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Study Abroad and Self-Efficacy in Teaching Pragmatics: Insights from Diverse Experiences

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留学経験と語用論指導における自己効力感
――多様な体験からの示唆――

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This study examined how Japanese pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics changed between pre and post study abroad (SA), comparing regular academic and ESL programs. Quantitative analyses showed greater overall self-efficacy gains for the regular group, although differences were not statistically significant. Time spent interacting with native speakers (NSs) predicted self-efficacy gains, whereas extensive Japanese use, particularly among ESL students, was associated with lower gains. Interviews revealed that high-achieving students actively engaged with NSs across diverse contexts, consolidating pragmatic knowledge, while low-achieving students relied more on co-national peers, limiting opportunities for pragmatic development. Students' beliefs about NSs and English as a lingua franca influenced engagement patterns and outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of examining individual differences in SA experiences, including variations in social engagement, language use, and motivation, in order to better understand the factors contributing to pragmatic development and self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics.

本研究は，日本の教員養成課程の学生を対象に，留学前後における語用論指導に対する自己効力感の変化を，正規科目プログラム参加者と ESL プログラム参加者で比較検討したものである。量的分析の結果，正規科目プログラム参加者の方が全体的な自己効力感の向上が大きかったものの，統計的有意差は認められなかった。母語話者との交流時間が自己効力感向上の有意な予測因子である一方，特に ESL 学生における日本語使用の多さは，自己効力感向上を抑制する傾向が見られた。インタビュー結果からは，効力感を大きく高めた学生は多様な文脈で母語話者と積極的に交流し，語用論的知識を獲得していたのに対し，あまり効力感を高めることができなかった学生は同じ国出身の学生との交流に依存し，語用論的発達の機会が限定されていたことが明らかになった。また，母語話者やリンガ・フランカとしての英語使用に対して抱く学生の信念が，現地での交流パターンや学習成果に影響を与えていた。本研究の結果は，留学経験における個人差，すなわち，社会的交流，言語使用，動機付けの違いを詳細に検討することが，語用論的能力の発達や語用論指導に対する自己効力感向上に寄与する要因を理解する上で重要であることを示唆している。

1. Introduction

Study abroad (SA) is widely regarded as a context that fosters linguistic development and intercultural understanding through frequent and meaningful interaction with target language

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users. However, learners' experiences abroad vary considerably, shaped not only by individual characteristics such as personality, motivation, and intercultural sensitivity (Dewey et al., 2013; Hernández, 2010; Isabelli-García, 2006; Ożańska-Ponikwia & Dewaele, 2012), but also by the social contexts in which they participate (Mas-Alcolea & Torres-Purroy, 2022; McManus, 2019; Strobl & Baten, 2021). Such variation raises questions about how and why SA benefits some learners more than others.

For pre-service teachers enrolled in university-based teacher preparation programs, this issue carries particular significance. Beyond developing their general English proficiency, they must also prepare to teach pragmatic uses of English—an area of language use that is inherently social and context-dependent (Taguchi et al., 2016). Study abroad (SA) is often regarded as an ideal environment for fostering pragmatic development, as it provides opportunities to observe, practice, and reflect on contextually appropriate language use (Pérez Vidal & Shively, 2019). Yet the extent to which pre-service teachers capitalize on these opportunities, and how such experiences shape their confidence in teaching pragmatics, remains underexplored.

The present study addresses this gap by examining Japanese pre-service teachers' development of pragmatic knowledge and self-efficacy in teaching pragmatics during SA. Building on prior research on social networks, language use, and pragmatic development, it compares two program types: regular academic courses and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. It also explores both group-level patterns and individual variation in relation to these developmental outcomes.

2. Background

2.1. Program-related factors and language use

Language use during SA is shaped not only by learners' individual characteristics but also by programmatic and contextual factors. Course type, for example, strongly influences interactional opportunities. Students in regular academic courses with local peers typically engage more with native speakers (NSs) and highly proficient non-native speakers (NNSs), increasing the likelihood of linguistic gains. In contrast, ESL students often interact primarily with peers of similar proficiency and may rely more on their first language (L1) for academic and social support. Such differences can lead to less diverse social networks and more limited target language experiences in the local community, which in turn affect developmental outcomes (Dewey et al., 2014; Llanes, 2011; Vande Berg et al., 2009).

