

Exploring *Juku* in a Foreign Country: The UPLB LITE Program Experience

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Abstract: *The University of the Philippines Los Baños, through its Language Instruction Towards Excellence (LITE) Program, offers juku-like English classes through its English Plus Course. Using descriptive statistics, this paper described the English learning experience of 19 Japanese students who took the course for three weeks. Based on the results, LITE's English Plus Course, despite being a juku, had facilitated improvement in the Japanese students' pronunciation and oral presentation skills based on their pre- and post-English Proficiency Examination (EPE) scores. Friendly, cheerful, but professional tutors, active classroom management, modules with interactive and task-based activities, and guided interaction with student facilitators were revealed to be the components of the course that substantiated their learning the most, which are noted to be very different to the typical juku. The Japanese students' English learning experience in a juku-like class in a foreign country such as the Philippines therefore made them confident speakers of English, motivated learners to pursue English language learning further, and receptive learners towards change.*

Keywords: *Juku; cram school; task-based learning; pronunciation; oral presentation Skills*

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1. Introduction

The role of English language in Asia has rapidly increased as our world takes on globalization. Even English as a language is now facing internationalization, blurring the lines between looking at it as merely a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL) and now viewing it as more of an international language (EIL) (Kang, 2010). With the growing importance of Asia in international affairs and with English being increasingly used to facilitate communication between non-native speakers in major domains (i.e., government, education, and business) (Wang & Hill, 2011), it is now considered as the world's lingua franca, one that Asians share with one another and the rest of the world (McArthur, 2002). It is an international language that speeds up national development, a way of understanding other cultures, and a tool for international communication (Chang, 2011).

Because of this emerging importance of English in the globalized world, many Japanese university students feel strongly about the importance of learning English (skills in speaking and listening, in particular) (Takanashi, 2004). This was supported by the nationwide survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (Monbusho) in which 42.5% randomly selected students took positive interest in English classes since 1991 (Monbusho, 1993 in Takanashi, 2004). English language proficiency therefore is seen to be functioning as gatekeepers to individual career or welfare as well as national development (Choi & Lee, 2008). However, Japanese English abilities have remained consistently low despite their interest in learning English (Takanashi, 2004). Norris-Holt (2001) reasoned that Japan's predominantly monocultural society restricted opportunities to use English in daily verbal exchanges. Takanashi (2004), on the other hand, saw this in a different context. Because Japan consists of isolated island, people have fewer opportunities to use English in natural contexts, which, in a way, weakened students' motivation in acquiring oral skills in English (Takanashi, 2004). Takanashi also claims that the obvious linguistic distance between English and Japanese, as compared with other languages such as Norwegian, Italian, Spanish, French, and Russian, affected Japanese's English language acquisition.

For East Asian countries such as Japan, China, Taiwan, and Korea that are influenced by Confucian tradition, educational background and status are important standards in evaluating a person's social level (Liu, 2011). In these countries, families value education highly and is given the highest priority in the family budget (New World Encyclopedia). In Japan, education is a key to future success in life (Takanashi, 2004). The equation for Japanese parents is simple: pass entrance examinations of famous universities = prominent, high-salaried jobs = happy future. This denotes that admission to a prestigious university is eminent to many Japanese, and English testing is an important component of the admission process (Blair, 1997). Studying English peaks in the final year of high school when students exert all effort into studying for university entrance (Norris-Holt, 2001). Thus, Japanese parents and learners who value disciplined study and are competitive when it comes to education opt to enroll in cram schools, or *Gakushu juku*

(*juku* in short).

“Cram schools consist of the use of outside-school instruction, provided by profit-oriented individuals or school-like organizations, to raise student performance in academic subjects” (Liu, 2011, p. 2). It generally focuses on two areas: supplementary education (i.e., remedial courses, refresher courses, and advance courses) and preparation for competitive examinations (i.e., upper-secondary school and university entranced examinations). In Japan, *juku* is divided into two types: 1) academic, which offers advanced and remedial education in mathematics, Japanese language, science, English, and social studies, and 2) non academic, which offers special education such as music, arts, and sports (New World Encyclopedia; Japan Times). *Juku* classes can last up to four or five hours after regular school hours and vary in size and quality. They may also be taken during weekends and vacations.

In general, English language teaching in Asia is focused on grammar and accuracy (Wang & Hill, 2011). Text memorization, exacting repetition, imitation, repeated reading, and reading aloud are deeply embedded in its language learning (Wang & Hill, 2011). In Japan, because of the emphasis on university admission, English education in secondary school is geared toward sitting—exams are focused vocabulary, grammatical structures, and translation of complex passages from Japanese to English (Norris-Holt-2001). Because the focus of exams is not directed toward speaking and listening skills, schools do not see the need to prepare students for something which will not be examined (Norris-Holt-2001). Similarly, this nature of English education in secondary schools had been the practice in cram schools and is perhaps the root cause of debates over the effects of cram schools especially in language education.

Hsieh (2001) provided evidences of the positive effects of cram schools in Taipei—cram schools provide more opportunity for learning and good learning environment for students, while providing extra income for teachers. However, language learning in a *juku* class neglects the development of critical and creative abilities because it is concentrated on testing factual knowledge rather than analytic abilities, looking at language learning as a kind of knowledge formation (Japan Times; Roesgaard, 2006; Takanashi, 2004; Hsieh, 2001). Language education in *juku* has been attacked for being too focused on grammar and reading to the extent that communicative abilities do not exist (Roesgaard, 2006). Benson (1991 in Norris-Holt, 2001) noted that educators in Japan are often surprised by university student’s lack of ability using spoken English, compared with that of their grammatical understanding. This is the case even if students have started to officially learn English in junior high school (Takanashi, 2004), while 30% of the surveyed 10,381 university students have begun studying English in elementary school (Koike et al., 1985 in Blair, 1997). This focus on English language education has created a great amount of stress to Japanese learners that Koichi (2014) compared Japanese’s preparation for tests as “Japan’s love affair with stress”. More than that, the number of children committing suicide is increasing in Japan because of “anxiety for the future” (Suzuki, 2013). Japan Times even highlighted that students learned to compete with people rather than cooperate,

while Zeng & LeTendre (1998 in Roesgaard, 2006) argued that few students actually study in *juku*; some of them regard them as a place to socialize. Nonetheless, Suzuki (2013) emphasized that *juku* may not provide an efficient way to study but it is all about discipline—a trait innate to Japanese.

The Philippines' education system does not initially involve *juku* classes. However, just like our East Asian counterparts, Filipinos, upon our independence from colonizers, have since highly value education and grabbed all opportunities to pursue learning. Thus the emergence of tutorial services and centers, and review centers for high school, college and university admissions, and licensure examinations have proliferated in the country. These institutions, in a way, can be considered *juku* classes because they provide the similar fast-paced instruction, grammar/vocabulary drills, problem sets, practice essay, practice exam questions, and/or effective test-taking strategies of *juku*. In Los Baños, some of the most famous *juku* are KUMON, which originated in Japan, Brain Train, and Instant Reader.

