Choosing Where to Study Abroad: Japanese English Learners' Decision-Making in Study Abroad Destinations and Their Views on Dual-Language Study Abroad Programs

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This study examined factors influencing study abroad destination choices of Japanese students learning English, and investigated barriers to selecting study abroad programs in English as a lingua franca context. Survey data were collected from 135 first-year students who major in English in a Japanese university where studying abroad is mandatory. The findings revealed that, while attraction to specific countries and their cultures primarily drove initial destination preferences, practical considerations gained importance in subsequent choices. Also, it indicates the Information Guide, which provides an overview of the program and potential study abroad experiences, and senior students' experiences primarily influenced students' decision-making processes. According to the survey, only 33% of students considered participating in dual-language study abroad programs. It also revealed the key factors that deter the participation of dual language study abroad programs, such as a preference for focusing solely on English, limited destination options, and concerns about simultaneous language learning (English and local language). This research provides insights for improving the design and promotion of dual-language study abroad programs.

Keywords:
Study abroad (SA), dual-language SA program, SA destinations

1. Introduction

Studying abroad has become an integral part of Japanese higher education, particularly for students aiming to enhance their English proficiency and broaden their cultural understanding.

For many Japanese students, who have limited exposure to English in their daily lives, study abroad (hereinafter referred to as "SA") programs offer an invaluable opportunity to immerse themselves in an English-speaking environment and to improve their English skills (Ueki & Takeuchi, 2017). SA experiences allow learners to use English in authentic contexts, rapidly developing practical communication skills that are difficult to acquire solely through classroom instruction in Japan. In addition to language improvement, SA provides students with firsthand exposure to diverse cultures, helping them develop essential global competencies such as inter-cultural communication, adaptability, and open-mindedness (Anderson et al., 2015; Tarchi & Surian, 2022). As the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2023) increasingly emphasizes the importance of fostering global mind and cultivating Japanese young adults who will actively engage in global communities, providing SA opportunities serves not only as a pathway to improving foreign language proficiency but also as a transformative experience that prepares them to thrive in a globalized world.

However, selecting an SA destination is not a simple task because it involves complex decision-making processes that balance academic, financial, socio-cultural, and personal consider-ations. Additionally, the global rise of English as a lingua franca (hereinafter referred to as "ELF") adds another layer of complexity to their considerations when choosing the SA desitina-tions. Learning English in an ELF context prepares students for multilingual environments where English serves as a common language, fostering an appreciation for linguistic diversity. From the perspective of translanguaging, these contexts allow learners to flexibly use their entire linguistic repertoire, including their native language, to communicate effectively (Garcia & Wei, 2014). This dynamic interaction with multiple languages enhances not only practical communication skills but also learners' adaptability and awareness of multilingualism as a valu-able resource in global contexts. Such experiences cultivate a deeper understanding of language as a social practice, equipping learners with the skills necessary to thrive in increasingly inter-connected and linguistically diverse settings.

Despite these advantages, Japanese learners of English often prioritize destinations in native English-speaking countries, influenced by firmly established norms that favor British or American English as the most prestigious varieties (Matsuda, 2003). Native-like English fluency remains a dominant aspiration for many English learners across Asia, including Japan, leading to the perception that English immersion in ELF contexts may not sufficiently support their language goals. Consequently, many students hesitate to explore SA programs in ELF contexts, despite their innovative approach to fostering both English proficiency and multilingual competence.

Given this context, the present study examines the factors that influence Japanese English learners' choices of the SA destinations. It also explores the factors that hinder students from pursuing English learning opportunities in ELF context (non-native-English-speaking countries). This study examines these issues to better understand the decision-making processes of Japanese students regarding the SA destination and how their attitudes and perceptions influence their choices.