Housing arrangements further shape language practices. Living with host families who speak the target language typically provides richer, more consistent exposure, whereas dormitory arrangements with co-nationals or international students often promote L1 use (Diao et al., 2018; Kinginger et al., 2016). Yet program structures and living arrangements do not fully determine learners' experiences; the social networks they cultivate and the choices they make within these contexts critically influence the quantity and quality of target language use

(Mas-Alcolea & Torres-Purroy, 2022; McManus, 2019). Understanding these dynamic interactions is essential for evaluating SA outcomes and contextualizing variation in linguistic development.

2.2. Pragmatic development during study abroad

Pragmatic competence, the ability to use language appropriately in context, depends heavily on social interaction. SA experiences have been widely associated with pragmatic gains, yet outcomes vary considerably due to differences in social engagement and language use (Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015; Matsumura, 2001; Morris, 2023; Schauer, 2006). Interactional intensity emerges as a key predictor: learners who actively seek opportunities to converse with NSs demonstrate greater recognition and production of pragmatic routines (Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler, 2019; Lang, 2019). Similarly, time spent using the target language in authentic contexts, such as homestays or volunteer activities, fosters sustained pragmatic growth (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015).

Recent work highlights the interplay between social networks and pragmatic development. Li et al. (2021) demonstrated that changes in request strategies among international students in China were closely tied to the composition of their social networks, illustrating how both the structure and intensity of interactions influence pragmatic outcomes. Collectively, these findings underscore the need to consider not just the amount of target language use but also with whom, in what contexts, and for what purposes interactions occur (Borràs & Llanes, 2021; Taguchi, 2018). For pre-service teachers, these experiences are doubly significant, shaping both their own pragmatic competence and their confidence in teaching pragmatics to future students.

2.3. Research questions

This study focuses on Japanese university students preparing to become English teachers (i.e., pre-service teachers). It investigates their use of first and target languages across social contexts during SA and examines how such use influences their self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics in their future classrooms. Specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

RQ1. How does the amount of first and target language use differ between two SA program types: regular academic courses and ESL courses?

RQ2. How does self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics change between pre and post study abroad?

RQ3. How do changes in self-efficacy relate to patterns of first and target language use?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study involved second- and third-year students enrolled in secondary school teacher preparation programs at two private universities in Japan. Their coursework included a range of

English classes (e.g., oral presentation, public speaking, academic reading and writing) as well as teacher preparation courses. Although studying abroad is not mandatory, many students choose to do so to improve their English proficiency and gain hands-on overseas experience while at university, as it is often difficult to study abroad once they begin their careers. Students selected destinations from partner institutions worldwide according to personal interests; however, high demand for certain programs meant that placement was sometimes determined by English proficiency assessments and interviews. As a result, some students were assigned to their second- or third-choice institutions.

For the present study, two groups were drawn from a cohort participating in four-month SA programs at Canadian public universities. The first group, the regular group, comprised 21 students enrolled in three or four regular academic courses alongside local students. Admission to these courses required a minimum internet-based TOEFL score of 80 ($M = 88.10$, $SD = 5.24$). Four students in this group had prior experience living and studying in English-speaking countries during high school, while the remainder had no experience living abroad aside from short-term travel. The second group, the ESL group, included 20 students who did not meet the proficiency requirement for regular courses ($M = 67.45$, $SD = 6.86$) and were therefore placed in ESL courses. None of the students in this group had previously studied abroad or lived in foreign countries. Students in both groups could choose either dormitory housing or homestays with local families based on their preferences. All students provided written informed consent to participate in the study. The consent form explained the purpose of the research, assured participants that they could withdraw at any time without penalty or any negative impact on their academic progress, and confirmed that all data would be treated confidentially.

3.2. Data Collection

Data were obtained from two groups of Japanese students through multiple sources. A self-efficacy questionnaire on teaching pragmatics, a questionnaire on language use across social contexts, and semi-structured group interviews were employed to capture both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the study.

