

## Practical Report

## The Impact of English Café on Students' Global Awareness and TOEIC Scores

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**Abstract:** English Café is a place where students discuss ideas with students from all over the world, motivating themselves to become global leaders. English Café has been held every Friday during lunch hour at the Faculty of Engineering, Shinshu University since December 2013. Activities including 10 minute presentations and group discussions encourage students to have their own opinions, to want to express their opinions, and to learn ways to express their opinions to others of diverse backgrounds. A total of 330 students participated in English Café between December 2013 and July 2017, but students who made academic travels abroad and international students participated more frequently than other students. Furthermore, we compared the current TOEIC scores of participants and non-participants to their scores in their first year of studies, and found that the average increases were 146.3 and 34.2 points, respectively. In particular, the increase was 169.0 points among English Café participants with overseas experiences, showing an interaction effect of *both English Café participation and overseas experiences* and time. Our study suggests that English Café attracts globally oriented students and is creating a snowball effect in their global awareness: that is, they go abroad more and they study harder for TOEIC exams.

**Keywords:** student-centered learning, global education, TOEIC

### 1 Introduction: What is English Café?

English Café at the Faculty of Engineering, Shinshu University is a student-led, student-centered activity to encourage students to empower themselves to become global leaders. We define global leaders as people who operate effectively in a global environment while being respectful of cultural diversity<sup>1)</sup> to inspire and influence people from around the world to work together toward a common vision and common goals<sup>2)</sup>. While we acknowledge English as a global communication tool at English Café, the focus is on thinking, expressing, and communicating, not on speaking English. English Café distinguishes itself from any English conversation or English classes.

English Café started in December 2013 when an international student and two Japanese students wanted to start TEDx at Shinshu University,

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but could not get a license. Initially they wanted to create an environment on campus where students can present their “ideas worth spreading” and discuss the ideas in English<sup>3)</sup>. One of the authors, became a supervisor for English Café, and as we organize English Café together with new students coming and going, we clarified our motivation and vision for English Café. That is, we are empowering students to become global leaders in three steps.

I) *We have our opinions:* We care about social/political/economic/cultural issues as well as scientific/technological issues in the world, and we should be able to formulate our thoughts logically and objectively in a global context. Recognizing self-identity is the basis for this step.

II) *We want to express our opinions:* Without expressing ideas or opinions, there will be no change or improvement. That is, there will be no moving

forward to our common goals. To express our opinions in words requires confidence and assertiveness as well as responsibility and flexibility.

III) *We know ways to express our opinions effectively to others:* We practice our communication skills through presentations and discussions with people from diverse countries and cultures. Our aim is to attain communication skills that are required

for global leaders, ultimately in our global language, English.

English Café is held every Friday during lunch time between 12:15pm and 12:50pm in a lounge at the engineering campus library. Every week, we have a 10-minute interactive presentation of a selected idea worth spreading, followed by questions.

Table 1  
*Presentations in Spring 2017*

Date	Presentation titles	Presenter	
		Nationality	Department (grade)
April 04	What is English Café?	Japan	Mechanical Systems (B4)
April 14	One year Internship in Europe: English is merely a tool	Japan	Electrical and Electronics (M2)
April 21	Getting to Know Japan through Food and Festivals	Nepal	Electrical and Computer (M1)
April 28	Internship in Vietnam: stop worrying, just do it	Japan	Electrical and Computer (B2)
May 12	I Have a Dream: why I left El Salvador	El Salvador	Civil (B3)
May 19	New Zealand	New Zealand	Adjunct professor
May 26	Cyber Security	France	Exchange student
June 02	Brazil: A country of diversity and challenges	Brazil	Electrical and Computer (M1)
June 09	Cultural Space: globalization and culture identity	Japan	Senior assistant professor
June 16	Fascination Toward Video-Games and Astronomy	France	Exchange student
June 23	My Motivation: wanting to be different	Saudi Arabia	Mechanical Systems (B2)
June 30	Contemporary Art: there is no creation without destruction	China	Architecture (M1)
July 07	Why Do We Waste Food?	Malaysia	Mechanical Systems (B2)
July 14	Passion Leads You to Success	Vietnam	Electrical and Electronics (B3)
July 21	Think –Communicate like a Scientist	Brazil and Nepal	Electrical and Computer (M1)

*Note.* B = Bachelor's program (B2 = sophomore, B3 = junior, B4 = senior); M = Master's program (M1 = first year, M2 = second year); Departments are all at Faculty of Engineering.