2. Literature Review

For many Japanese English learners seeking to enhance their language skills and cultural understanding, studying abroad is one of the most attractive learning options available. Exploring the motivations behind Japanese learners of English in deciding on SA destinations is a complex process as they are shaped by a dynamic combination of academic aspirations, cultural interests, and broader personal objectives. McMahon's (1992) push-pull model has been widely used to explain both students' decisions to study abroad and their choice of destinations. This model highlights how social, economic, and academic factors in both sending and receiving countries, as well as specific institutions, shape decision-making.

2.1 General Factors in Study Abroad Destination Choice

A key driver for many Japanese students' motivation to study abroad is their goal to enhance language proficiency, making the quality of the learning environment at potential partner institutions a vital consideration in their decision-making process. According to research by Anderson and Lawton (2015) and Aresi et al. (2018), students carefully evaluate how well an institution's English courses correspond with their academic interests and current language proficiency. Beyond course content, institutional prestige carries significant weight; Williams (2009) reveals that Japanese students often view their SA experience through the lens of future career prospects, carefully considering university rankings, faculty credentials, and the overall quality of English instruction. This focus on career prospects often leads students to favor English-speaking countries, where they believe daily immersion provides optimal conditions for language development.

Financial considerations have become increasingly critical in recent years. The yen's depreciation since 2022, triggered by the war in Ukraine and U.S. interest rate hikes, has significantly impacted SA choices (NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 2024 April 24). For instance, the living expenses for studying in the U.S. have increased from 1.5 - 2 million yen to

2 - 3 million yen due to the weak yen and rising U.S. prices (NIKKEI, 2024 July 23). These financial challenges can discourage some students from pursuing their prefered SA destinations. Previous research by Asaoka and Yano (2009) highlights that the substantial costs of international education—including tuition, living expenses, and travel—often force students to reconsider their preferred SA destinations, despite their strong interest.

In addition to financial considerations, personal factors also shape students' SA destination choices. Sponseller's (2021) research reveals the individualized nature of SA motivations—while some students prioritize language acquisition, others might focus on cultural understanding, academic specialization, or professional development.

Living arrangement preferences also play a crucial role in students' decisions, with some favoring homestay opportunities for cultural immersion and language practice (Schmit-Rinehart & Knight, 2004) while others prefer dormitory life for its social networking opportunities and independence (Rivers, 1998). These accommodation preferences may reflect students' comfort levels with different living environments and their language learning beliefs.

The decision-making process for SA destination choices therefore involves many interwoven factors—from academic and financial considerations to personal preferences. Understanding these interconnected factors reveals how students navigate and potentially adjust their destination preferences, which is crucial information for institutions developing overseas partnerships and providing SA experiences in their programs.

2.2 Challenges and Perceptions of Dual-language Study Abroad Programs

While studying in an ELF context would offer valuable SA experience such as developing multilingual competencies and cultural adaptability, there are some challenges in attracting Japanese English learners. For example, Fukui and Yashima (2021) found that Japanese students tend to prioritize English development over multilingual competence, leading them to hesitate in selecting non-English dominant environments for study abroad. This "English first" mindset may lead students to be concerned that learning additional languages might hinder their primary target language (English) development, particularly affecting their willingness to study in ELF contexts. Similar attitudes have been observed in other Asian contexts; for example, Lamb's (2004) study of Indonesian students found that their strong desire to integrate into global English-speaking communities led them to prioritize English over other languages.

Moreover, cultural unfamiliarity and linguistic barriers may discourage students from choosing study abroad destinations where English is not the dominant language. Japan's English education system predominantly focuses on English-speaking cultures (Kubota, 2011; Matsuda,

2004), reinforcing the perception that effective English learning occurs only in native-English environments. As a result, students may hesitate in dual-language SA programs, where they would need to balance English study with exposure to another local language.

2.3 Institutional Support in Study Abroad Decision-Making

The support framework provided by institutions plays a crucial role in shaping students' preferences of SA destinations, particularly in programs where participation is compulsory. In structured programs, institutional support serves multiple functions: providing comprehensive information about available options, helping students align their choices with their academic goals, and addressing concerns about various destinations.

