

# **Internationalization and Outcome of Study Abroad Program In Higher Education: Mobility of Japanese Students to Malaysia**

**Keywords :** Research skills, Oral presentation skills, Student mobility

## **1. Background**

Today, the understandings on issues such as globalization and business management challenges have become important subject matters to modern management education due to the rapid changes in the business landscape. Particularly, the university students under the business administration programme have been taught and exposed to various management courses and case studies (i.e. Apple, Google, Enron, Microsoft, etc.) on tremendous contributions that business and markets have made in creating wealth over the last few decades, and raising the standard of living of millions. However, despite of these achievements and considerable economic performance declines, it had raised an inequity conditions and promises that remain unfulfilled in the current business environment.

In this regard, the international office and the faculty of business administration of Kanagawa University had made collaboration with several universities abroad to allow these selected students to propel them towards acceptance and understanding of an array of different culture and society as well as organizational practices. This initiation process is known as Business Study Abroad Programme (BSAP) in Malaysia allows students to strengthen maturity and social poise, fuelled by necessity to confront challenges outside a familiar support and comfort zone. Importantly, to cultivate a sense of accomplishments among students to encourage independent or individual opinions and informed decisions upon the matters that they have observed especially on the current challenges to business and management matters of a

particular country they visited for a period of one year. These students were required to identify certain business issues faced by the local organizations and to present as well as to report their ideas once they are back to the university.

Alternatively, these students may also present and share their experiences on how they were able to compel in attempt to adopt into the different environment. For example, at the time that the BSAP students come to Malaysia, they realize that they need to find ways to assimilate into the new culture. However, for many, this process becomes almost impossible in the beginning. In most cases, language barrier, cultural shock, as well as the stress caused by homesickness affects the way they perceive things. Everything appears to be foreign to the BSAP students when they first arrive in Malaysia. Particularly, the way people communicate with one another here is not the same as the way they did in Japan.

In addition, as soon as these BSAP students start classes on campus (either in Multimedia University or AIMST University), it becomes tremendously difficult for them to interact with the locals or other international students due to language barriers. Many often find it difficult to communicate with their fellow classmates, lecturers and administrators. Others are extremely shy and uncomfortable speaking in English due to their proficiency. This prevents them from completing many of their daily accomplishments. It becomes challenging for them to make friends, comprehend lectures and participate in the classrooms where the cultural dynamic is very different.

Furthermore, asking for help does not come easily for the Japanese students due to the fact they do not have the ability to express their needs and troubles to others because of the language barrier. Language is the key to our basic communication and it allows us to help and learn from one another so when these individuals are unable to share their experiences and express their needs, they feel trapped in their minds due to lack of expression of their thoughts.

Therefore, under this realization, before the Kanagawa University sends their students to Malaysia for one year, it provides them 4 sessions a week to learn any foreign languages for each semesters, particularly English language for those intend to go for BSAP programme. Most of the students who will go to Malaysia is taking an English regular classes as well as a consultation of English writing and speaking. Based on these preparation, the students will obtain certain level of confidence to enter the foundation course in partner universities of Malaysia, which requires a minimum score of TOEFL such as 450 above.

In support to this, the faculty of business administration at Kanagawa University has initiated a research seminar to these students in attempt to prepare students for a variety of academic and other situations in which formal presentations in English are required. Topics will include cultural conventions and modern business management matters. Students will learn how to research, outline, and deliver short, informal presentations as well as longer speeches. This seminar will give the students the opportunity to develop and strengthen skills in preparing and presenting oral presentations in a variety of situations after they experience one year course of foundation in Malaysia. It should also sharpen their skills in critical listening.

This is a practice-oriented course whereby speaking clearly and comfortably with audience is a valuable and often essential skill to possess. Issues and current events relative to the seminar course will be addressed to induce deep discussion among the students as well as between instructors and students.

## **2. Methodology**

The chart 1 shows the list of students who have gone to Malaysia for one year at Kanagawa University. The total number of students has reached to around 50, which indicates that one-tenth of the students at the faculty of business administration of Kanagawa University attend to the program every year.

Table 1: List of the students who went to Malaysia

	2013 Spring	2013 Fall	2014 Spring	2014 Fall	2015 Spring	2015 Fall	
Male	3	9	15	7	11	10	55
Female	4	6	6	5	13	15	49
Total	7	15	21	12	24	25	104

Sources; Authors

In the foundation courses of Malaysian partner universities, all of Japanese students are required to take basic subjects of management studies including accounting, business administration, information studies, economics, mathematics for management, and legal studies in English together with local students. The total number of credits hours, according to the universities in Malaysia, is approximately from 40 to 44, which is almost equivalent to the credit hours taken by Japanese students in Japan.

The exposure to local community including Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca, and other cities in the Southeast Asia is also crucial for those students to acquire the skills and knowledge as the business persons in international community. Some of the students could have experienced an internship in the local companies for several weeks between semesters as well as volunteer activities with the people in Malaysia.

