

レスター大学への短期留学プログラム  
その利点と将来の研修への展望

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Benefits and Thoughts on Future Trips

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## Short Study Abroad Programme to Leicester University: Benefits and Thoughts on Future Trips

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### Abstract

Short study abroad programmes give students an opportunity to experience university or college life overseas, without committing the time or expense of spending a full academic year, or longer, abroad. The question of whether this type of programme is beneficial should be considered. In this study, we tested, interviewed and evaluated a group of students who spent three weeks on such a programme at Leicester University in the United Kingdom. The results suggest that not only did the participating students' receptive skills improve, but also their confidence and attention to detail in spoken English was noticeably better on their return. The effectiveness of the Homestay experience appeared to be key to this improvement. Furthermore, participating students were able to gain a reasonable level of cultural insight for such a relatively short trip.

**Keywords:** Short study abroad programme, EFL, Homestay, receptive skills, productive skills

### 1. Background

Since 2012 the University of Yamanashi has been running three-week study programmes at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. The stated objectives of the programme are as follows:

- 1) To improve the general English communication skills of participating students
- 2) To foster cross-course interaction between students of the University of Yamanashi and the University of Leicester in similar courses run by the two universities.
- 3) To foster a greater sense of cultural understanding of the UK university system for Japanese students.

During the course the students attend English classes at The University of Leicester's English Language Unit (ELTU). Here they are taught everyday English, as well as participating in an English project. Students also take part in visits to areas of cultural and historical interest, and in addition, are encouraged to mix with undergraduate students at the university.

While in Leicester, the students stay in Homestay accommodation. They travel to Leicester from Japan

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unaccompanied.

On the 2015 programme, twelve students travelled to Leicester: seven males, and five females. They are between 19 and 21 years of age. Four students belong to the Education faculty, seven to the Life Sciences faculty, and one from the Medical faculty.

Currently, to qualify to take part in the programme the students must have an English language level between IELTS 3.0 and 5.0, or TOEIC 365 – 590. However, this is only an equivalent guide, and the students do not need to take an IELTS or TOEIC test before joining the programme. This is something that could possibly be re-considered for future trips. Having students take an IELTS or TOEIC test before and after the trip may provide some quantifiable indication of how much their English level has improved.

Prior to departing for Leicester, this researcher held three ninety-minute preparation classes. The purpose of these was to introduce the students to some aspects of British culture, teach them useful phrases and terminology and practice everyday activities, such as using British money and telling the time.

Once in Leicester, the students had classes on general and useful English, education in the UK and two projects. In addition, there were various out of class activities. The content of the above is detailed in Appendix 1.

The aim of this paper is to establish whether this programme is of any benefit to the participating students' English level and cultural awareness, and also to highlight any issues surrounding pre-trip preparation, and the selection process.

## 2. Literature Review

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) , in its 'Promoting Two-Way Student Exchange' initiative, aims to "…achieve the goal of The New Growth Strategy, which is to send 300,000 Japanese students and workers abroad as well as accept 300,000 talented students from overseas in Japan for studying and training until 2020." This applies to short-term programmes, as well as longer stays, therefore the inherent benefit of these programmes seems to be recognized by the government.

One of the main issues facing short-term programmes in the past was that of whether they actually contributed to any language gain. As Bodycott & Crew (2000) noted, 'Our findings challenge traditional conceptions of funding agencies that gains in language proficiency cannot be achieved from short-term language immersion in residence abroad programs.' However, with the initiative mentioned above, this perception seems to be changing. The motivation for this change may be a reflection of the economic reality facing many Japanese graduates. The ICEF Monitor (2013) argues that, '…it is not surprising that we are seeing reports of increasing numbers of Japanese students studying abroad in recent years, whether with the goal of gaining greater access to employment opportunities overseas, or as a means of gaining a further advantage in a tough job market at home.'

This trend is reflected in comments made by the Ryugaku Journal's Executive Vice President Yukari Kato to the New York Times, where she noted that, 'The government was beginning to realize they must globalize their human talent, and companies like Rakuten and Uniqlo were introducing in-house English language policies.'

