

The Impact of Intercultural Interactions on Students' Outcomes, Motivation, and Attitudes in an EFL Speaking Course

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Abstract

In this paper the impact of international student classroom interactions on domestic English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in compulsory speaking classes was explored. Such opportunities for authentic intercultural communication have the potential to improve students' learning outcomes, motivation, and attitudes. For this quasi-experimental study, first-year undergraduate EFL students at a university in Japan participated in an International Student Interaction (ISI) program. In the first semester, the control group ($n = 39$) had speaking classes, and the quasi-experimental group ($n = 47$) followed the same curriculum in the second semester. However, a small group of international students ($n = 9$) visited the quasi-experimental group's classes twice and participated in classroom EFL tasks. Pre- and posttest data were collected on participants' motivation by using an adapted AMTB survey, and on their learning outcomes by using non-standardized language tests. In the quasi-experimental group, participants' reactions to the ISI program were also observed. Although the quantitative results did not reveal a significant difference in motivation or language test results, the qualitative feedback received by all participants was positive. In the discussion, possible obstacles are addressed that may have affected the results in the quasi-experimental group and changes to improve future ISI programs are listed.

Key words: EFL, Motivation, Interaction, Intercultural, Interlocutor

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The Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) at the university described in the current study had been experiencing a steady increase in student attendance since its creation in 2015. However, for causes which were unclear, usage data from the 2018/19 academic year showed that growth seemed to have plateaued. At that time the SALC had around 10,000 annual instances of usage, mostly from first-year students who can earn credit towards their compulsory English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking courses through SALC participation (Yamamoto et al., 2021). The SALC employs student staff, some of whom are international students. Other staff are domestic students, those based at the university, who have advanced English skills. These staff offer a variety of useful services for EFL learners such as board games, assistance with language tasks or homework, presentations, and casual conversations. The SALC is open Monday to Friday 10 am-6 pm, and is free to use. The challenge for the university's English program was to find ways to further increase voluntary SALC usage among domestic students.

One potential solution was bringing the SALC to the classroom. If some of the international SALC staff were able to participate in EFL speaking classes, might the opportunities for co-learning make the domestic students more motivated to make greater voluntary use of the SALC? This was the nascent thought behind the International Student Interaction (ISI) program described in the current study. Would interacting with international students in English classrooms increase the domestic students' motivation to learn more broadly? Would domestic students' attitudes toward learning English be impacted? How? Would they feel more intimidated, or more eager, to have further authentic intercultural experiences beyond the classroom? In turn, would international students find value in increased opportunities for interaction with domestic students? Accordingly, the idea behind the ISI program evolved. To evaluate whether such a program might increase SALC participation, it was decided that it was necessary to first investigate the impact on compulsory speaking classes themselves.

A small group of international students were asked to help pilot the program by visiting an EFL speaking class near the end of the second semester in the 2018/19 academic year. The domestic students were also asked if they would be interested in having international students visit. The response from both groups was positive. A single visit was arranged for four international students to join a class of 12 domestic students. Feedback after the pilot interaction session was encouraging. Both groups enjoyed the experience, and would have welcomed further opportunities to interact. Although that group of international students was returning to their home universities, a new group of students was arriving in the second semester of the 2019/20 academic year. This gave the researchers time to coordinate with university administrators. Would the ISI program lead to changes in

outcomes, motivation, and attitudes among EFL learners in their compulsory speaking courses?

Literature Review

Motivation

Motivation is directly related to success in learning a language, and motivational maintenance or enhancement strategies are essential tools for educators (Dörnyei, 2001). Motivation refers to the mental and emotional states that underlie how much effort a language learner makes (Ellis, 1997). Different models of language learner motivation have been proposed. The socio-psychological model suggested by Gardner and Lambert (1959), Gardner (1979; 2010), and Gardner et al. (1985) described language learner motivation as a multi-faceted amalgam of learners' integrative interest in interacting with speakers from the other language communities, their attitudes towards their educational environment, anxieties about language use, and instrumental gains related to language learning. Motivation was seen as highly dependent on a learner's evolving socio-educational context (Dörnyei, 2001). Later, so called cognitively situated (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) models reimagined the motivational impetus as resulting from learners' internal representation of themselves. Discrepancies between learners' ideal and actual performance are seen as salient starting points for change. Additionally, this model conceptualized motivation as a dynamic process. That is, even the most ardent learner may experience fluctuations in motivation between days or tasks (Al-Hoorie, 2017).