The students were allowed to decide whether to proceed with the research project either individually or partnership at joint seminar after they finish the BSAP in Malaysia. They were also given the liberty to decide on their preferred areas of study which related to the current international business scenarios. The students were directed to read at least several academic journals, to refer to any online world business news as well as to conduct small survey and interviews in order to enhance

their level of awareness pertaining to the topic which has been selected. Prior to this research process, the students will be given some introductory lectures by two instructors on steps of undertaking the research, current business environment as well as the preparation on skills in presentations. The instructors will be assisting and facilitating throughout the presentations and discussions weekly as the students follow their guidance.

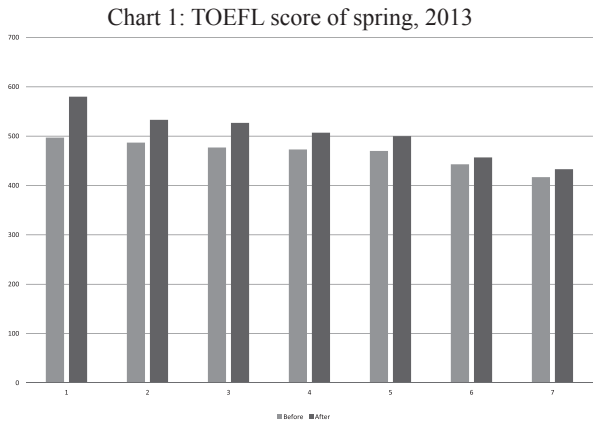
In this study, we treat prior study of foreign languages in Japan and the foundation courses taken at Malaysian partner universities as inputs for the students to become more sufficient with research skills and oral presentation skills. On the contrary, the joint seminar in Kanagawa University should be treated as the field for the students to express their abilities according to the guidance by the instructors from Japan and Malaysia. All of the students must take the English proficiency test such as TOEFL before and after they attend to the BSAP. Then, we can observe the difference of the scores among the each batch of students as well as the evaluation for presentation made by the students in the joint seminar. These two factors of TOEFL score and evaluation should be the dependent variables of our study.

### 3. Framework of the Study

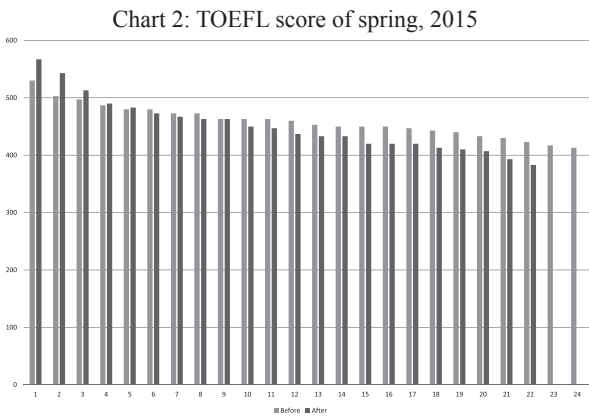


#### 4. Outcomes of Observation

One of the significant data which we have obtained from our study is the fact that even though the Japanese students who spend one year to learn basic subjects of management study in Malaysia, their score of TOEFL does not necessarily change at all after they come back to Japan.



Sources; Authors



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From the observations made throughout the semesters, it has found that the students have demonstrated their attitudes as follows in the joint seminar:

- i. Committed to the class of joint seminars via their attendance;
- ii. They were prepared for class and often participate in during class discussions;
- iii. They showed interest in the subject matter and asked interesting questions or made thoughtful comments;
- iv. They have strong determination and self-discipline necessary for success;
- v. They have completed the coursework with satisfactory grades.

The another fact based on the criteria shown as above shows that the score of TOEFL does not support relevant research skills and presentation in the joint seminar according to the evaluation by both instructors from Japan and Malaysia.

There are mainly three group of students in this study including the group which covers the students of better scores than before they attend to the program, the one which covers the students of nothing to change in terms of scores, and the one which covers the students of lower scores than before. We carefully consider why this phenomena happened consistently and propose feasible independent variables such as family structure of each student, foreign experiences before they attend to the BSAP, and effectiveness of education in Malaysia in terms of class size.

#### **4.1 Malaysia as a Destination**

When asking reasons as to why they chose Malaysia as their study abroad destination – few respondents showed an interest in the Malaysian education system, but other reasons like an interest in the daily life in Malaysia and how different it is from Japan were also mentioned. One respondent did mention that some Japanese students might want to learn about Malaysian culture (as most of the respondents for the BSAP programme had). The respondents mentioned knowing previous Japanese

students who had lived in Malaysia in order to take part in the daily life and experience the traditions of Malaysia. All of the respondents found it challenging to use English during their study abroad experience, since Malaysia is a multi-racial society. Other perhaps smaller hindrances included Malaysia public transportation and facilities system not being as good as expected and the host university's cafeteria not offering a wide variety of dishes daily.