Considering the characteristics and nature of *juku*, it can be deduced that the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) has been providing *juku*-like English classes through the Language Instruction Towards Excellence (LITE) Program (LITE from here on). LITE, a non-profit program of the College of Arts and Sciences, provides a 150-hour course for international graduate students of UPLB (known as the Intensive English for International Graduate Students [IEIGS]), and a two- to four-week intensive English course for international students (known as English Plus Course) (Language Instruction Towards Excellence Program, n.d.), which are considered supplementary education. It also provides one-on-one or small group tutorials on a number of languages and short-term courses on business English and occupational English (Language Instruction Towards Excellence Program, n.d.). In a training, LITE prepared teachers from Thailand in taking and teaching the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). It should again be noted that LITE is an extension program of UPLB and is therefore not profit-oriented.

In its more than two decades of training learners of English as an international language, no study has been conducted about LITE, its learners, its curriculum, and its milestones. In a broader view, no study has been made to look into cram schools or even *juku*-like programs in a foreign country such as the Philippines. It is therefore high time that a research on this emerging field in the country be commenced to address the issues and challenges faced by a *juku*-like program such as LITE, which in turn can provide recommendations for policy implication to the program itself and to higher education.

On September 2016, Kobe University in Hyōgo, Japan sent its fifth batch of delegates to enroll in LITE's three-week English Plus Course to improve their English proficiency. With this opportunity, we, the tutors and researchers, wanted to describe Japanese students' English language learning experience, particularly in pronunciation and oral presentation skills, in a *juku*-like program in UPLB such as LITE by looking into their pre- and post-English Proficiency Examination (EPE) scores in the said components. We would like to

know if there is any difference in the pronunciation and oral presentation skills among Japanese students after taking LITE classes. Moreover, we wanted to determine which component of the course supplemented their learning the most.

2.Data and Methods

Nineteen university students from Kobe University attended LITE's 3-week English Plus Course (September 5 to 23, 2016). Thirteen females and six males comprised the fifth batch of Kobe delegates; eleven of them were sophomores while seven were freshmen. Majority of them have travelled outside Japan (e.g., Thailand, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, United Kingdom), with Australia, America, and Korea being the top three most visited places; only four were first time travelers. All students were first-time visitors to the Philippines. In terms of English training, all of them started studying English formally since their junior high school and had no other training aside from school. Among the expectations from the course they provided in the profile sheets, four emerged to be topmost—to improve their English skills (particularly speaking and listening), to speak English fluently using conversational English, to meet new friends to practice speaking English with, and to learn about Philippine agriculture.

The English Plus Course has three components: Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills, Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment, and Guided Interaction. Only the test scores in Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills were used in this study. The test scores measured the improvement in scores based on the pre- and post-EPE, taken before the students had undergone classes in the course and during the last session of the course, respectively. Descriptive statistics was employed in analyzing the data to describe the learning experience of all 19 students. Students' profile sheets, English Plus Course's terminal report (containing the numerical grade and qualitative remarks on the comparative analysis of pre- and post EPE and students' classroom academic performance), evaluation of the English Plus Course, e-mailed feedback from students, and post-course letters in the form of a scrapbook given by the students to their tutors as a gift, were also reviewed to provide qualitative data that may enrich our data analysis. All these sources of data were provided by LITE.

3.Results and Discussion

3.1Analysis of the Pre- and Post-EPE Results of the Japanese Students

For 11 days, the fifth batch of Kobe Japanese students underwent trainings on Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills, and Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment from 0830 to 1130 and 1230 to 1530 everyday. Workshop on Anime and Educational Singing Activity were also given outside the modules. Guided interactions with student facilitators from 1600 to 1800 supplemented their classroom lessons by learning and applying basic conversational English while visiting shops, food stores, and other places within and near the campus. The remaining days of the three-week course were spent in cultural exposure trips within UPLB, International Rice Research

Institute (IRRI), and around Laguna province. Only Sundays were allotted as free days. It can therefore be said that the students had a hectic and learning-filled stay in LITE.

The students took the pre- and post-EPE to determine their individual proficiency in the module they would be taking. The EPE for Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills aimed to gauge the students' proficiency in speaking and evaluate the clarity of their pronunciation. It was composed of two parts: pronunciation drill and picture drill. Both pre- and post-course EPE were completed for 10 minutes per student and were recorded to allow the tutor to thoroughly review the exchange and responses of the students. During the pronunciation drill, each student was asked to read words that represent the sounds of the English language. A total of 129 words were read to check the capacity of the student to produce front, middle, and final vowel and consonant sounds. Each word read correctly was given a point. During the picture drill, each student was asked to tell a story about a picture shown by the tutor. S/He must tell what happened before and after the picture was taken. Accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension were evaluated in this part. The highest score one can obtain is 5, while the lowest score is 0.

Table1. Descriptive statistics of the pre- and post-EPE of the Japanese students.

Category	Mean	Standard deviation
Pronunciation Drill pre-EPE score	109.63	8.48
Pronunciation Drill post-EPE score	117.16	5.50
Vowels (pre-EPE)	64.16	6.40
Vowels (post-EPE)	69.05	3.50
Consonants (pre-EPE)	47.53	12.01
Consonants (post-EPE)	47.11	3.00
Picture Drill pre-EPE score	13.37	3.52
Picture Drill post-EPE score	15.89	3.90
Accent (pre-EPE)	2.42	0.61
Accent (post-EPE)	2.95	0.85
Grammar (pre-EPE)	2.79	0.85
Grammar (post-EPE)	3.26	0.87
Vocabulary (pre-EPE)	2.58	0.77
Vocabulary (post-EPE)	3.11	0.81
Fluency (pre-EPE)	2.79	0.92
Fluency (post-EPE)	3.32	0.82
Comprehension (pre-EPE)	2.79	0.85
Comprehension (post-EPE)	3.26	1.05

Based on the mean scores of the students (Table 1), both pronunciation drill and picture drill scores had significant difference. Before the course, the students' mean scores are 109.63 and 13.37 in the pre-EPE for pronunciation and picture drills, respectively. After taking the English Plus course, their mean scores improved—117.16 for the pronunciation drill and 15.89 for the picture drill. All sub-categories of each drill have likewise improved, except for the pre- and post-EPE scores for consonant sounds. Its pre- EPE mean score

was 47.53, but became slightly lower by 0.42 with a post-EPE score of 47.11. This result may be associated to the Japanese's difficulty in producing certain consonant sounds. In the qualitative remarks of the comparative analysis of pre- and post-assessment for the Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills, a number of consonant sounds were singled out for constant practice by the students. These are [r], [l], initial [w], [hw], [z], [zh], and hard and soft [th]. This may have made them more conscious of producing the sounds correctly, which in turn may have also limited them from pronouncing the sounds correctly during the post-EPE. Because both EPE were given limited time, the students could not correct themselves repeatedly, which ideally should be a part of pronunciation correction. As stressed by Chuo and Yen (n.d.), despite being marginalized by communicative learning approach, repeating and imitating should be reemphasized in a foreign language classroom as these ensured learning of pronunciation of their Taiwanese participants in their study. Nonetheless, the difference in the mean scores in the pre- and post-EPE scores for consonant sounds had no effect on the overall mean score of pronunciation drill. It can still be deduced that the students have, in general, improved their pronunciation.