Research indicates that the timing and contents of institutional support significantly influence students' decision-making processes. Whatley and González Canché (2021) demonstrate that well-structured support systems—encompassing pre-departure preparation, engagement with faculty, and ongoing guidance—help students make more informed choices about their SA destinations. These supports are particularly crucial when programs offer diverse options, including both traditional English-speaking destinations and ELF destinations, as students need detailed information to evaluate how different programs align with their language learning objectives.

Also, peer networks, especially connections with senior students who have previously studied abroad, constitute another vital component of institutional support. Whatley (2018) found that these peer interactions provide authentic insights into different SA experiences, helping students develop realistic expectations about various destinations. When considering SA programs, for instance, hearing firsthand accounts from peers can help address concerns about language development and cultural adaptation.

3. The Context of the Study

The faculty of Foreign Language Studies (hereinafter referred to as "FFLS") of Kansai Univeristy, offers a robust SA program that immerses students in English-speaking environments[1] to improve their language proficiency, build cross-cultural competencies, and foster autonomy. The SA program allows students to study at partner universities worldwide while earning credits toward their degree at Kansai University. To ensure that students have an academically and personally fulfilling SA experience, FFLS offers comprehensive support including intensive English skills courses, pre-departure preparation, on-site support, and post-

return debriefing sessions.

Additionally, FFLS offers a dual-language SA program to the English majors that gives students opportunities to study both English and a third language, such as Chinese, Korean, or German in ELF contexts. This program provides a distinctive SA experience, in which students complete academic coursework in English while navigating daily life in the local language. Through this experience, students enhance their English proficiency, develop multilingual competence and understanding of ELF, and broaden their global perspectives and cultural adaptability.

Participation in the SA program is a compulsory component of the FFLS curriculum, requiring all students to complete a one-year program abroad during their second year. For the 2024 academic year, FFLS maintains partnerships with 16 institutions from which English major students select their host university. Each partner university offers a unique program, resulting in varied SA experiences depending on the partner university. There are differences in undergraduate courses, accommodations, extracurricular activities, and even tuition fees across destinations. However, each partner university has a limited number of spots available. Therefore, the selection process for partner universities is competitive.

Students must first thoroughly understand the application requirements for each partner university through the Information Guide, which provides an overview of the program and potential SA experiences. After ensuring they meet these criteria, they then submit their applications, ranking their preferred universities from first to fifth choice. If the number of applicants exceeds the capacity previously set, the selection process relies on TOEFL scores and GPA (Grade Point Average) from the spring semester.

Students who are not admitted to their first-choice university are re-selected for other universities on their list. If their second choice is already filled by first-choice applicants, they are considered for subsequent options. Therefore students must carefully and strategically rank their choices for SA destination, considering the possibility that they may not be selected for their top choice.

4. Research Gap and Research Questions

The SA experience at Kansai University's FFLS presents a unique research opportunity as it offers both traditional English-focused programs and innovative dual-language options within a single institutional framework. This context enables us to examine how Japanese English learners navigate their choices when presented with diverse SA options.

While existing research has extensively examined Japanese students' general motivations for studying abroad in English-speaking countries (Anderson & Lawton, 2015; Williams, 2009), less attention has been paid to how students evaluate their options when presented with both traditional English-focused programs and dual-language alternatives. Understanding the decision-making process in this context is particularly relevant as universities worldwide increasingly diversify their SA offerings to include programs in non-native English-speaking countries.

Moreover, the dual-language SA programs offer unique opportunities for multilingual development and global competency building. However, based on past records, many students appear hesitant to select these options. Previous research identified general concerns about cultural unfamiliarity and linguistic barriers in non-native English-speaking contexts. Yet, how these factors specifically influence Japanese students' choices and what additional barriers might exist remain unclear. Understanding the possible barriers for Japanese students is crucial for SA program development and student support, particularly as institutions seek to diversify their SA offerings.