In EFL contexts language learners' motivation may also vary greatly. When English is not readily used around such learners in their daily lives, its integrative benefits may seem abstract or intangible. Additionally, some EFL learners may have poorly defined learning goals, not know how to improve their learning, or see English as valuable (Sampson, 2016). For others, unfavorable educational experiences can also foster anxiety towards foreign language use, education, and teachers. Many learners of English in Japan are indeed demotivated or intimidated by the prescriptive, teacher-fronted, grammar and translation-heavy nature of much EFL instruction (Kikuchi, 2013). Conversely, other EFL learners may be highly instrumentally oriented. That is, their motivation arises from pragmatic goals like passing standardized language aptitude tests, or getting a better job or salary (Wong, 2011). In the Japanese context, motivation may be enhanced when learners are able to adopt integrative perspectives towards the international English-speaking community, seeing themselves as part of it (Yashima, 2002; 2009). This research suggests that initiatives in Japan which promote direct intercultural interaction and

co-learning opportunities may be worthy of further investigation as a means of enhancing motivation and outcomes.

Internationalization

Carefully managed encounters with international students could enhance domestic students' motivation and language skills, while simultaneously benefitting international students. Successive Japanese governments and universities have actively promoted internationalization (Asaoka & Yano, 2009; Morita, 2014). The presence of international students on Japanese campuses has been part of these efforts (Lassegarde, 2006). Examples of international student activities include English-medium lectures (Tsuneyoshi, 2005), Japanese language classes and planned cultural activities (Hofmeyer, 2021), or casual work in campus language centers (Yamamoto et al., 2021). Engaging in direct interactions with domestic students can be among the most motivating and memorable aspects of international exchanges (Carvalho & Shepherd, 2022). However, both informal encounters for interaction and formal integration into the curriculum of co-learning opportunities is required (Leask, 2009). Passively sharing a space without structured and purposeful activities will not enhance outcomes or skills (Miles et al., 2018). For instance, Umino and Benson (2016) detailed the experience of an Indonesian exchange student who spent four years in Japan but mostly interacted only with other international students. The lack of a formal program providing opportunities for intercultural interaction may have contributed to this behavior. Many exchange programs are of significantly shorter duration than four years, including those offered by the university in the current study. Additional challenges to meaningful intercultural interaction in informal settings may include the formation of impenetrable cliques, asymmetries in language proficiency, or cultural barriers (Hofmeyer, 2021).

Formal curriculum integration, or “the inclusion of specific course-related activities and learning modules that are assessed as part of students' final grades” (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999, as cited in Baldassar & McKenzie, 2016, p.88) needs to be intentionally planned. It is thought that a carefully managed program of learning activities may promote intercultural learning and lead to improvements in outcomes, motivation, and attitudes. The importance of initiatives that aim to replicate the study abroad experience on domestic campuses is increasingly being recognized (Custer & Tuominen, 2017). Internationalization at Home (IaH) aims at “developing intercultural competences among the non-mobile majority of students” (Prieto-Flores et al., 2016, p.437). IaH programs have been studied across a diverse range of academic fields (Baldassar & McKenzie, 2016; Lee & Cai, 2019), and comprise a broad range of curriculum-integrated, classroom-based interactions. Domestic students collaborate closely on learning projects with international students while on

their home campus, reducing the impact of financial barriers to traditional language exchange.

Beyond the classroom, widespread adoption of technology and virtual learning environments have expanded IaH. Woicolesco et al. (2022) described how six Brazilian universities expanded IaH activities online during the COVID-19 pandemic through webinars, online workshops, and congresses. Another example are collaborative online international learning (COIL) projects. Developed by the State University of New York (SUNY), COIL projects involve instructors in different countries co-creating short-term, cooperative online learning projects for their students (SUNY, N.D.). COIL projects have been found to be worthwhile, albeit labor-intensive opportunities for intercultural skills and knowledge building (Bragadóttir & Potter, 2019; Mundel, 2020).

Whether online or in the classroom, such initiatives still face cultural and language barriers. Custer and Tuominen (2017) described a project involving Japanese and U.S. university students. They reported that unlike their U.S. counterparts, the Japanese university students were unfamiliar with online discussion formats, active learning approaches, and lacked the confidence to express themselves without additional training to increase their level of participation. In addition to the challenges of skill-asymmetry, those implementing IaH initiatives in the context of language exchanges need to be aware that engaging in authentic interaction with speakers of other language communities may be daunting as, “the student is not simply faced with learning new information (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc) ...but rather of acquiring symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community” (Gardner, 1979, p.193). Nevertheless, if potential pitfalls are accounted for, this research demonstrates that IaH programs offer benefits to learners.

