

# ***Examining the Effectiveness of UPLB-CAS LITE Program Through the Lens of Japanese Students***

***Kristine K. Adalla***

*University of the Philippines Los Baños*

***Abstract:*** *The Language Instruction Toward Excellence (LITE) Program is an extension arm of the College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Los Baños that offers language courses to international graduate and undergraduate students. This paper examines the effectiveness of the English Plus Course as perceived by 105 Japanese students who took the course for three weeks from 2016-2018. Based on the results, The English Plus Course of the UPLB-CAS LITE Program has been effective in terms of delivering the objectives of the course to its students. Pre and Post-EPE of students showed a combined increase of 43.59% in the 2 components of the course. Mean scores of students' classroom performance from 2016-2018 also showed an increasing trend while the students' evaluation of the overall program received a 100% positive rating. The students' experiences in the LITE Program created a positive change in the behavior of the students who were enrolled in the program. Increased confidence, better classroom presentations, improved written essays, and improved ability in expressing ideas were shown to be practiced by students who were enrolled in the LITE Program.*

***Keywords:*** *esl; second language teaching; interactive learning; task-based learning*

## **1.Introduction**

Globalization has made English language learning rapidly increase over the years. The dominance of English in countries where it is the native language and in countries where it is not traditionally the native language but has an institutional role to play has greatly contributed to the diffusion and power of English (Schneider, 2011). However, it is through the ever-accelerating spread of English in countries where English is learned as a foreign language that has made English the international language (Crystal, 2003). In Asia, its growing importance in international affairs necessitates the knowledge of using English to facilitate communication between non-native speakers in major domains such as government, business, and education (Wang & Hill, 2011) as it has become the global language, one that Asians share with one another and the rest of the world (McArthur, 2002 in Blanco and Mendoza, 2017).

One of the primary reasons for the promotion of English language education in Japan has been internationalization (Kubota, 1998). Hu & McKay (2012) state that when Japan's economy began to surge in the 1960s and 1970s, tension began to occur between Japan and its trading partners and Japan leaders began to believe that learning English was an important way to enhance Japan's international communication. English learning became one important strategy in Japan's goal to internationalize its nation thus, English language education is seen as a public good that can benefit the country and its people.

In Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea, and China are important players in the global spread of English as it entered their educational systems (Hu & McKay, 2012). In Japan, English was made as a compulsory subject in elementary school in 2011 and has made English instruction compulsory beginning with Grade 5 (Hu & McKay, 2012). This is based on the assumption that there exists a critical period for foreign language learning and that younger learners are superior to older ones (Park, 2009). Japan's reform of foreign language education in 2002 has created a strong push for local governments and individual schools to conduct foreign language activities to promote international understanding and preparing students for a global economy. Aside from being a required subject, English testing in university entrance examinations is also required sending many Japanese students and their parents concerned about English learning (Choi & Lee, 2008). Even a Japanese term *Juken eigo* which means "English for the purpose of examinations" is proof of the growing need for English learning. Hu and McKay (2012) notes that outside of the educational systems in Japan, English proficiency also carries high stakes in the workplace in each society. Butler and Iino (2005) mentions that many companies base recruitment and promotion decisions in part of (prospective) employees' scores on standardized international tests such as TOEFL and TOEIC.

Because of this growing importance of English in their lives, many Japanese university students feel strongly about the importance of learning English (skills in speaking, and listening, in particular (Takanashi, 2004). Takanashi (2004) in Blanco and Mendoza (2017) notes that in Japan, education is key to future success in life as passing the entrance

examinations of prominent universities is equal to getting high-salaried jobs which is equal to having a happy future. Blair (1997) furthers that admission to a prestigious university is eminent to many Japanese and English testing is an important component of the admission process. The peak of studying English in Japan is during the final year of high school when students exert effort in studying for university entrance exams (Norris-Holt, 2001) and most of them opt to enroll in cram schools.

The Language Instruction Towards Excellence (LITE) Program of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) has been providing cram school-like classes in English. The LITE Program is an extension arm of the UPLB College of Arts and Sciences and has been in the forefront of the College's bid for internalization for more than two decades. It is a non-profit program designed to help UPLB international undergraduate and graduate students to achieve either basic English proficiency for undergraduate students or the required standard of linguistic and communicative competence to hurdle academic life in the university for graduate students enrolled in UPLB degree programs.

The program offers the following courses: 1) Intensive English Course for International Graduate Students, a 150-hour English course for international graduate students, 2) English Plus Course for International Students, which is a three-to-four-week course that covers two areas, namely: a) Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills, and b) Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment, and 3) Tutorial in Other Languages such as English, Filipino, Spanish, Nihongo, and French. These are supplementary education with the goal of achieving the required standard of linguistic and communicative competence needed in their academic life. The program is headed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, UPLB and managed by a Program Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator. All language tutors come from the Language Division and Communication Division of the Department of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, UPLB.

This paper focuses on the perception of 105 Japanese students from Kobe University, Japan from 2016-2018 on the two components of the English Plus Course namely a) Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills, and b) Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment. The goal of the English Plus Course are as follows: 1) improving pronunciation of distinct critical sounds of English to create intelligible sentences in actual conversations, 2) using nonverbal gestures effectively in oral presentations, and 3) speaking English with sufficient accuracy in participating in both formal and informal conversations. Aside from the daily classroom lessons and activities, the Course is also supplemented by a two-hour daily guided interaction and a cultural exposure trip within UPLB and IRRI, including a tour of some of the historical places in Laguna.