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We make it interactive by requiring the presenter to ask three questions to the audience during the talk. Then we discuss an issue raised by the presenter in small groups for 15-20 minutes, led by group leaders with high communication skills in English, until now, all international students. Table 1 shows a list of the presentation titles and the nationalities, departments, and grades in spring semester 2017 of the presenters. For example, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, a Saudi male sophomore student (mechanical systems engineering) talked about his successes driven by his wanting to be different from others and daring to think outside the box. We discussed our own examples of thinking outside the box that might have surprised people around us, but nonetheless led to successes. In the following week, a Chinese female graduate student (architecture) discussed contemporary art and postulated that there is no creation without destruction. In this session, we discussed examples of things created by destroying old values and whether or not destruction is necessary to create. We have had numerous lively discussions at English Café, and approximately 30-40 Japanese and international students attended English Café every week in 2017 on average.

In this paper, we investigate: 1) the relation between the participation of students in English Café and their overseas experiences based on the data from the university administration and 2) the correlations between the students' English Café participation/ overseas experiences and their TOEIC<sup>1</sup> score increases based on our survey questionnaires. This study is motivated by our observation of English Café participants in the past three and a half years: i) many students attended English Café before they went abroad for their studies/internships and again after they returned from abroad, and ii) many participants seem to have higher TOEIC scores than non-participants. Thus, we made a hypothesis: English Café is fostering global awareness in students, inspiring them to go

abroad more and study English more.

We describe the demographics of English Café participants and our materials and procedure for the study in **Method**. Then, we analyze the data of overseas experiences of participants and their participation frequency in **Results 1** and analyze TOEIC score improvements seen among participants compared to non-participants with and without overseas experiences in **Results 2**, and end with **Discussion** and **Conclusion**.

## 2 Method

### 2.1 Participants

English Café participants are mostly engineering students in the undergraduate and graduate programs, because the engineering campus of Shinshu university is in Nagano city geographically separated from other faculties located in four different locations in Nagano prefecture. A few students from the Faculty of Education have actively participated in English Café in the past: the education campus is also located in Nagano city, but it is 3.5km away from the engineering campus. In addition, there are no first-year engineering students at English Café as they are all in Matsumoto City for general education. All first-year engineering students are required to take the TOEIC or TOEIC-IP in their first year.

Engineering students are required to take a minimum of 8 credits in English for graduation. Freshman English classes focus on speaking and listening for interpersonal communication or, while sophomore English classes focus on reading research papers and writing essays of 3-5 paragraphs. There are a few elective English Classes offered for junior students. We note that the entrance examination for the Faculty of Engineering covers only math and science, not English, thus many engineering students (think they) are not good at English or tend to avoid studying English.

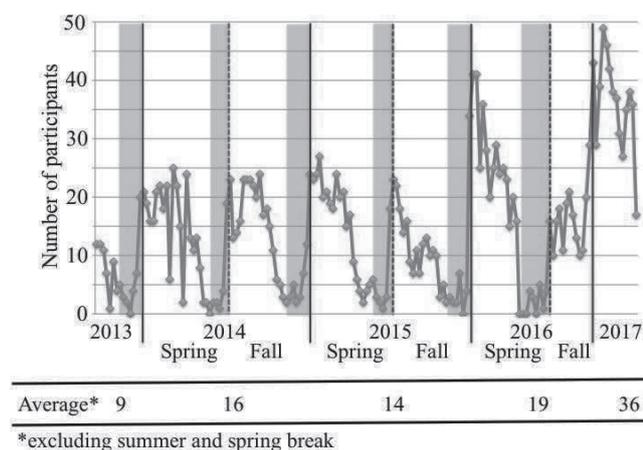


Figure 1. Numbers of English Café participants between December 2013 and July 2017.

Figure 1 shows the numbers of English Café participants since December 2013. The average numbers of participants have been steadily increasing over the past three and a half years, and the average in 2017 was 36, which is more than twice as much as the averages in 2013-2016. For the calculation of the averages, we excluded spring and summer breaks (*shaded region*), because most students were not on campus, so we did not organize any presentations or activities<sup>2</sup>.

A total of 330 students have participated in English Café since December 2017, and most participants are Japanese students (79.4%) and the rest are international, *non-native English speaking* students (20.6%). We note that 35% of students never returned to English Café after their first visits, and they are mostly Japanese students who attended English Café *for extra credits offered by English classes*. Another 9% of students did not come back to English Café after a few times of participations. Twenty percent of the students are frequent participants who attended English Café more than 10 times, and they include both Japanese and international. We will show later that the most frequent participants with more than 40 participations are Japanese students with two or more overseas experiences and international students. We note that most of the discussion leaders

are international students as they tend to have better communication skills.