For the picture drill, qualitative remarks revealed that the students' remarkable progress was in the area of confidence building. All students have become more in command of themselves as characterized by each student's easy cadence, and appropriate intonation and vocal inflections during the post-EPE. Their eye contact and bodily actions also improved. Students who, at first, had been shy in speaking up need not be coaxed into speaking anymore. Accurate words and coherent, well-constructed, and longer sentences were provided by all students during the post-EPE. Students who have been listening to key words and repeating them for comprehension have displayed more competent comprehension and listening skills. These remarks were supported by the students' letters in the scrapbook and e-mailed feedback. Some students (i.e., Student A, F, M, and R) may have been worried at first about their English and their ability to cope with classes, but all of them believe that their English had greatly improved after the course. Student M "felt" that she was able to "answer the questions more quickly and use longer sentences" in the post-EPE as compared with the pre-EPE. Student D even wrote, "This program has a large impact on my English skill", while Student C said, "I speak English more fluently after taking lessons". Student E realized that she could make someone understand despite her difficulty in finding the right words: "When I didn't know how to say, I could say with other words, sometimes with gestures." Student I agrees, "I felt the importance of [facial] expression and gesture". These insights may imply that the learners' perspective of English as a language has changed. They no longer see English as just a language but a tool for them to communicate, and communicating one's thoughts is of more importance. As Student N wrote, "I realized how important was the feeling, 'I want to communicate'".

Learners of English in Asia are used to memorizing formulaic expressions (dual-mode system) that are supposed to ease the burden of cognitive processing during actual communication (Wang & Hill, 2011). This is also the experience of Japanese learners of

English. Nine out of the 19 students have written in their e-mail that the method of teaching and the topics provided in LITE are different compared to Japan. Thus, daily exposure to “natural” and conversational everyday English facilitated their English language learning, particularly vocabulary improvement and listening, as they were experiencing English real-time. According to Student S, “In daily life in Japan, I sometimes studied English. But I seldom talked with someone in English.” Student F commented, “...everyday was full of English, so I was tired more than I had expected. However, I was glad to experience natural English.” Meanwhile, Student H wrote, “In the Philippines, I could get chances to talk in English, so I thought in English naturally (sic)”. Student E shared that it was her first time to speak English every day and emphasized on the importance of listening to “different English”. She stated in her e-mail, “At first, I couldn’t understand what teachers said to us in UP. Therefore, I listened carefully at least key words. Of cause (sic), I couldn’t understand the meaning. On the fifth day, I could imagine what they wanted to say.... At the final test, I could hear clearer what teachers said than the first test.... I enjoyed the test.”

The idea of hearing “different English” is no longer new. As Wang and Hill (2011) pointed out, the rapid development of international communication has resulted to the phenomenal globalization of English that lead to the development of more varieties of English in the world, thus coining the term “World English”. In fact, they emphasized that international communication is no longer about native speakers talking to native speakers; with the emergence of “World English” and dialects in English, native speakers can be needing to receive special training for them to communicate effectively with second language learners. A number of authors support this idea. According to Kang (2010), global intelligibility has been emphasized over mastery of a particular native accent since the internationalization of English; mutual intelligibility therefore is a key issue for both listeners and speakers. Similarly, Derwing (2010) highlighted that the focus of pronunciation teaching should be on intelligibility and comprehensibility rather than accentedness. As Ayan (2008) indicated, “Intelligibility is regarded as the exact mission to carry out for language instructors today” (p.27).

This is why accent was not thoroughly examined during the pre- and post-EPE. It may be one of the sub-categories of the picture drill, but it was only used to gauge the students’ proficiency level in that area. In the comparative analysis of pre- and post-assessment for the Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills, the qualitative remarks were focused on describing how confident the learners have become and how they have improved in their vocabulary and sentence construction after the course. These observations were likewise noted in the qualitative remarks under the students’ classroom academic performance. Remarks pertaining to final oral presentation that is “well-crafted”, “well-organized”, “presented clearly and understandably”, “carried out in a spontaneous, conversational, and natural manner”, “was able to explain clearly”, and “energetically explained” were constantly cited. This may imply a healthy mix of lessons and techniques provided by the course in teaching pronunciation. It does not only train learners with the segmental

features of pronunciation but with suprasegmentals as well. Modules on vowel and consonant sounds, critical sounds of English, intonation pattern, and voice and intonation were provided. Activities such as group discussion, demonstrative speech delivery, and impromptu speech delivery could have facilitated practice of intelligibility and comprehensibility.

This healthy mix is in fact in accordance to the strategies and techniques used by good language learners (GLLs) in the Taiwanese EFL context. In two separate studies, Chuo and Yen (n.d.) and Tseng (n.d.) found that GLLs utilized different combination of specific strategies and techniques involving memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies while tackling various language skills and tasks. Advanced English for foreign language (EFL) learners highly used metacognitive strategies that made them efficiently plan, monitor, and organize different strategies for different language tasks (Tseng, n.d.). Teachers and researchers even concluded that no single method of language teaching and research findings can provide universal success in teaching a second language (Brown, 2007 in Zare, 2012). Hence, teachers should experiment with the techniques in teaching pronunciation because there is no consensus in the literature about which of these is most effective (Celce-Murcia, Dewing, & Goodwin, 1996 in Tanner & Landon, 2009). Language instructors therefore should take their students learning strategies in considerations (Zare, 2012). More importantly, teachers should get feedback from their students because they themselves know which technique is most useful for them (Celce-Murcia, Dewing, & Goodwin, 1996 in Tanner & Landon, 2009).

From this, it can therefore be said that the English Plus Course has a positive significant effect on the Japanese students' post-EPE scores in Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills. Moreover, it can also be inferred that the interventions provided for by LITE had a positive impact on the post-EPE performance of the students. The question now is, which part of the course supplemented the improvement of the students? By reading and analyzing the e-mailed feedback from the students (sent a week after the course) and their scrapbook (a collection of post-course thoughts of students given on the day of the closing program as a gift to their tutors), two major factors may have contributed to their English language learning experience—the tutors and their classroom management, and the modules and guided interaction.

3.2 Contributing Factors to the English Language Learning Experience of the Japanese Students

3.3.1 The tutors and their classroom management

Despite the revolution and evolution of teaching approaches together with the advancement of technology, many East Asian countries are still following the shadows of teacher-centered learning. In Japan, for instance, high school and university entrance examinations focus mainly on grammar translation skills, thus high schools, universities, and *juku* classes provide drills on grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills measured by translating from Japanese to English (Takanashi, 2004). When

it comes to language learning, Japanese teachers and students still tend to think of foreign language learning as a kind of knowledge formation, putting more importance on formality than creativity (Takanashi, 2004). As Ji (1988 in Wang & Hill, 2011) claims, it is the spirit of diligence and active use that set Asian learners apart from Western learners who emphasize on creative spirit in language learning.