Given the nature of the Course, the study seeks to find out the effectiveness of the English Plus Course by looking into the results of the students' pre and post-English Proficiency Exam (EPE), their classroom assessment, students' evaluation of the program,

and the overall program's effects to the students even after finishing the course. The results of this study will be beneficial in improving policies that will enable the management team and tutors to further improve the program.

## **2. Data and Methodology**

A total of one hundred five (105) students from six (6) batches of Kobe University, Japan were enrolled in the English Plus Course from 2016-2018. Forty-two (42) of them were female and sixty-three (63) were male. Forty-seven (47) of them were in the junior and senior standing while fifty-eight (58) are freshmen and sophomores. Students arrive in two batches with the junior and senior arriving first, and the freshmen and sophomore arriving one week later. Ninety-four (94) students came from the Faculty of Agriculture while the other eleven (11) are from the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Environmental Biology. Of 105 students, seventy-four (74) have travelled outside Japan prior to going to the Philippines while seven (7) have taken up formal English training in their own country before joining the LITE Program. Among their expectations in the English Plus Course of the LITE Program, improving their English proficiency received the most number of mentions, followed by gaining more confidence and increasing motivation and interest towards studying English.

The test score on the students' English Proficiency Exam taken before the students had undergone classes in the course and during the last session of the course, as well as their classroom grades, were used for this study. Data from the students' program evaluation were also used to analyze the usefulness and effectiveness of the program. Emailed students' feedback via personal letters and videos about the course were compiled and reviewed to provide qualitative data that may enrich the data analysis. Descriptive statistics was employed in analyzing the data to describe the experience of 105 students under the English Plus Course of the LITE Program from 2016-2018.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Analysis of the Pre and Post - English Proficiency Exam**

The English Proficiency Exam (EPE) aimed to gauge the participants' proficiency in speaking and clarity of pronunciation, as well as their accent, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

In the Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills sub-course, each student was given ten (10) minutes to answer questions prepared by the tutor. Both pre- and post- tests were divided into three (3) parts: (1) students were asked ice breaker questions, mostly about themselves and their experiences in the Philippines, (2) they were asked to read English words to test if they can articulate vowel and consonant sounds correctly, and (3) they were asked to describe a picture. The reading of words was given a scoring weight of 130 points while the description was assigned 30 points – 5 being the highest and 0 being the lowest, for the areas of Voice (quality, pitch, rate, loudness),

Speech (inflection, variation, articulation, blending), and Nonverbal (paralanguage, eye contact, confidence), with a total of 160 points for the pre- and post-test.

For the Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment sub-course, each student was given seven (7) minutes to answer questions prepared by the tutor. Questions in this sub-course include topics on 1) introducing oneself, 2) personal hobby/hobbies, 3) family, 4) dream country destination, and 4) plans to continue English learning after their training in the LITE Program. A rubric was used to evaluate the performance of each participant. They were graded according to their Comprehension, Comprehensibility, Language Function, Vocabulary and Communication Strategy. The highest possible score for each criterion was 5, and the lowest was 1. A score of 5 was given to students who exceeded expectations; the scores of 4 and 3 for those who met expectations; and scores of 2 and 1 if expectations were not met. The highest numerical score a student can get is 25 points. The conversation was recorded to allow the evaluator to thoroughly review the exchange of dialogues.

Based on the results of the Pre and Post-Course English Proficiency Exam, from 2016-2018 (Figure 1), the area on Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills had a mean score of 73.44% during the pre-EPE, and 84.48% during the post-EPE respectively, showing an increase of 15% in their score.

Meanwhile, Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment had a mean score of 59.19% in the pre-EPE and 76.11% (Figure 2) during the post-EPE showing an increase of 28.59% in their score. This suggests that the two components of the English Plus Course have been useful for the students in terms of learning English and improving their English communication skills. In the course evaluation of the students (Figure 3), 77.14% said that the course was 'very useful' and 22.86% said that the course was 'useful' for them, thus reinforcing the increase in score of the post-EPE.

Since almost all of the students had no other English training aside from their subjects in school prior to attending the LITE Program, the English Plus Course served as their tool to further their English communication skills. Final reports on the students' assessment mentioned that during the pre-EPE, most students had difficulty in articulating the sounds of /r/, /l/, /z/, /zh/, /th/, /æ/, /ɜ/, and the long and short /u/, /e/, /i/, /o/ sounds. In addition, they were shy and nervous, reserved in responding to questions, speaks, with a soft, inaudible voice, could not express their ideas clearly and coherently using English, and their limited English vocabulary affected their comprehension during the test and interview. However, during the post-EPE, tutors' assessment showed that the students were more confident in responding to questions, they begin using hand gestures to aid them in expressing their ideas, they were able to establish eye contact with the teacher, speak more audibly and with more clarity compared to the pre-EPE, and became conscious with their pronunciation as evidenced by their effort to enunciate challenging speech sounds such as /r/, /l/, /ɜ/, /zh/, etc. In addition, they were able to apply the

appropriate intonation, inflection, and proper stress on words and sentences. Students who were shy during the pre-EPE have shown more enthusiasm and proactively involved themselves in the conversation/interview. They were able to express their ideas with more clarity and coherence, and their sentences were now longer compared to the pre-EPE. To further explain, below are some qualitative comments of tutors based on a student's performance during the pre and post-EPE in the Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills sub-course:

During the pre-course evaluation,

*"Student A's pronunciation of vowel sounds can be confusing when listened to because there was no distinction between the long and short /u/, /e/, /i/ sounds. Sometimes, /æ/ also became /e/ (e.g. dagger sounds degger, lavish sounds levish, etc.). The /w/ sound was also omitted when placed in the beginning of the word such that "wood" becomes "ood". She also omitted the ending sound of a word such that "sand" becomes "san". There was also the mispronunciation of /r/ and /l/ sounds when they are placed in the beginning and middle sound of the words. She appeared to be shy and had difficulty expressing her ideas when asked to describe photos. She would only use one or two sentences and I would have to ask for probing questions so she will have more responses. But even then, she still had difficulty expressing her ideas.*

The same student had these comments during the pre-course evaluation:

*"Student A's pronunciation significantly improved during the post-test. The critical sounds of /l/ and /r/ were spoken clearly and correctly. Most of the vowel sounds were also pronounced correctly especially the /ɔ/, /à/ and /æ/ sounds. /ʒ/ sound was also clearly pronounced. Pronunciation of /th/ was also clear and defined. She was also more confident during the post-test. She was maintaining eye contact with the teacher as compared to the pre-test. She needs to speak louder though and be more willing to express her ideas.*

For the Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment sub-course, notes from the assessment of students stated that Student B

*"was shy during the pre-course interview and was timid and gave clipped answers and bade for time to respond. However, she gave correct answers, after a while. She would stop and think about her answers, hence, initially, the conversation took long. However, you can feel how interested she is to improve her English facility".*

The same student had this evaluation during the post-EPE:

*"She has improved in her conversational fluency because her exposure to English -speaking people helped her learn more English words and phrases. She now can sustain a conversation by asking for clarification. It is also obvious that she is able to integrate now in her responses terms that she*

*learned for the last three weeks. She also demonstrated most of what she heard by responding more appropriately”.*

Based on the students’ evaluation, the Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills sub-course is what they found to be the most interesting, but they also found it to be challenging at the same time. In the class, teachers in this sub-course employ tongue twisters, pronunciation drills, storytelling, among others to reinforce various aspects in speech production and articulation. While the students find it to be a fun way to learn pronunciation, they find it difficult to pronounce tongue twisters and speech drills as observed in the classroom. This may be the reason why students had a lower percent increase in score at 15% in this sub-course compared to Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment which had 28.59%. increase. As one of the students said in his evaluation, *“Pronunciation is difficult topic but fun too! I want to improve my English pronunciation when I go back to Japan.”* Another student said, *“Now I know the difference of /l/ and /r/. It is difficult but I will try harder.”*

In addition, since there was limited time during the pre and post-EPE, the students had to also be mindful of the time while thinking, speaking, and articulating sounds. Most of them are used to mentally translating their thoughts from Nihongo to English and they had to do it while also thinking how to correctly produce the speech sounds. Thus, they cannot repeatedly correct themselves when they mispronounce certain words, which ideally should be part of pronunciation correction (Blanco, 2017). Moreover, pronunciation drills, although done in class and practiced by some students during their free time, is not reinforced because students communicate in their own language most of the time when talking among themselves. As stressed by Chuo and Yen (n.d.) in Blanco and Mendoza (2017), *“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”.*

Though this may be the case, the students had significant improvement in their use of English language. Feedback from the students revealed that the course was very helpful and useful for them. One student mentioned that during the first few days, she *“didn’t like the style in the class”* because she had to express her thoughts and make a presentation, or play but his changed and thankful that she *“became able to speak in confidence in front of others through those activities”*. Another student said that *“the program for improving English proficiency was very meaningful in the content of the lesson which strengthened pronunciation and conversation which Japanese people are not good at”*. Another student wrote that she *“can speak English more fluently after taking lessons”* while another student mentioned that she *“felt”* that she *“was able to answer the questions using longer sentences”*.

From this, we see that the English Plus Course has a significant positive effect on the pre and post-EPE of the students. But what about in their classroom performance?

### **3.2. Analysis of students' classroom performance**

For the past three (3) years, scores in the classroom performance of Japanese students from Kobe University enrolled in the LITE Program have shown to be increasing (Figures 4 and 5). In 2016, the average score of students was 78.02%, 82.88% in 2017, and 85.99% in 2018. Notably, the students in 2017 got the highest student score of 96.97% while at the same time, also getting the lowest student score at 64.70%.

Deng and Zou (2016) identified factors such as age, environment, device, mode, and motivation in adult language acquisition. To analyze the students' classroom performance, I will use the factors Deng and Zou (2016) identified but will put it in the context of the LITE Program.

#### **3.2.1 Age**

The age of the students in the LITE Program from 2016-2018 ranges from 18-24 years old. The student who got the highest score was 18 years old at that time and the student who got the lowest score was 20 years old at that time. Both students were trainees in the 2017 English Plus Course. In 2016 and 2018, the students who got the highest score was 19 years old while those who got the lowest score were 22 and 20 years old respectively.

*"The critical period hypothesis suggests that adults may have lost their natural language acquisition skills after a certain age, so adults cannot successfully acquire the second language with the same level of eventual fluency as children's native language acquisition"* (p. 778). However, Yao (2011) notes that *"one of the main strengths of adults is their ability for logical thought"*. Their thinking mode has been improved and their language consciousness is very strong (Deng and Zou, 2016). In addition, *"the maturity of adults raises their cognitive ability, resulting in strong abilities to analyze and conclude"* (p. 778).