There has been some research into the use of IaH style programs in Asian EFL contexts. In Korea, university based IaH programs have been found to increase domestic student's intercultural competence and levels of interaction with international students (Jon, 2013). Another IaH program also heightened feelings of intercultural sensitivity among participating international students (Choi et al., 2012). In Japan, a campus based IaH program of language exchange classes positively impacted domestic participants' perceptions of their foreign language skills development, although voluntary participation in other initiatives remained low (Hofmeyr, 2021). Other investigations have highlighted similar difficulties. Aubrey and Philpott (2021) found that a classroom-based initiative where domestic and international students collaborated on a series of language tasks improved attitudes and engagement but resulted in no change to learning behavior or motivation compared to controls. This research underscores the importance of further efforts to quantify the impact of IaH style programs on EFL learner outcomes, motivation,

and attitudes in the Japanese context.

Interaction

Interlocutor and task characteristics may influence outcomes and motivation in spoken interactions. There are several aspects to consider. The age of the interlocutors, levels of language proficiency, and personality differences can all influence how successful interactions can be (Lowen & Sato, 2018). For the ISI program, the international students and domestic student participants were of similar ages but differed in language proficiency and cultural background. Furthermore, programmatic factors such as task goals, complexity, feedback, and participation structure can impact results (Lowen & Sato, 2018). For instance, there are two types of interaction between L1 (native) and L2 (second language) speakers: intracultural and intercultural. Intracultural interactions involve interlocutors with a shared cultural and language background, such as two L1 Japanese speakers interacting in English. Conversely, intercultural interactions involve interlocutors from different cultural and language backgrounds, such as a Japanese L2 speaker of English and a L1 speaker of English. In an Asian EFL context, intercultural interactions among intermediate-level students were found to have a greater impact on attitudes towards the learning context than intracultural interactions (Aubrey & Philpott, 2021). This research suggests that IaH style initiatives such as the ISI program may produce some positive outcomes. Finally, another factor to consider are the types of feedback that occur between the speakers. There is often considerable anxiety associated with any L2 usage and intercultural interaction, and low proficiency learners are often more apprehensive when receiving negative feedback (Liu, 2018). This research indicates that in the current study careful attention should be paid to the specifics of how the domestic and international students will interact.

Summary

A review of the literature has underlined not only the importance of language learner motivation in improving outcomes, but also of integrating intercultural language exchange programs into the curriculum with care. Doing so may make learning English enjoyable and the benefits more tangible. IaH could offer a promising model for how this can be done. Such programs may offer cultural and language skills and knowledge development opportunities that improve attitudes. However, the impact of IaH style programs on EFL motivation and learning outcomes in an Asian context has been understudied. When implementing such a programmatic design, due attention must be paid to the characteristics of the learners, task, and feedback types to maximize positive outcomes. This is the very gap that the current ISI program hoped to bridge.

Research Question

The primary question the current study set out to answer was how would student participants respond to periodic international student interactions in a compulsory EFL speaking course held over a semester? To better understand how students responded to the ISI program, the researchers chose to focus on three elements. First, how would domestic students' learning outcomes be affected? Second, how would domestic students' motivation be affected? Third, what feedback would be generated in response to the program from domestic students, international students, and teachers?

Methods

Participants

The participants were 112 domestic, undergraduate EFL students at a university in Japan. Of the 112 students, 86 completed all measures correctly. The results from students that did not participate in all measures were excluded from the final analysis. All participants were first-year students, with a mean age of 18.5 years ($SD = .83$), an age range of 18-24 years, and were 53.6% female. All were non-English majors enrolled in a compulsory course, titled College English Speaking, taught by the researchers. Standardized test data on participants' proficiency before the study period were not available. However, an internal placement test had assigned them to classes whose designated textbook was at a CEFR A 2 (elementary) level, indicating generally low English proficiency. Students in the first semester control group ($n = 39$) were divided by faculty between two classes (Humanities $n = 21$; Economics $n = 18$) and those in the second semester quasi-experimental group ($n = 47$) were divided across three classes (Law $n = 17$, Humanities $n = 14$, Economics $n = 16$).

Measures

To evaluate the ISI program, three data collection measures were employed. The first measure was a set of non-standardized language tests. The tests comprised a range of vocabulary, listening, and grammar questions drawn from the speaking course textbook, *English Firsthand 1*. Second, to measure changes in participant motivation the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985) was selected. The AMTB is a widely used, standardized measure of motivation among learners of English as a second or foreign language. It has been shown to reliably measure different constructs (subscales) related to motivation and L2 learning (Gardner, 2010). The full length AMTB consists of over 130 positively and negatively worded statements representing the subscales. Participants indicate the

extent of their agreement with each statement using a 7-point Likert scale (*1 Strongly Disagree - 7 Strongly Agree*) or by selecting the most appropriate statement from options. Mean scores can either be calculated independently for each subscale or combined to produce an overall sum score for each participant, as was the case in the current study. See Table 1 for subscale examples.

