

# Motivating English Learning through International Friendship Letter Exchanges

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This paper focuses on issues of English communication and international understanding by reporting on a successful international friendship letter exchange project implemented as a part of international cultural exchange. The project aimed to maximize the opportunity for real-life L2 and cultural exchange among students from Japan and China. The study's survey on students' perceptions of L2 and international/intercultural understanding and goodwill demonstrates that this international friendship letter exchange project has significantly influenced students' actual L2 motivation and view for the need to acquire English even beyond the classroom, thus fostering international/intercultural understanding and goodwill. The authors conclude that friendship letter exchanges can be regarded both as a powerful integral motivating factor and an effective example of authentic learning, thus highlighting the growing necessity for the effective incorporation of authentic settings into the process of L2 learning.

..... Keywords .....

English education, motivation, letter exchanges, international friendship

## 1. Introduction

The issue of motivation for successful second language learning (L2) has been a target of many research studies. The never-ending debate regarding which factors prove to be more efficient for successful L2 acquisition is still far from reaching any consensus. The literature, both linguistic and socio-linguistic, is overwhelmed with controversial conclusions about the predominant role of either

*instrumental* or *integrative* types of motivation. Gorshkov and Lange (2015) generally supported the view that elements of integral motivation in bridging English communication and international understanding prove to be more beneficial for L2. There are also research studies (e.g. Tsai, 2012) which conclude that both instrumental and integrative types of motivation are equally important in English acquisition for students studying abroad. Conversely, Hadriana et al. (2013), for instance, after investigating the relationship between motivations and self-learning and secondary high school students' English language achievements, conclude that

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2016年9月27日受理

英語学習を促進する手段としての国際手紙交換の有効性に関する一考察

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there is a less significant relationship between extrinsic motivation and English language achievement, while there is no significant correlation between intrinsic motivation and students' achievements.

Recent studies on motivation (e.g. Rees, 2014) appeal to the “complexity” of learning attitudes and motivation that are being shaped by a “global socio-cultural context”. Rees (pp. 86-87) concludes that learning motivation is subject to changes in its social environment. Wadell and Shandor (2012) draw similar conclusions, stating that English is an international language nowadays, and the distinction between integral and instrumental is no longer relevant, as L2 learners associate English with more than English-speaking countries. Dornyei (2010, p. 74) also points out that research on L2 motivation has recently shifted from the traditional “integrative/instrumental dichotomy” to the concept of the “*ideal L2self*”.

*Authentic learning*, or “learning by doing” is another wide-spread trend in the field of education which is also being actively applied for L2 acquisition. Studying for a real purpose, fostering the ability to relate theoretical knowledge to real-world issues and problems motivates the L2 process itself and helps acquire new skills and knowledge.

In the present study, we do not advocate the accuracy of any research findings of the previous studies, but we do generally support the view that elements of integral motivation might foster students' English capabilities, especially taking into account the research findings claiming that motivation for L2 among Japanese university students is mostly of instrumental origin (Brown, 2004).

In this research, taking advantage of an

international exchange setting<sup>1</sup>, we explain how international friendship letter exchanges can foster students' English learning capabilities. We conclude that international friendship letter exchanges have the potential to trigger integrative motivation and aim to ascertain to what degree letter exchanges motivate students to activate their English skills to foster international/intercultural understanding and goodwill.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 briefly introduces literature review related to pen pal projects and international letter exchanges. Section 3 provides a brief overview of the international friendship letter exchange project at Kaichi International University. Section 4 outlines the methodology of the research. In Section 5 we discuss the survey results, with the conclusion in Section 6.

## **2. Letter Exchanges as a Motivating Factor in English Learning: Short Literature Review**

International letter exchanges aimed to connect students around the world and activate their motivation in L2 is certainly not new. Writing for “a real purpose” or for “authentic communication purposes” as mentioned by Larotta (2011), has proven to be an extremely efficient driving force for students from different age groups to improve their writing skills and increase their awareness on intercultural issues and international understanding. Barksdale et al. (2007), for instance, point to the positive impact of pen pal projects in supporting literacy development, promoting content-based learning, forming personal friendship, and developing cultural

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<sup>1</sup> See details in Part 2 below.