Qualitative assessment of students in their classroom performance revealed that *"on some occasions, students interpreted for each other some of the words presented or instructions given. Generally, the students were able to follow the lessons and give acceptable to commendable outputs in the lessons"*. One student was observed to have *"improved in using the target vocabulary when required to explain his thoughts during recitation"* and *"demonstrated a much improved understanding of the words/sentences that he hears"*. This suggests that as adult learners, the students who enrolled in the LITE Program were able to integrate complex lessons in their use of English language.

#### **3.2.2. Environment**

According to Krashen (1982), children are exposed to their mother tongue every day in daily life. Their native language acquisition is natural mainly focusing on the content of language rather than the form. Thus, their learning ability is inherent, but the language is not. In addition, 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).

Language tutors in the LITE Program acknowledge this characteristic of Japanese learners thus, they make their lessons relevant for their learners. Classroom activities in the English Plus Course include pronunciation drills, storytelling, role-playing, group discussion, demonstration speech, interview, and speech presentation with PowerPoint, among others. Games are also incorporated in the lessons to make learning a fun experience for the students. Therefore, class hours are divided in various parts. The first part will be ice breaker to set the mood for the entire lesson. The second part will be devoted to lecture/discussion while the last part is devoted to activities where the students can apply what they learned in class. These strategies prove to be helpful for the students as evidenced by their reception to the lessons and eagerness to participate. One student said in her evaluation of the course that *“by doing presentations and a lot of skits, I was able to get used to making something in English. I think that it contributed to my improvement of my English ability”*. Another student wrote,

*“In the classes, there are many interactive forms in Japanese schools, and there was enough opportunity to speak English. In addition, roleplaying has always been incorporated into the lesson as much as possible, and it was decided to make a small play within the time limit by announcing two pairs or one group of 4 people and presenting it. This was a little unfamiliar to the Japanese, so I was puzzled at the beginning, but it got a little fun when I got used to it. Thinking now, I believe that this roleplaying that all of us think in English and actually announce it was greatly helpful in improving English proficiency”*.

Brown (2007) in Blanco and Mendoza (2017) mentioned that there is no single method of language teaching and research findings can provide universal success in second language teaching. Thus, tutors must consider the learners when creating teaching strategies in the classroom setting.

Aside from classroom lessons and activities, there is also a two-hour daily Guided Interaction where students from UPLB accompany Japanese students and become their conversation partners. During the Guided Interaction, students are divided into small groups of 3-4 with 1 UPLB student-facilitator as their conversation partner. Student-facilitators are expected to accompany the students around the campus after class hours, engage them in English conversations while orienting them about Filipino culture and practices. The Guided Interaction proved to be an effective way to facilitate learning to the students. Feedback from the students mentioned that guided interaction was the most enjoyable time because they were able to do many things. One student wrote, *“The time I spent with them [facilitators] was unforgettable”*. Another student mentioned, *“Every experience was a good way to learn Filipino culture”*.

### **3.2.3 Device**

According to Chomsky (1972), people are born with a language acquisition device, but for adults, this acquisition device has been weakened. As a result, second language learners must rely on their own language concepts or system of language knowledge to complete second language acquisition.

Shvidko (2011) noted that English programs that support English-only policy implement various strategies such as elaborative games and penalty systems to ensure that students do not use their first language. Unfortunately, in many cases, these restrictive policies seem to be rather ineffective and even harmful (Grant, 1999). Rivers (2014) suggested that such English-only policies *“are often guided toward a dark emotional pathway of shame (in not being good enough to participate), guilt (in breaking the contract of obligation to their classmates, the teacher and the institution), and ultimately fear (of the impending consequences and exclusion)”*. The same feeling of alienation from exclusion because of English-only policies were noted in Littlewood and Yu (2011).

In the LITE Program, language tutors highly encourage the use of English in the classroom and even during breaks of students. However, this proves to be a challenge to students. As observed, Japanese students cannot avoid speaking in their native language while in the classroom and when talking among themselves. Though this is the case, a strict English-only policy has never been put into place because of the limitations of students in terms of vocabulary and use of English in expressing their ideas. Initial classroom observation showed that during group works, the students had a tendency to speak in their first language and when teachers tell them to speak in English, they have difficulty executing their output because of language barrier. Students would have difficulty expressing what they want to say and would eventually lead to speaking in their first language. During breaks when they talk among themselves and the teacher tells them to speak in English instead, they tend to just keep quiet and not talk at all. During the latter part of the course however, it was observed that students would try their best to speak in English when encouraged by the teacher during group works and even during break time. This suggests that an imposed English-only policy is not effective in learning English; rather, teachers should allow students to be comfortable first in using the language and let their confidence build up so they will be receptive to learning English.

### **3.2.4 Mode**

Gao (2002) states that children start learning a language from imitation, memory and phrases, then forms the concepts of things. *“In contrast, adults firstly combine their own native language’s code switching and meaningful notes for speech analysis”*

The second language acquisition is based on the native language ability they have formed such that *“when the native language is deeply ingrained, adults will extend their first language rules into their second language acquisition”*.

This mode of second language learning is evident in the students. In the duration of the course, classroom observation showed that students tend to mentally translate their ideas before responding to questions. As mentioned in the classroom assessment of students, it was mentioned that *“the student had long pauses during the interview and was groping for words”*. Another comment written stated that *“she [student] tends to pause for a while and takes her time to think of the right words to say. In addition, she mentally translates her ideas first before giving her answers to the questions”*. There were also instances where students will speak in Nihongo first and then try to search for the equivalent English word for it. Although these instances were minimized as the course reached its end, the students still had a tendency to mentally translate their responses from Nihongo to English. This suggests that three-weeks of English training is not enough and that vocabulary expansion is necessary in a student’s desire to improve proficiency in a second language.