#### **4.2 Benefits of Studying Abroad**

Beside the chance to improve their English skills, all of the respondents brought up the concept of making international connections. They saw it beneficial to learn more about other cultures, one respondent describing that by making international friends, you also learn new views in life. Another mentioned that you learn to accept differences between cultures. While the respondents had been interested in getting to know more about Malaysia, through their study abroad experience, they ended up learning more about other cultures as well. One respondent also told how they had faced a challenge relating to English language in one class, but instead of asking for help from their Malaysian friends, they had handled it on their own and gained confidence through that. After returning to Japan, they felt they could do more things than before without much hesitation.

### **5. Discussion**

Japanese students come to Malaysia with their domestic cultural identities which is based on deep-rooted values, which are also commonly shared among the people of their culture. Thus, as we are aware, values and traditions play a significant factor on the way that individuals interact and inter-relate. Level of morals and principles justify the way individuals behave around others as well as how they perceive the behaviour of others in which either may or may not initiate relationship development with others of various backgrounds.



In this reference, the objectives for this study was to understand the trends for student mobility in Kanagawa University in Japan through Business Study Abroad Programme (BSAP) and opportunities of the Japanese students could have by studying in Malaysia. After, once answers from respondents have been collected, suitable recommendations on the topic of how study abroad could be developed with Japanese students in mind can be thought of. The study managed to fulfil the set objectives. Most importantly, however, the data from the respondents helped tie together the connection between Malaysia and Japan in this study, as the data gathered hadn't concerned both of the countries simultaneously, and was rather one side versus the other in nature.

While this study concluded being rather small in scale, hopefully with the results and insights gained from it the subject can be examined more in the future. The study did show potential in having Malaysia as a study abroad destination and while this study focused on Japanese students from the Faculty of Business in Kanagawa University, the results could also be used when promoting Malaysia for students from other faculties as well. Most international exchange students struggle in the process of adapting to a new culture, learning a new language and understanding a new way of life so it will not be a surprise that most of them encounter countless difficulties. It takes hard work to succeed and overcome the challenges of living in different countries, in this case Malaysia. Since, individuals identifies his or herself with a particular group, it is important to understand the values and norms of other cultures in order for the Japanese students to be understood as well. Most of us would say that no one should give up their culture, but rather should be open-minded. This is crucial, if people are to acknowledge one another and establish common ground.

Studies also showed that student mobility is now starting to grow in Japan, with the Japanese government jumping in on the trend to develop the nation's youth (Aoshima, 2016). The students saw the biggest advantage of overseas studies being gaining language skills and also listed foreign language courses as one incentive,

along with financial support and increased employability. While there might still be some reluctance, hopefully more and more students will head abroad – be it as an exchange student or as a degree student. The results indicated that English skills – whether lack of them or the wish to improve them – was one major factor for Japanese students when it came to studying abroad.

In the case of BSAP programme, other than improvement in English language, the exchange students also developed various abilities and skills that were directly related to their experience in Malaysia, such as local language competency, the ability to interact successfully with other cultures, and increased knowledge of foreign countries such as Malaysia and its neighbouring countries.

Additionally, these study abroad participants (BSAP) recognized that they acquired or improved general social skills, such as communication skills, the ability to act on decisions, and to be more flexible – other than individuals who did not study abroad. These social skills are critically important for individuals to live and work effectively in a modern and civil society. Although social skills should be developed at a university in the home country, the current study on Kanagawa University students under BSAP programme showed that study abroad experience had a significant impact on the development of these skills and were less developed by those students who remained at Kanagawa University throughout their period of study.

In the beginning, these BSAP students go through an exciting and refreshing stage, they then become overwhelmed, concerned and frightened by the new environment, while there was a case that a student would rather go back home than to try to adjust to the host culture. Indeed, it is a challenging to change our way of life, the values, traditions we dearly valued and to easily embrace a new way of life. Due to these troubles, it is common for the BSAP exchange students to have a tough time adjusting to host culture because it truly differs from what they have identified with all their lives. In some cases, what is acceptable in their culture might be unusual and

strange in the host culture. This creates anxiety in the hearts of the Japanese students because they are constantly conscious about their surroundings. During this time, miscommunication is very likely to take place and often times; it is a burden for them as they try to be the respectful and tolerant ones since they are the outsiders. For some, they would not prefer to be identified and referred to as an outsider as they are trying very hard to understand the new culture.

Generally, whether the BSAP exchange programme students or any regular international students, they experience many difficulties while attempting to integrate. There are different stages that they go through as many of them also relate to each other's experiences. In most cases, these international students find comfort within other international students. Therefore, at times, this makes it difficult for them to assimilate into the host country. Nonetheless, some successfully go through the different stages while others spend longer periods in those phases.

Furthermore, some of the BSAP exchange students identified issues that they encountered in their classrooms. They mentioned that Malaysian professors/lecturers ask questions that are asking the student about a cultural aspect of the Malaysian culture that they may not have ever heard of. This then causes the students to be confused and anxiety in terms of how to answer such questions. These questions can range from a type of food, clothing, drink, or even a country's history. A student would not be able to answer such a question if they have not been equipped with the proper knowledge of the Malaysian culture and history. It is beneficial to familiarize a student, particularly in the BSAP programme with the culture in which they are writing about or either to write for students from a multicultural perspective in which the questions can somewhat relate to them.