understanding. In a different study, Larotta and Serrano (2012), by developing a holistic and socio-cultural approach to adult English literacy, also conclude that pen pal writing brings “linguistic and cultural gains” to L2. Lange (2011, p. 79) also points out the positive outcome of international letter exchanges between students in Japan and students in Laos<sup>2</sup> fostering an increased interest in international/intercultural understanding and goodwill. More specifically,

the percentage of respondents (in Japan) who said that they became much or very much interested was slightly more than half (51%) for “Japan’s role in Asia”, 76% for “developing countries like Laos”, 72% for “internationalization”, 69% for “helping other countries”, 75% for “international goodwill”, and an overwhelming majority (87%) for “English”, which is strong evidence for the benefits of this kind of letter exchange. (Lange, 2011, p. 79)

As such, the positive impact of international letter exchanges is widely recognized.

On the other hand, technological advancements in the era of globalization have significantly changed the means of communication, making it easier to correspond with people from “disparate far-flung cultures” (Thirumurthy, 2010). The spread of information technology (IT) and its adaptation to L2 paved the grounding for a change in the traditional way that international letter exchange projects are organized. More and more researchers and instructors of L2 worldwide report on the positive impact of e-mail exchanges (Greenfield, 2003; Ndemanu,

2012; Xing, 2014), e-pal (Thirumurthy, 2010) or even VideoPal projects (Du et al., 2011) and videoconferencing (Wu and Marek, 2010). However, as claimed in some research, the arrival of a pen pal letter produces much more excitement than any form of technology-based communication (Mims, 2013). The overwhelming delight of students receiving letters written on paper from students in a foreign country is also well reported on in Lange (2011) as well as in Lange and Gorshkov (2016). Thus, international letter pen pal exchanges in the traditional paper form may still be a more effective way to promote elements of integrative motivation.

### 3. Methodology

Kaichi International University puts much emphasis on the promotion of international exchange. On 21 July 2014, the university hosted Chinese students from Soochow University and organized a Japanese cultural experience for them. The idea of the exchange was expressed in the concept of a “bridge” as a symbol of connection joining the two schools. Lange and Gorshkov (2016) referred to this international exchange as an example of integrative motivation. On 17 July 2015, the second round of international exchange with Soochow University<sup>3</sup> was organized under which the authors launched the International Friendship Letter Exchange Project.

The general overview of the International Friendship Letter Exchange Project and International Cultural Exchange Program with Soochow University, China is presented in **Table 1** below.

Our major research questions include the

<sup>2</sup> Through the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) organization.

<sup>3</sup> For details of the exchange, refer to Lange and Gorshkov (2016).

following:

1. What is the motivation for students to learn English?
2. What are students' attitudes towards international cultural exchange?
3. How can an International Friendship Letter Exchange Project influence students' English learning motivation?

In order to answer these research questions, we implemented a two-stage analysis.

**Table 1** Overview of the International Friendship Letter Exchange Project and International Exchange Program with Soochow University

Step 1. International Cultural Exchange Program with Soochow University (21 July 2014)
Step 2. International Friendship Letter Exchange Project (June 2015) - preparation of letters by Kaichi students - getting written consent forms from students
Step 3. International Cultural Exchange Program with Soochow University (17 July 2015) - passing Kaichi letters to Soochow University students - preparation of letters by Soochow University Students
Step 4. Obtaining official permission to analyze Soochow University students' letters from the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Office, Soochow University, China (August 2015)
Step 5. Survey of Kaichi Participants (September 2015) - passing Soochow letters to Kaichi students (September 2015) - getting official permission from the Ethics Committee at Kaichi International University to conduct the survey (9 September 2015)

First, we launched an international friendship

letter exchange project as a part of an international cultural exchange event with students from Soochow University on 17 July 2015. To get our students involved in the project, we followed and built from the example in Lange (2011) including the process approach to writing. The steps we followed were:

- 1) briefing about the Soochow University visit and related friendship letter writing project,
- 2) providing a letter writing template (see attached in **Appendix A**),
- 3) having the students write their first drafts,
- 4) correcting and returning the letters, and
- 5) having students write and submit their final drafts.

We later on collected the students' letters from both partner universities and analyzed their contents, structures (whether the students followed the scaffolding technique provided in the letter template), establishing friend connections and focus on cultural issues.