The Self-Efficacy Questionnaire on Teaching Pragmatics was a modified version of the English Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Chacón, 2005), adapted to measure participants' beliefs about their ability to teach pragmatics in future classrooms. The instrument contained 12 items across three subscales (i.e., student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies) with four items each. Example items included: "How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in learning pragmatic uses of English?" (engagement); "How well can you establish a class management system with each group of students when teaching pragmatic aspects?" (classroom management); and "To what extent can you provide alternative explanations or examples when students are confused about pragmatic usage?" (instructional strategies). To minimize comprehension issues, all items were translated into Japanese, and the

9-point scale of the original was replaced with a 6-point semantic differential scale anchored by "not at all" and "a great deal." Total self-efficacy scores thus ranged from 12 to 72. A pilot administration was conducted with four pre-service teachers who did not participate in the main study, and they reported no major concerns. The questionnaire was administered online two weeks before and after the SA program, requiring approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The Questionnaire on First and Target Language Use in Social Contexts was a Japanese translation and adaptation of the Social Networks Questionnaire (McManus, 2019). It examined participants' interaction patterns across five contexts: university life, organized free time, general free time, home, and virtual activities. In each context, students listed up to five people they interacted with most frequently, identifying each person's social role, first language, interaction language, frequency, and average duration of contact. This design captured both social and linguistic dimensions of their interactions. To protect privacy, participants used pseudonyms or initials. The instrument was administered in class after students' return to Japan, with researchers providing detailed instructions, and completion required about one hour.

To complement the quantitative data, semi-structured group interviews were conducted in Japanese with four students from each group, selected through extreme-case sampling (two with the largest and two with the smallest self-efficacy gains). Group interviews were chosen to foster a relaxed atmosphere where participants could reflect on their own and peers' experiences. Questions probed students' reflections on their L1/L2 experiences shaping the development of pragmatic knowledge during SA. Each session lasted approximately one hour and was audio-recorded with consent for later transcription and analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative phase

In addressing RQ1 (How does the amount of first and target language use differ between two SA program types: regular academic courses and ESL courses?), the descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveal notable variations in overall language use between the two groups. As expected, Japanese use was more pronounced among ESL students ($M = 89.60$, $SD = 74.77$) than among regular students ($M = 42.95$, $SD = 49.67$). Although the average usage among ESL students was approximately double that of their regular counterparts, the large standard deviations indicate considerable variation in Japanese use within both groups. More specifically, ESL students reported using Japanese across all social contexts except organized free time ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 6.41$), whereas regular students' use was concentrated primarily in virtual social activities ($M = 15.62$, $SD = 12.60$).

Table 1 Means and standard deviations of language use in social contexts.

	Univ. life	Organized free time	General free time	At home	Virtual social activities	Total
Regular Group						
English use with NSs	31.90 (31.39)	14.57 (19.38)	39.76 (24.09)	32.86 (28.61)	3.76 (6.82)	122.86 (73.07)
Japanese use	7.52 (12.71)	5.05 (14.83)	6.62 (13.68)	8.14 (12.19)	15.62 (12.60)	42.95 (49.67)
English use with NNSs	17.00 (17.99)	5.24 (10.52)	19.67 (20.03)	11.90 (14.75)	2.76 (6.80)	56.57 (49.75)
ESL Group						
English use with NSs	33.75 (29.44)	14.35 (23.68)	32.00 (26.00)	15.55 (19.37)	4.50 (6.54)	100.15 (61.83)
Japanese use	22.30 (36.47)	2.45 (6.41)	19.35 (19.92)	27.60 (32.23)	17.90 (21.08)	89.60 (74.77)
English use with NNSs	12.40 (19.22)	5.50 (13.53)	10.20 (21.31)	8.85 (31.15)	0.20 (0.89)	37.15 (69.07)

Note. Means and standard deviations are presented in the upper and lower rows, respectively, at each intersection of language use and social context.

Several counterintuitive results also emerged. First, no significant difference was found in the total amount of English use with NSs between the regular group ($M = 122.86$, $SD = 73.03$) and the ESL group ($M = 100.15$, $SD = 61.83$), despite the expectation that ESL students would have fewer opportunities to interact with NSs due to the nature of their courses. The regular group reported using English with NSs mainly in three social contexts: university life ($M = 31.90$, $SD = 31.39$), general free time ($M = 39.76$, $SD = 24.09$), and home ($M = 32.86$, $SD = 28.61$). Similarly, the ESL group reported comparable opportunities in university life ($M = 33.75$, $SD = 29.44$) and general free time ($M = 32.00$, $SD = 26.00$), though their opportunities at home were noticeably fewer ($M = 15.55$, $SD = 19.37$).