LITE tutors acknowledge these distinct characteristics of Japanese learners, as well as the differences among teaching and learning strategies. They want to make their curriculum relevant for their learners. Thus, activities that offer short lecture-discussion, which Japanese learners are accustomed to, and that are task-based are provided in every LITE class. In a class, the tutor usually provides a 15- to 30-minute lecture-discussion to introduce basic concepts of the module. PowerPoint presentations are used to aid the students in listening and understanding the concepts. The next class hours are allotted for pair, group, and/or class activity and/or presentation. The last 15 to 30 minutes are allotted to synthesis of modules and activities. This “formula” devised by the tutors aim to maximize each learner’s potential (given the short period of training) by experiencing the communication context first-hand and allowing them opportunities to practice their presentation skills across all modules of the course. As written by Student F in her e-mail, “Although pair work, discussion, speech and presentation in English were a little difficult for me, I enjoyed every class because I didn’t want to regret these chances. I think that my imagination became rich through this program.” Student H agrees, “In the classes, we often did group or pair work. Even when we do something individually, we usually had to do presentation in front of everyone.... The class was experiencing rather than learning.”

The learners ultimately enjoyed the active nature of the classes. For Student J, classes are “interactive and interesting.” As Student H shared in her e-mail, “The class in the Philippines differ from in Japan. It was very active.” She also mentioned, “Your active teaching made the class enjoyable.” This is supported by Student P, “I was able to take an active and an enjoyable English class.” Student N exclaimed in her letter, “Your classes were so fun. I’ll never forget taking your classes!!!” Student O even shared, “Different from Japanese class, the class was so enjoyable in the Philippines that I was looking forward to go to schools every day.” Student R was likewise grateful, “Thank you for teaching us English in various ways. I enjoyed learning English in the Philippines much more in Japan, thanks to you.” Because Japanese classes are highly formal, it is very rare for students to move around the class and work with others. Student F was grateful about this: “You taught me the fun of English.” Student L agrees with this, “Your class was much more enjoyable than in Japan. You always take care of us.... I hope Japanese teacher should take care of us like you.” Student S even remarked, “Through this stay, however, I became to think Japanese people are too serious and should let the tension out of the body.”

The learners also highly appreciated the songs, games, dances, and other activities before the start of each class. Some classes even have ice breakers between lessons. Students B and R regarded these activities as “precious experiences for me” and “very interesting for me.” As Student L shared, “I like game or dance before lecture. This made

me awake and concentrate on the lectures.” He even commented in his e-mail, “I realized that exercise was very important.” Student R supports this: “In class, I didn’t feel sleepy like in Japan thanks to many games, many exercises and presentations. I enjoyed doing all of them.” On the part of Student A, “dance before class and many kinds of games were very fun and relaxed me.” For Student H, “...we enjoyed dancing, playing games, stretching and breathing rightly. These made the mood concentrating naturally.” Taking classes the whole day for three weeks is definitely demanding and exhausting, thus ice breakers such as games and activities that require learners to move is somewhat a breather for them. These games and activities, however, are still related to the lesson for the day. Student G noted this in his e-mail, “...we had a dance at the beginning of classes and we played games related to English. Thanks to them, I was able to enjoy studying English.” As Student J remarked, “I enjoyed learning English because you used a lot of communication, songs, dance and games in class! I wanted to take your class more! I wanted to learn English more in the Philippines!” As Student O put it, “I learned not only English but also the delights of studying English.” Student E even discovered a new talent while enrolled in the course. She wrote in her e-mail, “And I also find my ability, drawing a picture.” In this manner, they do not only provide relaxation, fun, or rest for the learners but also other avenues for learning. These may be counted as social strategies for language learning

According to Rubin (1987 in Zare, 2012), social strategies are activities that may provide learners opportunities that can be of great help to practice their knowledge. For LITE tutors, these activities are considered to be experiential or task-based learning and the Japanese students valued this strategy. As imparted by Student H, “...in the Philippine classes, we did not work silently myself until the close of classes. I thought this point is big difference between the Philippines and Japan.” What is most notable for Student L is interaction with others: “It was most impressive for me to interview people in the Philippines. Thanks to this, talking to foreigners became much easier and enjoyable.” This is supported by Student S, “The teachers asked us to make the dialogues in these situations and to act the roles with the classmates. By doing so, I could acquire them more efficiently.” Student C agrees on the helpfulness of pair work. According to her, “I think making dialogues was nice training for me. I became to compose English sentences smoothly.” Because of the interactive activities, Student P is determined to apply his learning the next time he will go abroad. According to him, “Before I had learned in the LITE, I had reserved hotel rooms and boarding tickets online. I will try the way I learned in LITE program next time.” Similarly, Student L realized the importance of applying what he learned: “During classes, I found that it was very effective to use the expression outside or in the class that I learned in the class.”

The light and supportive classroom atmosphere could have also inspired the learners to be enthusiastic in doing the tasks given to them and to be vocal with their thoughts. Because of the experiential or task-based activities, students feel that they can make a contribution in the learning process, thus motivating them to participate and learn, and

increasing their self-confidence. During oral presentations, on the other hand, students were given motivational feedback immediately about their performance by the tutors, focusing on the points for improvement but laced with words of encouragement. This is appreciated by Student O: “You praised me many times so I was able to have a little confidence.” Aside from tutor’s comments, a classmate is also asked to comment on a speaker’s performance to provide a constructive criticism aside from individual comments by everyone written on small sheets of paper that are handed to the speaker after the performance. Anxiety in committing mistakes and being ridiculed could have been reduced and replaced by trust and openness because of such strategy.

Tutors were likewise noted to have influenced their English language learning experience. Student P noted this to be another big difference: “I think class style of the Philippines is very different from that of Japan. In the Philippines, all teachers are more energetic and powerful than in Japan. I prefer the Filipino style because I can feel I join the class.” This “style” has, in a way, motivated the learners to listen and participate in all classroom activities, no matter how difficult they may seem for them. Student A wrote in her letter, “...every teachers were always kind and taught English to us with smile! So, I actively kept trying to tell my opinion in English.” Student I and N also noted this. According to them the “teacher’s smile and cheerfulness” removed worries about the class and teachers always “gave us bright smiles. Tutors being referred to as “kind” was consistently mentioned in the letters and e-mails, which may have aided the students to listen and participate actively in class. As stated by Dornyei (2001 in Thanasoulas, 2002), teacher behavior is a powerful “motivational tool”. In LITE’s case, the students appreciated the friendly and cheery attitude of the tutors. According to Student C, “In the lessons, you were so kind and it was easy for me to listen what you said. It was important to understand. I could understand instructions well and do activities pleasantly.” This is supplemented by Student K’s account in his e-mail: “Teachers in the UPLB usually had friendly atmosphere, and spoke English slowly and intelligibly for us.” Student M gratefully remarked, “Thanks to my teachers, I can improve my English skill with enjoying.”