In the current study the AMTB was modified for use in the language classroom. Several items were removed from the full length AMTB to reduce the burden on participants (Tennant & Gardner, 2004). The modified AMTB can be seen in Appendix 1. For the remaining scaled items ($n = 39$), a reliability analysis was performed on each subscale to check for internal consistency (Gardner, 2010). Negatively worded items were reverse coded, so that a higher score represented higher motivation. Table 2 shows the subscales, number of items retained, and α values. Most subscales were acceptably reliable ($\alpha \geq 0.81$), so most items were retained. However, the alpha for the Motivation subscale was low ($\alpha = 0.58$). The removal of item 12 increased the alpha to $\alpha = 0.73$, so the item was excluded. To further reduce the burden on participants the selected AMTB items were translated into Japanese by a native speaker with proficient English who was familiar with the ISI program. The translation was then checked for meaning and accuracy by one of the researchers, a native English speaker with proficient Japanese.

The third and final measure was qualitative feedback, which was collected in different forms. A survey was distributed on Microsoft Forms using open-ended questions to collect responses from domestic students. For the international students, a different method was used. Debriefing sessions in which the researchers solicited reflections on the ISI program were held after class. Finally, the researchers made classroom observations of the ISI program sessions as instructors.

ISI Program

The *College English Speaking* course syllabi, lesson structure, textbook and activities were consistent between the first and second semesters and across classes where possible. However, in the first semester no international students attended. For the second semester, international students ($n = 9$) participated in *College English Speaking* course classes taught by both researchers. These students came from North America and England. Six were female and three were male. All were third or fourth-year university students in their early twenties. Groups of four or five international students participated in two 90-minute interaction sessions for each *College English Speaking* course. Due to logistical constraints addressed later in the Discussion section, only two such sessions were possible per course. The first session was held in week 5, and the second in week 10.

Before each session, neither the international students nor the domestic students

were asked to prepare anything. Interaction sessions would begin with a small announcement and introduction of the international students. When performing classroom tasks, the instructor first modelled the procedure for a textbook activity with an international student. Domestic students then performed the task in small groups. One international student was assigned to each group. The international students were not instructed how to interact with the domestic students other than to simply participate in the task. A typical task type involved pairs of domestic students taking turns practicing a textbook dialogue. After rehearsing the conversation, domestic students repeated the activity, substituting personal information in the appropriate gaps. The international students listened to and observed these interactions. Next, an international student adopted the role of one of the domestic students so that each could have an interaction with an international student. Lastly, international students would provide feedback when appropriate. The international students alternated groups and the activity was repeated a couple of times to allow multiple opportunities for formal and informal interactions with different speakers. Once a task cycle was complete, the process was repeated with other tasks throughout the interaction session. Finally, the class would finish with some words of gratitude to the international students.

Protocol

To assess the impact of the ISI program on language test outcomes, motivation, and student feedback, it was decided that a quasi-experimental, between-groups design would be used. Data was collected from a control group in the first semester of 2019 and from a quasi-experimental group participating in the ISI program in the second semester of the 2019/20 academic year. Both groups took the same 15-week course, *College English Speaking*, taught by the two researchers, consisting of 15 lessons each. The main activities in lessons for classes taught by both teachers were similar: vocabulary building, grammar, communication skills and speaking strategies. The two non-standardized language tests and pre- and posttest AMTB measures were collected at both Time 1 (the start) and Time 2 (the end) of the 15-week course for all participants. For the quasi-experimental group, feedback from domestic student participants was collected at the end of the course in the second semester. Feedback from the international students and teacher observations were also collected throughout the ISI program in the second semester.

Results

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS build 1.0.0.1508. Power calculations made with G*Power software showed that a sample size of about 98 participants

was required to detect medium effect sizes with an alpha level of .05 and power set to 0.80.

English Test Results

Domestic students' performance in their *College English Speaking* class was assessed through their scores on two equivalent, non-standardized language tests created from the textbook. The format and number of items was consistent between the pre and posttest and the total possible score was 99 points. Students' scores improved overall after taking the class. Figure A is a box plot of the score distribution for both groups between Time 1 and 2. Minimum, maximum, and median scores improved between Time 1 and 2. The interquartile range did not vary greatly for the control group between Time 1 and 2, and the data were normally distributed. For the quasi-experimental group the interquartile range was much larger and more negatively skewed at Time 1. However, at Time 2 the interquartile range was smaller and normally distributed. This suggested that students in the quasi-experimental group who performed worse at Time 1 performed better at Time 2, and may have benefited from the program.

Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for both control and quasi-experimental groups at Time 1 and 2. Mean scores also improved for both groups between Time 1 and 2. However, plots of the estimated marginal means of the data revealed that it was unlikely that there would be a statistically significant interaction between the ISI program and time on English test scores. As such no further analyses were conducted. These findings suggested that the ISI program was not responsible for any statistically significant changes in mean test scores.

AMTB Results

As seen in Appendix 1, for most question items participants indicated the extent of their agreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale (*1 Strongly Disagree - 7 Strongly Agree*). Each response was scored between one and seven points accordingly per item. In addition, for the Motivation subscale eight out of twelve question items required participants to select an appropriate statement from three options. Each response was scored between one and three points accordingly per item. Next, the scores from all the question items belonging to each subscale (Integrative Orientation, Motivation, Attitudes towards the Learning Situation, Language Anxiety, and Instrumental Orientation) were used to calculate a single mean value for each subscale per participant. Lastly, these mean values were added together to derive one overall motivation score for each participant for Time 1 and 2. Table 4 shows these mean overall motivation scores and standard deviations for both control and quasi-experimental groups at Time 1 and 2. Mean motivation

decreased slightly in both control and quasi-experimental groups between Time 1 and 2, which could have been due to the challenges of the course for low-proficiency domestic participants.

Plots of estimated marginal means of motivation indicated that there could be a statistically significant trend for motivation to decrease less in the quasi-experimental group, as seen in Figure B. A two-way mixed ANOVA was conducted to compare the result of the control and quasi-experimental groups (between subjects). Measures were repeated at Time 1 and 2 (within subjects). Box plots did not identify any outliers, and a Shapiro-Wilk test showed that motivation scores were normally distributed ($p > 0.5$). A Levene test demonstrated homogeneity of variances ($p > 0.5$), and a Box's M test showed homogeneity of covariances ($p = .251$). However, no strong effect sizes or statistically significant interaction effects between the ISI program and time on motivation were detected: $F(1, 84) = 3.76$, $p = .056$, partial $\eta^2 = .043$. The main within-subjects effect of time did not show a statistically significant difference in mean motivation at Time 1 and Time 2: $F(1,84) = 6.490$, $p = .013$, partial $\eta^2 = .072$. The main effect of group also did not show any statistically significant difference between groups: $F(1,84) = .351$, $p = .555$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$. These findings suggested that the ISI program did not produce any statistically significant changes in student motivation.

Student and Instructor Feedback

Reflections on the program from both domestic and international students, as well as from instructors, were broadly positive. There were no negative comments about the program. In the short survey, domestic students described the experience as “good”, “enjoyable”, “rare”, “refreshing”, and “valuable”. Responses were analyzed and coded with reference to the AMTB subscales. For some participants, it was the first time they had ever interacted with an international student in such proximity. Many participants mentioned various motivational or attitudinal changes after the program. Some were of an integrative nature. For example, participant E 66 said, “This experience made me want to learn more about new cultures and speak English more. I think it’s good because it made me more motivated. I wish there were more opportunities for this kind of experience.” The increased familiarity with international students of similar ages had made them want to study English more, or had opened the door to new friendships. Other participants felt that there were material or practical benefits of the program. They had been able to engage in “real” English communication or improve specific aspects of their language skill. For example, participant E 62 said, “It was great because I was able to focus on the international students’ pronunciation.” In addition, participant E 70 stated that, “think some of the main benefits were that the conversation really kept moving, and

that the international students would point out grammar mistakes we made.” Language anxiety also characterized some of the participants’ experiences, with some reporting nervousness associated with the program. Participant E 60 said, “Although I got a little nervous every time, it was a great opportunity to improve my English skill,” and participant E 63 stated, “I’m really not good at speaking to people even in Japanese, so while I was even more nervous when speaking to the international students, I tried my best.” The respondents who mentioned anxiety all framed the experience in a positive way; they were able to recognize the value of the opportunity in spite of their nervousness. Lastly, some participants mentioned changes in their attitude towards their language course or language learning as a result of the program. For instance, participant E 50 said, “I think there should be more opportunities like this to speak English at school.” The program had offered enjoyable opportunities for interaction with native speakers, and these participants experiences of the program had made them view their language education in a more positive light.