Second, in order to ascertain to what degree letter exchanges motivate students to activate their English skills to foster international/intercultural understanding and goodwill, we conducted a survey in September 2015 targeting two groups of students: those who participated in the international friendship letter exchange project only and those who also participated in the international cultural exchange with students from Soochow University. The survey form consisted of three parts: background information of the respondents (nationality, sex, academic year, specialty, motivation of L2); questions related to the students' experience of participating in the international friendship letter exchange program; and questions related to their experience of international cultural exchange

with Soochow University on 17 July 2015. The survey form included both open-end questions and questions based on the Likert scale.<sup>4</sup> The complete survey form is presented in **Appendix B**.<sup>5</sup> All students who participated in the international friendship letter exchange project with Soochow University provided their written consent<sup>6</sup> (**Appendix C**) to analyze the contents of their letters. In addition, the present study also passed the screening and fulfilled the necessary requirements of the Research Ethics Committee at Kaichi International University.<sup>7</sup>

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Analysis of the letters' contents

Forty-eight letters were prepared by Kaichi students for their dear friends from Soochow University within the framework of the international friendship letter exchange. Since four students volunteered to write more than one letter, the actual number of Kaichi participants amounted to 43 students with the majority of them being first-year students (elementary and pre-intermediate levels) who were encouraged to prepare their letters as an extra-curricular activity apart from their regular English classes. Out of the 48 letters submitted to the instructors, 10 letters were written by foreign students at Kaichi International University.<sup>8</sup> Twenty-seven letters (56%) contained pictures, original drawings and pieces of origami prepared for

their dear Soochow University friends. The scaffolding technique and process approach to writing were applied to assist the students to complete their letters. The students were provided with a letter template to help them with the process of writing (**Appendix A**). The analysis implemented showed that 22 letters (46%) followed the style of the template letter, 15 letters (31%) contained original letter structures while 11 letters (23%) combined both methods by supplementing the template provided with their original sentence structures. Students were encouraged to ask for any help from their instructors and many eventually rewrote and improved their letters (with the average score for question 5 at 3.7. See Part II. B of the Survey in Appendix D).

Kaichi students mostly enjoyed writing about the following topics: introducing themselves, their hometowns, hobbies, local food and traditions popular in their culture, sightseeing spots and seasons in Japan. Anime and manga were also often mentioned among the top 3 topics the respondents enjoyed writing about. In their letters they asked various questions to their partners mostly wanting to learn about their partners, Chinese culture, Soochow University, why their partners like Japan and how they enjoyed their stay. Some students were even interested in the level of English ability of their dear Soochow University friends. Some Kaichi students added delightful welcoming greeting salutations at the beginning of their letters and some even added helpful precautions in their letters to their Chinese exchange partners:

*It's my pleasure to write this letter for you.*

*Have you ever been to Japan? If this your first time to visit here, your're lucky coming to*

<sup>4</sup> The format of the Likert item included a scale with the following five options: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree.

<sup>5</sup> The original survey form had a Japanese translation to help students understand the goals of the survey. Students could reply either in English or Japanese. The responses in Japanese used in this paper were translated into English by the authors.

<sup>6</sup> The written consent form was also available in both English and Japanese.

<sup>7</sup> Acceptance Number 18 dated 9 September 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Seven letters were written by first-year Vietnamese students and three letters were written by first-year Chinese students.

*Kashiwa.*

*Japan is very beautiful. Hope you enjoy your journey.*

*Japan has earthquakes like many countries do. A might earthquake may occur tomorrow. Please take earthquake measures even though you are only visiting Japan.*

*He's the mascot of Chiba Prefecture. His name is Chiba-kun. He is shape of Chiba Prefecture. I live in around his neck. Do you have any country's mascot?*

Foreign students studying at Kaichi shared their Japan experiences with their Chinese partners:

*I came to Japan three years ago. It was a difficult time because I had never been to a foreign country before, and moreover I don't know about the language, culture or people here. Everything started from zero. However everyone here is very friendly and kind. Therefore I didn't fear anything and I enjoy life in this beautiful country.*

Instructors received 52 thank-you letters back<sup>9</sup> prepared by Soochow University students and staff members on the day of the international exchange program. The letters mostly contained self-introductions and replies to the questions asked by Kaichi students. In 25 letters, Chinese students invited their Japanese partners to visit China one day:

*In Soochow, there are many ancient gardens. ... You could let me guide you have a charming visit.*

*If you have chance, welcome to visit China and I am sure you will have a good memory.*

*I wish you could visit China and taste Chinese sweets.*

*Sorry for not having too much space to tell you more about my country and if you have any chance to visit China, please feel free to contact me.*

Many letters from Soochow University students also introduced their experience of visiting Japan and expressed their views on Japan, Japanese people, cultural differences and similarities between Japan and China:

*Frankly speaking, Japanese people work very hard and take almost everything seriously, maybe because that most of them are blood type A (笑). I went to game center on the first day when I came to Osaka. I wanted to take a picture of someone who played very well. But someone else told me not to do so. I felt surprised that if in China, people like to take photo or videos of people who can do things very well.*

*I think Japanese are so polite and cute.*

*Japan is clean and beautiful. I love here very much. Everyone is friendly and help us a lot.*

*In China, everyone live a leisure life. But I feel people in Japan are very busy. I can't adopt to it, but I love Japan culture!*

*Today, we came to here – your university, to become the bridge of China and Japanese.*

#### 4.2. Survey

The number of Kaichi students who

<sup>9</sup> Seven letters were written in Chinese and four letters in Japanese.

participated in the survey amounted to 34, including 28 Japanese students and 6 foreign students (Vietnam - 4, China - 2). As the project mostly targeted freshmen, the majority of the participants were first-year students (23) followed by second-year students (9) and one student respectively from the third and fourth years. Thirty-three students participated in the international friendship letter exchange project while those who participated in the international exchange program with Soochow University on 17 July 2015 amounted to 12.<sup>10</sup>

The motivation to study English for all respondents is presented in **Table 1 in Appendix D**. Seventy-three percent of students replied that their motivation to study English was driven by the necessity to acquire academic credits or pass English compulsory classes or English proficiency tests, while 27% of the respondents explained that their motivation was more of an integral character driven by the desire to travel, communicate with people from different countries or simply interest in the English language itself.

**Table 2 in Appendix D** summarizes the average scores for Part II. B of the survey. Most of the students (question 1, average score 1.8) experienced “writing for a real purpose” for the first time and admitted that they could not write a friendship letter in English before the project. That is why many of the students followed the letter template (scaffolding technique) provided by their instructors (question 2, average score 4.2) and asked them for help (questions 4 and 5, average scores 3.9 and 3.7 respectively). The data also shows that on average students

enjoyed receiving a reply letter back more (question 10, average score 4.1) than actually writing one (question 8, average score 3.5), although overall they describe exchanging letters with Soochow students as a positive experience (question 17, average score 3.9) and state that they would like to use English more for international understanding (question 21, average score 3.8). The interest in the project itself can also be supported by selective comments provided by some respondents (for details, refer to **Table 4 PART II. C. in Appendix D**):

*Letter exchange was very fun. I was very excited to get a letter back. I would definitely like to do it again.*

*I think everybody was very excited to participate in this project.*

*It took much time and a lot of efforts to finish the letter, so it was very difficult. But I was so happy to receive a response. My partner wrote my name in Chinese, I was really touched.*

**Table 3 in Appendix D** presents the average scores of the 12 respondents who participated in the international exchange event with Soochow University on 17 July 2015 and could experience the letter exchange time and other activities included in the event. The data shows that on average students showed a relatively high interest in communicating with the visiting Chinese students (question 2, average score 4.2) and demonstrates that this exchange program was overall a positive experience (question 4, average score 4.3). The students also demonstrated the desire to improve their English

<sup>10</sup> Most of the Kaichi students could not participate in the cultural exchange due to a class overlap.

communication skills after the event (question 3, average score 3.8) and desire to learn the English language itself (question 6, average score 3.7) and show international goodwill (question 7, average score 3.7). From the responses to the open-end questions for Part III of the survey, it is obvious that students interacted in various ways: language communication (mostly in English with a few students communicating in Chinese and Japanese), taking pictures together, trying on *yukatas*, *Tanabata*-related activities (writing wishes and watching videos on YouTube). In our view, some respondents experienced both “linguistic and “cultural gains” mentioned by Larotta and Serrano (2012):

*I feel like I could learn more about China and Chinese people.*

*Even if we do not understand each other, we do have something in common. We still could have much fun.*

*I think it is not good to have stereotypes towards Chinese people. They were very open and active and many of them like Japan so much.*

Needless to say, for some students this experience provided new challenges and let them reappraise the importance of L2 and identify the role of English in fostering international/intercultural understanding and goodwill. Some students admitted that it was difficult for them to communicate in “real” and “authentic” situations.