The role of institutional support systems in shaping these decisions requires further study. While research suggests that pre-departure preparations and on-site resources influence SA experiences (Whatley & González Canché, 2021), their impact on students' decision-making for their SA destination requires further examination. Understanding how different types of information and support influence students' choices could provide valuable insights for improving program guidance and support systems.

Based on these gaps in the current literature, this study addresses two research questions:

1) What factors influence Japanese university students' decision-making for SA destinations?
2) What factors discourage them from selecting the dual-language SA programs in ELF contexts?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of how Japanese university students evaluate and select their SA destinations, particularly when presented with both traditional and innovative SA program options. The findings will have practical implications for the design and promotion of SA programs, especially dual-language options, and for the development of more effective student support systems.

5. Method

5.1 Participants

The survey was conducted among first-year students majoring in English at the FFLS, Kansai University, who are planning to participate in the SA programs in 2025. Among them, 135 students voluntarily responded to the survey. All participants provided informed consent, adhering to ethical guidelines regarding data management and personal information protection. The survey was conducted online.

5.2 Instrument

The questionnaire primarily consisted of multiple-choice questions designed to explore various aspects of students' preference for SA destinations and decisions related to studying abroad. Specifically, this study focuses on four items in the survey: (a) general factors influencing SA destination choices (such as cost, location, course contents), (b) key information resources influencing their decision-making (such as university websites, the Information Guide, peer experiences), (c) considerations regarding the dual-language SA programs, and (d) reasons for excluding the dual-language SA programs from their SA destination options.

5.3 Data analysis

The questionnaire responses were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research questions. For items (a) factors influencing SA destination choices, (b) key information resources influencing their decision-making, and (c) considerations regarding the dual-language SA programs, descriptive statistics were employed. For item (d) reasons for excluding the dual-language SA programs from their SA destination options, a thematic analysis was applied to the open-ended students' responses. This approach involved systematically coding the data to uncover recurring themes and patterns that explain students' hesitations or barriers regarding participation in the dual-language SA programs. By integrating these quantitative and qualitative methods, the analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping students' SA destination choices and the challenges associated with participation in the dual-language SA programs.

6. Results

6.1 Factors Influencing SA Destination Decision-Making

To address the first research question: *What factors influence Japanese university students' decision-making for SA destinations?,* the data were collected on students' preferences for SA destinations, ranking them from first to fifth choice. The result revealed distinct patterns in the factors influencing their decision-making, summarized in Figure 6-1. It presents the number of students and the factors that influenced their choice, according to their ranking from first to fifth choice.

The primary factor driving students' initial preferences was the desire to live in the destination country or region, highlighting the importance of cultural and regional appeal as a key motivator. This preference suggests that students prioritize the experience of immersion in a particular cultural setting, which aligns with broader motivations for studying abroad. Additionally, program content emerged as an important consideration in students' top choices, reflecting the academic relevance and attractiveness of specific programs as significant influences on their decision-making.