LITE tutors were also observed to be persistent and determined. According to Student H, “I’m grateful your polite teaching.... all teachers try to teach until I can do correctly.” Student N’s statement may have denoted this as well. She wrote, “Questions from you were interesting”. This may imply that tutors are not simply giving out information to students. They try to make the class interactive by stimulating the students to participate in the discussion through questions and to provide their own insights. Conversely, tutors were considered understanding. As Student G shared, “I enjoyed a class because you [tutors] were very considerate.” Student K even imparted, “I think my exchange program become more valuable thanks to you....” Because of the tutors close rapport with the students, learners were motivated to do more out of their English language experience. As stated by Alison (1993 in Thanasoulas, 2002), a key element is to establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the learners, which can lead to enthusiasm. This is in

support to the study of Chuo and Yen (n.d.), which stated that positive reinforcement, such as interesting ways of learning, devoted and competent teachers, praise and encouragement, and good grades, caused Taiwanese learners to like or be interested in learning English. Similarly, they pointed out that resultative motivation, that is, successful or positive learning experiences might make learners more motivated to learn. As Student S stated in his letter, “You always gave me the nice presents of English. With the water you gave me, I will try to produce the best fruit!” Other students share the same sentiment:

Student J: “I will continue studying English! (And I’ll keep on smiling)”

Student H: “I want to express myself and to become good listener, too.”

Student L: “I want to make effort and become a good speaker.”

Student R: “I will continue learning English to improve my English skill.”

“I like English more than before I come to the Philippines.”

Student N: “I want to be a person who can speak fluently.”

Student F: “I’ll keep studying English in Japan, and I’ll do my best to show you my growth someday!”

Student B: “I want to use English and talk with foreign people actively in Japan.”

Student S: “I became to want to visit several countries in order to meet and talk with many people in English.”

Student E: “I want to speak English more in Japan.”

Above all, tutors of Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills seem to have established their credibility to the Japanese learners in terms of teaching pronunciation. According to Student P, “I have learned English for 6 years, but I can’t master the pronunciation. Thinking back now, Japanese teacher’s pronunciation was not correct because I think they are not native speaker or pre-native speaker like Filipino.” Student S seemed to be impressed by the tutors’ proficiency in teaching pronunciation. Because of the nature of English language teaching in Asia, pronunciation and basic conversations “are seldom taught thoroughly in Japan in spite of basis (sic)”, as Student A shared. Hence, concentrating on modules that are of practical importance to English learners is novel for Japanese learners. This is somewhat supported by Student S’s remark, “In the class, I found that Japanese people who want to speak English well should recognize the weak points of pronunciation peculiar in Japanese. The teachers were very familiar with our weak points and never gave up teaching them to us until we can understand.” Towards the end of his recollection on this part of his e-mail, Student S said, “I really respect the teachers.”

The students’ experiences in learning pronunciation, in a way, support the claims of Kang (2010). According to her, students seem to be more confused with inner-circle accent variation (i.e., United Kingdom, America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) than expanding-circle accents (e.g., China, Korea, Iran, Nepal, and Japan). In one instance, Student S got a little confused with the pronunciation of “war” because the pronunciation

in his dictionary is different with the one taught in class. It turned out that his dictionary is British and the pronunciation taught in class is American English. This scenario is in accordance to the instance exemplified by Kang when a student got confused with the pronunciation of “vase”—the student said it as /veɪz/ but the teacher pronounced it as /vāz/. The teacher is from New Zealand. Kang (2010) also indicated that learners’ attitude were quite receptive when fluent, non-native English teachers taught pronunciation. This was likewise manifested in one of the LITE classes. Japanese are known to be shy and laconic, thus they do not want to be put on the spot. However, the students gamely accepted the one-on-one pronunciation drill while in class. Students are also inquisitive; this may have been encouraged by the tutors’ friendly and accommodating attitude. Lastly, Kang (2010) specified that teachers’ attitudes toward varieties of accents can play a critical role in shaping learners’ perspectives and expectations of language learning. This claim is supported by the case of Student S and his pronunciation of “war”. The tutor’s explanation can be interpreted as her openness to the occurrence of different “Englishes” and this may have been imparted to Student S.

Students appreciating LITE tutors who are teaching pronunciation further debunk the claim of the Direct Approach to language teaching, which stressed that the teacher must be a native speaker or have native-like proficiency in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2006). LITE tutors, being Filipinos, are considered as second language learners of English, but they have clear understanding, knowledge, and background of the occurrence of different “World English”, which makes it easier for them to explain the difference, for example, between American and British English. This may imply then that LITE tutors, particularly in Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills, focus on intelligibility and comprehensibility rather than accentedness. Moreover, this may mean that LITE tutors ensure to know their learners’ cultural and individual background (despite having more than 10 students) so they may try to address each learner’s needs. The use of “tutor” instead of “teacher” or “facilitator” in LITE may prove this.

All these were supported by the students’ evaluation of English Plus as a course. In a post course evaluation questionnaire administered to the students on their last day of classes, all students gave a positive assessment of the helpfulness of the activities provided. Tutors, on the other hand, were also rated favorably. According to them, the tutors 1) explained the lessons well (18.25), 2) spoke clearly (18.75), 3) were able to make students participate (18.25), 4) were able to make difficult lessons easy (16.25), 5) used very good teaching materials (16.5), 6) were kind and pleasant (18.75), and 7) always arrived on time (17.25).

From these, it can be deduced that the LITE tutors, particularly in Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills, and their classroom management had positively affected the Japanese learners’ knowledge acquisition and attitude towards English language. Their kind but professional manner of dealing with students motivated them to study harder and pursue learning English even after the course. Their interactive and instructive activities, on the other hand, prompted them to be participative in class and enjoy learning. These

have created pleasant learning experiences for the learners, who were given opportunities to learn and consistent encouragement for their learning efforts. The students' statements, cited literature, and the tutors/researchers' perspectives established these.

3.2.2 The modules and the guided interaction

Because of the university exam-focused nature of English teaching in Japan, the drilling that cram schools provide became a very important part (Liu, 2011) of Japanese educational system. Around 60% of junior high school students now go to cram schools (Monbusho, 1993 in Takanashi, 2004). Unfortunately, these students go to cram schools primarily to strengthen their ability for taking tests (Liu, 2011) or to pass the entrance exam requirements for university (Norris-Holt, 2001) instead of working up their facility on language and communication. This perhaps is the reason Kobe Japanese students certainly enjoyed the modules on Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills, and Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment; they were new and practical for them.