While giving oneself an economic advantage may require studying abroad for a more significant period, the short study programme has a role to play, as it introduces students to university life in a different country, and may provide the stimulus for future overseas study. As Martin, Schnickel & Maruyama (2010) note, 'It is possible that participants who had lived abroad would have a more realistic self-concept with regard to what could actually occur when abroad than participants who had never lived abroad or even been abroad.' It may be that the motivation required to actually study overseas needs exactly the kind of stimulus offered by the short-stay programme.

What previous studies seem to suggest is that the students must be given the maximum possible exposure to the target language and culture during their stay. Drake (1997), discussing Japanese study abroad packages argues that, 'Such group programs, however, may fail to meet the linguistic and cross-cultural expectations of the participants due to reclusive tendencies of the homogeneous group itself. Unless the Japanese students are joining a multicultural language learning program, special consideration must be given to creating opportunities for authentic linguistic and intercultural exchange.'

This is where the homestay experience becomes so vital. As Bodycott & Crew (2000) observe, living with homestay families, 'maximizes cultural exposure and opportunities for language immersion.' They go on to comment that, 'Living with foreigners was the greatest concern of students before departure. However on return it emerges as one of the highlights of the entire immersion experience.' (ibid) .

A final hurdle in evaluating the effectiveness of the short-stay programme is how best to measure improvements (if any) in participating students' English levels. Oral tests can prove difficult to assess, as will be discussed later, therefore alternatives need to be found. Geis & Fukushima (1997) contend that, 'a satisfactory method has not been found.' This is echoed by Drake (1997) who argues that, '...there seems to be no test available that is sensitive enough to measure six weeks of language learning...' However, it is not so much the perceived improvement in a test that is necessarily the goal of such programmes. As Bodycott & Crew (2000) observe, '... the students themselves indicate and profess a new found confidence in their ability to use English and a positive change in attitude towards the language.'

### 3. Methodology

During the final preparation class, the students were given a listening test. As one of the aims of the programme is to improve communication skills, it was felt that a listening test would be the most effective way of measuring any improvement, particularly in receptive skills. Diagnostic speaking tests can be subjective, as well as being difficult to grade, and therefore do not provide data that can be easily measured.

The first two sections of the TOEIC listening test were given to the students. This involved forty questions; ten in section one, and thirty in section two. There were certain time constraints, which precluded giving the students the full listening test. It was felt, however, that the first forty questions would give a good indication of the students' pre-trip listening ability. None of the twelve students had taken a TOEIC test previously, therefore the procedure of the test was briefly explained beforehand. One of the students was absent due to illness from this first test.

On the students' return they were given a further TOEIC listening test: once again, the first forty questions. In addition, the students were also asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 2), which aimed to ascertain which areas of the trip they felt had been the most beneficial and enjoyable. One student was not able to attend the post-trip test.

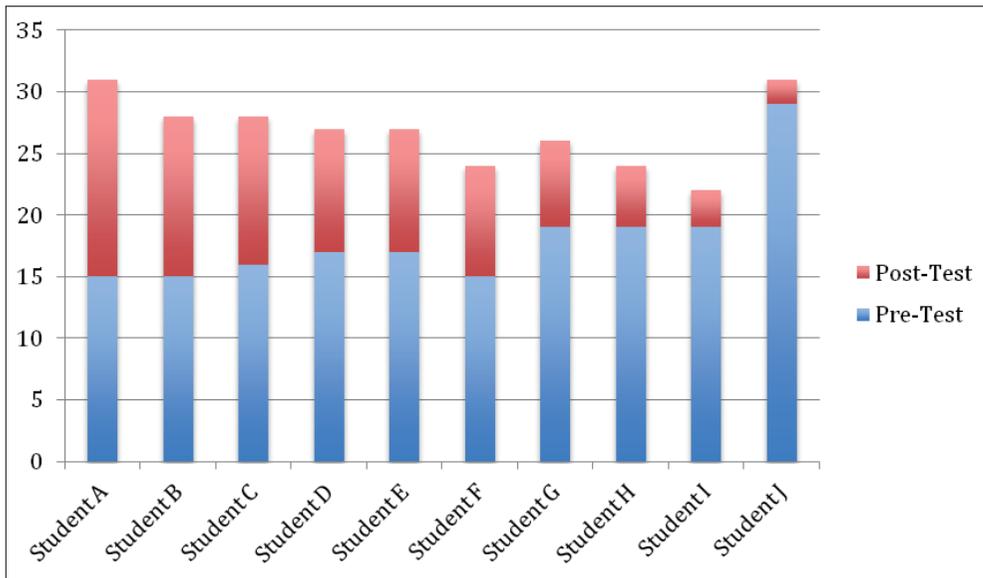
Four students, two females and two males were then given a more in-depth interview. This was carried out in an informal setting, and was recorded. The students were interviewed in pairs so that they would feel more comfortable. Each pair interview lasted approximately twenty minutes. The aim of the interview was to extract further information regarding which aspects of the programme they had found the most beneficial. This included the classroom activities, the homestay experience and extracurricular activities. It also sought to establish whether there were any problem areas or difficulties during their stay. The questionnaire and interviews were both conducted in English by the researcher.