Second, contrary to expectations, ESL students reported less English use with NNSs ($M = 37.15$, $SD = 69.07$) than regular students ($M = 56.57$, $SD = 49.75$), even though their courses included many international classmates. In both groups, English use with NNSs was concentrated in three contexts: university life (regular: $M = 17.00$, $SD = 17.99$; ESL: $M = 12.40$, $SD = 19.22$), general free time (regular: $M = 19.67$, $SD = 20.03$; ESL: $M = 10.20$, $SD = 21.31$), and home (regular: $M = 11.90$, $SD = 14.75$; ESL: $M = 8.85$, $SD = 31.15$). These contexts also accounted for most of students' English use with NSs, although the overall amount of interaction differed considerably between NSs and NNSs.

Overall, the results in Table 1 suggest that program type (regular vs. ESL) alone does not determine students' use of English with NSs or NNSs. Rather, they underscore the importance of considering how language use during SA is shaped by the amount of time spent in different social contexts. The findings also indicate that even within the same contexts, students varied considerably in the extent to which they relied on their first versus target languages.

Regarding RQ2 (How does self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics change between pre and post study abroad?), the data collected before and after SA showed Cronbach's alpha values of .78 and .72, respectively, for the total scores, indicating that both were within the acceptable range of reliability. A *t*-test was conducted to examine whether changes in self-efficacy differed significantly between the groups. Changes were measured by gain scores (pre-post), as presented in Table 2. The results indicated that the group difference in overall self-efficacy gains was not statistically significant, $t(39) = 1.904$, $p = .064$. Similarly, no significant differences were observed in gains across the three subscales (student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies) with $t(39) = .029$, 1.022, and 1.839, and $p = .977$, .313, and .074, respectively.

Table 2 Self-efficacy levels for teaching pragmatics.

	Before		After		Gain	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Regular group ($n = 21$)						
Student engagement	11.10	1.81	11.90	2.02	0.81*	1.12
Classroom management	12.86	1.98	13.67	1.68	0.81*	1.17
Instructional strategies	11.48	2.75	13.43	2.04	1.95*	1.20
Total	35.43	4.31	39.00	4.66	3.57*	1.57
ESL group ($n = 20$)						
Student engagement	10.65	2.21	11.45	1.64	0.80*	1.01
Classroom management	12.95	2.04	13.20	1.91	0.25	0.72
Instructional strategies	11.10	1.71	12.65	1.60	1.55*	1.32
Total	34.70	4.39	37.30	4.57	2.60*	1.70

Note. The score range for each subscale is 4-24, and the total score range is 12-72. *$p < .01$ in the Wilcoxon's signed-rank tests.

Moreover, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted to examine whether gain scores in each subscale were statistically significant rather than due to chance. For students in the regular group, gains across all subscales were statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level, with corresponding *z*-scores of 2.80, 3.07, and 3.98, and effect size *r* values of .43, .47, and .61 for student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies, respectively. Students in the ESL group also exhibited significant gains at the $p < .01$ level in student engagement and instructional strategies, with *z*-scores of 2.81 and 3.33 and effect size *r* values of .44 and .53, respectively. Using .30 and .50 as benchmarks for medium and large effects (Cohen, 1988), the reported effect sizes fell within the medium-to-large range.

With respect to RQ3 (How do changes in self-efficacy relate to patterns of first and target language use?), a multiple regression analysis was conducted with the total amount of the three types of language use as independent variables and the gain scores as the dependent variable. Prior to the analysis, both skewness and kurtosis values were found to indicate acceptable deviations from normality, and the assumption of independent errors did not appear to pose a

serious issue (Durbin-Watson = 2.34). In addition, a plot of standardized predicted values against standardized residuals, together with the results of the Breusch-Pagan test ($p = .155$), confirmed that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were not seriously violated. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Summary of correlation and regression coefficients.

Variables	*B*	*β*	L-CI	U-CI	*r*	*sr*	*t*	*p*
English use with NSs	.012	.476	.005	.018	.528	.516	3.668	＜.001
Japanese use	−.009	−.372	−.013	−.016	−.419	−.424	−2.848	.007
English use with NNSs	−.001	−.048	−.00	−.006	−.051	−.060	−.364	.718
$R^2 = .410$, $F(3, 37) = 8.56$, $p < .001$, Adjusted $R^2 = .362$								

Note. L-CI and U-CI denote lower and upper confidence intervals, respectively. $N = 41$.

