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Dialogue journals in short-term study abroad: “Today I wrote my mind”

Short-term study abroad programs are growing in popularity, so educators and researchers are exploring effective tools to enhance the learning and cultural experiences of students in these programs. Dialogue journals, writing journals in which students respond to instructor prompts and in turn initiate topics for further written discussion, are a useful pedagogical tool in a variety of educational contexts, but their use in the short-term study abroad setting remains largely unexplored. This study looks at the dialogue journal writing of eight Japanese students in a four-week visit to a Canadian faculty of education. Themes that emerged from their writing in conversation with their English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructor reveal that the dialogue journals provided a venue for students to express their feelings, draw upon their learning outside of class and bring their intercultural learning into the dialogue. The use of dialogue journals facilitated the building of rapport between teacher and students and served to bridge cultural differences.

Unlike traditional writing journals, where topics are either self-chosen or instructor dictated, dialogue journals mimic a conversational style in which the dialogue is connected and topics arise naturally out of previous discussion. In other words, dialogue journals are writing journals in which students respond to instructor prompts and in turn initiate topics for further written discussion. This reciprocal exchange is an effective pedagogical tool in contexts where English is being taught as an additional language because the emphasis on communication over accuracy can lower student affect, promote language acquisition, and foster critical literacy.

However, due to their back and forth nature, dialogue journals normally require a number of writing exchanges to establish a pattern of instructor prompt and student response/prompt. In some contexts, particularly short-term study abroad programs, instructors may hesitate to implement dialogue journals, fearing that the lack of time to get to know students would negatively impact the ability to establish rapport necessary for the journals to be effective.

We argue that dialogue journals accelerate teacher-student relationship building and are therefore an especially useful tool for short-term sojourns. This is especially pertinent where host and recipient cultures differ significantly, since the focus on communication and natural topic choice provide a venue for students to express their feelings, draw upon their learning outside of class (field trips, homestay, etc.) and bring their intercultural learning into the dialogue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Short-term study abroad

Short-term study abroad sojourns, defined as 4-10 weeks in length, are growing in popularity (Jackson, 2006; 2008; Llanes & Munoz, 2009; Martinsen, 2011). They are, however, understudied (Jackson 2006) and researchers recognize concerns about students' abilities to increase language proficiency (Allen & Herron, 2003); cultural sensitivity (Martinsen, 2011; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2000); and engage meaningfully with host cultures (Tanaka, 2007).

As such, scholars are exploring effective tools to enhance the learning and study abroad experience of students in short-term sojourns.

Some of the tools used in research on short-term study abroad sojourns include ethnographic observation and interviews (Castaneda & Zirger, 2011; Jackson, 2006) and cultural learning journals (Berwick & Whalley, 2000). These tools effectively provide researchers with the means to investigate the learning in short-term sojourns, but they also present a challenge as they require extensive researcher involvement in participant observation or student training in methods. Dialogue journals represent a tool that is easier to implement yet, as we argue in this paper, have the potential to provide rich data even in the limited time frame of a short-term sojourn.

Dialogue journals

Dialogue journals are writing journals in which the teacher begins with a prompt to which the students respond, thereby initiating a written conversation that continues throughout the duration of a specific instructional course. Defined by their conversational rather than evaluative nature, dialogue journals create a regular, authentic exchange between teachers and learners, characterized by writer-selected length, topic, style and genre (Peyton, 1997)¹. As corrective feedback is not provided by the teacher, advocates of dialogue journals highlight the benefit of such writing in minimizing student anxiety (often a feature of assigned writing). Peyton and Reed (1990) found evidence of greater linguistic complexity in dialogue journal entries than in students' assigned writing. Indeed, the conversational turn-taking inherent in dialogue journals strengthens what Bruner (1988) considered a central principle of pedagogy: '...being able to hand

¹ While the topics that arise in dialogue journals may include the linguistic backgrounds and language development of students and resemble to some degree the linguistic autobiography (Kramsch, 2009) or autobiography of intercultural encounters (Byram, 2008) used in other research, they differ in purpose, form and scope of content.

over to another when the learner gets sufficiently expert, and not to take the action away from the learner' (p. viii). This turn-taking stands in contrast to the frequently static nature of classroom assignments written to an often 'imagined audience' (Mansor, Shafie, Maesin, Nayan, & Osman, 2011). As teacher-student initiation and response progresses in dialogue journals, an authentic discussion is moved forward.