As students refined their preferences beyond the first choice, financial considerations, specifically the cost of tuition and accommodation, became increasingly important. This shift indicates that, while cost may not be the primary consideration, it gains relevance when students weigh
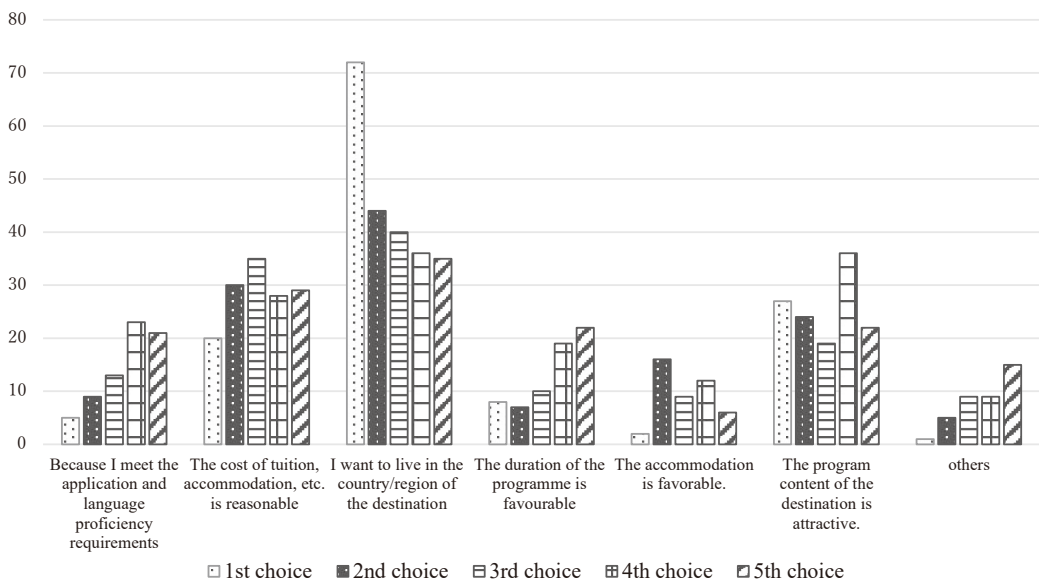

Figure 6-1 Factors Influencing SA Destination Decision-Making

their options more carefully. This pattern suggests a layered decision-making process, where initial excitement about the destination gradually incorporates practical considerations such as affordability.

These practical considerations manifested differently for various factors. Contrary to expectations, practical considerations such as the cost of tuition were influential for students' second choice, but beyond that, the results indicate it does not appear to be a primary factor in their decision-making.

Similarly, the role of program duration showed an evolving pattern of importance. While students initially placed less emphasis on program length during their first round of selections, this factor gained significant weight as they progressed through the decision-making process. Some students, especially female students, showed particular concern about programs extending into mid-January, with this timing factor becoming increasingly important in their later choices, primarily due to the conflict with Coming of Age Day ceremonies (Seijin-shiki). This is an important cultural celebration and many students have made advance preparations, such as purchasing or arranging formal kimonos, before enrolling at university. Therefore, an extension into mid-January may be a concern for some of these students.

Overall, the results highlight a progression in student preferences, where attraction to particular countries and their cultures drive initial selections, and practical considerations such as financial burdens shape subsequent choices. This pattern illustrates the complex and multidimensional nature of students' decision-making when selecting an SA destination, balancing aspirational goals with practical realities.

6.2 Key Information Resources Influencing Study Abroad Destination Decision-Making

This section examines the recourses or support systems that most strongly influenced students' decision-making when selecting their SA destinations. Figure 6-2 presents the number of students who primarily used each type of resource, revealing the relative importance of institutional resources, peer insights, and family input in guiding their choices.

The results show that the most influential resource used when students made their decision to choose their SA destination was the "Information Guide." The guide provides an overview of the program and potential SA experiences. This finding indicates the importance of structured and comprehensive information in guiding students' choices. SA experience reports from senior students（『先輩の声』）were also significant, suggesting that peer experiences play a critical role in shaping expectations and providing insights into the SA experience.