#### 4. Results

The results of the TOEIC listening tests demonstrated that the students had all made improvements in their listening ability. The range of improvement varied from 5% to 40%. The table below includes pre and post-test scores, as well as the level of improvement as a percentage.

Student	Pre-test score	Post-test score	% Improvement
Student A	15/40	31/40	40%
Student B	15/40	28/40	32.5%
Student C	16/40	28/40	30%
Student D	17/40	27/40	25%
Student E	17/40	27/40	25%
Student F	15/40	24/40	22.5%
Student G	19/40	26/40	17.5%
Student H	19/40	24/40	12.5%
Student I	19/40	22/40	7.5%
Student J	29/40	31/40	5%
Student K	22/40	Absent	N/A
Student L	Absent	26/40	N/A
Average			21.75%

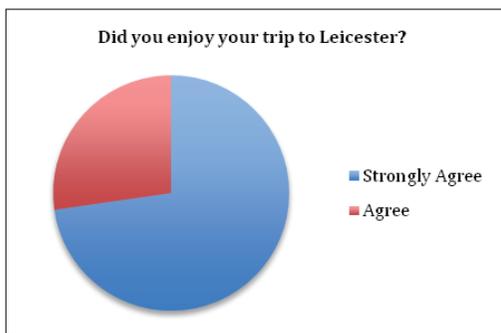
The following bar graph illustrates improvement in terms of pre-trip test results and post-trip test results.



Eleven of the students completed the post-trip questionnaire. There were seven questions, with the results being as follows:

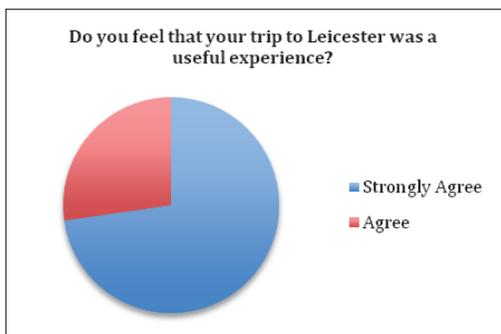
**Question 1** Did you enjoy your trip to Leicester?

Eight students stated that they strongly agreed. Three students stated that they agreed.



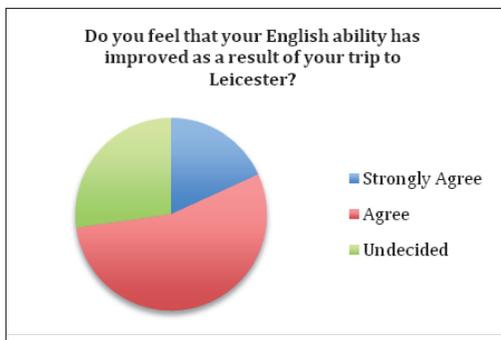
**Question 2** Do you feel that your trip to Leicester was a useful experience?

Eight students stated that they strongly agreed. Three students stated that they agreed.