The null hypothesis that no variance in gain scores was accounted for by the three predictor variables was rejected at the .001 level, as indicated by the R^2 and F values. Examination of the R^2 revealed that approximately 36.2% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by the three predictors, although other sources of variance remained. Further analysis of the model parameters showed a significant positive relationship between gains and English use with NSs ($\beta = .476$, $t(37) = 3.668$, $p < .001$). The semi-partial correlation ($sr = .516$) and its squared value indicated that about 26.63% of the variance in gain scores was uniquely explained by English use with NSs. Interestingly, Japanese use was negatively and significantly related to gains ($\beta = -.372$, $p = .007$). By contrast, English use with NNSs was not a significant predictor of gain scores ($\beta = -.048$, $t(37) = -.364$, $p = .718$).

4.2. Qualitative phase

4.2.1. Insights from interviews with the regular group

The quantitative analysis showed that students in the regular group achieved greater overall and subscale gains in self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics than their peers in the ESL group. As indicated in Tables 1 and 2, these students not only reported the highest levels of English use with NSs during general free time but also demonstrated the most pronounced gains in the instructional strategies subscale.

A closer examination of two high-achieving students (with gains of 7 and 6 points) and two low-achieving students (with gains of 1 point) within the regular group revealed distinctive SA experiences. Both high achievers adopted a proactive approach, actively seeking opportunities to use English beyond campus. One noted, “Interacting with classmates is not sufficient to enhance my English skills. I require more engagement.” Another reflected, “I practically stick to my classmates during my spare time.” One of the high-achieving students further remarked, “I capitalized on various opportunities to engage with NSs, seeking confidence through their positive feedback on my use of English.” The other explained, “The

course I took was particularly challenging, prompting me to seek assistance from NSs, especially when preparing presentations and writing reports." These comments suggest that, although both students actively pursued interactions with NSs, the purposes behind their engagement varied. When asked about their pragmatic uses of English in daily life, both high achievers agreed that observing how their friends acted and reacted in social situations influenced their own pragmatic choices. One explained, "I always paid close attention to the expressions my native English-speaking friends used. That's how I study English. So, I basically tried to replicate what I heard them say in similar situations."

In contrast, two low-achieving students reported struggling with the demands of their academic coursework, which left them with little free time to engage with members of the local community. One student remarked, "I was swamped getting ready for the next class, constantly buried in my books." When asked to reflect on their pragmatic use of English, both students explained that they tended to rely on the same strategies across different situations. This consistency stemmed from uncertainty about which expressions were most appropriate, even though they recognized the importance of adjusting responses to situational differences. One student stated, "I wasn't sure about prioritizing factors in a specific situation, so I chose a safer approach by using expressions like 'I think' and 'maybe' instead of ones with 'you should' and the like." The same student added, "I find it safer to use expressions I know rather than trying out new ones when I'm not entirely sure. So, I selected the same pragmatic choices for almost all occasions." The other student reflected, "I didn't come across situations where I specifically focused on how to use English pragmatically during my SA. To be honest, I'm still uncertain about the appropriate choices to make."

Taken together, these accounts suggest that the distinction between high- and low-achieving students in this group may be attributed to differences in their opportunities to observe and learn from NSs' pragmatic performance.

4.2.2. Insights from interviews with the ESL group

The ESL group exhibited positive and significant overall gains in self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics during the SA period. The magnitude of these gains was sufficient that no significant difference emerged compared to the regular group. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the ESL group actively engaged in interactions with NSs in both "university life" and "general free time," achieving notable self-efficacy gains, particularly in the instructional strategies subscale.

Similar to the top performers in the regular group, two high-achieving students in the ESL group (with gains of 6 and 4 points) emphasized the importance of interacting with NSs. One remarked, "Talking with them is pretty enlightening. They help fix my English." The other explained, "I'm here to enhance my English proficiency through communication with native English-speaking friends." When asked about their pragmatic use of English in daily life, both described a thoughtful decision-making process that considered multiple factors. One student noted, "My fundamental approach, especially in English conversation, is to refrain from

unintentionally being rude to others. I consider external factors based on my past experiences." The other reflected, "Reflecting on my interactions with local people, I have contemplated deeply what is deemed polite by them, especially in the context of making requests and apologies."