### **3.2.5 Motivation**

Dai (2012) stated that clear learning goals and motivations, as well as the target language and cultural interests, often bring some strong learning motivations to people.

All students who participated in the English Plus Course mentioned that improving their English communication skills is the top reason why they joined the program. Other reasons mentioned were to a) be confident in speaking English, b) know Filipino culture, c) improve listening skills, d) be able to write research paper in English, and e) make friends. All of these expectations were shown to be fulfilled during their three-week stay in the Philippines as evidenced by the feedback letters of students. One student wrote, *“First, I think my communication skills and character may be improved. Through English lessons, I became what can express thoughts and opinions”*. Another student mentioned, *“I gained a confidence to communicate with people whose mother tongue isn’t Japanese, because now that I have a special means to talk with them. It’s my own English. Even if they cannot speak English well, I still have a confidence to relate to each other”*. Another student wrote, *“I learn to speak English in front of people with confidence not fear”*. This shows that the students were able to meet their expectations in terms of improving their English communication skills, speaking with confidence using English language, making friends, and knowing Filipino culture.

### **3.3 Analysis of Students’ Evaluation of the LITE Program**

Based on the students’ evaluation of the LITE Program, 80.04% found the course to be ‘very useful’ while 19.96% found it to be ‘useful’ giving a 100% (Figure 3) rating in terms of the usefulness of the course to the students. Teachers and classroom management received a total mean score of 92.20% (Figure 6) in their capacity to explain the lessons well, speak clearly, make students participate, make difficult lessons easy, and use excellent teaching materials, as well as being kind and pleasant, and arriving in class on time.

### **3.3.1 Teachers and classroom management**

The LITE Program implements a student-centered classroom setting, which is something new for Japanese students since classroom setting in Japan is mostly teacher-centered. LITE classes in the English Plus Course are divided in three parts: 1) ice breaker to set the mood for the lessons and activities, 2) lecture/discussion about the topic for the day, and 3) activities to apply the lessons discussed in class. More time is allotted for the activities to ensure students are able to expose themselves to English language while maximizing learning opportunities. For the students, this set-up makes them uncomfortable at first because of their shy nature. But being exposed to this classroom setting proves to be effective in improving their confidence. As one student narrates,

*“The first days, I didn’t like this style class because I have to express my thoughts and make a presentation or play. But I changed the thought from unpleasant to pleasant. Also I improved my pronunciation. Thanks for it, I could tell my thoughts more than before. I was very glad to let myself understand. Second, I had many chances to make role-plays and skits in front of others. At first, I had butterflies in my stomach and my hands and legs were trembling, but I became able to speak in confidence in front of others through those activities. At last, I reached the level that I came to think how I can make a funny story and make my classmates laugh”.*

Teachers were found to be able to explain the lessons very well because in the classroom, they speak slowly and clearly. They also encourage students to ask questions and participate in class. Words, phrases, instructions, etc. are also repeated several times depending on the need of the students. In the classroom, all students are given a chance to speak, perform, recite, etc. and no one is left behind even if the student is very shy. The teachers also modify the activities and lessons as they see fit for the students. Students are also given ample time to prepare for requirements, especially the difficult ones such as interview, speeches, and presentations. In terms of using excellent teaching materials, each lesson has a corresponding activity related to the topic and lessons are tailored fit to the objectives of the course and the needs of the students. Students found this method and classroom setting to be effective for them because they are having fun while learning. As one student mentioned in her letter,

*“Before I came to Philippines, I was poor at English. So, I was worrying whether I can follow the class in Philippines. However, that was no problem. I learned about English happily. In class, we studied English happily. If I study English all day in Japan, I will not be able to stand the class. However, in Philippines, that time passed before I even knew it. because great teachers taught English in the various interesting ways. For example, making drama, playing charade or Chinese whispers, and so on. They were very fun for me. Especially, I was surprised at how to proceed with the class because, as you know, in Japan the professors talk by themselves and we students only listen*

*to them. So, I felt freshness in Philippines. Thanks to you and other great teachers, I like to study English”.*

Another student wrote,

*“Although I have studied English since I was a junior high school student, I couldn’t speak English well. Because Japanese English teachers teach only how to read or write English. I felt it have been very boring. However, LITE program was different. Every tutors put a lot of thought into their classes to have made us enjoy. It is very exciting and I could speak English with no fears”.*

### **3.3.2 Activities**

In terms of all the activities done in the LITE Program, students gave it a rating of 96.27% (Figure 6) in terms of its helpfulness in their studies. Classes employ interactive activities that will help improve not just the language [English] use of students but also their self-confidence such as ice breakers, role-playing, group work, group discussion, presentations, interview, among others. Exposure to these activities enabled them to challenge themselves and overcome their shyness. As one student explained, *“Through this program, I learned many things. In the class, I learned how to make friends in English, how to ask and answer questions, how to express things, how to invite someone, job interview, how to make good presentation, pronunciation, how to make good voice, and so on. The most effective thing for me was how to make good presentation. In the last class, I performed last presentation. It was the place where I showed what I learned in three weeks. That was the first genuine presentation using PowerPoint for me. But I proud of making good presentation. I’m going to keep this confidence and keep trying”.*