## 2.2 Materials and Procedure

To study the effects of English Café on the participants' overseas experiences, we use the records of their English Café participation tracked in our attendance confirmation system with student IDs and the records of their travels abroad from the university administration. We define "*overseas experiences*" to include only academic travels for the purposes of studying abroad, joining internship programs or attending conferences. Travels for leisure and family visits are excluded. We note that private academic travels in the students' first year (at the Matsumoto campus) are not recorded by the administration at the Faculty of Engineering. We studied the dates of their participation in relation to their travel dates.

To study the effects of English Café and overseas experiences on the participants' TOEIC scores, we conducted a survey among 58 English Café participants of the present and the past and among 323 non-participants taking courses in Academic English I and in various laboratories of the departments of mechanical systems engineering, information engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, and architecture. We asked their TOEIC or TOEIC-IP scores in their first year at Shinshu University and their most recent TOEIC scores. English Café student committee members collected the data using our survey questionnaire summarized in **Appendix I**. The survey was conducted in person mostly, but sometimes by email. However, many students did not take TOEIC exams after their first-year requirement. Thus, we have 33 participants and 131 non-participants with both past and current scores for our study. We also asked the subjects whether they have academic overseas experiences, but did not ask for the dates of their travels. Thus, we are not able to study the relation between the travels and TOEIC scores in time. IBM

SPSS statistics (IBM Corp. Released 2013. IBM SPSS Statistics for Macintosh, Version 25.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.) was used for the analysis.

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Results 1: English Café Participation and Overseas Experiences

Out of 330 English Café participants since December 2013, 104 students (90 Japanese students and 14 international students) had some form of academic overseas experience (31.5%). Our data only include the travels that they made while enrolled at Shinshu University recorded by our administration. 62 students were attending English Café before going abroad and 42 students began to attend English Café only after going abroad. In addition, 16 out of the 64 students and 18 out of the 42 students went abroad again after English Café participation respectively. Most students continued to participate in English Café after they returned from abroad (82.5%), but 22 students did not continue their English Café attendance.

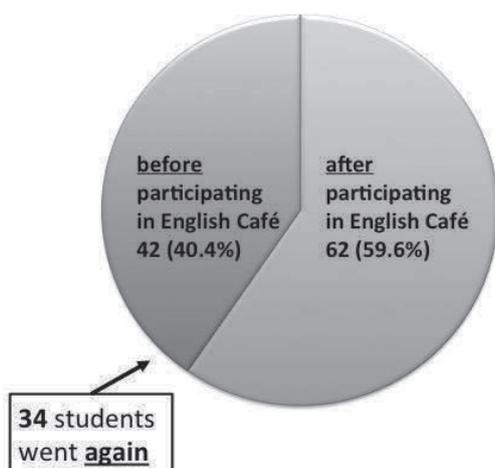


Figure 2. English Café participants with overseas experiences.

The total number of engineering students who went abroad from Shinshu University for

academic purposes between August 2013 and July 2017 is 257. This is a small number, given that the total number of undergraduate students (1644) and master's students (240) is 1884 at the Faculty of Engineering in 2017 alone. Out of 257, 104 students are English Café participants and 153 students are non-participants. Most of them made only single academic travels, but 34 participants and 23 non-participants made two or more travels.

Next, we compare the frequency of English Café participation between students with and without overseas experiences: they are 104 and 226 students respectively. These 226 students without overseas experiences include international students who did not make any academic travels from Shinshu University, but for the analysis below, we separate these international students from the Japanese students, as they 'did' make academic travels to Japan to attend Shinshu University. We consider them to be more globally oriented than the Japanese students. We also excluded 9 students with overseas experiences and 108 students without overseas experiences who visited English Café only once for extra credits offered by English classes. Thus, for the analysis below, we have 96 Japanese students without overseas experiences as Group 1, 95 students, both Japanese and international, with overseas experiences as Group 2, and 43 international students without overseas experiences as Group 3. Students who visited English Café only once are excluded as they just came to English Café for extra credits.