Other factors, such as teachers' support—specifically information shared at SA pre-departure
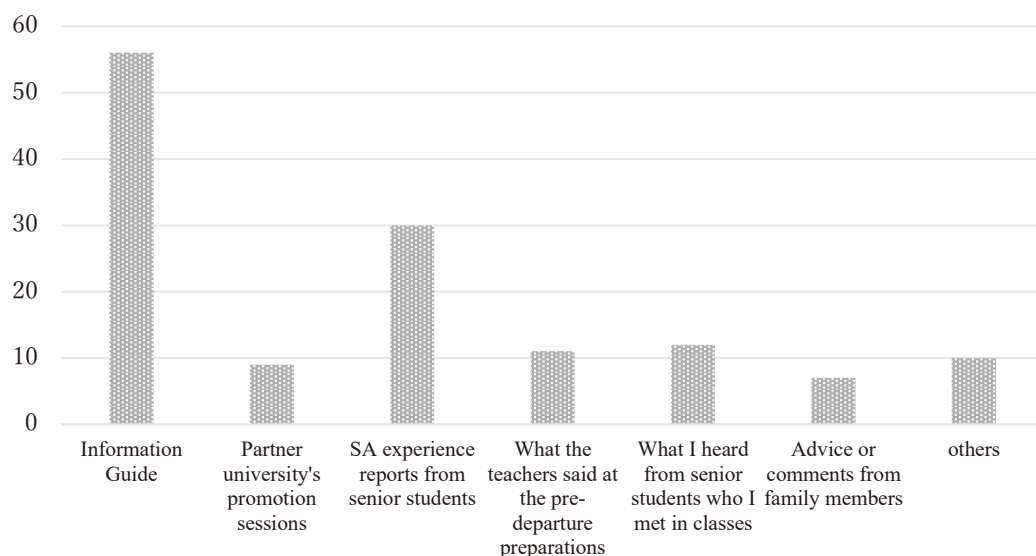
Figure 6-2 Key Information Resources for SA Destination Decision-Making.

preparations—and comments from senior students encountered in classes, had a moderate influence on students' decision-making. This represents a secondary layer of influence, where direct interactions with faculty and experienced peers in academic settings offer additional context and support in the decision-making process. Additionally, family advice or comments were selected by a few students, indicating a relatively minor but still noteworthy influence of familial support.

In summary, the results demonstrate that formal program information and the voices of senior students serve as a primary source of influence in students' decisions regarding their SA destinations. These findings highlight the value students place on both institutional resources and firsthand accounts when making SA choices.

6.3 Factors Influencing Students' Decision-Making Regarding the Dual-language Study Abroad Program

To explore the second research question: *What factors discourage Japanese university students from selecting the dual-language SA programs in ELF contexts?*, we conducted descriptive statistics and thematic analyses.

The quantitative results revealed that 67% of respondents (n=90) did not prioritize the dual-language SA programs at all, while only 33% (n=45) included these programs among their top five choices. These findings highlight a notably limited interest in, or perceived barriers to, the program among FFLS students.

Table 6-1. Categories Arising from Students' Responses toward the Dual-Language SA Program

Themes	Samples	Frequency
Language Preferences	"*I want to focus only on studying English.*" "*I think learning English has to be my first priority; learning other languages comes way after that.*"	36
Program and Destination Limitations	"*There were no destination options in the country or region where I was studying the additional language.*" "*I wasn't interested in the destinations for the dual-language SA programs.*"	33
Language Proficiency and Challenges	"*I considered it, but I didn't meet the language proficiency requirements.*" "*I believe learning two languages are too challenging.*"	33

Thematic analysis identified four main demotivating factors influencing students' decisions regarding the dual-language SA programs (see Table 6-1).

For many students, a preference for focusing only on English was evident, expressing the desire to concentrate on English study without any distractions. One student stated, "I want to focus on studying English only for this SA opportunity." Furthermore, some students expressed a preference for studying in English-speaking environments, highlighting their strong interest in immersion within an English-native context to improve their English proficiency.

A significant proportion of students reported a lack of destination option in the target language region as a major factor influencing their decision-making. One student expressed, "I am studying Spanish and there were no destination options of dual language program for me." Among the third language options such as Chinese, Korean, and German that English majors can choose to study, Spanish is the only language that does not yet have a dual-language program. Since Spanish is one of the most popular second languages at FFLS, the lack of such an option may be a critical disadvantage.