Dialogue journals have been utilized to positive effect in a wide range of educational settings with participants as diverse as nursing students (Van Horn & Freed, 2008), pre-service teachers (Lee, 2007), practicing teachers (Reichmann, 2001), children with emotional disturbance (Regan, 2003), deaf and hard of hearing students (Morrell, 2010), and adult university English as a second language learners (Holmes & Moulton, 1997). Researchers credit dialogue journals with various advantages: among them affective learning influences (Peyton, 1988); opportunities for critical literary practices (Ghahremani-Ghajara & Mirhosseini, 2005); learner autonomy (Burton & Carroll, 2001), and factors in language acquisition, whether reduced anxiety, enhanced oral-written transference, or heightened mastery of morphology (Holmes & Moulton, 1995). The literature also indicates their effective use across diverse geographical contexts: e.g., Hong Kong (Lee, 2007), Malaysia (Mansor et al, 2011), Iran (Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005), Australia (Carroll & Mchawala, 2001) or North America (Peyton, 1997). Dialogue journals serve as a useful pedagogical tool in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes, yet their use in short-term sojourns has remained largely unexplored.

A number of researchers report the rapport-building function of dialogue journals (e.g., Burton & Carroll, 2001; Lucas, 1990; Peyton, 1988). Dialogue journals offer knowledge about oneself, whether teacher or student, that is not often gleaned through the course of other typical classroom activities (Casanave, 2011), can provide a venue for the expression of feelings in

another language (Alexander, 2001), and have proved useful as vehicles for self-evaluation and self-awareness (Trites, 2001). Perhaps because of these advantages, participant journals often serve as empirical data in investigations of longer study abroad programs (e.g., Churchill, 2006; Iino, 2006). Bacon (1995) found that dialogue journals facilitated a ‘coming to grips’ with a host culture by study abroad participants whose writings evidenced a growing cultural adjustment.

Dialogue journals and cultural differences

While multiple studies on dialogue journals have been situated in English as an additional language teaching contexts, explicit attention to the role of dialogue journals in bridging cultural differences is underrepresented in the short-term study abroad literature. Culture is said to be ‘arguably the most elusive term in the generally rather fluid vocabulary of the social sciences’ (Jahoda, 1984, p. 140). Though notoriously difficult to define, proposed definitions of “culture” usually emphasize “sharedness” of various descriptors in a combined grouping (Minkov, 2013). Obviously not all individuals share to the same degree all characteristics ascribed to the culture of which they are a part, but researchers have suggested various means of identifying and classifying these elements of sharedness among social groupings. Values are seen as an important identifying feature of culture, in that social behaviour is influenced at least in part by overarching values; Hofstede’s (1980; 2001) studies measured “dimensions” of values across cultures, and these serve as a reference point for this present study.

Hofstede sets forth six dimensions for measuring national cultures: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. Of particular significance to this study are the dimensions of power distance, individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance.

Power distance is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 61). In cultures with a high power distance, the actions of those in authority are not likely to be questioned and those with less power are more likely to accept that the society needs these power differentials in order to function properly. Where power distance is greater, teachers are treated with respect “or even fear”, teacher-fronted instruction is expected or more commonly accepted, students expect teachers to control classroom dynamics and teachers are expected to initiate all communication (p. 69). Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) identify Japan as a country with higher power distance than Canada (54 on a scale of 1-100 in comparison to Canada with 39) (p. 59). In other words, in school settings, students from Japan would expect more traditional teaching than students from Canada.

The spectrum of individualism/collectivism describes the degree to which members of a society strive toward standing apart as an individual or working together as a group (Neuliep, 2015). A culture is considered more individualistic if it encourages independence, promotes individual accomplishment and fosters competition. A group of people is considered collectivist if group coherence, societal goals and common good are valued. Cultures are often compared to others to establish the degree of individualism/collectivism. For example, Japan is considered closer to the collectivist end of the spectrum with an individualism index of 46 whereas Canada with a score of 80 is closer to the individualist end. This difference plays out in educational contexts as whether a student is expected to speak up, voice opinions and learn to cope with new and unforeseen circumstances in order to function in an individualistic society, or harmonize,

maintain face and adapt to the valued attributes of an acceptable group member as in collective societies.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which members of a particular culture might value new ideas, experiences, etc. over received wisdom. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, behaviour conforms to clear norms and rules (Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, & Ogawa, 2005, p. 9). Japan, with a score of 92, differs considerably from Canada with a score of 48 (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010, p. 192). In schools this results in Japanese students expecting their teachers to be and act as experts, and Canadian students being more likely to express intellectual disagreement with their teachers. These differences can result in vastly different teacher and student expectations about what is considered appropriate classroom behaviour and learning.