English Plus Course, particularly modules on Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills, has provided the students an innovative way of looking at and learning English as a foreign language. They were given a fresh perspective that learning English can be enjoyable. This is evidenced by the students' statements in their letters and e-mails. According to Student P, "There were many things that I learned first time in the Philippines." Student N supports this: "You taught me about many thing which I can't study in Japan, I was very surprised to know how profound English is." Student Q's e-mail substantiated this: "It was difficult to listen in English, but I learned about many things that I can't learn in the Japan." Meanwhile, Students D and K regarded the classes as "interesting". Student K said that she "really enjoyed" all classes and they were "worth listening to", while Student D wrote that thinking something in English became easier for her "through the lessons". As pointed out by Student A, pronunciation and basic conversations "are seldom taught thoroughly in Japan in spite of basis".

Pronunciation obviously had the biggest impact among the students. Eight students indicated "pronunciation" as one of the interesting topics in their course evaluation. "Voice control", "analysis of intonation", and "lesson and vocal qualities" were also noted to be appealing for them, which are part of the module on pronunciation. This is evident on the letter of Student P: "In the class, I can learn many English knowledge in class. Especially, how to pronounce correctly and the class about intonation patterns were most impressive class... Furthermore, I didn't know there are 4 patterns on intonation, pitch1, pitch2, pitch3, and pitch4. After this, I pay attention to the pitch." For Student N, pronunciation and presentations were highly practical. This is supported by Student G: "I was able to learn English pronunciation and intonation, how to deliver a presentation and speech, and the way to discuss in English. I had a few opportunities to learn these in Japan (sic), so the classes were very instructive for me." To which Student N agrees, "I've never taken such wonderful classes in Japan." Meanwhile, Student B considers the module on

pronunciation as the first of her many reasons why LITE program was good. According to her, “my pronunciation has made progress”. Similarly, Student F thinks her English, particularly pronunciation, has “greatly improved”: “I couldn’t tell ‘R’ from ‘L’ by hearing, but now I understand.” Student D shared, “...you taught us well the technique of voice, pronunciation, interview, discussion, presentation and so on. It was quite different from the lecture in Japan.”

For Student F, however, pronunciation was the most difficult: “The position of the tongue and the adjusting breath was complex.” Nonetheless, she exerted effort in correcting her pronunciation by practicing. She wrote, “I practiced pronunciation hard after dinner with Isa and Erika [Isa Filio and Erika Belarmino were UPLB students who were hired to be the students’ guardians while on their three-week stay in the Philippines]. They thought (sic) me politely until I can pronounce correctly.” Student I’s case is similar: “I practiced a lot and asked Isa about how to pronounce words. Thanks to teachers and Isa, I changed consciousness for pronunciation. Because of this, she thinks that “my pronunciation became a little good”. Student M did the same: “...I felt that my English skill isn’t enough yet and I have to improve my skill more and more. I practiced pronunciations of many words with our tutor, Isa,...” Even Student R shares the same sentiment, “At night, in CEC [Continuing Education Center UPLB where the students are billeted], I practiced some pronunciations with Isa. It was difficult to master the correct pronunciation, but this time was very precious for me.” This proves the learners’ diligence and perseverance in studying, particularly in studying English. It can be assumed that their training in *juku* classes in Japan have influenced their study habits. Despite the long hours of classes and difficulty in learning a language, particularly pronunciation, they still have the energy and motivation to practice their lessons with their student facilitators.

Based on the students’ reactions, it can be inferred that the learners may have come to realize the importance of pronunciation in communicating, which used to be a topic for debate in English language teaching. Through the years, the role of pronunciation in the different schools of language teaching has varied widely (Castillo, 1990 in Otlowski, 1998). In the Direct Method, pronunciation is not seen as a significant part of language learning, while Audiolingualism and the Oral Approach thought otherwise (Celce-Murcia, 2006). For Suter and Purcell (1980 in Otlowski, 1998), pronunciation practice in class had little effect on learner’s pronunciation skills and accurate pronunciation in a second language is beyond the teachers’ control. This is in line with the belief of Lee (2005 in Wang & Hill, 2011) who said that it is impossible for any learner of a language become a native speaker “unless he or she is born again” (p.208). On the contrary, Pennington (1989 in Otlowski, 1998) believes that teachers with formal training in pronunciation and teaching suprasegmentals can make a difference. As argued by Morley (1998 in Stibbard, 1996), intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence, meaning the learner’s ability to communicate is severely limited without adequate pronunciation skills (Otlowski, 1998). Ayan (2008) even highlighted that pronunciation is of central importance because it is a part of successful oral production as communicative

competence.

Acknowledging the importance of pronunciation in English language learning, LITE has always included pronunciation as a module in all of its courses. All Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills tutors are University professors who are graduates of Communication Arts with major in Speech Communication and their master's degree are either Speech Communication or Communication Arts, making them seasoned professors of pronunciation and oral presentations. They are therefore familiar with the techniques and strategies in teaching the two main features of language. In teaching pronunciation, it has been argued that suprasegmental features of language should be emphasized on a short-term pronunciation course (McNerney & Mendelssohn, 1992 in Pronunciation teaching: History and scope) rather than the segmental features. That is why tutors include intonation patterns, and voice and intonation in their module to acknowledge not only this but to advocate intelligibility and comprehensibility. Nonetheless, tutors likewise recognize that correct production of phonemes facilitate intelligibility, thus segmental features of language were included in the modules, discussing vowel and consonant sounds, and critical sounds of English. The tutors wanted to develop awareness and monitoring skills by teaching them the "ideal" pronunciation of sounds. By doing this, learners can still improve their pronunciation even outside class. In teaching both features, LITE tutors employed pronunciation drills, which make use of words, phrases, sentences, and minimal pairs, repetition and mimicking, dialogues, and work sheets. All these can be assumed different from the usual lessons Japanese students take in high schools, universities, and *juku* classes.

English Plus Course provides varied avenues for students to learn. As written by Student A, "In addition to classes, there were many opportunities to improve my English skills in my stay, talking with teachers, Ms. Isa, facilitators and local people, and playing games...." For Student O, however, she thinks that "the good points of this program were guided interaction and that Isa stayed at CEC from 19:30 to 21:30." This is supported by Student P: "I was able to practice the pronunciation not only class but also in the guided interaction and at CEC with Isa and Erika. I will never forget it." Isa is the assigned student guardian of the fifth batch of Kobe students. As student guardian, Isa is expected to 1) prepare and facilitate supplementary English exercises and conduct evening tutorials for students; 2) serve as guardians during cultural and educational trips; 3) coordinate with students and secure their needs during their stay in the Philippines; and, 4) serve as conduit between LITE staff and the students. During their stay, the fifth batch of Kobe students are sharing CEC with the fourth batch of Kobe students who arrived a week earlier, thus Erika (who is the student guardian of the fourth batch) is an additional help not only to Isa but with the fifth batch students. This is highly valued by the students. As Student P imparted, "I want to thank Isa and Erika for practicing with me again and again." Student M shared that she felt impatient when she wanted to talk but could not during the first days of the course. To overcome this difficulty, she decided to speak with Isa every night. After some time, Student M "could convey my thought little by little." In the case of

Student D, she imparted, "...our facilitator (Erika, Isa) was so kind that they taught us and waited for us until we can hit upon a proper word." Student K's e-mail coincide with this: "Especially, I greatly appreciate Isa and Erika. They supported us about not only our assignments but our lives in the Philippines until late at night. They listened to our questions one by one kindly, and gave advices (sic) till we understood. I think they are really considerate." The words of gratitude and appreciation by the students to the student guardians may prove that LITE's provision of a student guardian supported not only the students' language learning, but overall stay of the students.