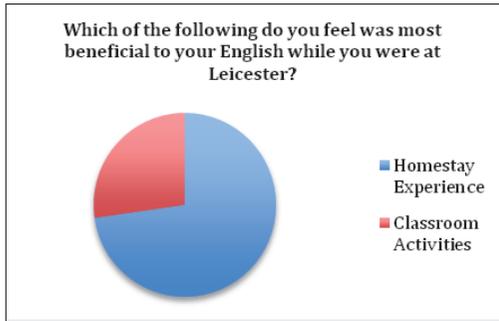
**Question 3** Do you feel that your English ability has improved as a result of your trip to Leicester?

Two students stated that they strongly agreed. Six students stated that they agreed. Three students were undecided.



**Question 4** Which of the following do you feel was the most beneficial to your English while you were in Leicester?

Eight students stated that they felt the Homestay Experience had been the most beneficial. Three students stated that they felt the Classroom Activities had been the most beneficial. No students indicated that the extracurricular activities had been the most beneficial.

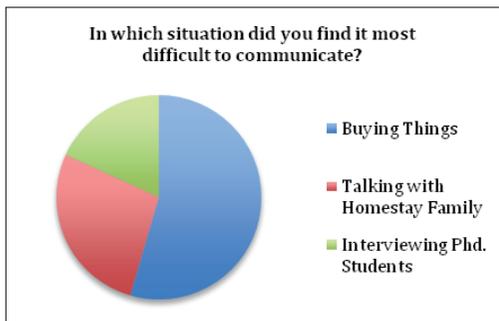


**Question 5** In which situation did you find it most difficult to communicate?

Six students indicated that they found buying things in stores, buying tickets and ordering in a restaurant the most difficult situations in which to communicate.

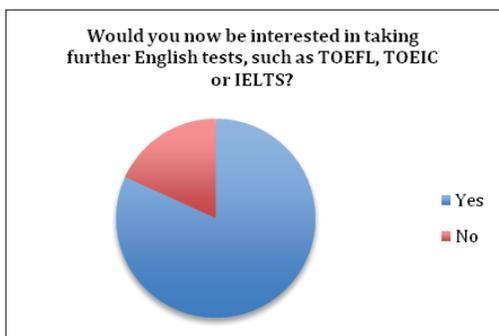
Three students indicated that it was talking with their homestay families that proved to be the most difficult.

Two students indicated that it was interviewing Phd. students; something they had to do as part of the course.



**Question 6** Would you now be interested in taking further English tests, such as TOEFL, TOEIC or IELTS?

Nine students stated that, 'Yes', they would. Two students stated that, 'No' they would not.



**Question 7** Would you recommend other students to take part in future trips to Leicester?

All eleven students said that ‘Yes’ they would.

When asked to explain their answer, the students gave various responses: enjoyed the programme, enjoyed the homestay experience, discovered more about the UK, could talk to people from another culture, could develop English skills, could gain self-confidence and could have a chance to think about yourself.

Four students agreed to take part in in-depth interviews, two females and two males. The students volunteered for this, and were not chosen by the researcher.

First, the students were asked to describe their homestay experience in more depth. All four students had a very positive experience, and mentioned that their host families had taken them to restaurants, bars and to visit friends. One student mentioned that she would liked to have been able to discuss in more detail about the differences between the UK and Japan, but her English level held her back. Another mentioned the confusion over terms where British English differs from American English, for example ‘cookie’ vs. ‘biscuit’ , or ‘chips’ vs. ‘crisps’ . Overall however, the students were very happy with the homestay experience, and described it as one of the highlights of the programme.

The students were then asked about their experiences with the classes. They were kept together as one group for the classes, although were encouraged to talk with other students outside the classroom.

When asked if the students found the classes difficult, they said that they did not find them so difficult. They mentioned that the teachers explained things very clearly. They also mentioned that they had to do a lot of group and pair work, which was different to their experience of Japanese classrooms.

Part of the programme involved interviewing Phd. Students about their poster presentations. All the students commented on how they found this very difficult. However, the students commented that they had enjoyed a trip to Beauchamp College to experience classes in a British secondary school.