Power distance, individualism/collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance are the three intercultural dimensions that emerged when the Japanese students in this study attended an EAP course taught by a non-Japanese instructor during a short-term study abroad program at a Canadian university.

Cultural awareness

One model of cultural awareness that sheds light on how study abroad participants process cultural differences is Hanvey's (1979; 2004) four-stage model of cultural awareness (see also Moran, 2001, pp. 161-162). This model describes the levels of cultural awareness sojourners might have as they process their observations of culture. This model is instructive for this study in that participants proceed from "tourist" where differences are quaint; to irritation where differences are viewed as bizarre or irrational; to a process of intellectualization where explanations are sought for observed differences; and finally to an acceptance where one feels at

home in the host culture. The degree to which students are able to do this within a four-week sojourn, the researchers argue, is facilitated by the instructor's use of dialogue journals.

METHODOLOGY

Context

The setting for the study is the Education Faculty of a large Canadian university, which regularly conducts international exchange events as an optional part of its Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree program, both in sending Canadian students abroad for short-term placements, and as host recipient of students from other nations.

The study participants were undergraduate Education majors from a Japanese university, who came to Canada for four weeks as part of an international exchange agreement forged between the Education faculties in the Japanese and Canadian institutions. The Institutional Research Board at the host institution approved the use of consent implied by specific action². The students' study program consisted of 15 hours of EAP language instruction per week, visits to Canadian schools and cultural activities organized by the first author. Among their three EAP instructors was the second author, who was responsible for initiating and maintaining the dialogue journals. Dialogue journal writing formed part of the instructional content; approximately 30 minutes each week for four weeks were allotted for this purpose.

² The researchers consulted with Japanese scholars at the Canadian institution regarding the most culturally appropriate procedure for asking for informed consent. A Japanese-speaking colleague, conversant with ethical considerations at Canadian universities yet unaffiliated with the exchange or the research, spoke to the potential participants. She explained the university's requirement for informed consent to the class at the beginning of the study without the instructor present. Students were informed that they were under no obligation to participate in the study and that neither participation nor non-participation would be reported to their home university. Students were contacted after their exchange regarding research participation via an email written in Japanese. A return email in the affirmative indicated consent to include their dialogue journal in the data.

Data sources and analysis

The second author (the EAP class instructor) introduced the dialogue journals on the first day of class, having pre-written an introductory prompt in the journal notebook inviting the students to respond. He explained verbally to the students in advance of distributing the journal notebooks that the purpose was a conversation, that the writing was not to be graded, and that grammar and spelling would not be corrected - all aspects typical of dialogue journal pedagogy (Peyton, 1997); these same instructions were reiterated in written form as part of the introductory prompt.

The students wrote in the dialogue journals during class time four times over the course of the exchange. The instructor responded to prompts in between class sessions. The contents of the journal notebooks were not discussed in class, but rather remained as private exchanges between instructor and student (See Appendix for a retyped exemplar of one of the dialogue journals). The instructor did not reference the study at any point during the course to mitigate the possibility that students' dialogue journal writing would be influenced by awareness of the research study. At the conclusion of the course, students kept their own notebook while the instructor retained a photocopy of each. Of the 10 exchange participants, 8 consented to the use of their journal notebook as data. The remaining photocopies were excluded. This resulted in 32 responses to instructor dialogue prompts that were available for analysis. In addition, the instructor wrote a post-course reflection.

The analysis used grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Silverman, 2014) methods for finding common themes brought forward in the writing of the students. This method provided a pragmatic structure to the coding. Since we did not approach the data with preconceived notions as to what we might find, we were open to the discovery of the ideas that emerged (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In the first reading, themes brought forward by each student participant were coded by attaching labels emerging from participants' words. Then, in the

second reading, each journal was reread for evidence of labels found in other journals that might not have emerged during the first reading³. These were then grouped together in themes. All of these themes pointed to a facilitation or acceleration of teacher-student rapport through the use of dialogue journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of dialogue journals in this short-term exchange program facilitated and potentially accelerated the establishment of rapport between instructor and students. This is especially noteworthy in light of the differences in culture of origin (Japan) and culture of the host destination (Canada). The differences between these two cultures impact what behaviours one might expect in an EAP classroom in particular with regard to the students' expression of their feelings, their initiation of topics of conversation from learning outside of the classroom, and their growing intercultural awareness.