Figure 3 plots frequency distributions of English Café participation for the three groups. The average numbers of participation are  $5.51 \pm 6.09$  (SD) in Group 1,  $12.59 \pm 15.28$  (SD) in Group 2, and  $13.98 \pm 19.60$  (SD) in Group 3. Levene's tests for equality of variance were found to be violated for both analyses ( $F(1,189) = 32.68, p = .000$  and  $F(1,189) = 18.59, p = .000$ , respectively), thus,  $t$  statistics not assuming homogeneity of variances were computed. The mean

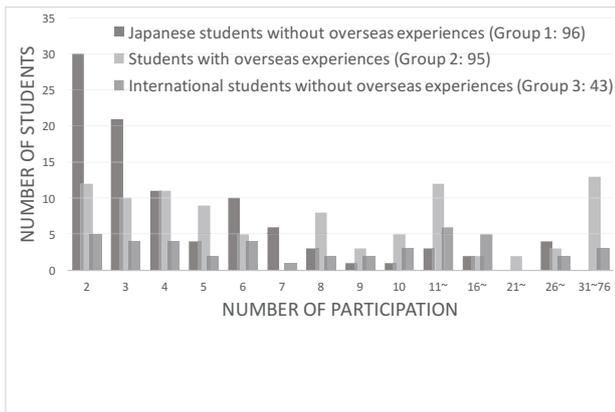


Figure 3. Frequency distributions of English Café participation I.

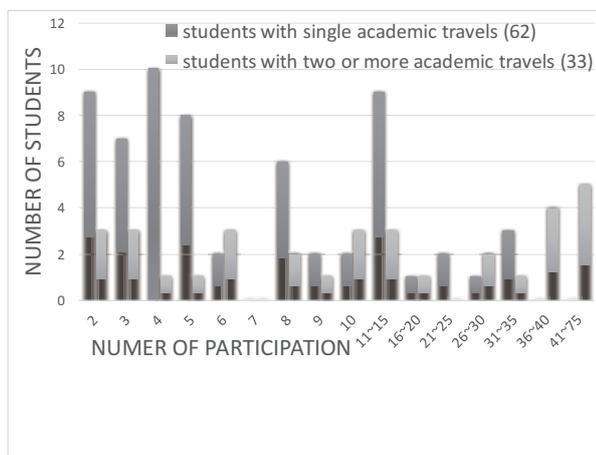


Figure 4. Frequency distributions of English Café participation II.

differences in participation are 7.08 between Group 1 and Group 2, and 8.47 between Group 1 and Group 3 with statistical significances ( $t=4.45$ ,  $p=.000$  and  $t=2.77$ ,  $p=.008$ , respectively) by Welch's  $t$ -test. The effect sizes were moderate without overseas experiences. There is no significant difference in the means of participation between Group 2 and Group 3 ( $t=.463$ ,  $p=.640$ ).

The top three highest numbers of participation are 103 and 77 by international students. Two Japanese students follow with 58 and 57 participations: one of them became a student committee member for English Café in August 2017 and the other graduated in March 2016 and went to Coventry College in England for a master's degree program. We note that these two

Japanese students are very reserved and quiet even compared to the rest of the Shinshu University Japanese students.

We also compared the frequency of English Café participation between 62 students who made only single academic travels and 33 students who made two or more academic travels in Figure 4. Likewise, students who attended English Café only once for extra credits are excluded (8 and 1, respectively). The average numbers of participation are  $8.37 \pm 7.70$  ( $SD$ ) among students with single academic travels and  $20.52 \pm 19.67$  ( $SD$ ) among students with two or more academic travels. Levene's test for equality of variance was found to be violated for the analysis ( $F(1,102)=52.94$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Thus, by Welch's  $t$ -test, the mean difference in participation was 12.14 with a statistical significance ( $t=3.41$ ,  $p=.002$ ). The effect size was moderate ( $d=.575$ ). These results suggest that students who made two or more academic travels attend English Café more than students who made only single academic travels.

### 3.2 Results 2: TOEIC Score Improvement

The TOEIC test is an internationally accepted, multiple-choice test of general English proficiency, and is marketed as a reliable measure of non-native speakers' abilities to communicate in an English-speaking work environment<sup>4</sup>. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the validity of their claim, however, high scores are intrinsic to finding good employment for students, especially in global industries in Japan.