The students likewise highlighted in their e-mails the significance of the Guided Interaction. During guided interaction, the students were broken down into groups of three or four, and a student facilitator is assigned to them. Student facilitators are expected to accompany the students around the campus after class hours, engage them in English practice, orient and introduce them to Filipino culture and practices. For the fifth batch of Kobe students, eight student facilitators guided them after regular classes. Reading the students' e-mails, Guided Interaction seemed to have facilitated English language learning of the students while having fun. Student I mentioned that they went to different places—restaurants, karaoke shop, mall, and café and her facilitators Shelly and Paul "taught us pronunciation and intonation with menu in the café." For Student C, "The most enjoyable time in the Philippines was Guided Interaction time.... Jen and Chelsea speak many times to made (sic) us understand.... And they gave me a lot of assignments. It was little hard but very good training for me.... The time I spent with them was unforgettable." This is supported by Student M, "...I had many enjoyable experiences [during guided interaction]. These were fresh for me and I enjoyed all." Alternatively, guided interaction also provided the students an opportunity to learn about Philippine culture. As imparted by Student H, "Every experience was good opportunity to know Philippine culture." Student S even realized the similarities and differences between Japanese and Philippine culture in terms of transportation, costs on services and products, and work ethics of service providers. For majority, they noted the difference of Filipino food with Japanese cuisine. Nonetheless, Student G appreciated all that he experienced: "...I was able to experience the culture of the Philippines.... I will never forget the very fun time I spent with the facilitators. It's no exaggeration to say that I had an enjoyable three weeks, thanks to them." Similarly, Student Q was "very happy to study English and the culture of the Philippines a lot...."

According to Zare (2012), language learning strategies play an influential role while the learners play a significant role in the process of language learning. In the course of English Plus Course, the students have been showing some characteristics of GLLs. For one, the fifth batch of Kobe students can be considered as active learners—they practice, put what has been learned into use, and are willing to guess and make mistakes (Chuo & Yen, n.d.). They may no longer see English as just a language but as a tool to communicate and interact; they now have the drive to communicate and learn from communication (Chuo & Yen, n.d.). As Student Q emphasized in his e-mail, "English is a tool to learn

about a culture, a history, a religion, and a life style (sic) of people.” Therefore, it can be deduced that learning a language is not only dependent on the teacher, the lessons, and the activities done in the classroom but also on the learner’s proactive attitude towards learning and opportunities for learning inside and outside the classroom.

As evidenced in the students’ Evaluation of English Plus as a course, 16 out of 19 students indicated that it was useful for them. When asked how much the students learned from the modules on Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills, 16 noted “very much”. Moreover, the length of the course was regarded by 13 students as “just right”. Because of this, 17 students are willing to recommend the course to other students of Kobe University. On the other hand, facilitators were noted to 1) have helped improved the students’ English proficiency (16.52), 2) have helped expose students to Filipino culture (14.45), 3) be kind and pleasant (17.34), and 4) have initiated helpful activities (15.28).

In view of these data, it can therefore be inferred that the modules on Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills exposed the learners to new topics on English language. They now recognize the importance of pronunciation in communicating their thoughts intelligibly. Oral presentations not only aided them in practicing their English skills but in turning them into confident speakers. Guided Interaction, on the other hand, supported and enriched students’ learning. The facilitators not only became their tutors but friends as well, who they can converse comfortably with. They helped the students be exposed to different communication situations to apply their learning and to Filipino culture while enjoying.

3.3Changed Learners of English

At the beginning of the course, each member of the fifth batch of Kobe students filled out a profile sheet. One of the questions in the profile sheet pertains to their expectations from the course. Four emerged to be topmost: 1) to improve their English skills (particularly speaking and listening), 2) to speak English fluently using conversational English, 3) to meet new friends to practice speaking English, and 4) to learn about Philippine agriculture. Based on their letters and e-mails, the first three expectations were addressed by the tutors, classroom management, facilitators, and guided interaction. The first was even evidenced by the descriptive statistics presented and explained. Meanwhile, the fourth expectation was supplemented by their trips around the campus, particularly IRRRI and Makiling Botanical Garden. However, what turned out to be a revelation are the statements of the students that imply that they have been transformed by the program in terms of confidence, motivation, and even worldview, making them changed learners of English.

3.3.1Confident learners of English

Because of the students’ constant and continuous practice inside and outside the classroom, and regular presentations, the students now claim that they have become

confident speakers of English. Likewise, the intervention made by the tutors through their modules and classroom management, and by the facilitators provided a pleasant learning experience for the students. According to Student L, "...it was also helpful for me to learn voice control and some skill about presentation.... I learned that suitable posture can made me confident and change my voice, and if I practice more, my talking skill will improve." Student E believes the same thing: "Now, I think I can speak more fluently than before." Similarly, Student J imparted, "Before I went to the Philippines, I'm shy of speak English more than now. But now, I want to try to speak in English to know other country's culture and life or make new foreign friends. So I continue studying English with a positive attitude!" As for Student E, because of the course, "I got self-confidence and found my ability." These statements were supported by the tutors' qualitative remarks in the comparative analysis of pre- and post-assessment for the Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills assessment report, which were previously discussed and elaborated. The tutors' qualitative remarks were focused on describing how confident the learners have become. As Student G claims, "Through this program, I learned English..., and I gained a lot of wonderful and precious experience. Now, I can confidently say I'm different from what I used to be before I visited the Philippines."

3.3.2 Motivated learners of English

Because of the program, English became more appealing to a number of students. According to Student A, she "came to love English more," while Student K said that he "get more interest in English." As for Student R, "...I like English more than before I come to the Philippines." The students' total experience under English Plus Course may have ultimately influenced their change of heart. As Student D remarked in her e-mail, "From these experiences, I strongly thought this program has a large impact on our English skill.... all interactions were meaningful for me."

Because of this change, the students are now more motivated to pursue learning English. As Student P wrote, "I am going to continue studying English after this program because I want to become a good English speaker." For Student Q, this can be possible by using English in daily talk, which he found most important in studying English. Thus he said, "I continue to use English, and improve my English after the trip to the Philippines." Student N's statement was similar: "Now I want to study English more and talk with many foreign people." From this statement, Student N is becoming not only bilingual but also bi- or multi-cultural. Because of the cultural trips prepared by LITE, the students were exposed to another culture and her close interaction with its people made her realize that speaking can help her know about another culture. She has realized that English can be a tool to know more about another culture and its people. On the other hand, Student N was also motivated by the qualitative remarks in the pre- and post-assessment. Now that she knows the areas she needs to improve, she promises "to continue studying English hard." Students A, K, and Q promised to continue studying and improve their English when they get back to Japan, while Student I has started writing an English diary to improve her

vocabulary as suggested by her facilitator. Student S has bigger goals: "...after this stay, I became want to visit several countries in order to meet and talk with many people in English."