Having said that, the issue is not limited to the cultural context of materials only, but also language barrier as well lack of communication and misunderstanding of teacher-student relationship in a Malaysian classroom context.

Based on the results, it can be said that there is potential in developing the study in the future if a larger pool of respondents can be gathered. Therefore, if there's an interest in the future to further develop the educational relationship between the two countries (Japan – Malaysia), conducting this study again on a larger scale should be beneficial. With all of this data taken into consideration, we can now see what kind of opportunities Japanese students of Kanagawa University could have in Malaysia and offer recommendations for strengthening the Business study abroad programmes (BSAP).

## **6. Recommendations**

This study was conducted with BSAP programme in mind, but the results could prove to be potentially valuable for student mobility programmes in Kanagawa University. Based on the results, Japanese students are most interested in developing their language skills when deciding on where to do their study abroad. However, as seen with the answers from the questionnaire during the interview sessions, none of them particularly wanted to study the Malaysian language, but rather develop their skills in English – a language they have learned before coming to Malaysia. While, obviously, the courses the students will take in Malaysia are taught in English, one additional idea to help them efficiently improve their skills could be to, if not develop new courses, to promote English courses even more to the Japanese students, perhaps one course as compulsory as part of their majors.

In the case of BSAP, its Japanese exchange students can potentially come from a variety of educational background (Undergraduate) instead of Faculty of Business Administration. For example, the BSAP programme can be extended to other faculties such as Faculty of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Human Sciences. Therefore, students coming in may be forced to take courses that are not part of their usual curriculum back at their faculties. While courses from different fields may still be beneficial, it might be a good idea to take this more into consideration.

Few respondents showed interest particularly in the Malaysian education system, but others were also interested in culture, traditions, daily life, design and others. While Malaysian Partner University courses usually also teach cultural things as well, it might be a good idea to offer, e.g., a short series of lectures on those cultural related topics.

## **7. Conclusions**

This study was involved in discovering some of the trends of studying abroad interest of the Kanagawa University BSAP students to Malaysia and the challenges that these students are challenged with as well as their cultural identity transformation during their 1 year stay in Malaysia and whether they experience identity crisis in some cases. Additionally, throughout this study, it is expected that the students will be able to conduct even their emotional trainings such as maturity, demonstration such as research presentations and forth in the future. Students who are able to master in research and communication skills are prepared for future success.

The in-class observations and semi-structured interviews were adopted in this study, as the researchers understand the benefits of having an open discussion. The researchers also see the advantage of allowing students to express their views and observations without restricting them in any way. This method allowed them to bring new ideas and comments to our discussion as the interview continued.

Overall, it is important that we consider how much of an impact that we have on our students as instructors, and regardless of what we teach, and how we educate our students, we are leaving them with an experience of a lifetime so let's concentrate on enhancing their self-esteem and motivating them to succeed academically.

This study is meaningful as it sheds light on some issues that need to be addressed among students, educators and perhaps parents. It is important that educators

understand the best interest of all students, as international exchange students also need to acknowledge the different environment and better communicate with their teachers. This study should also assist administrations while they are preparing for orientation week for the international exchange students and consider addressing some of the challenges as well as solutions for them. Indeed, our understanding of these issues will as a result enhance our ability to provide sympathetic, supportive services to international exchange students.

**References:**

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活動実績報告 ①法政大学経営学部での研究報告  
国際共同研究「グローバルな集合知形成のマネジメント  
—日本企業の国際成長戦略に関する研究—  
2017年1月23日～24日

## **Internationalization and Inter- culturality in Higher Education:**

**Japanese Student Mobility to Malaysia**

**Seiki Yukimoto, Arman Hadi Abdul Manaf  
Kanagawa University**

### **Business Study Abroad Programme (BSAP)**

- The BSAP allows students to enroll and study in Malaysia.
  - AIMST & MMU
- Study Abroad attracts a tuition fee based on the number of subject credit points of study at the other institution.
- Our partner universities teach in English.
  - Students are not required to speak the language of your host country.
  - However, going on exchange is also an opportunity to learn a new language, even if students will not study in that language.

## **Objectives: BSAP**

- To cultivate a sense of accomplishments among students to encourage independence opinions and informed decisions upon the matters that they have observed.
- To strengthen maturity and social poise, fuelled by necessity to confront challenges outside a familiar support and comfort zone.