In the post-course reflection, the instructor described his previous experiences teaching EAP classes to students from the same country of origin, Japan. He noted that "they just wouldn't talk". This classroom behaviour led to instructor frustration and increased instructor talk to compensate for the lack of participation of the students in class discussion. As a result, the EAP instructor made a point of waiting for student talk. "Minimal talk from the English teacher, maximum talk from the English learners" was the resulting motto. As a result of these previous experiences, he entered the study participants' classroom expecting "awkward silence" and came in "armed with my minimalist approach".

³ The codes that emerged, in chronological order were: Japan/Canada comment or comparison; reference to classwork; reference to field trips; reference to homestay/other; feelings; future goals; picking up on instructor's modeling; comment on dialogue journal.

This particular group of students did not require the minimalist approach and responded positively to all instructor-initiated activities. This suggests that they were more outgoing and less stereotypical of the classes the instructor had previously taught. However, beyond praising the students for their participation, the short classroom time allotted to this specific instructor (four hours) in light of the fuller program (homestay, school visits, field trips) left little time for him to establish rapport. The use of dialogue journals facilitated the building of rapport and minimized the constraints of the short time period. Through the journals, the students drew upon their feelings about their sojourn and English learning, brought outside learning into their classroom dialogue and discussed intercultural observations.

Affective feedback loop

The dialogue journals evidenced sharing of students' various struggles, whether grappling with uncertainty avoidance, linguistic insecurity, or the processing of culture shock. Sometimes the process of sharing was enough to relieve anxiety or increase confidence. The instructor was also able to respond to this sharing and bolster confidence through his remarks.

Sakaya⁴ expressed her anxieties regarding an upcoming presentation to school children.

Today, I'll do my presentation about kimono at junior high school. So I'm very nervous :-), but I did work hard to prepare my presentation. I'll do my best and I want to exchange and talk with children.

I believed that I get the power through doing my presentation. (Sakaya, third entry)⁵

⁴ All student names are pseudonyms.

⁵ Extracts from student dialogue journals are reproduced here in their original, unedited form.

While most second language learners can be expected to be nervous (“nervous”) presenting in their second language, students from a culture of high uncertainty avoidance would experience additional anxiety at the unknown elements of such a presentation. As her entry continued, Sakaya’s confidence grew and by the end she expressed that she felt she would “get the power” to do her best by actually doing the presentation. In this way, her entry in the dialogue journal facilitated her attempts to boost her confidence, which was later reinforced by the instructor’s response “I’m sure they’ll love it” which he was able to target directly to this part of the entry by writing it in the margins and using an arrow to direct her focus back to her original comment.

Another student, Kaori, shared transparently regarding her linguistic insecurity, her feelings that her language abilities were not adequate for this short-term sojourn.

This morning I joined EAP class. I read an article about mobile phones. It’s really difficult for me. After read it, I have to talk with my friends what is my article about.

But I couldn’t. :(I’m really disappointed of my poor English. I need more academic skill. (Kaori’s third entry)

The student’s willingness to talk about her dejection after an initial language lesson underscores the important function played by dialogue journals in creating an avenue where learners can be “heard”. The instructor’s response was to point out that talking to classmates is a good strategy. In doing so, he pointed out her effective self-help and emphasized the cooperative nature of learning in EAP classrooms. This might not be Kaori’s expectation coming from a culture where power distance expectations may result in her expecting the teacher, not classmates, to be expert.

Ayumi's fourth entry candidly described a series of personal difficulties: the lack of someone to share frustrations with; feelings of social isolation from other sojourn students; frustration at her inability to express herself fully in English and yet at the same time having no confidant with whom to speak in Japanese. She concluded the entry with the summary, "Today I wrote my mind".

This freedom to "write [one's] mind" in dialogue journals aptly encapsulates a central element of their rapport building function, where non-judgmental listening takes place (Alexander, 2001). Indeed, student-teacher written interactions in this study demonstrated an 'affective feedback loop' of sorts, providing in turn an outlet for expression and a validation of feelings: a loop that was seen to intensify as the students' sojourn experience progressed. The researchers' own experiences as study abroad learners was that day-to-day struggles are amplified under the intensity of cross-cultural experiences. Providing a means of expression for these feelings is a valuable role performed by dialogue journals, and the ability for instructors to respond in a timely and direct manner to those expressions of feedback result in an affective feedback loop.

This advantage of dialogue journals for students was not lost on the students themselves. In her final entry, Ayumi responded to the instructor's question regarding her opinion of dialogue journals in the following excerpt.