Student R has a unique realization after English Plus Course: "I learned a lot of things in the Philippines.... But I found the most important thing was being always smile." As described by Student J, "Filipino are very friendly and always smiley" which is in contrast to Japanese people as observed by Student S, who said to be too serious. The students must have felt the warmth of Filipino hospitality because of the smiles from tutors, LITE staff, facilitators, and even locals. The students may have found this comforting, considering they are away from their country and family, and some of them are first time travelers. They may have recognized the value of smiling as a means of communicating. To her delight, Student J even exclaimed in her e-mail, "I want to be like Filipina!"

3.3.3 Receptive learners of English

The students' enthusiasm to visit other countries "to talk to foreign friends" and their increased motivation to study harder to be fluent speakers of English are just some of the positive indications that they have opened themselves to change. Their resolutions are admirable, but the most commendable resolution proposed is that of Student O's because it is concrete and demonstrates complete transformation in terms of worldview. She wrote, "First, I will change my job. Before coming to the Philippines, I had worked at a restaurant in which I had used only Japanese language. But now I want to study English as I work, so my next job will be a tutor or a hotel stuff (sic)." Her experience in English Plus Course may have opened her mind to opportunities beyond her comfort zone. It may be difficult for her to learn English while applying it in daily conversations, not just with co-students but perhaps with English language learners like her or foreign clients, but she is willing to challenge herself. She, just like the other learners, has now become a GLL—one who finds her own way and takes responsibility for her own learning; creates opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom (Zare, 2012); willing to guess and make mistakes; and has the drive to communicate and learn from communication (Chuo & Yen, n.d.).

All students, no matter how significant or minute their learning are, are considered as changed learners of English—they have become confident, motivated, and receptive. Their unique and interactive experiences in the English Plus Course, with the help of the tutors and their classroom management, the modules, guided interaction, and facilitators, have influenced their attitude towards themselves, the English language, learning English, and even the world. In a way, they adhered to what Chang (2011) identified as the three roles of English language in Asian context. These are: 1) English as a way of speeding up national development, 2) English as a way of understanding other cultures, and 3) English as a tool for international communication. The second role has been evidently narrated in their letters and e-mails—they have come to understand Filipino culture and compare it

with theirs. Meanwhile, the third was evidenced by the improvement in their post-EPE scores. The first, however, is yet to happen.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The rise of Asia's importance in international affairs impelled many Asian learners, including Japanese, to focus on learning English. Thus, Japanese parents and learners opt to enroll in cram schools, or *juku*, to supplement the English classes taught in high schools and universities. However, English *juku* have been criticized for many reasons, primarily on the manner they are taught (only to strengthen a student's ability for taking test) and on the lessons provided (only focused on grammar, vocabulary, and translation). In the Philippines, *juku* is starting to flourish in the form of review and tutorial services. In Los Baños, KUMON, Brain Train, and Instant Reader are the famous *juku*, while UPLB through the LITE Program has seemingly been providing *juku*-like classes since 1996 in the form of Intensive English for International Graduate Students (IEIGS) and English Plus Course.

With the arrival of the fifth batch of Kobe students on September 2016, taking trainings on Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills, and Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment, we, the tutors and researchers, wanted initiate a study on the LITE Program by describing the Japanese students' English language learning experience, particularly in pronunciation and oral presentation skills, in a *juku*-like program in UPLB such as LITE by looking into their pre- and post-EPE scores in the said components. Specifically, we endeavored to know if there is any difference in the pronunciation and oral presentation skills among Japanese students after taking LITE classes and which area of the course supplemented their learning the most.

Using descriptive statistics, the mean scores of the students in the post-EPE have improved on the whole, except for the consonant sounds sub-category, which may be associated to the Japanese's inherent difficulty in producing certain consonant sounds, such as [r], [l], initial [w], [hw], [z], [zh], and hard and soft [th]. Nonetheless, the difference in the mean scores in the pre- and post-EPE scores for consonant sounds had no effect on the overall mean score of pronunciation drill. This means that the English Plus Course has a positive significant effect on the Japanese students' pronunciation and oral presentation skills. In support of this, the Japanese students' e-mailed feedback and letters revealed that LITE Program, particularly English Plus Course, has positively affected the Japanese learners' knowledge acquisition and application, and attitude towards English language learning in a *juku*-like program in a foreign country such as the Philippines. This is likewise reinforced by the qualitative remarks on the comparative analysis of pre- and post-EPE, and classroom academic performance in the English Plus Course's terminal report; and evaluation of the English Plus Course reviewed.

English Plus Course may be a *juku*-like class in terms of fast-paced instruction and some pronunciation drills performed in class, but the tutors and their classroom management, the modules, and Guided Interaction made the students' learning experience

pleasant, interesting, effective, and rewarding. The tutors of Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills have established a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the learners, which lead to motivation to study English further. The brief discussions before each task encouraged the students to be independent learners by providing them basic information about the lesson, which they need to apply in interactive and task-based activities. Such teaching strategies engaged the learners to participate and remove the notion that English is learned only when sitting down. Meanwhile, the modules were proven to be novel for the learners as the lessons included are not taught in their home country despite being fundamental in communication. Finally, the Guided Interaction with student facilitators provided support to students' learning outside the class while enjoying. These strategies resulted to experiential learning on the part of the learners, in which they thought of ways on how to communicate in English during pair work, interview, group discussion, and speech delivery. A *juku*, therefore, can still uphold creativity and critical abilities despite its fast-paced instruction and drills. Because of a *juku*-like program like LITE, Japanese learners have improved their pronunciation and oral presentation skills and have become changed learners of English—one who is more confident in speaking English, more motivated in learning English as a language, and more receptive to change.

In the light of a *juku*-style of learning which Japanese learners are familiar with, it can be said that the UPLB LITE Program, specifically its English Plus Course, serves its purpose. The English language teaching strategies utilized by tutors of Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills proved to be applicable to the characteristics of the Japanese learners. In this regard, the teaching strategies employed by tutors of Conversation Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment can be investigated as to be compared to the results of this research. Age, gender, major, and other variables can also be included to identify other possible factors that could have influenced students' learning. English learning experiences of other nationalities, such as Thais and Koreans, who are also regular LITE clients, can likewise be examined. Moreover, modules on listening, which is closely associated with pronunciation, reading, and/or grammar that uses the same teaching strategies as that of Pronunciation and Oral Presentation Skills can be designed and employed to determine their applicability on such text- and discussion-based courses.

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