## **Foreign Languages Education at KU**

- 4 sessions a week
- Students can choose one of the seven foreign languages starting from the freshman
- There is a placement tests every semester so that students can learn the English language at the right level that they achieve.
- Once students are selected as exchange students to go to Malaysia, they will take a consultation of English writing every week and will attend to several workshops to understand the objectives of BSAP



## Courses and Subjects in AIMST

- Group 1 mainly takes the degree courses since their TOEFL score is over 500

Subjects	Credits
Essentials of Business Communication	2
Organizational Behaviour	6
Introduction to Business Economics	2
Principles of Management	2
Foundation of Marketing	2
Entrepreneurship	6
Elements of Accounting	2
Operations Management	6
Human Resource Management	6
Management Information Systems	6
Sub total	40
English for Specific Academic Purposes	4
Total	44

## Courses and Subjects in AIMST

- Group 2 combines one degree subject with the foundation courses since their TOEFL score is over 470

Subjects	Credits
Foundation in Accounting 1	3
Fundamentals of Business Administration 1	3
Information Technology Studies 1	3
Principles of Economics 1	3
Mathematics for Management 1	3
Foundation in Accounting 2	3
Fundamentals of Business Administration 2	2
Information Technology Studies 2	3
Principles of Economics 2	2
Mathematics for Management 2	3
Foundation in Accounting 3	2
Fundamentals of Business Administration 3	2
Information Technology Studies 3	2
Principles of Economics 3	2
Mathematics for Management 3	2
Foundation of Marketing	2
Sub Total	40
English 1	2
English 2	2
Total	44

## Courses and Subjects in AIMST

- Group 3 takes the foundation courses only since their TOEFL score is below 470

Subjects	Credits
Foundation in Accounting 1	3
Fundamentals of Business Administration 1	3
Information Technology Studies 1	3
Principles of Economics 1	3
Mathematics for Management 1	3
Foundation in Accounting 2	3
Fundamentals of Business Administration 2	2
Information Technology Studies 2	3
Principles of Economics 2	2
Mathematics for Management 2	3
Foundation in Accounting 3	2
Fundamentals of Business Administration 3	2
Information Technology Studies 3	2
Principles of Economics 3	2
Mathematics for Management 3	2
Sub Total	38
English 1	2
English 2	2
Total	42