## 5. Conclusions

The results of the survey conducted allow us to

draw some concluding remarks as follows.

First, while it is difficult to directly classify L2 motivation into instrumental or integral types, the results obtained envisage that, for the targeted group, the motivation of more instrumental origin significantly surpasses the integral one. In this regard, our results generally correspond to the findings of Brown (2004) who stated that motivation for L2 among Japanese university students is mostly instrumental in origin. Students often fail to understand the idea of “studying for a real purpose”. Textbooks applied often focus on distant foreign places as a framework for English study. While many professional native speakers work as instructors at Japanese universities, quite often students are still reluctant and shy to communicate with them due to both personal and cultural reasons. Many students view the L2 through the prism of “grammar rules” and the process of “memorized” learning, while in fact L2 helps increase awareness of international understanding and raises students’ interest in intercultural issues.

Second, we found that in general students showed a positive attitude towards the international cultural exchange and letter exchange project. Major scores for most of the survey questions are above average, which brings us to the idea that students enjoyed the international cultural experience. As an overall impression, the students were very enthusiastic about taking part in this letter writing project and appeared to enjoy the opportunity to express themselves in this real need for language exchange for friendship and learning about another culture through English. It certainly provided a framework for active, interactive and cross-cultural language learning as an example of integrative motivation under the umbrella

setting of the Soochow University visit. In this regard, a Soochow University student aptly wrote in his letter:

*...Today, we come here – your university, to become a bridge between China and Japan. I hope to be friends with you and learn about each other more these days.*

The exchange of these friendship letters clearly demonstrated international reciprocity of friendship through English with the essential ingredients of curiosity about their international recipients and desire to share their culture and lifestyle. The Kaichi students initiated the exchange and elicited an instantaneous enthusiastic response from the Soochow students with their culture-focused letters discussing differences and similarities between Japan and China. The Kaichi participants were so fascinated and enthralled to read the letters they received back from the Soochow students.

Third, our study supported the argument that letter and cultural exchanges are a powerful motivating factor for L2. International communication with foreign nationals can be a strong facilitating factor in developing the necessary language competence and helping overcome language reticence.

Establishment of an authentic learning environment is crucial for L2 motivation. It provides the framework of interdisciplinary, content-based learning and simultaneously allows students to acquire various practical skills that may well be applicable in their future career paths as well.

In our example, students received an opportunity to learn both English and culture (interdisciplinary, content-based learning),

acquired some research and analytical skills (how to introduce Japanese culture to foreign nationals in English, where to search for relevant related information) and actually learned how to write a letter through the scaffolding technique (practical skills).

While it is not always possible to establish authentic settings in the classroom, results of involvement in international friendship letter exchange projects such as reported by Lange (2011) as well as in this present study have demonstrated that they can help students reassess their existing L2 motivational stance and redirect it to a more empowering multi-dimensional base for more meaningful and successful L2 acquisition with its consequent potential rewards beyond the classroom towards fostering international/intercultural understanding and goodwill.

### **Acknowledgments**

We express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Hong Zi, coordinator for Student Training and Student Exchange at the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Office, Soochow University for her advice and kind assistance in getting the permission to analyze the letters prepared by Soochow University students.

The authors also wish to thank an Australian student at the Maisie Kaufmann Learning Centre in Maryborough, Queensland, Australia for inspiring yet another set of international *dear friend* letter exchanges – this time between Japan and China after the first set between Australia and Japan, and the second between Japan and Laos – following his spontaneous and heartfelt letter “To my dear Japanese friends” (see Lange, 2011, for further details). Special thanks to Ms. Sylvia Collins, Operations Manager at the Maisie Kaufmann

Learning Center for her work in arranging Ms. Lange's research visits to the Maisie Kaufmann Learning Center.

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## Appendix A

### Letter Template

*Dear Friend* from Soochow University,

Welcome to Kaichi International University. How wonderful you could visit.

First of all, let me introduce myself. My name is ... . I am ... years old.