Similar positive reflections, which mirrored those of the domestic students, came up during the informal debriefing sessions held immediately following class with the international students, as well as in email correspondence. The international students enjoyed interacting and bonding with the domestic students, seeing them practicing English, and the chance to compare the program to their own language learning experiences. International student M said, “I think it is a great idea. Thinking about my own Japanese classes in my university, I would be really excited to have a native Japanese speaker sit in my class. It’s the real thing!” Others recognized the potential value of the program as a first step in breaking the ice and allowing students to feel comfortable enough to take advantage of the SALC. International student J said, “In the SALC, it can be intimidating even for students with high abilities in English to approach us. If we could come to their classes, maybe it is easier for them to say, “Hello!” to us in the future.” The program was popular with the international students, some of whom even volunteered to continue participating in classes beyond the end of the ISI program, and who expressed regret at not having been able to participate in more classes.

Lastly, as the instructors of the classes, the researchers also made personal observations of the classroom environment. These observations broadly matched the reflections of the domestic participants and international students. The in-class behavior of the domestic participants seemed to be positively impacted by the opportunity for small group collaboration with the international students. First, the domestic participants were noticeably less distracted, more responsive, and willing to work independently during speaking activities in these sessions. The opportunity for authentic or ‘real’ interaction seemed to sharpen their focus. They needed much

less prompting from the instructor to complete classroom tasks, or to give longer and more detailed oral responses, than when the international students were not present. The international students often adopted leadership roles inside their groups. Even in the absence of specific instruction to do so, the researchers observed them facilitating the flow of task performance and engaging in error-correction during formal interactions. Similarly, the researchers often observed the international students instigating instances of informal interaction. This seemed to produce changes in the domestic participants' classroom behavior. Even domestic participants who were otherwise quite withdrawn engaged with the speaking tasks more enthusiastically. For example, there was noticeably more smiling and alert body language. In general, the in-class atmosphere and student interactions seemed more positive, energetic and encouraging of participation.

These findings suggested that the ISI program was popular, and was viewed as having provided beneficial opportunities for enjoyable language practice and intercultural interaction, which would otherwise have been unavailable.

Discussion

In this study, the impact of an International Student Interaction (ISI) program on speaking classes for university-aged domestic students of English as a Foreign Language at a Japanese university was explored. The study sought to look at three elements: the impact on learning outcomes, motivation, and attitudes. Data collected on the first two elements did not support the impact of the ISI program. Quantitative data about the first element was assessed by language tests, which showed that both groups performed better after the *College English Speaking* course. Additionally, some lower achieving students in the quasi-experimental group performed better on language tests after the ISI sessions. Results about the second element were assessed by the motivation survey, which showed that motivation scores did decrease less in the quasi-experimental group than the control group. However, further analysis showed that in both cases these were not statistically significant or particularly large interaction effects. Conversely, the qualitative data about the third element, attitudes, which were assessed by the domestic student survey and debriefing sessions with international students, apparently supported the impact of the ISI program. The program was viewed as popular, and both domestic and international students and instructors reported it had been helpful for language learning, improving motivation, and increasing authentic opportunities for intercultural interaction. The possibility that the qualitative data are unreliable due to response bias inherent in self-report measures like questionnaires cannot be eliminated. However, the results of the study were in line with those of other research into IaH style initiatives in Japan. Aubrey

and Philpott (2021) found that intercultural task-based interactions positively impacted integrative attitudes and feelings towards the learning context among Japanese EFL learners without significantly impacting motivation or learning behaviors. Hofmeyr (2021) reported similar limited impacts of an intercultural intervention. Noncompulsory participation remained low, and skills were not enhanced. These findings highlight the difficulty of impacting EFL learner motivation and outcomes through intercultural interaction. There are a range of implications for the way future IaH style ISI programs integrate classroom-based intercultural interaction tasks, which will now be discussed.

Interaction

The format of the classroom interactions between the domestic and international students may have impacted the results in the current study in several different ways. One factor could have been the lack of international student training. Minimal instruction was given to the international students on how to manage their interactions with the domestic students, including error correction and other forms of feedback. It was supposed by the researchers that this would reduce performance anxiety for the international students, thus facilitating task accomplishment and enhancing the potential for replicability in other contexts. Other than modelling the task, the international students attended and participated as though they were domestic students taking the class themselves. However, other studies in a Japanese context have shown the benefits of training in giving corrective feedback during peer-interaction (Sato & Lyster, 2012). Even though the international students were themselves language learners and had ideas about what a language class should be like, they were not experienced instructors themselves. Therefore, it is possible that if the international students had been given more detailed instruction in how to interact, objectives, and how to give corrective feedback to the domestic students, the results would have been positively impacted. Conversely, preparing domestic students for interactions with international students, for example, giving domestic students profiles of the international students, could have lowered anxiety levels for domestic students. Furthermore, task characteristics may have affected the results. Although attempts were made to keep progression through units in the shared EFL speaking textbook consistent across instructors and classes, scheduling difficulties meant that this was not always possible. The precise lesson tasks undertaken may have differed. In addition, while the textbook tasks were designed to promote spoken communication, they were not specifically designed for use in the context of intercultural interactions. Alongside careful instruction, tasks themselves need to be carefully prepared to promote enjoyment and willingness to communicate (Van Batenburg et al., 2019). Anxiety surrounding the ISI interactions was reported by