The students were also asked to describe the extracurricular activities that they took part in. They mentioned touring Leicester and visiting Leicester Tigers rugby stadium. One student mentioned that he had joined other undergraduates to play basketball. All the students toured other parts of England on the weekends. This was not part of the official programme, and was something done on the students` own initiative. They commented that on these trips they had to use English to buy tickets, souvenirs and food. Once again, the students seemed to enjoy these extracurricular activities, and they agreed that it gave them a chance to use English in a real world setting.

The differences between British academic life and Japanese academic life were also discussed. One student mentioned that while British students seemed to have fewer classes in the week, they had to do more work in their own time. Another student noted that British undergraduates seemed to have more idea about what they wanted to do after they had graduated. The students all mentioned how many different nationalities they had encountered at Leicester University, and how this was different from Japan.

Finally, the students were asked what they felt had been the main benefit of the programme. Two of the students said that the homestay experience had been the most beneficial thing. Another student felt that it was the opportunity to talk with people from the UK, while the final student believed that the chance to speak to many people in English was the greatest benefit.

## 5. Discussion

The pre and post TOEIC test scores seem to suggest that all the students were able to improve their listening ability, despite the short duration of the programme. For many of the participants the improvement has been quite

significant. Although Student J only improved by 5%, the pre-trip score in this instance was already quite high, and a larger increase of 20% or more at this level would probably take a longer time. This is in contrast to Geis and Fukushima's (1997) study, which found that some students' TOEFL scores had actually dropped after a six-week study abroad programme. This may be due to the fact that the students in Geis and Fukushima's study did not stay with a homestay family, but rather in student dormitories.

The students were given the post-test two days after they returned, therefore it could be argued that they were still in 'English mode', and that after some time, their scores would drop a little. Further testing after a month or two would confirm whether this would indeed be the case. However, when they took this post-test, the students were all jet-lagged, and therefore one would not expect them to be working at full capacity.

What seems to be beyond any doubt is that three weeks of almost constant exposure to English has had a positive impact on the participating students' receptive skills. It could be argued that this is one of the principal reasons for such programmes to be encouraged. Unless the students were in some kind of relationship with an English speaker in Japan, it would be almost impossible to get such exposure in their everyday lives. While there is almost unlimited opportunity to practice English reading, writing and grammar in Japan, the occasions where real-life listening and speaking are encountered are, by circumstances, limited.

Evaluating speaking ability, as mentioned above, can be problematic and difficult to quantify. With this in mind, for the purposes of this study, the confidence with which the students use English, coupled with their ability to self-correct, will be taken into consideration and used to attempt to assess any improvement.

As mentioned above, the students received three preparation classes before departing and were then tested and de-briefed on their return. Although subjective, it is the opinion of this researcher that the confidence with which the students conversed in English on their return was greater than before they departed. While responses had to be coaxed from the students in the pre-trip class, on their return, the students were more forthcoming, and seemed more at ease using English than previously.

It was also evident that the students were self-correcting after the trip. During the in-depth interviews, students made repeated self-corrections. For example: discussing interviewing Phd. Students,

*"I can't understand they talk, ... I couldn't understand what they talked about."*

*"We had to ask them questions, so this is, ... was difficult."*

*"I had to, ... we had to interview Phd. Students."*

Also, discussing the homestay experience,

*"My host mother take me, ... took me to university every day by car."*

*"My host mother work, ... works for the City Council."*

And finally, discussing their experiences in general,

*"I have never been to, ... I had never been to a foreign college."*

*"I don't have, ... didn't have any bad experiences."*

The improvement in receptive skills, as demonstrated by the pre and post listening test scores, coupled with the increased confidence and attention to detail in productive skills, as demonstrated above, provides clear evidence of the usefulness and validity of this intensive study programme. From the information gathered during the in-depth interviews, it would appear that there are three main positive factors of this style of study programme, which are of benefit to students' English ability. These are; the homestay experience, the classes and the independent travel undertaken by the students.