Two low-achieving students, both of whom experienced a one-point loss, also reported making efforts to interact with English-speaking individuals from the local community "as much as possible" during their SA period. However, unlike high-achieving students, their initial enthusiasm appeared to diminish over time for various reasons. One student reflected, "Initially, communicating in English with other international students in the class was enjoyable, but our interactions were constrained by the linguistic challenges we faced, given our similar proficiency levels." The same student added, "As a result, international students tended to create a cultural enclave by gathering with co-nationals in the class, where they conversed in their first languages, making it difficult to approach them. In fact, we often found ourselves unintentionally doing the same." The other student, noting it was a personal opinion, commented, "Interacting with NNSs made me realize that there's a limit to improving my English through this type of interaction." Eventually, this student abandoned further attempts to use English, explaining, "Since my stay was only four months long, I shifted my mindset to find enjoyment in Canada, an experience that I could embrace through the use of Japanese." These reflections help account for why English use with NNSs was counterintuitively limited among ESL students, as shown in Table 1.

Moreover, both low-achieving students identified problematic instances of using Japanese at home. One remarked, "Many students in the ESL program lived in the same dormitory and studied alongside friends from Japan, so we spent most of the time together." The other emphasized the necessity of using Japanese for "a relaxing time at home." These comments help explain why this group reported more frequent use of Japanese than the regular group. When asked about their pragmatic use of English, both students expressed a lack of confidence in judging the politeness of their expressions. Consequently, one explained that they opted for what seemed to be "the politest looking one" to play it safe, while the other reported relying "entirely on Japanese cultural norms."

Taken together, the contrast between high- and low-achieving students in this group appears closely linked to their use of Japanese, which may have constrained opportunities to use and develop pragmatic knowledge and skills in English through interactions with local people.

5. Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between the amount of time spent using first and target languages in various social contexts and gains in self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics during SA. This investigation involved students participating in two distinct types of SA programs: regular academic courses and ESL courses.

The results indicated that students in the regular group showed greater overall gains in self-efficacy than those in the ESL group, although the difference was not statistically significant. This aligns with the non-significant differences between the groups in the amount of time spent using English with NSs (Table 1). Since time with NSs emerged as a significant predictor of self-efficacy gains in the multiple regression analysis (Table 3), these findings suggest that target language development—particularly the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge and skills—is not inherently determined by the type of SA program. Rather, it depends on the extent to which students capitalize on opportunities to interact with, observe, and learn from NSs' performance, supporting the findings of Sánchez-Hernández and Alcón-Soler (2019).

Insights from the interviews further underscore that, despite variations in individual access to such opportunities within the same SA program, all high-achieving students across both groups actively engaged with local NSs, regardless of the specific social contexts in which interactions took place. These qualitative findings reinforce the regression results, which showed that time spent with NSs significantly contributed to self-efficacy gains. The interviews also suggest that while program-specific factors may influence the accessibility and challenge of such opportunities, sustained motivation for target language use is crucial—even if it requires adapting the kinds of interactions students pursue. By contrast, those who, due to demanding schedules, substituted these opportunities with interactions primarily among co-nationals or withdrew from them partway through their SA experience were less likely to fully benefit from the potential to develop pragmatic competence in English and, consequently, to strengthen their self-efficacy for teaching it in future classrooms.

Upon closer examination of the social contexts in which interactions with NSs occurred, notable similarities between the two groups become evident. Both groups reported using English with NSs across all contexts except "virtual social activities." This stands in contrast to previous research indicating that SA students often have limited contact with NSs (Baten, 2020; Wilkinson, 1998) and that local students may be reluctant to engage with short-term international students due to perceived language limitations (Coleman, 2015). For both the regular and ESL groups, "general free time" emerged as the context of most intensive use. It is plausible that more frequent peer interactions in such settings afforded greater exposure to pragmatic uses of English, which may, in turn, have contributed to consolidating students' knowledge of how to use English pragmatically and to deepening their understanding of the factors that determined their pragmatic choices in real-life situations. This may help to account for why the most noticeable gains were observed in the instructional strategies subscale. Taken together, these findings lend support to the view that the composition and structure of students' social networks are likely to play a central role in shaping their access to linguistic and cultural input (Coleman, 2013; Li et al., 2021).