Journal is very good for me. I could write free and I could write my mind, my thinking. Many Japanese students don't like to writing English, I did neither. But the most important thing is just writing. So "I can't write" → I can write easy English. [*underline in original*] Mind is changed. It is very good for us.

(Ayumi, fourth entry)

Ken also saw the advantage for teachers and noted that “Teachers can’t notice children’s change. If they use it [dialogue journals], they can know children’s background and feeling”.

Although the instructor did not explicitly encourage the students to express their feelings, students recognized that dialogue journals were, among other things, a place for sharing emotions, be they positive or negative. Candid admissions like these are noteworthy given the cultural differences between teacher and student implied in Hofstede’s (2001) conception of “power distance”. The extent to which students were willing to initiate expression about matters of personal difficulty was unexpected to the researchers; national cultural preferences surrounding power distance might predict such exchanges as unlikely. Especially striking to the researchers was the compressed time frame in which students moved the written conversation from introductory greetings to issues of personal struggle.

Dialogue journals provide a powerful tool for overcoming and bridging areas of cultural difference between student and teacher, by providing a safe, judgment-free venue for self-expression. The fact that evidence of rapport in this manner occurred in such a short time frame highlights dialogue journals’ utility in intensive, short-term sojourns.

Learning Outside of the Classroom

Several entries illustrate how students used dialogue journals to draw upon their learning outside of the classroom. In the excerpts below, outside learning includes using English in homestay families, learning from field trips, and learning about the Canadian school system from school visits. The dialogue journals make reference to outside learning by opening up topics to those of most interest or immediacy to the students.

In her second entry, Kaori mentioned her language learning through the input of playing with the children of her homestay family. “Children’s English is little bit difficult for me, because it’s so fast. But they teach me a lot”. The instructor left a margin comment focused on

the mutual benefits of these interactions, writing “I bet they are very happy to have you play with them”. Kaori also listed the name of another international student living in the homestay family, noting that “she is really good at speaking English”. The instructor knew the student Kaori had identified, so this mutual acquaintance provided an opportunity for enhanced rapport. In a subsequent entry he referred back to this EAP student and pointed out to Kaori that comparing one’s English with that of other EAP students who had been in Canada longer was not a fair comparison and that she should not be discouraged. This dialogue journal exchange over several entries facilitated student-teacher rapport and provided an opportunity for the instructor to tailor his encouragement of Kaori’s efforts to speak English outside of the classroom.

The second author did not participate in any of the student field trips, but through the dialogue journals was able to discover which aspects of this learning outside of the classroom had the most impact on students. Taro wrote about a visit to a science centre display on the human body. Ken wrote about visiting a local museum. Kaori wrote about visiting Japanese classes at the university. In each case, the instructor was able to take up the topic and respond to areas of student interest.

The students also participated in school visits. They used their dialogue journal entries to attempt to integrate their experiences in Canadian primary and middle schools with their understanding of the Japanese educational system. They wove into their entries reflections on the pedagogy of English language instruction.

Chiaki remarked on differences in curriculum between Japanese and Canadian schools.

I surprised Canadian school curriculum. . . [*underline in original*]

There are many arts and crafts in the school - made from students -so cool, so beautiful, so fancy [*sic*]. I thought I'd like to set many arts on the wall when I become a teacher. . .

In Japan, teachers have a power that is strict for students, especially high school students.

In Canada, teachers are friendly. :-) I think students don't feel stress or pressure. The teaching style in Calgary or Canada is good for students!

(Chiaki, fourth entry)

She was impressed by the decorations in the hallways that indicated a student-centered learning environment. The instructor responded with a side comment: "Yes, true! Canadians seem to value student self-expression". This comment drew the student's attention to the individualistic nature of some aspects of the Canadian educational system. Chiaki also referenced the power distance between students and teachers in Japan and contrasted that with Canada by noting that Canadian teachers are friendly and that she perceived students do not feel stress or pressure as a result of this low power distance. In his longer response/prompt for the next entry, the instructor pointed out that "reflection is a very valuable skill to develop as a teacher". These entries allowed both student and teacher to draw upon the outside learning from school visits in the dialogue journal.

The dialogue journals, then, provided a valuable means of intersection and interrelation between the various components of a larger program. They helped counter the tendency of isolated classroom instruction uninformed by broader curriculum aims. As well, the entries stemmed from student interest and reflection upon their outside learning, thereby allowing the instructor to tailor his responses to the specific interests of the students.