Over 70% of the students acknowledged that they felt that the Homestay experience had been the most beneficial to their English. The four students interviewed spoke very positively about Homestay, and two of them felt that overall it had been the best experience of the programme. This correlates with Bodycott and Crew's (2000) findings, which suggest that the homestay experience is the 'most influential component of the immersion program design.'

The advantages of Homestay over the usual alternative, which is to have students stay in halls of residence, are clear. The students are separated from the other members of their group, and therefore they cannot speak in their native language, and are forced to use the target language to communicate with the family. In the case of Japanese students it is highly unlikely that they will find themselves in a British home where the family speaks Japanese. While this may be daunting, the students quickly realize that they have no alternative, and providing the Homestay families are patient, interested and open, communication, up to a certain level, will take place. Were the students to stay in a residence, they would almost certainly mix with each other, and use Japanese rather than English.

There are also the cultural benefits of staying with a Homestay family to be considered. Not only will students witness how normal British people live, but they will also, almost certainly, engage in discourse with the family about differences in British and Japanese culture. A hall of residence would not provide the same level of cultural immersion.

It can be argued, therefore, that based on the improvements in the students' receptive and productive skills, as well as their greater cultural understanding of the UK, that the Homestay experience is not only beneficial, but to be strongly encouraged.

From the student interviews it emerged that during the classes they were encouraged to speak with each other and with Leicester undergraduates as much as possible. They mentioned that this differs from the Japanese classroom, which tends to be teacher-led. There are also fewer students from other countries and cultures at the University of Yamanashi. Once again, this would have contributed positively to the students' receptive and productive skills.

Finally, the students undertook a great deal of independent travel on the weekends, going as far afield as Brighton, Canterbury, Birmingham and London. These excursions were made either individually or in small groups and were not part of the official curriculum. This gave the students an opportunity to practice their English in such activities as buying tickets, asking directions, ordering food and drink and shopping. The independent aspect of this is very important, as it gave the students unstructured access to real-life English.

## 6. Recommendations

From the evidence this study has presented, it appears that the short intensive English programme to Leicester University is worth continuing. The benefits to students' productive and receptive English skills appear to be clear. Furthermore, the increased confidence with which the students conduct themselves on their return is not to be overlooked.

It could be argued that a longer period of study may be even more beneficial, however this is probably logistically difficult from Leicester's perspective. Nonetheless, the process begun in Leicester could be continued on the students' return to Yamanashi. Some follow-up classes and discussion sessions could easily be structured into the returning students' curriculum. It may also be beneficial to establish, prior to departure, what has motivated the students to choose to go on the programme, and then on their return, whether their expectations have been realized.

It may also be beneficial to give the students a full TOEIC/TOEFL, or preferably an IELTS test before they depart for Leicester, and then another one on their return, followed by a further test two or three months after that.

The advantage of having an IELTS test is that it includes a speaking component, which would help to determine any improvement in discourse. This would enable teachers and students to have a clearer idea of how much improvement has been made and whether this improvement is being sustained. It may also be useful to film the IELTS speaking tests before and after, to gauge whether the students' use of eye contact, gesture, and other non-verbal communication strategies has improved.

While the programme at Leicester seems to be well run, it would nevertheless be of greater benefit to the students if they could share the classes with students from other universities engaged in the same programme (if such exists). Furthermore, it may also be advantageous for the students to be evaluated in Leicester to maintain levels of motivation. These are points that could be discussed with the Leicester officials.