the participants in the current study. As such, it is possible that the task type negatively influenced the results. Additional care needs to be taken when choosing tasks for intercultural interaction. In addition to these concerns about the precise manner of the intercultural interaction, there were several methodological issues with the current study that limited it and may partially explain the disparities between the quantitative and qualitative data.

Limitations: Interactional Frequency

One issue which likely affected the results was frequency. During the 15-week study period the international students only made two visits for each of the three courses, for a total of six interaction sessions. The sessions may have occurred at too low a frequency to produce statistically effects on motivation and outcomes. One reason for this were unavoidable constraints on recruitment and scheduling. First, the international students only attended campus in the second semester and returned home after the end of the semester in the spring. This provided a natural restriction on the study period. Furthermore, even during this time the international students were often unavailable, limiting the frequency of interactions. Their weekly schedule was occupied with compulsory Japanese language classes in the mornings and elective classes in the afternoons. In some cases, speaking classes already needed to be rescheduled to allow more international students to join. Further increasing the frequency of interactions would have been problematic for the domestic students in terms of ensuring consistent attendance. Additionally, these constraints impacted decisions about which classes of domestic students could participate in the study. It was not possible to sample only students from a single faculty or language proficiency group. This combination of factors may partially explain the lack of a significant increase in motivation and language test scores. In other intercultural studies, a higher frequency of interactional episodes produced positive results: five times over five weeks (Aubrey, 2016), 10 hours over 10 weeks (Sato & Lyster (2012) and 12 hours over three weeks (Philip et al, 2010). Greater levels of institutional and administrative support would likely have helped overcome some of these availability and recruitment issues, permitting more international student interactions, which in turn may have led to more concrete gains in motivation and language learning that matched the positive feedback of students and teachers. It is the recommendation of the researchers that future iterations of IaH style international student interaction programs should proceed with due attention to the aforementioned factors.

Limitations: Study Attrition

A second set of issues were related to data collection. Of 112 domestic students

who signed consent forms indicating that they would participate in the study only 86 completed the measures correctly. Their incomplete results were removed from the study. Although it cannot be determined, it is possible that if those participants had completed all measures as expected that the quantitative results would have matched the qualitative results more closely. However, because of this attrition the current study was underpowered. Future iterations of ISI programs should aim for higher initial recruitment targets to offset the impact of inevitable attrition through incomplete study participation.

Conclusion

The current study identified commonalities with other recent research on intercultural interaction in EFL contexts. The desired measurable increases in motivation and language scores are challenging to produce. However, the study has highlighted avenues for further exploration of the impact of international student interactions on EFL speaking classrooms. Both domestic and international students enjoyed the opportunity for intercultural interaction and the ISI program was well received. For the instructors it was not difficult to plan lesson activities which integrated the international students.

Considering the issues faced by the current study it is likely that IaH style, classroom interaction-based intercultural initiatives like the ISI program require both a significantly deeper level of integration into the curriculum and a greater degree of attention paid to the specific way the intercultural interaction is targeted. Where possible, future studies of programs like the ISI should aim to use larger samples, employ a higher frequency of sessions, and perhaps explore impacts on language skills other than speaking. More research is needed on the impact of different intervention aims, classroom materials, or programmatic designs on EFL learners' language skills, motivation, and attitudes. For the SALC and English program in the current study, such adjustments may prove useful in enhancing efforts to help future EFL learners overcome intercultural barriers, and improve outcomes, motivation, and attitudes.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1 *AMTB Subscales, Meanings, and Examples*

Subscale	Meaning	Example Item
Integrative Orientation	Interest in communicating with and attitudes towards English speakers, interest in foreign languages	"The more I get to know English speakers, the more I want to be fluent in their language."
Attitudes towards the Learning Context	Feelings and opinions on the teacher and the course	"The teacher for this class has a dynamic and interesting teaching style."
Motivation	Motivational intensity, desire to learn English, attitudes towards learning English	"I would rather spend my time on subjects other than College English Speaking."
Language Anxiety	Anxiety experience when using English inside/outside the class	"I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in our English class."
Instrumentality	Practical gains that motivate English learning	"Studying English can be important for me only because I'll need it for my future career."