Processing intercultural awareness

The dialogue journals also served as an avenue for processing of unfamiliar cultural input, with a resultant evidence of a growing intercultural awareness. Early student entries show recognition of “surface” differences between home and host countries. Students remarked that Canadian “food too sweet”, “homes are larger in Canada”, and “rice is too sweet”. However, later conversational turns revealed attempts to explain possible reasons for differences. The dialogue journals showed evidence of the processing of cultural differences for intercultural awareness. Given the short duration of this study abroad program, the rate at which learners moved to the later stages of cultural awareness was a striking feature of the students’ journal entries.

In his third entry, Taro initiates a conversation on differences between home and host cultures in regards to family. He posed the question: “So I ask you, how’s Canadian family? To spend their family is important time?” The instructor responded to this question with comments contrasting traditional family structures with the diversity of family types which exist presently in Canada, noting blended and single parent families, adult children living with their parents, etc. Taro then continued the conversational thread he started.

Thank you for teaching about styles of family in Canada. I understand these. I think these are similar in Japan. Before, one husband works outside. Wife works at home. it’s like a washing dishes, do laundry, polishing floor and making foods and so on. A one family has four or more thier children.

But recently Japan is also changing.

In my family, father and mother work. I have a younger brother only.

Other case, my friend. he lives him mother.

So, a lot of kinds of family style in Japan! (Taro, third entry)

This entry illustrates the third stage of Hanvey's (2004) model of cultural awareness: an awareness of significant and subtle traits that may differ from one's own culture. In this case, Taro remarked upon differences that used to be more pronounced, but now are no longer as different.

Sakaya and the instructor carried on several journal entries regarding a mutual interest in sports. In her third entry, she wrote of a difference she perceived between her home country and Canada in regard to this subject.

I think in Canada we play many sports with their friends. for example ice hockey, speed skating, basketball of course lacrosse.

But in Japan we play individual sports (solo play?) Such as judo, kendo, tennis and so on.

I think it is relate with the parsons character in their's country Japanese person is very shy (I felt that in Canada).

But Canadian is very friendly and kindness because they are familiar to group work or to live together.

Canadian school do a lot of group work in class. (Sakaya, third entry)

While her assessment of why Canadian and Japanese athletes might prefer different sports may not fit with the instructor's understanding, this excerpt revealed how she attempted to reconcile observed differences in the two cultures. She sees the differences as "believable" and "explainable", rather than exotic or irrational (Hanvey, 2004).

Grappling with observed cultural differences, and suggesting explanations to account for them represent a deeper intercultural awareness than one might expect to find in an undergraduate student's first overseas experience, and in one of such a short duration. The

researchers assert that the effective use of dialogue journals presented such an opportunity, and that the journals' conversational turn-taking nature facilitated intercultural exploration to a depth that may not have been otherwise possible in the context of this sojourn.

CONCLUSION

In summary, dialogue journals from participants in this relatively short-term sojourn are characterized by several features which make them an attractive pedagogical tool in the context of short-term study abroad programs. The journals offered a safe outlet for the expression and validation of feelings and concerns, an effective means of integrating learning experiences inside and outside the classroom, and an efficient medium in which to foster a growing cultural awareness. While differences between the host culture and the sojourners' culture of origin combined with the condensed duration of the program might predict restricted opportunities for the above benefits, the researchers found that the use of dialogue journals served to mitigate these limitations.

An examination of students' entries showed that dialogue journals played a facilitative function in student-teacher rapport building. The second author was only loosely aware of the students' schedule and activities outside of his own instructional slot as he was only one of several instructional and administrative participants in the sojourn experience. As such, there was a risk that his particular course content might be delivered in isolation, deprived of the benefits of input from the rich range of diverse experiences students were encountering. In this regard, dialogue journals served an (often student-initiated) integrative function, providing an outlet of expression as sojourners attempted to amalgamate and make sense of a variety of new and unfamiliar linguistic and cultural experiences.

We recognize two limitations to this study. First, an increased number of dialogue journals and additional entries would have provided a larger corpus from which themes could be

drawn. As well, our attempt to triangulate these data using the instructor's reflections were limited as the instructor did not comment on how the dialogues in the journals informed his instruction. However, these limitations inform our directions for future research.

Future directions for research will include an investigation of the extent to which the use of dialogue journals play a role in enhanced student engagement in class, and the use of multimodality in dialogue journals (e.g., the use of drawings and non-conventional use of space) to extend student responses. With the challenge of short-term sojourns being the development of rapport and intercultural learning within a condensed time frame, the present investigation of dialogue journals presents intriguing possibilities for research and classroom practice.