A substantial number of students pointed to language proficiency barriers as a reason for not participating in the dual-language programs, with one student explaining, "I considered it, but I didn't meet the language proficiency requirements." Partner universities offering dual-language SA programs tend to have relatively high standards compared to regular SA programs. Unlike regular SA programs, which typically begin with academic preparation at language institutions, dual-language SA programs require students to directly enter undergraduate courses taught in English while simultaneously receiving intensive instruction in the local language. Therefore, they are expected to have a relatively high level of English proficiency by the time they decide to pursue SA. Achieving a high level of English proficiency during the first semester as freshman can be daunting for students. Another challenge cited was the

perceived difficulty of learning two languages simultaneously. Students felt that focusing on an additional language would be ineffective without a strong foundation in English. As one student put it, "Learning two languages would result in poor proficiency in both languages."

These findings suggest that students' decisions regarding the dual-language SA programs are influenced by practical considerations such as their preference to focus on a single language (English), destination availability, proficiency requirements, and their perceived ability to study two languages simultaneously.

7. Suggestions for Future Student Guidance and Study Abroad Program Design

Based on the survey findings, opportunities to enhance the current pre-departure preparation system have been identified. The pre-departure sessions in the spring semester provides first-year students with essential program information through Information Guides and preparatory guidance. The survey results confirm that students actively utilize these Information Guides in their decision-making process, indicating the success of this approach. However, the findings suggest potential areas for enhancement, particularly in educating students about the diverse roles of English in global contexts and providing more targeted practical information about SA experiences.

7.1 Enhancing Interaction with Senior Students

An important insight from the survey is the first-year students' strong desire to hear from senior students who have participated in SA programs. SA experience reports from senior students were identified as the second most influential factor in destination selection, under-scoring the need for direct interaction. Currently, the pre-departure preparation program does not include activities that allow first-year students to seek information from seniors. There was an occasion in which a few senior students were invited to share their experiences with first-year students in a pre-departure preparation session: four senior students presented their activi-ties in the destinations. However, the audience was over 150 first-year students, so having opportunities for questions and discussion was impossible. In fact, senior students also express a desire to connect with first-year students and share their SA experiences. Those who returned from SA, especially those who pursue the teaching certificate program, are eager to share their experiences and insights into preparations for the SA. Their motivation is particularly strong because they understand the complexities of balancing teaching certificate requirements with SA schedules, and want to help first-year students navigate these academic planning challenges.

Yet, promoting such contact opportunities is limited at the moment. The most significant challenge is schedule conflicts. The number of pre-departure preparation programs in the spring semester is limited; therefore, arranging cross-generation meetings is difficult. Furthermore, senior students are usually busy with internships, and job-hunting activities along with their academic work upon their return; thus, setting up interactive opportunities with first-year students is challenging.[2]

However, direct communication with senior students would empower first-year students and could positively influence their choice of a SA destination.　Therefore, hosting events that foster direct, interactive discussions between first-year students and senior students could be beneficial. For instance, poster sessions featuring senior students' SA experiences could allow first-year students to ask questions and gain a more vivid understanding of SA life.　As an exemplary model, the Ehime University International Students Center annually hosts the "Study International Fair," where senior students who have studied abroad create posters about their experiences. At this event, students who have studied abroad share diverse SA experiences (Ehime University International Student Center, 2024). The poster format facilitates one-on-one discussions, allowing senior students to openly share both the enjoyable aspects and challenges of their experiences. Such an event could provide first-year students with comprehensive insights into study abroad opportunities.

7.2 Broadening Perspectives on Study Abroad Opportunities

The survey also revealed a narrow view of SA among students, as many based their destination choices on the country or region they wanted to live in, with little consideration for dual-language SA destinations. This suggests that students may be approaching their decision-making with preconceived preferences shaped before entering university. The current SA preparation guidance appears less effective in broadening students' understanding of what SA experiences can offer.

Interactive presentations showcasing dual-language users, such as faculty members and senior students, could help first-year students visualize the practical benefits of multilingualism. Many faculty members at FFLS have studied abroad in non-English-speaking countries and are multilingual. Sharing their anecdotes and detailing how learning a third language contributed to their academic success, career development, and well-being might have a positive impact on students. Furthermore, during a past open-campus event, students who studied abroad in Taiwan presented their SA experiences in both Japanese and Chinese, leaving a strong impression on the audience. Incorporating similar multilingual presentations into pre-departure prepa-

rations could spark interest in third-language learning.