Another students mentioned, *“In the classes, there are many interactive forms in Japanese schools, and there was enough opportunity to speak English. In addition, roleplaying has always been incorporated into the lesson as much as possible, and it was decided to make a small play within the time limit by announcing two pairs or one group of 4 people and presenting it. This was a little unfamiliar to the Japanese, so I was puzzled at the beginning, but it got a little fun when I got used to it. Thinking now I believe that this roleplaying that all of us think in English and actually announce it was greatly helpful in improving English proficiency”.*

Aside from the classroom activities, there are also three educational trips for the students: 1) Laguna cultural trip wherein students are taken to five (5) towns in Laguna province to expose them to the cultural heritage of the province. Here, they visit the Shrine of Philippine’s National Hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, in Calamba. Students get to know a little bit of Philippine history and what life was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They also visit a 400 year old Catholic church in Pila where they get to know the traditions of the catholic faith. They also visit the Japanese Memorial Garden in Caliraya where some Japanese soldiers were laid after the World War II. They also visit Paete, the Woodcarving Capital of the Philippines, where they can see decades of family tradition of woodcarving. Lumban, the

Embroidery Capital of the Philippines, is also visited. Here, students see decades of familial tradition of hand embroidery. Liliw, the shoe capital of Laguna is also visited. Here, they can see hand-made shoes, slippers, and bags made by the townspeople. The town plaza is also surrounded by 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture of old houses which students also see. This educational trip aims to expose the students to some of the old Filipino traditions. Students are also provided opportunities for students to practice English because they are required to interview people from the places they visit. 2) UPLB-IRRI wherein students visit UPLB's Museum of Natural History and Makiling Botanical Garden to see flora and fauna species endemic to the Philippines, and the International Rice Research Institute to get a glimpse of what the organization does. 3) Costales Farm trip wherein students visit an organic farm in Majayjay, Laguna to see technology in organic farming. Here, they are exposed to the different methods of farming and they get to harvest some vegetables. Since most of the students are from the Graduate School of Agricultural Science, visit to these places are interesting and helpful for them.

These trips are fascinating for the students because of their exposure to Filipino local traditions. The visit to Dr. Jose Rizal's ancestral home in Calamba was insightful for some students. As one student wrote in his comments, *"I like the Museum of the Philippines National Hero because I am interested in the Philippine's history"*. They were also impressed by Rizal's ideologies and life. Another student said in his comments about the woodcarving shop, *"I am impressed by his [wood carver] working"*. Some students also enjoyed the feeding of animals and vegetable picking at Costales Nature Farm, as one student said, *"I enjoyed eating leaves of plants, feeding spinach to rabbits and pigs"*.

Another activity that students engage in is the Sounds of the English Language: The Karaoke King and Queen Challenge. Prior to coming to the Philippines, the students are informed of the activity and they have to choose a song piece, practice it at home, and sing their song choice during the activity. The students are evaluated by their classmates based on the following criteria: a) clarity of pronunciation, b) melody, and c) overall impact. The male and female students who receive the highest overall rating is hailed the Karaoke King and Queen of their batch. This activity promotes fun language learning through songs since students enjoy listening to their classmate's singing style, and the actual singing itself. In fact, they still get together in Japan after the LITE Program to have karaoke.

Aside from the daily classroom activities and trips, the students also have a daily two-hour guided interaction with UPLB student-facilitators after their classes. This is done to practice their English communication skills. Based on the students' evaluation, guided interaction received a mean rating of 93.88%. Conversation partners/facilitators were shown to help them improve their English skills, were pleasant and kind, and initiated helpful activities for them. These activities depend on the preferences of the students but their usual activities are eating in a local restaurant, playing Filipino games, practice pronunciation and conversation, and assisting them in their homework. Students see the

importance of the guided interaction in their stay in the LITE Program and in learning English to reinforce and practice the lessons taken in class. As one student said, *“My facilitators helped me understand the lessons better since I am not good at pronunciation”*. Another student feels happy that she was able to make new friends in a foreign country as stated in her letter, *“It was my first time to make friends with foreigners. At first I was shy and not talking. But my facilitator was very kind. I had a lot of fun. We went to many places in UPLB and played fun games”*.

### **3.4 Students’ perception of the effects of their experiences in the LITE Program in their lives**

Classroom qualitative assessment of tutors of these students found that some notable observations in their classroom behavior towards the end of the course include 1) improved confidence and eagerness to express ideas using English language, and 2) improved ability to describe and elaborate ideas using the English language. More importantly, they were able to apply what they have learned in the course in their day to day interaction with their peers, and at work when they go back home.

These were proven to be true based on the personal letters and reflection about their experiences in the LITE Program sent by the students via email few weeks after they finished the course. The positive behaviors noted by the teachers were extended even after they have finished the course.

One student wrote in her letter, *“During this program, I really felt the importance of English to convey my thought and exchange the ideas with the people all over the world. To communicate with you by English is very hard for me so I was tired every night. But thanks to these experiences, I can overcome the stereotype that I cannot speak English well. I found that it is important that I try to talk with people even if I cannot speak perfect English. Body languages, facial expressions, tones and poses... all of them help me when I communicate with foreign people. The important thing is that I try to make understood myself without afraid. Now I would like to visit to many countries because I learned that I cannot know the real situation of the world until I go there and look at by myself”*.