## Appendix 1

### Outline of Leicester Content

Lessons	Language Focus/Vocabulary	Can do/Use during course/Outcome
Meeting people	Question forms – open/closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask and answer a variety of questions</li> <li>Linked to Activities – Research Festival, Language Café, Interviewing UG students etc.</li> </ul>
Living with people	Making offers (function) Modals of obligation – must/have to Weak and Strong forms Multi-word expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate with homestay family about everyday chores and activities</li> <li>Aware of cultural expectations in UK homes</li> </ul>
Who's Richard III	Past simple for statements and questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask and answer questions about things that happened in the past</li> <li>Informed about English history and prepared for out of class activity at Exhibition on Richard III</li> </ul>
High Tea	Polite requests Vocabulary for afternoon tea Vowel sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make polite requests when shopping, dining, in the classroom, etc.</li> <li>Informed about English tea culture and prepared for out of class activity at Mrs Bridge's Tea Room</li> </ul>
Clothes and fashion	Vocabulary for types of clothes Verbs used with clothes <i>Will</i> and <i>going to</i> for predictions/ plans/ decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about fashion and making clothing choices</li> <li>Talk about future plans and decisions</li> </ul>
Shopping	Vocabulary for shopping Interrogative questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking and answering questions in shops</li> <li>Planning shopping opportunities</li> </ul>
Pub Food	Vocabulary for dining out Ordering from a menu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ordering at a restaurant/pub</li> <li>Informed about British pub culture</li> </ul>
Visiting places	Prepositions of movement Describing things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking and giving directions</li> <li>Informed about Leicester city and prepared for out of class activity</li> </ul>
Visiting Oxford	Reviewing giving directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further practice in following directions</li> </ul>

	Preparing tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed about Oxford and prepared for out of class activity</li> </ul>
Describing places	Vocabulary about cities <i>Like</i> for preference/description Pronunciation of connected speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to ask about and express preferences using <i>like</i></li> <li>• Describe/compare places and people using <i>like</i></li> </ul>
<b>Education in the UK</b>	Vocabulary for education Comparing and contrasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about studying in Japan and the UK</li> <li>• Informed about the UK education system and prepared for out of class activity</li> </ul>
Getting around town	Vocabulary for travelling and transport in the UK Adverbs of frequency Strong and weak forms for /t/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking about commuting habits in the UK</li> <li>• Talking about how often things are done</li> </ul>
<b>Sightseeing</b>	Vocabulary for describing things/places Modals for possibility/ recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking and answering questions about booking a tour</li> <li>• Describing and recommending places/activities to others</li> </ul>
Virtual London	Vocabulary for places in London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further practise for preparing and taking a tour</li> <li>• Informed about London sites and prepared for post-course London trip</li> </ul>

<b>Project</b>	<b>Input/Content</b>	<b>Outcome/Production</b>
Project 1	<i>Ways of saying hello</i> <i>Topics connected with university study</i> <i>Review open and closed questions</i> <i>Note taking practice</i> <i>Edit questions</i> <i>Practice interviewing</i> Present information Reflect on project A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing students studying at UoL</li> <li>• Documenting interview information</li> <li>• Reporting on interview results</li> </ul>
Project 2	<i>Types of topics for the visual diary</i> <i>Identifying opportunities to take photos</i> <i>Describing different experiences</i> <i>Preparing scripts</i> <i>Preparing a visual PPT</i> Recording audio for slides <i>Reviewing and editing Diary</i> <i>Checking pronunciation/grammar/vocabulary</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce visual diary for presentation assessment</li> <li>• Speak and reflect on experience in the UK</li> <li>• Exhibit visual diary</li> </ul>

<b>Out of Class Activities</b>	<b>Interaction - details</b>
Research festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewing Phd/Masters students from UoL presentations of research area.</li> <li>• Meeting and talking with exhibitors and other students from UoL</li> </ul>
Language café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting and speaking with students studying at UoL</li> </ul>
King Richard III Exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewing an exhibit and extending knowledge of the UK discussed in class</li> </ul>
Mrs Bridge's Tea Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing British culture and applying language learnt in class</li> </ul>
Meet Students from UoL Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting and speaking with undergraduate students studying at UoL</li> </ul>
Leicester Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing British culture (local rugby club) and applying language learnt in class</li> </ul>
Beauchamp College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting and talking with UK secondary students</li> <li>• Experiencing the British schooling system</li> </ul>
Oxford Trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying language learnt in class</li> <li>• Visiting another British university setting</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire for students returning from Leicester Intensive English Programme

1) Did you enjoy your trip to Leicester?

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Undecided    Agree    Strongly Agree

2) Do you feel that your trip to Leicester was a useful experience?

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Undecided    Agree    Strongly Agree