Such real-life demonstrations can be particularly powerful as they provide first-year students with concrete role models of successful language learners (Murphey & Arao, 2001). When students see their peers successfully navigating multiple languages, it helps them envision their own potential for multilingual achievement and motivates them toward similar goals. To further broaden these possibilities, FFLS should consider establishing dual-language programs for other L3 languages currently taught at FFLS, such as Spanish, and develop partnerships with universities in relevant regions.

7.3 Aligning SA Experience with FFLS's Specialized Programs

Another area for improvement is aligning pre-departure preparation with FFLS's five specialized programs: language education, intercultural communication, translation and interpretation, area studies, and global/regional cooperation. While these programs are emphasized in the 3rd and 4th-year curriculum, students are also expected to explore entry-level courses related to these areas during their second-year SA programs. However, the current curriculum lacks cohesion between language skill training and the specialized fields, leaving students unaware of how their SA experience connects to the faculty's broader degree goals.

To address this issue, sharing curriculum models from seniors who have finished SA programs could be beneficial. These models would illustrate which subjects the seniors chose to enroll in during their third-year and fourth-year years, taking their SA experiences into account. By presenting these examples, first-year students can see a clear pathway of how SA experiences can be effectively integrated into their academic progression and how they align with their long-term educational objectives. This approach could provide a more coherent educational trajectory for first-year students pursuing degrees in specialized programs.

Additionally, forming partnerships with universities that offer service learning opportunities could enhance this alignment. Service learning integrates practical, community-based learning with classroom instruction, which deepens understanding in FFLS's specialized programs. Through these programs, students can apply academic theories to real-world problems, reflecting the practical application of their studies particularly in global and regional cooperation or area studies. Furthermore, they could continue to study issues discovered during the program in their third-year and fourth-year seminars. Such partnerships could play a pivotal role in offering students a more comprehensive learning experience that extends beyond traditional academic boundaries, making their education more dynamic and impactful.

8. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the factors influencing Japanese English major university students' decision-making regarding SA destinations as well as the barriers deterring students from selecting dual-language SA programs. The findings reveal that while attraction to specific countries and their cultures, along with academic relevance, play significant roles in shaping students' destination preferences, practical considerations such as financial costs and program requirements also weigh heavily in the decision-making process. The study shows the need for institutional guidance that not only supports logistical and procedural aspects of pre-departure preparation but also broadens students' perspectives on multilingualism and the global role of English.

The survey findings indicate that many students prioritize traditional English-speaking destinations, often driven by the perception that these environments offer the best opportunities for language immersion. This reflects a preference for native-English-speaking contexts over ELF environments, highlighting the need for greater emphasis on the benefits of multilingual competence and the value of dual-language SA programs. Students' hesitations regarding EFL contexts, stemming from language proficiency requirements, perceived challenges of dual-language learning, and limited destination options, point to areas for program improvement.

To address these challenges, this paper proposes several enhancements to the current guidance system: creating opportunities for meaningful interaction between first-year and senior students, showcasing successful dual-language users, and aligning SA programs with the faculty's specialized programs. These improvements, along with strengthened emphasis on the role of multilingualism in global settings, could help students better understand and prepare for their SA experiences.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of SA guidance to better support students in making informed and expansive decisions. By addressing both the practical barriers and the underlying perceptions influencing students' choices, institutions can encourage broader participation in innovative SA opportunities that equip students with the skills and perspectives needed for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Notes

1) FFLS offers programs for both English and Chinese majors. This paper focuses only on English majors and their choice of SA destinations. Chinese majors also experience the same pre-departure

instructions and study abroad at two universities in China.

2) In recent years, students returning from SA have produced an animated PowerPoint presentation to share their SA experiences. However, it has not been possible to create public opportunities to view these presentations.

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