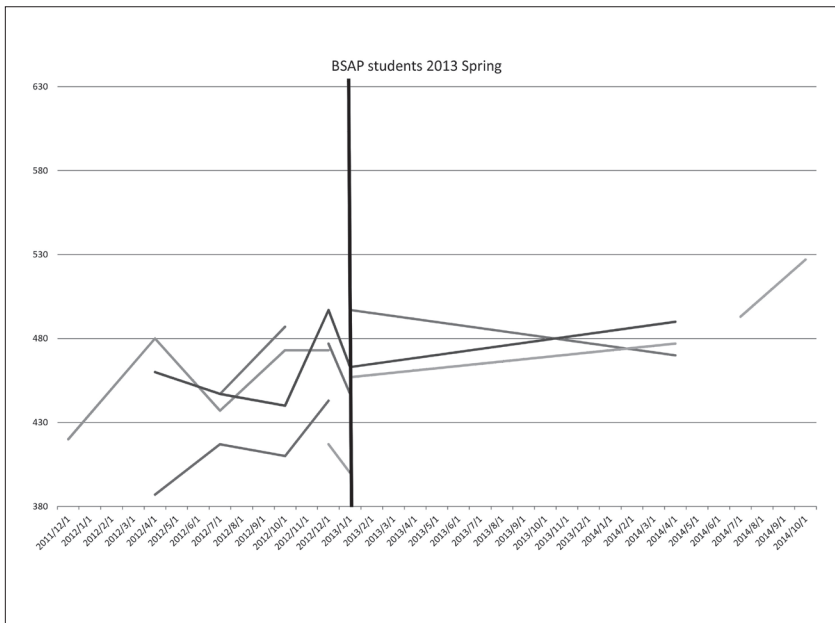
## Foundation courses in MMU

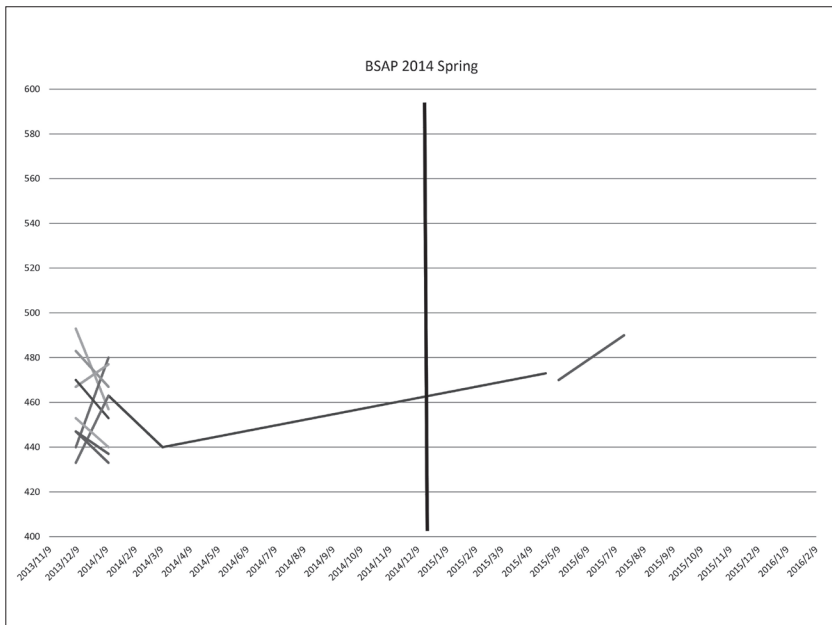
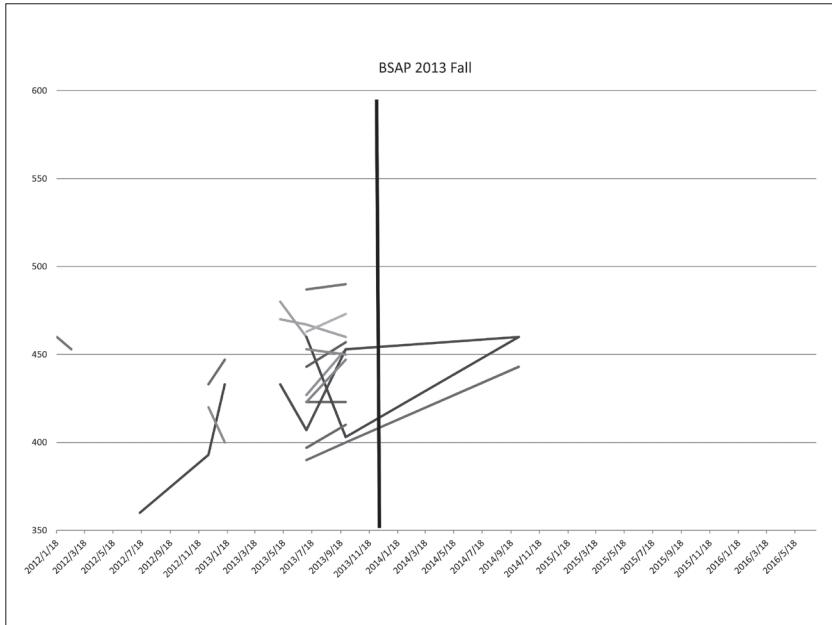
- Before the students start to take the foundation courses, they need to take one-month intensive English preparatory courses in order for them to pass the placement exam.

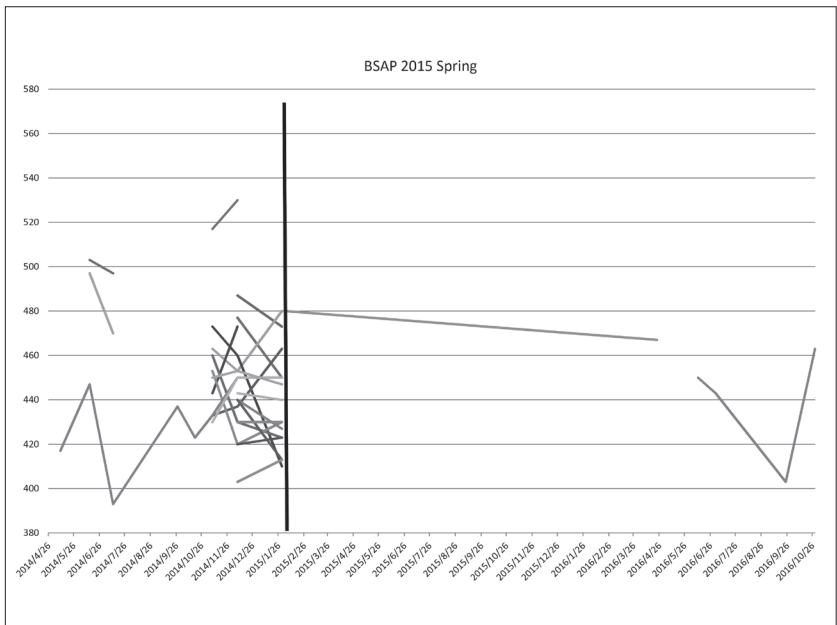
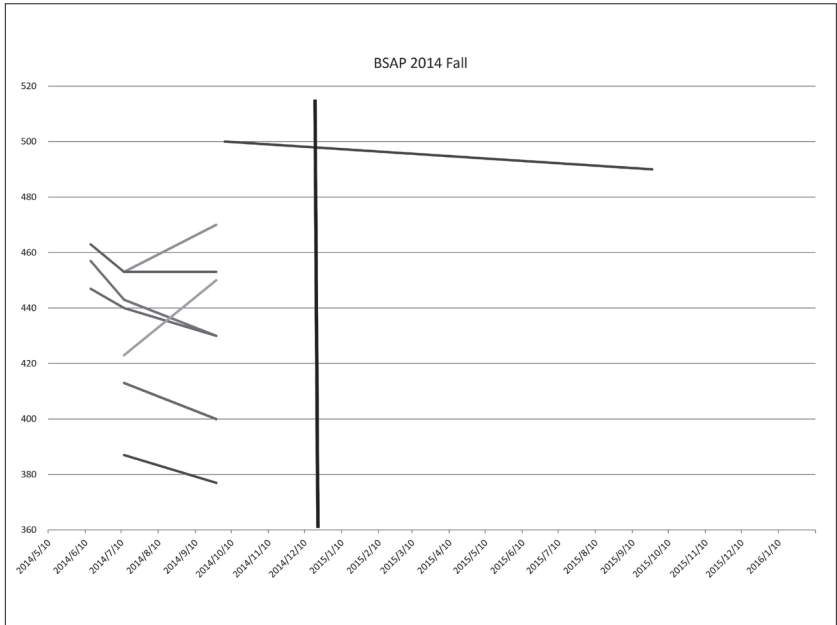
Subjects	Credits
Introduction to Business Plan	2
Introduction to Business Management	2
Principles of Macroeconomics	2
Principles of Microeconomics	2
Critical Thinking	4
Group dynamics	4
Computer Applications and Web design	4
Introduction to Probability and Statistics	2
Mathematics	4
Financial Accounting	4
Cost and Management Accounting	4
Introduction to Commercial Law	2
Academic English	4
Sub Total	40
Communicative English	2
Essential English	2
Total	44