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Appendix

Exemplar: Instructor prompts and student responses⁶

I hope this dialogue journal will give you a chance to reflect on your experiences in Canada. I look forward to hearing from you. Each week I will respond to what you have written and we can carry on a written conversation.

So here's our first topic. What are you looking forward to most during your time here in _____?
What do you expect to benefit from?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Feb, 24th

I can't believe the weather changes in a day. I thought _____ is colder than Japan, But these days are warm!

Today, I went out to run in early morning.

It was fun! I like playing sports and excircise.

_____ has large nature, so I want to winter sports.

Of course learning English.

We studied about how many English are there.

I never know English has 250,000-750,000 words.

But I study 2,000 words to read or write English. I'll try to continue studying English

I think Japanese has more words than English.

So, it is a piece of cake!!

I from _____, _____ because my university build there.

My hometown is _____, _____ Prefecture.

I like my hometown!

I'll enhance my English skills! Especially speaking. Because here is a Canada not Japan!

I'll try to speak only English!

Yeah. ☹️
I really dislike that aspect of life in _____.
Winter is not really winter and summer is not really summer.

Me too!

← It is just joke ☺️

Wow! You went for a run early in the morning, even though you just travelled across the world. You must be an energetic person!

⁶ Student journal entries are written in *italics*. Both instructor prompts and student responses were originally handwritten. Grammar, spelling, punctuation and direction of writing are reproduced as in the original and identifying information has been removed or changed. Non-italicized comments in margins are written by the instructor in reply to student comments.

February 26th

Your journal topic

Hi! Thanks for sharing. I really enjoyed reading your February 24th journal entry. I must say, I admire your dedication in trying to improve by using only English. That's very impressive!

I'm interested to know which sports and which kinds of exercise you're interested in.

I look forward to our conversations through these dialogue journals. Don't forget to read the comments I made beside your February 24th journal entry. Sometimes I write little comments on the side.

Feb 26th

Thank you reply to me. I've never experience exchange daiary, so I enjoy it.

Before writing my journal, I couldn't understand some words. Tell me the meaning of these words "trgical"

TYPICAL

It means "usual" or "normal".

By the way,

I always run in the morning before have breakfast. But today soooo cold! My face was frezzing. I thought it was genuin [city name]

You also like play sports!

Yes!

Now I belong handball team.

Oh ... interesting!

Does this describe your typical day?⁷

Yes!

I love baseball, because of its strategy.

But I started handball I entered university. Before entered university, I've played baseball since I was 6. I can did many sports. Swimming, skiing, soccer, baseball and basketball.

I'd like to try nature sports!

I'm interested in these kinds of sports!

And I want to know what kind of sports you like.

Me too!

After the today's lunch I will do rock climbing. It will so fun. I'll enjoy it.

⁷ Next to this prompt, the instructor drew several small stick drawings of sports activities. The student circled the word typical and drew an arrow back to the misspelling of the original word.

March 4

Quiz:

1) Guess _____'s [EAP instructor's name] position in baseball.

- I'm left-handed. →
- a) *catcher*⁸
 - b) **1st base** 1 mark
 - c) pitcher
 - d) right field

2) _____'s favourite sport to play is: 1 mark

- a) **baseball**
 - b) volleyball
 - c) *American/Canadian football*
 - d) golf
- boring →

3) _____'s favourite sport to watch is: 1 mark

- I can't get enough of the Olympics!
- a) basketball
 - b) **Olympic Games**
 - c) *hockey* ← But I do love hockey, though.
 - d) golf

4) _____'s dream is to compete (at age 50+) in:

- a) swimming 1 mark
- b) marathon
- c) **powerlifting** ✓ Yes!
- d) cycling

5) _____ is sad, because he wanted to play this sport when he was young, but did not have the opportunity.

- I thought I have the right body type for rugby, but never had the chance to play.
- a) hockey
 - b) Canadian football 1 mark
 - c) **rugby**
 - d) *curling* ← I've curled A LOT.
 - e) swimming
- SCORE: _____

Can you make a quiz for me?

⁸ Student's answers to quiz questions in *italics*. EAP instructor's 'correct' answers in **bold**.

March 5th

Thank you for making quiz! I marked imagine you play some sports.
So, it's my turn.

Quiz:

1) My position in Baseball.

- a) **pitcher**⁹ ← It looks to me like you have a strong arm!
- b) third base
- c) right field

2) What kind of skiing did I play.