One student said that his English training in the LITE Program gave him confidence and enthusiasm in interacting with foreigners. He mentioned in his letter an incident that happened to him few days after coming back home from the Philippines,

*“And my communication ability in English improved thanks to your classes and this trip. Today I had a part-time job in Motomachi shopping arcade. I assisted with the street concert as a staff then. And a strange foreign resident spoke to me in English at that time. I could make out what she say and I also communicate with her. However she was maybe Chinese that she couldn’t make out what I say correctly. But I was happy that I could communicate with a foreign resident in English. After a part-time job finished, I went to Motomachi station with my friend to go home. Then we were suddenly spoken*

*by a strange foreign resident in English. He wanted to know he can go to Kobe-Sannomiya station from Sannomiya station or not but I also could communicate with him at that time. As I have explained, there are many foreign residents in Kobe that I have many opportunities to communicate in English and practice English. So I'm full of enthusiasm now".*

One student said that he was anxious about interacting with foreigners before but it was changed when he joined the LITE Program. *"Once change that happened to me is that the obstacle to talk with foreigners disappeared. I thought it was so difficult to understand each culture and values. And I thought if I cannot speak well, they would make fun of me. But it is quite different. I learn we can understand each other in spite of different nationalities. It was my first time to make friends with foreigners. After being familiar with them, I can talk to them and other Filipino people easily. After I came back to Japan, there were some opportunity to talk with exchange students. And at that time, I did not feel any obstacles, thanks to LITE program".*

Faculty guardians of these students also noticed the above mentioned positive changes in their behavior when they go back to the university. Increased confidence, better classroom presentations, improved written essays, and improved ability in expressing ideas were shown to be practiced by students who were enrolled in the LITE Program. In addition, the friendship they built during their time in the Philippines was sustained as evidenced by their constant gatherings.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, UPLB-CAS LITE Program has been effective in terms of delivering the objectives of the course to its students. Pre and Post-EPE of Japanese students who were enrolled in the LITE Program from 2016-2018 showed a combined increase of 43.59% both for the Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills and Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment sub-courses. Mean scores of students' classroom performance also showed an increasing trend from 78.02% in 2016 to 82.88% in 2017, and 85.99% in 2018.

The students' evaluation of the entire program also showed 100% positive rating in terms of its usefulness to them. Teachers and classroom management received 92.20% rating as they were able to explain the lessons very well, encouraged student participation, and used excellent teaching materials. The program's activities received 96.27% rating as these were effective tools in helping them learn. Interactive classroom activities enabled the students to challenge themselves and overcome their shyness thus improving their confidence. Educational trips, educational singing activity, and guided interaction paved the way for cultural exposure and learning while having fun.

The students' experiences in the LITE Program created a positive change in the behavior of the students who were enrolled in the program. Some notable observations



were their improved confidence and eagerness to express their ideas using English language, and improved ability to describe and elaborate ideas using English. These positive changes were brought back to Japan when they went back home. Increased confidence, better classroom presentations, improved written essays, and improved ability in expressing ideas were shown to be practiced by students who were enrolled in the LITE Program as observed by their Faculty Guardians.

## **References**

- Blanco, K.A. and Mendoza, G.B. Exploring Juku in a Foreign Country: The UPLB LITE Program Experiences. *The Journal of East Asian Educational Research*. Issue No. 3, January 2017
- Blair, R. J.: "The role of English and other foreign languages in Japanese society," *The Internet TESL journal*, (3)7, <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Blair-EngJpn.html>, (1997).
- Brown, D. H. *Principles of language learning & teaching*. (5th Eds.). Pearson: Longman. (2007).
- Butler, Y.G., and M. Iino. Current Japanese reforms in English language education: The 2003 'Action Plan'. *Language Policy* 4: 25-45. (2005).
- Choi, Y. H., & Lee, H. W.: "Current trends and issues in English language education in Asia," *The journal of Asia TEFL*, 5(2), pp.1-34, (2008).
- Chomsky, N. *Language and Mind* (Enlarged Ed.). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 124. (1972).
- Chuo, T.-W. I., & Yen, S.-C. H.: "Good Language Learners in the Taiwanese EFL Context: Characteristics, prior experiences, and strategy use," <http://ir.lib.wzu.edu.tw:8080/dspace/bitstream/987654321/194/1/637-Good%20Language%20Learners%20in%20the%20Taiwanese%20EFL%20Context.pdf>, (n.d.). Crystal, D. *English as a global language*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (2003).
- Dai, M. C. A Critique of Fundamental Difference Hypothesis in Second Language Acquisition. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, 1, 16-20. (2012).
- Deng, F. and Zou, Q. A Study on Whether the Adults' Second Language Acquisition Is Easy or Not – From the Perspective of Children's Native Language Acquisition. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 776-778, April 2016.
- Gao, Xia. Probes into the Characteristics of Second Language Acquisition-a Contrast between First Language Acquisition and Second Language Acquisition. *Journal of Chuxiong Normal University*, 17, 37-40. (2002).
- Grant, R. Student attitudes toward English-only classroom policies. *ORTESOL Journal*, 20, 1–20. (1999).
- Hu, G. and McKay SL. English language education in East Asia: some recent developments. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. Vol. 33, No. 4, 345-362. July 2012.
- Krashen, S.D. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 45. (1982).
- Kubota, R. Ideologies of English in Japan. *World Englishes* 17: 295-307. (1998).