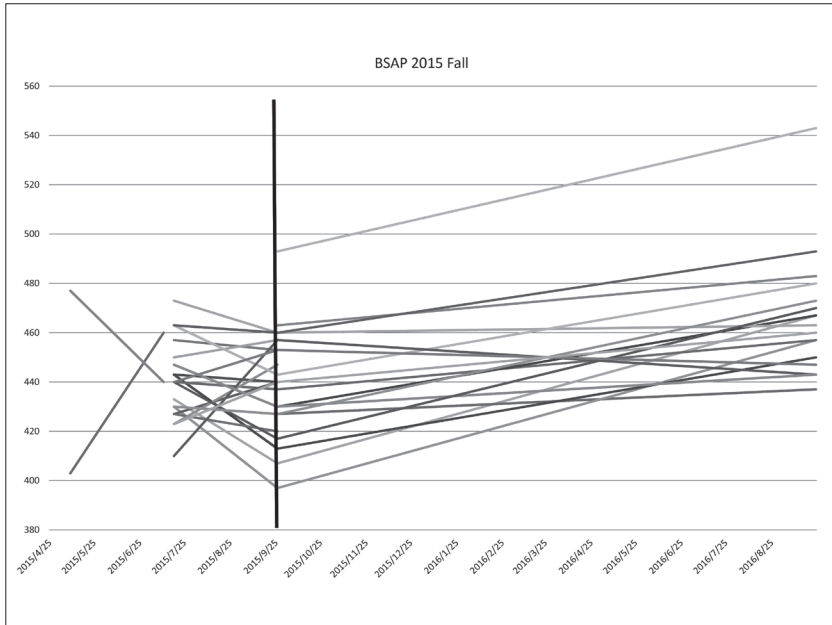
## List of the students who attended to BSAP

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Male	3	9	15	7	11	10	55
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## Fact findings by analyzing their achievements

- Three groups of students
  - Better score than the one before they attend
  - Nothing change before they attend
  - Lower score than the one before they attend
- Possible independent variables
  - Family structure
  - Foreign experiences
  - Class size in Malaysia

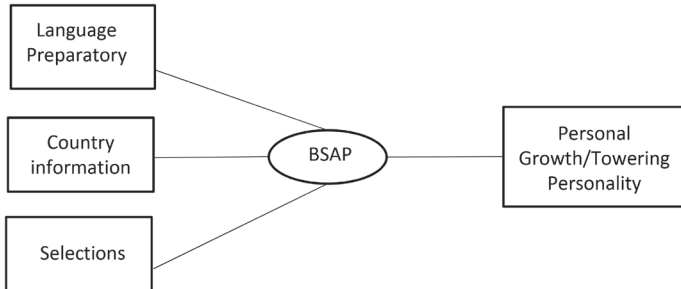
## **Joint Seminar**

- The faculty of business administration has initiated a joint seminar to these students after they come back to KU in attempt to prepare them for a variety of academic and other situations in which formal presentations in English are required.

## **Objectives of Joint Seminar**

- The goal of this seminar is to provide opportunity to work closely with instructors in a small-class environment and to meet other students.
- This seminar will emphasize class discussion as well as learning in creative ways.
- The seminar is also designed to help students refine their communications skills, including the ability to speak clearly and write persuasively, as well as build critical thinking and research skills.

## KU Mobility Model



## Summary

- Reconsider career prospects
- Pushed out of comfort zone
- Open to the new experiences come across
- Going on exchange is deciding what kind of people you want to be surrounded by and what kind of person you want to be in life.