I'm majoring in human psychology/business administration/culture. I belong to ... club.

My favorite sport is ... .

I'm from ... City, in ... Prefecture, which is north/south/east/west of Tokyo. It takes ... hours/minutes by train/plane to get there. My hometown is famous for ... .

I have a part-time job. I work at ... .

My hobby is ... . I like... .

Is this your first visit to Japan? How have you been enjoying yourself? Have you experienced any culture shocks? Have you had any problems?

Let me tell you something about my country. (Choose)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manga          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anime                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cherry-blossom | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online games           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seasons        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sports (Olympic games) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mountains      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Others                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Japanese food  |  |

*Example:*

My country, Japan, is an island country. Japan has the four seasons. I like spring very much because you can enjoy the cherry blossoms.

“Tanabata” is a Japanese traditional event, which is based on Japanese ancient mythology. In the mythology, there are Orihime (the princess of the star) and Hikoboshi (the prince of the star).

Do you know what a *yukata* is? Japanese people wear it in summer. It is a traditional Japanese costume.

The most beautiful temple in Kyoto is ... .

I'd love to know more about you. What's your name? How old are you? What are your interests? What are you majoring in? Please tell me more about your culture and your country.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.

Best wishes,

Your friend,  
Mariya (Signature)

## Appendix B

### Survey Form

Dear Students who participated in the event with the visiting students from China and/or international friendship letter exchanges,

We would be grateful if you could please spend about 10 minutes or so to answer the following questions for the purposes of our paper.

#### I. Background Information

1. Nationality:
2. Sex:
3. Academic year: 1    2    3    4
4. Major (Department):
5. Did you participate in the international friendship letter exchange program with the Soochow University students?  
Yes    No
6. Did you participate in the international exchange program with Soochow University held on 17 July 2015?    Yes    No
7. What is your motivation to study English?

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#### II. For students who participated in the international friendship letter exchange.

##### A. Please answer the questions below.

1. What topics did you most enjoy writing about to the Soochow University students from China? Write the top three.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What did you want to learn most about through this letter exchange? Mention the top three.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Were you able to write a friendship letter in English before the project?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Did the example letter template help you write the letter?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Were you helped by teachers to write the letter?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Did you ask the teacher questions to get some help?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Did you rewrite and improve your letter?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Did you write a nice letter (for example, introducing yourself, describing your country, culture & traditions, and/or hometown, asking appropriate questions, using proper letter format)?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Did you add drawings and/or pictures?	1	2	3	4	5

8. Did you enjoy writing the friendship letter?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Did you visit Kaichi International University's homepage to view the photos and read about their visit?	1	2	3	4	5
10. Did you enjoy getting a letter back?	1	2	3	4	5
11. Were their letters easy to understand?	1	2	3	4	5
12. Did the letters from the Chinese students describing their visit to Japan help you see Japan through their eyes?	1	2	3	4	5
13. Did the letter-writing project help you understand better about what life is like for a student in China?	1	2	3	4	5
14. Did this project help you understand more about China and Chinese people?	1	2	3	4	5
15. Would you like to continue communicating with your letter-writing Chinese partner?	1	2	3	4	5
16. Did the project help you improve your English writing skills?	1	2	3	4	5
17. Was exchanging letters with the Soochow students overall a positive experience?	1	2	3	4	5
18. Would you like to have more opportunities like this to practice real English?	1	2	3	4	5
19. Did this experience increase your desire to improve your English writing skills for future opportunities?	1	2	3	4	5
20. Would you like more experiences like this?	1	2	3	4	5
21. Would you like to use English more for international understanding?	1	2	3	4	5

**B. Please circle the answer (1-5) that mostly applies to you regarding your experience of participating in the international letter exchange with the Chinese students.**

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
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**C. Please write some overall comments in English or Japanese about this letter exchange experience.**

**III. The questions below are for students who participated in the international exchange program on 17 July 2015.**

**If you did not participate in the exchange program, please leave the form blank.**

**A. Please circle the answer (1-5) that mostly applies to you regarding your experience of participating in the international exchange with Chinese students.**

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
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1. Degree of reticency before meeting the students from China	1	2	3	4	5
2. Interest level in communicating with the Chinese students	1	2	3	4	5
3. Desire to improve English communication skills after the meeting for future opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
4. Was spending time with the Chinese students overall a positive experience?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Would you enjoy more experiences like this?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Did this experience increase your desire to learn English?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Did this experience increase your desire towards international goodwill?	1	2	3	4	5

**B. Please write some comments about the following either in English or Japanese.**

1. Please write about how you interacted with the students from China.

2. Please write about your feelings and reactions about this intercultural exchange experience with the students from China.