- Littlewood, W., & Yu, B. First language and target language in the foreign language classroom. *Language Teaching*, 44(01), 64–77.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444809990310>. (2011).
- McArthur, T.: “English as an Asian language,” <http://www.accu.or.jp/appreb/09/pdf33-2/33-2P003-004.pdf>, (2002).
- Norris-Holt, J.: “Motivation as a contributing factor in second language acquisition,” *The Internet TESL journal*, (7)6, <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Norris-Motivation.html>, (2001).
- Park, J.-K. English fever’ in South Korea: Its history and symptoms. *English Today* 25, no. 1: 50-7. (2009).
- Rivers, D. J. *Resistance to the known*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. (2014).
- Schneider, E.W. *English around the world: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (2011).
- Shvidko, E. Learners’ Attitudes Toward “English-Only” Institutional Policies: Language Use Outside the Classroom. *TESL Canada Journal*. Vol. 34, Issue 2, pp. 25-48. (2017).
- Takanashi, Y.: “TEFL and communication styles in Japanese culture,” *Language, culture and curriculum*, 17(1), pp.1-14, doi: 10.1080/07908310408666678, (2004).
- Wang, H., & Hill, C.: “A paradigm shift for English language teaching in Asia: From imposition to accommodation,” *The journal of Asia TEFL*, 8(4), pp.205-232, (2011).
- Yao, F. A Study of the Advantages and disadvantages of Adult Second Language Acquisition. *Continue Education Research*, 1, 139-140. (2011).

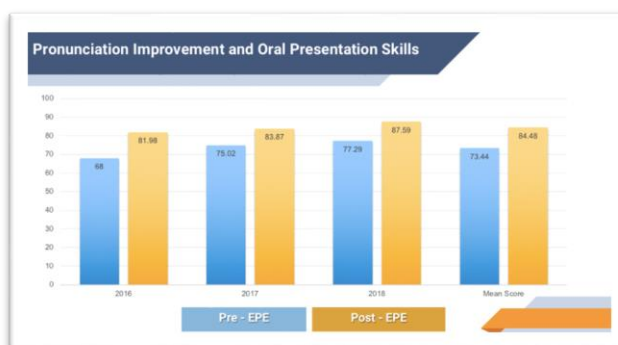


Figure 1. Pre and Post-EPE Score on Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills

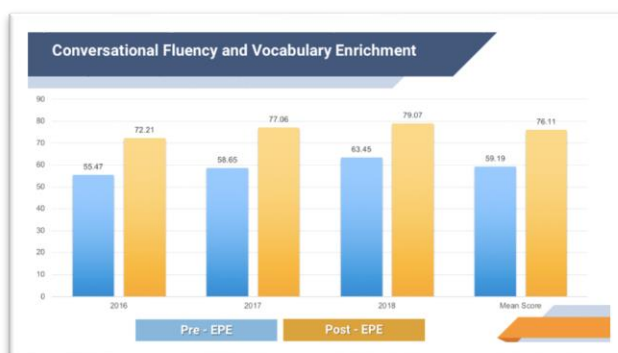


Figure 2. Pre and Post-EPE Score on Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment



Figure 3. Usefulness of the Course

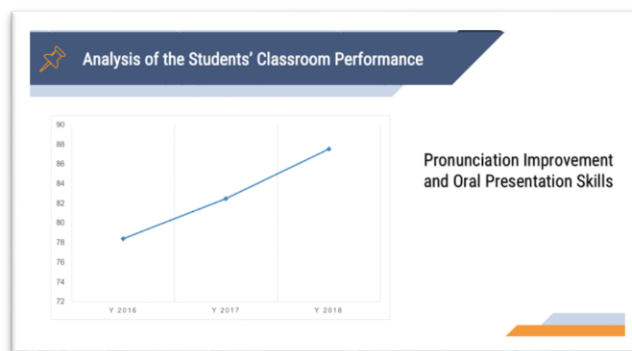


Figure 4. Classroom Performance of students in Pronunciation Improvement and Oral Presentation Skills sub-course

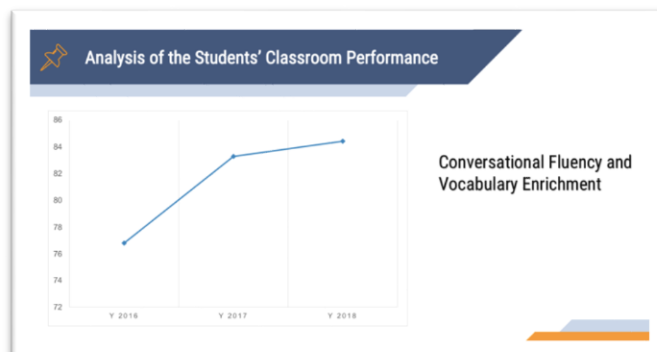


Figure 5. Classroom Performance of students in Conversational Fluency and Vocabulary Enrichment sub-course

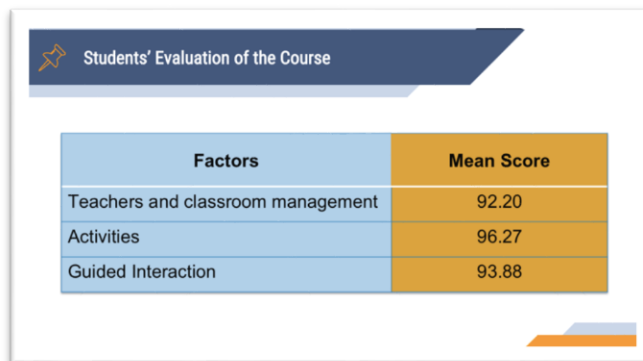


Figure 6. Students' Evaluation of Teachers and Classroom Management, Activities, and Guided Interaction