Further examination of the quantitative results suggests that extensive use of Japanese may hinder self-efficacy gains during the SA period. As shown in Table 1, Japanese use was evident

in both groups in the context of "virtual social activities," which is understandable given students' frequent communication with family and friends back home. However, the ESL group stood out for its overall reliance on Japanese, particularly in "university life" and "at home." As discussed earlier, interview insights from low-achieving ESL students shed light on this tendency: the formation of cultural enclaves in "university life" (e.g., co-nationals clustering together) and the preference for Japanese in "at home" settings (e.g., studying in groups, socializing, and relaxing). Their reflections indicate an awareness that such enclaves can be problematic, potentially limiting opportunities for intercultural development and target language practice (Mas-Alcolea & Torres-Purroy, 2022). They also reveal a gradual decline in enthusiasm for using the target language; initial eagerness appeared to diminish as the comfort of first-language use increasingly outweighed the challenges of sustained target-language engagement. This pattern echoes findings reported by García-Amaya (2017). Taken together, these insights underscore the potentially detrimental role of first-language reliance in constraining opportunities for target language development, corroborating the findings of previous research (e.g., Sauer & Ellis, 2019; Watson & Wolfel, 2015).

The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests indicated that both groups demonstrated statistically significant self-efficacy gains across various subscales (see Table 2). Interview data from high-achieving students across the two groups revealed diverse purposes for their interactions with NSs. Yet, a common theme emerged: these students placed considerable value on engaging with NSs, particularly highlighting the benefits of receiving corrections in pronunciation, writing, and other linguistic aspects. Notably, ESL students appeared especially convinced that NSs provided superior language support compared to NNSs. This perception reflects what previous research has termed the "native speaker myth," wherein NSs are regarded as more authoritative sources of "correct" language (e.g., Borghetti & Beaven, 2017). Such beliefs may have motivated students to pursue interactions with NSs more actively, which in turn may help explain the reduced engagement with NNSs observed in Table 1.

Although this orientation may have helped sustain students' motivation to learn the target language, it contrasts with the growing emphasis in applied linguistics on English as a lingua franca (ELF) rather than on adherence to native-speaker norms (Jenkins, 2013). As Seidlhofer (2009) notes, ELF use often involves "ad hoc, situated negotiation of meaning" (p. 242), where effectiveness is grounded in contextual appropriateness rather than conformity to native-speaker standards. These findings highlight the need to move beyond the native speaker myth and to reframe beliefs about language development and intercultural competence in order to maximize the benefits of SA experiences. One practical step in this direction may involve revisiting the role and design of pre-departure orientations (Matsumura, 2022). Students who enter SA with an appreciation for ELF practices may be more inclined to seek diverse forms of input and engagement opportunities than those documented in the present study. Such variation in beliefs about English use could lead to differing outcomes in pragmatic development and self-efficacy

for teaching pragmatics, underscoring the importance of further investigation.

Finally, it is important to note the usual caution regarding generalizability and to highlight several methodological limitations of the present study. First, the small sample size within each SA program is a limitation, given the complex relationships among first- and target-language use, social contexts, and changes in self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics to future students. Moreover, changes were assessed at only two time points, limiting the ability to capture potential non-linear developments. Future studies should consider larger sample sizes and longitudinal designs with more than two measurement points. Second, students' pragmatic development was not measured directly; thus, gains in self-efficacy for teaching pragmatics may not fully reflect actual pragmatic development. Future research should examine both pragmatic competence and self-efficacy longitudinally to explore their relationship. Third, the absence of random selection in recruiting Japanese students means that the observed self-efficacy levels should not be interpreted as representative of university-level Japanese pre-service English teachers more broadly. Fourth, the study did not examine self-efficacy at the item level within each subscale; the focus was on relationships between language use in social contexts and overall and subscale-level self-efficacy gains. Investigating item-level self-efficacy in relation to SA experiences would require more in-depth qualitative analysis. Fifth, qualitative data, primarily collected through interviews, could have benefited from triangulation, for example, by incorporating students' daily journals, to enhance the robustness of interpretations. Finally, the purposeful selection of four participants from each group warrants caution, as these individuals may not adequately represent the diversity within each SA program. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between language use and self-efficacy gains in different SA contexts, highlighting individual differences, the effectiveness of various SA programs, and potential factors influencing the teaching of pragmatics in future classrooms.

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