3. What did you like best about meeting the Chinese students?

4. Other comments

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

## Appendix C

### Form Requesting Written Consent from Students to Analyze their Letters

**To students who participated in the International Friendship Letter Exchange Project  
with Soochow University**

If you agree that we may use your letter as a sample for the purposes of joint research papers of Professors Elizabeth Lange and Victor Gorshkov, please fill in your name below. While the results of the papers might be published online (Internet publication), the full text of your letter, your name or any other personal information will not be disclosed. However, some parts (sentences) of your letter might be quoted as examples for the purposes of the papers.

*I hereby give my written consent to use the copy of my letter that I wrote for the International Friendship Letter Exchange Project held on 17 July 2015 for the purposes of research papers of Prof. Elizabeth Lange and Prof. Victor Gorshkov. I understand that the results of these research papers might be published online (Internet) and I give my written consent only on the condition that the full text of my letter, my name or any other personal information will not be disclosed. However, I understand that some parts of my letter might be quoted for the purposes of the above-mentioned research work.*

Agree

Disagree

Name:

Date:

## Appendix D

### Survey Results

**Table 1** Motivation to Study English (Part I. 7.)

Motivation	Example answers	Total number of respondents
1) Compulsory class, to get credits	because there is English curriculum at school and I have to; because I study it at school; it is a compulsory class, I need my credits	13
2) Future job/career	I can use English for my future job, I can read scientific papers in English; I want to become a tour guide; I want to be an English teacher; my dream is to build a company, so I need to study English; English is needed for companies and work	10
3) Self-improvement, self-growth	I want to improve my English even a little bit; I want to be able to speak English fluently; I want to extend my abilities, studying English will not bring any harm	5
4) Travelling/communication with people from other countries	I want to be able to communicate in English so that I can talk to people from all over the world; I want to be able to communicate with many people around the world	3
5) English proficiency tests	I want to pass TOEIC and Eiken and other English proficiency tests	1
6) Interest in English	I am deeply interested in English, and I want to be able to use English for daily-life communication	1
No answer		1
TOTAL		33
1)+2)+5) (instrumental motivation)		24 (73%)
3)+4)+6) (integral motivation)		9 (27%)

**Table 2** Average Scores for Part II. B of the Survey

1. Were you able to write a friendship letter in English before the project?	1.8
2. Did the example letter template help you write the letter?	4.2
3. Were you helped by teachers to write the letter?	3.9
4. Did you ask the teacher questions to get some help?	3.5
5. Did you rewrite and improve your letter?	3.7
6. Did you write a nice letter (for example, introducing yourself, describing your country, culture & traditions, and/or hometown, asking appropriate questions, using proper letter format)?	3.7
7. Did you add drawings and/or pictures?	3.4
8. Did you enjoy writing the friendship letter?	3.5
9. Did you visit Kaichi International University's homepage to view the photos and read about their visit?	1.9
10. Did you enjoy getting a letter back?	4.1
11. Were their letters easy to understand?	3.8
12. Did the letters from the Chinese students describing their visit to Japan help you see Japan through their eyes?	3.5

13. Did the letter-writing project help you understand better about what life is like for a student in China?	3.4
14. Did this project help you understand more about China and Chinese people?	3.6
15. Would you like to continue communicating with your letter-writing Chinese partner?	3.4
16. Did the project help you improve your English writing skills?	3.3
17. Was exchanging letters with the Soochow students overall a positive experience?	3.9
18. Would you like to have more opportunities like this to practice real English?	3.6
19. Did this experience increase your desire to improve your English writing skills for future opportunities?	3.6
20. Would you like more experiences like this?	3.4
21. Would you like to use English more for international understanding?	3.8