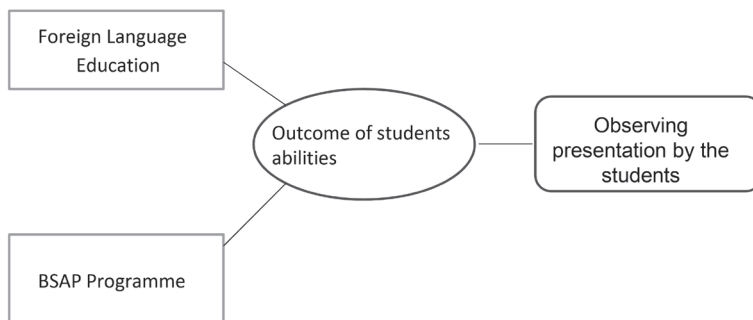
活動実績報告 ②EIBA（イタリア）での研究報告  
2017年12月14日～17日

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Mobility of Japanese Students to Malaysia

Seiki Yukimoto, Arman Hadi Abdul Manaf  
Kanagawa University

## Framework of the Study



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- Students can choose one of the seven foreign languages starting from the freshman
- There is a placement tests every semester so that students can learn the English language at the right level that they achieve.
- Once students are selected as exchange students to go to Malaysia, they will take a consultation of English writing every week and will attend to several workshops to understand the objectives of BSAP

## Business Study Abroad Programme (BSAP)

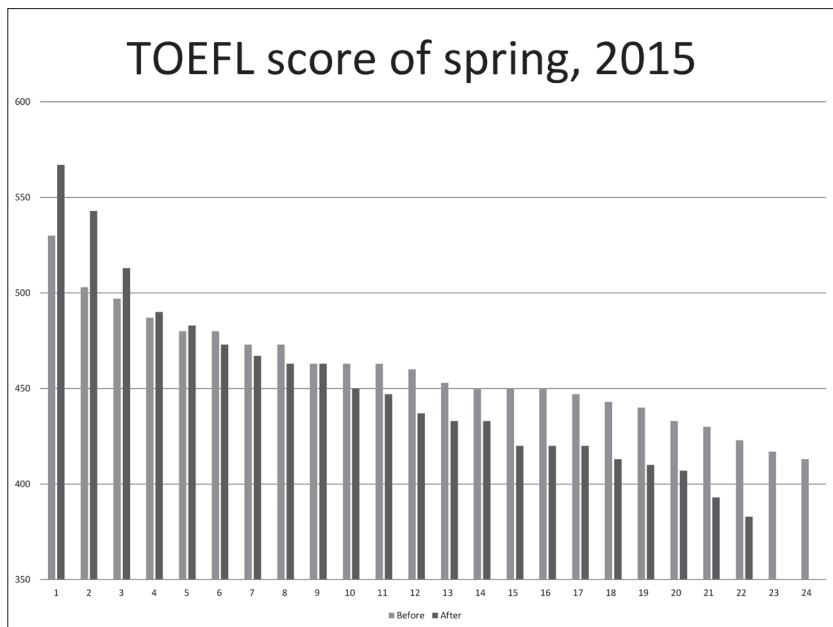
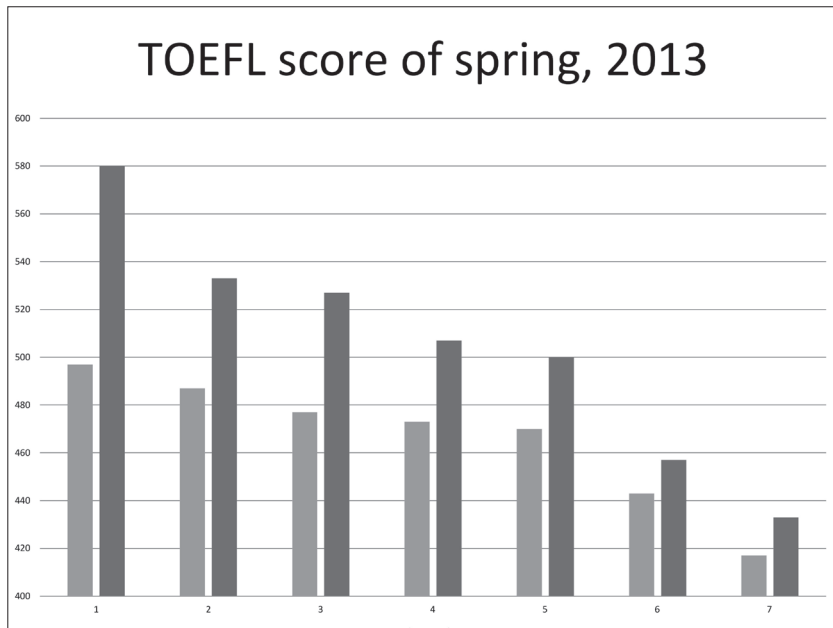
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## **Joint Seminar**

- The faculty of business administration has initiated a joint seminar to these students after they come back to KU in attempt to prepare them for a variety of academic and other situations in which formal presentations in English are required.
- Two faculty members under different nationality involved this class

## **Objectives of Joint Seminar**

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- This seminar will emphasize class discussion as well as learning in creative ways.
- The seminar is also designed to help students refine their communications skills, including the ability to speak clearly and write persuasively, as well as build critical thinking and research skills.

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  - Lower score than the one before they attended
- Possible independent variables
  - Family structure
  - Foreign experiences
  - Class size in Malaysia

## Summary

- Effect of study abroad program for Japanese students spending one year in Malaysia where you may be able to enjoy multi-ethnicity
- Effective communication and research skills are not dependent upon the experience of exchange programs to go to Malaysia
- Students skills may be affected by their level of maturity and self-confidence through observing the achievements of their presentation