- a) jump
- b) **GS**
- c) cross country

3) My special part of swimming is

- a) the butterfly stroke
- b) the back stroke
- c) **the crawl**

☆ Perfect!! ☆

I hope 3/3 ☺

SCORE ☆ 3 ☆

→ This is a safe guess. I think butterfly is SUPER DIFFICULT!

Yesterday I went to _____ [city name] zoo and _____ [name of science center]. In the _____, many kinds of science. Especially, being human zone was so good.

That's interesting!

It showed "How did we born from your mother?" At first, we were just tiny, tiny cells. Our cells grown up to be human in mother. And lastly, we birthed. I was moved. It reminded me of my mother. Thank you my mother. I love all of my family. ← Yes!

Thanks for your question!

So, I ask you, How's Canada's family? To spend there family is important time?

⁹ Instructor responses to quiz questions in **bold**.

9 March

Thanks for making a quiz for me! I'm very interested to find out the answers! (Though I'm a bit nervous because it was hard to guess.)

Did I understand your question correctly?

Well, you asked a very good question: how is Canada's family situation? And how important is family time in Canada?

I think the best way to summarize family life in Canada is diversity. A "traditional" definition of family in Canada is changing, and it now more and more common to have a different family structure.

I made a chart on the other page showing some of the diversity. (Please keep in mind that I'm not an expert!)

"traditional view" of family

- one husband, working outside home
- wife, at home
- 2 children

"2000s" types of families in Canada

- both parents working outside the home
- one parent with children
- two parents with children from a previous marriage (blended family)
- family with young adults (25+ years) living at home
- same-sex couples with children
- etc.

Thank you very much for your question. I hope I answered it. If not, please feel free to ask again.

What should we talk about next?

March 12th

Thank you for teaching about styles of Canada family. I understand these. I think those are similar to Japan. Before, one husband works outside. Wife works at home. its like a washing dishes, do laundry, polishing floor and making foods and so on. A one family has four or more thier children. But recently, Japan is also changing. In my family, father and mother work. I have a younger brother only. Other case, my friend, he lives him mother. So, a lot of kinds of family style in Japan!

That's interesting!

It's true!
Canada is a very multi-cultural country.

Good observation!
I hope so.

By the way, I stayed two weeks in _____, gradually I knew about this city.

In _____ [city name], Canada, many race of people live in this city. So, _____ [city name] has a lot of kinds of food culture mixed, I think.

For example, Korean food, Vietnam food, hamburger, and so on. It's good because it means they are respect other culture and personality.

*But I want to eat local food!! or tradition food.
So, I'd like to know, you recommend what's the local food, or food name.
And I like to know what's your favorite foods!
Please tell me!*

I love eating anything!

Me too! 😊

March 17th

Well, I can see that you and I share a love of eating. ☺ I really enjoy trying new kinds of food from different countries.

You've asked a difficult question about Canadian traditional foods. Since everyone in Canada is an immigrant except the First Nations Aboriginal people, only their food can be said to be "traditional". The immigrants in the last 200 years, from Europe, Asia, Africa, etc. have brought with them traditional foods from their own countries.

A First Nations traditional food is called "pemmican". "Poutine" is said to be a traditional food in French Canada. You can try some of that in Mac Hall.

My all-time favourite food is a Malay dish called "nasi lemak" (I used to live in Malaysia). It is spicy coconut rice and fish – usually eaten for breakfast. Yummy!

Do you have any closing comments? (I guess this is our last journal entry. ☺) I've asked a question, but you can choose your own topic if you'd like.

Thanks for your participation in our classes together!

Q: Did these dialogue journals benefit you? If so, how? Do you have any opinions to share about dialogue journals?

Journals is easy to writing because you don't need to thinking hard just writing!!

And fun!!

Interesting!!

March 20th

To begin with, I appreciate you very much. Thank you.

I really enjoyed writing journals. I don't like grammar But It doesn't need to care grammar do not thinking, just writing, it was fun. And you responed me. I was so happy to exchange conversations.

I think journals has not only writing but reading and making vocabulary and other skill practicing with enjoying. It influenced me good skills.

I spend for a month was so fast. I don't want to leave _____ [city name]. I miss you. ☺

Talking about traditional food, I ate "poutine" in _____ Hall. It was really tasty!! Thank you for telling it.

I was surprised you used to live in Malaysia.

I went to Philipins, Sebu island to shightseeing. I did scuba diving, but I don't have license, so I did just only 5 meters deep. It was some fun!!

I did also shooting real gan. It was wonderful!

So I'd like to know spending your Malaysia life! What did you do?

And I'll try eating Malaysia's food!

Thank you very much and I'll never forget spending the time with you!!