**Table 3** Average Scores for Part III. A. of the Survey

1. Degree of reticency before meeting the students from China	3.0
2. Interest level in communicating with the Chinese students	4.2
3. Desire to improve English communication skills after the meeting for future opportunities	3.8
4. Was spending time with the Chinese students overall a positive experience?	4.3
5. Would you enjoy more experiences like this?	3.8
6. Did this experience increase your desire to learn English?	3.7
7. Did this experience increase your desire towards international goodwill?	3.7

**Table 4** Open-ended Question Reponses

PART II. C. Students' comments about the letter exchange project.	<p><i>Letter exchange was very fun. I was very excited to get a letter back. I would definitely like to do it again.</i></p> <p><i>It was fun. I would like to use English more for international understanding.</i></p> <p><i>I think everybody was very excited to participate in this project.</i></p> <p><i>It took much time and a lot of efforts to finish the letter, so it was very difficult. But I was so happy to receive a response. My partner wrote my name in Chinese, I was really touched.</i></p> <p><i>I feel that my English ability has slightly improved.</i></p> <p><i>I thought it was better than communicating by email because you can directly express your feelings.</i></p> <p><i>English is not my native language, so it was difficult to express myself. It was a good experience but it was difficult.</i></p> <p><i>It was difficult to write a letter.</i></p>
PART III. B1.	<i>It was good to exchange our experiences.</i>

<p>How respondents interacted with students from China.</p>	<p><i>I speak both Chinese and English, so when I started talking with Soochow students they looked excited and started asking me questions back.</i></p> <p><i>We chatted and took pictures together.</i></p> <p><i>We made origami together and they received it as a souvenir.</i></p> <p><i>I could communicate a little with Chinese students. We made origami together. I taught them how to make an airplane.</i></p> <p><i>I could not deeply interact with the students from China, but I introduced myself and helped to explain the program to some of them.</i></p> <p><i>We made origami together.</i></p> <p><i>Helping students wear yukatas. They looked satisfied.</i></p>
<p>PART III. B2.</p> <p>Feelings and reactions about this intercultural exchange experience with the students from China.</p>	<p><i>It was very interesting.</i></p> <p><i>I was disappointed by my poor level of English.</i></p> <p><i>It was difficult to communicate but it was fun. I wish there were more opportunities like this.</i></p> <p><i>Once again I felt the difficulty in communicating in English.</i></p> <p><i>I once more felt the importance of studying English.</i></p> <p><i>Even if we do not understand each other, we do have something in common. We still could have much fun.</i></p> <p><i>I think it is not good to have stereotypes toward Chinese people. They were very open and active and many of them like Japan so much.</i></p> <p><i>There were moments when I could not speak fluently and could not express myself. Sometimes I could not understand what I was told. But generally I could understand and be able to express myself 60-70%.</i></p> <p><i>I think I realized the importance of trying to communicate even if you do not have enough words to express yourself.</i></p> <p><i>English is difficult.</i></p> <p><i>As a part of activities, we made origami together. But I didn't know how to fold some origami. So I felt it was necessary to practice origami and learn instructions how to make it beforehand.</i></p>
<p>PART III. B3-4.</p> <p>What did you like best about meeting the Chinese students? Other comments.</p>	<p><i>Helped me improve my English writing skills.</i></p> <p><i>I feel like I could learn more about China and Chinese people.</i></p> <p><i>I could communicate even though my English ability is very low and I speak no Chinese at all.</i></p> <p><i>I enjoyed speaking and listening in English.</i></p> <p><i>I was happy to use English since I spoke it a long time ago. I think I could communicate a bit.</i></p> <p><i>I was happy to use English outside my English class. I enjoyed communicating with students of similar age.</i></p>

## 英語学習を促進する手段としての国際手紙交換の有効性に関する一考察

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### Synopsis 邦訳

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本論文は、英語コミュニケーションと国際理解を促進するための動機づけの問題に焦点を当てている。筆者らは国際交流イベントの一環として国際手紙交換プロジェクトを実施し、プロジェクトに参加した学生を対象に、「国際交流と英語教育に関する学生の意識調査」を行った。本調査から、国際手紙交換は統合的動機 (integral motivation) 及びオーセンティックな学習(実践学習、authentic learning)を展開するための有効な手段の一つであることが明らかとなった。さらに、本論文では英語教育、国際理解教育を促進する教育方法の導入及び語学教育における「実践の場」(authentic settings)を提供する必要性を指摘した。

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### キーワード

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English education, motivation, letter exchanges, international friendship

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