Table 2 *Subscales and Cronbach's Alpha*

Subscale (<i>n</i> = 39)	Cronbach's Alpha
Integrativeness (<i>n</i> = 12)	.92
Motivation (<i>n</i> = 11)	.73
Attitudes Towards the Learning Situation (<i>n</i> = 8)	.87
Language Anxiety (<i>n</i> = 4)	.81
Instrumentality (<i>n</i> = 4)	.88

Table 3 *Mean, standard deviation, and number of participants for English test scores at Time 1 and Time 2*

	Group (<i>n</i>)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time 1	control (39)	65.41	10.68
English Score	quasi-experimental (47)	65.66	12.50
Time 2	control (39)	75.77	10.37
English Score	quasi-experimental (47)	74.49	10.72

Table 4 *Mean, standard deviation, and number of participants for AMBT scores at Time 1 and 2*

	Group (<i>n</i>)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Time 1	control (39)	23.87	2.90
Motivation	quasi-experimental (47)	23.75	2.45
Time 2	control (39)	22.88	2.56
Motivation	quasi-experimental (47)	23.61	2.47

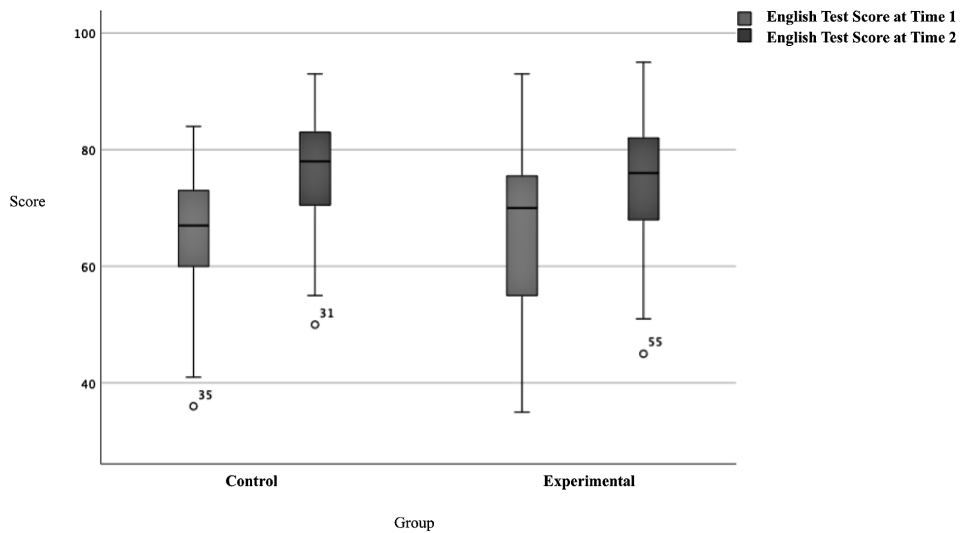


Figure A *A box plot of English test scores at Time 1 and 2 for the control and quasi-experimental group*

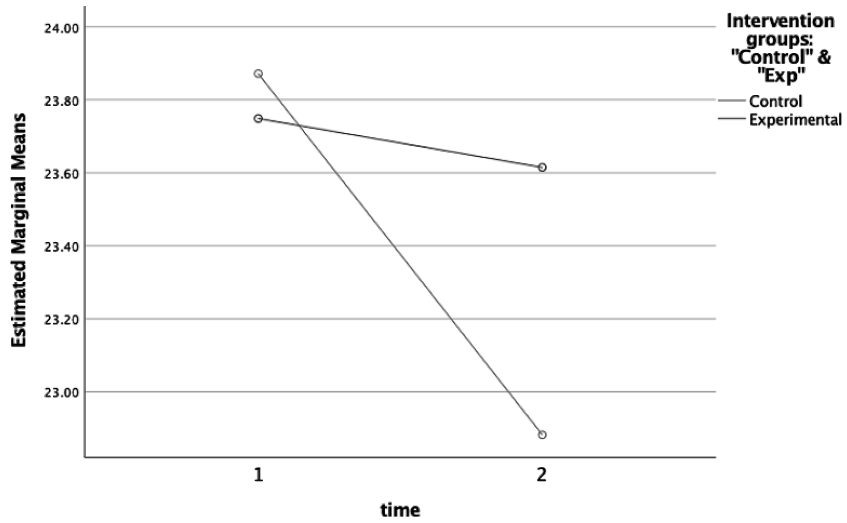


Figure B *Estimated marginal means of motivation for AMBT scores at Time 1 and Time 2*

Appendices

Appendix 1 Link to Modified AMTB Questionnaire

<https://bit.ly/3I2JHwV>