This paper investigates the relationship between TOEIC score increases and the following factors:

- 1) English Café participation
- 2) Overseas experience, and
- 3) combinations of 1) and 2)

The average, maximum, and minimum TOEIC(-IP) scores of 33 English Café participants (EC) are  $499.2 \pm 158.1$  ( $SD$ ), 945, 192 in their first

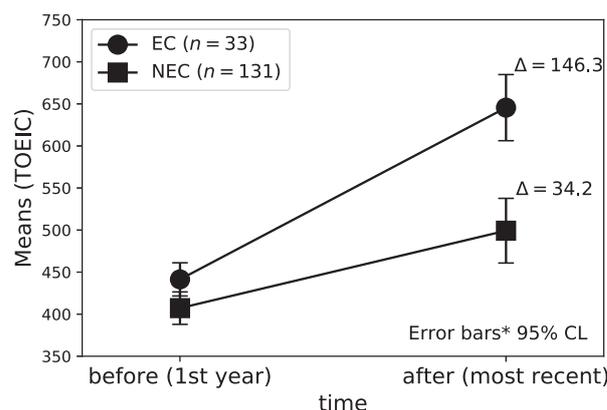
year 'before' they moved to the engineering campus where English Café is held and  $645.5 \pm 133.2$  (*SD*), 970, 420 'after' they participated in English Café. Those of 131 non-participants (NEC) are  $407.2 \pm 97.13$  (*SD*), 800, 210 'before' they moved to the engineering campus and  $441.4 \pm 109.3$  (*SD*), 763, 200 most recently (= 'after'). The most current scores are recorded if students have multiple 'after' score.

Next, the means of TOEIC scores between EC and NEC groups at two different times are compared: 'before' and 'after' by *t*-test. Levene's test for equality of variance was found to be violated for the 'before' analysis ( $F(1,162) = 8.86, p=.003$ ). There were significant differences between the groups in both 'before' scores ( $t = 3.20, p=.003$ ) by Welch's *t*-tests and 'after' scores ( $t = 9.17, p=.000$ ) by independent *t*-test. The effect sizes for this analysis were moderate ( $d=.701$ ) 'before' and strong ( $d=1.68$ ) 'after.' We follow Cohen's convention<sup>5)</sup> for a large effect ( $d=.80$ ). These results suggest that TOEIC scores of EC group are different from those of NEC group both before and after English Café participation, and the differences are 92.0 and 204.1 respectively.

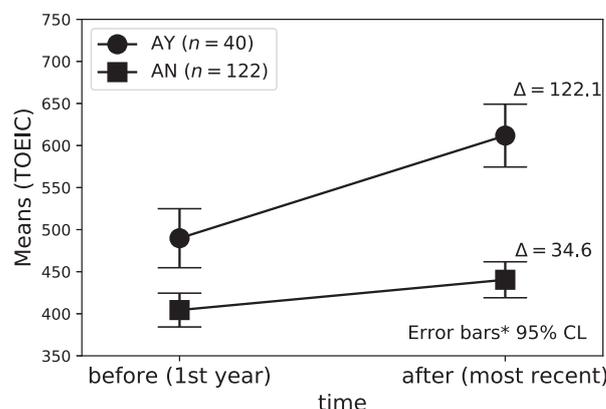
Paired-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare 'before' and 'after' TOEIC scores within EC and NEC groups separately. There were significant differences between 'before' and 'after' scores for EC group ( $\Delta=146.3, t=7.21, p=.000$ ) with a strong effect size ( $d=1.689$ ) and for NEC group ( $\Delta=34.2, t=5.17, p=.000$ ) with a moderate effect size ( $d = 0.45$ ). These results suggest that TOEIC scores of both EC and NEC groups increased over time irrespective of English Café participation. However, the increase of EC group is statistically stronger and much larger ( $> \times 4$ ) than the increase of NEC group.

**Figure 5** summarizes the results. The scores of two groups are different at both times, illustrated by no overlaps in means at 95% confidence level, and the scores of two groups increased over time, however, the increase of English Café participants is larger than the

increase of non-participants, illustrated by the sharper slope in **Figure 5**.



**Figure 5.** Means of 'before' and 'after' TOEIC scores for English Café participants (EC: circle) and non-participants (NEC: square).



**Figure 6.** Means of 'before' and 'after' TOEIC scores for students with (AY: circle) and without (AN: square) overseas experiences.

Next, we analyze the correlation between overseas experiences of all the students in our sample and their TOEIC score increases. For this study, we ignore their English Café participation. The average, maximum, and minimum TOEIC(-IP) scores of 40 students with overseas experiences (AY) are  $489.8 \pm 156.6$  (*SD*), 945, 192 'before' and  $611.8 \pm 149.4$  (*SD*), 970, 340 'after' and those of 122 students without overseas experiences (AN) are  $404.4 \pm 93.87$  (*SD*), 670, 220 'before' and  $440.4 \pm 108.3$  (*SD*), 710, 200 'after.' Two NEC students did not specify this information on the questionnaire. Note we do not know when the

students made their travels in relation to their exam dates.

Welch's and independent *t* tests were conducted to compare the means of TOEIC scores between AY and AN groups at two different times: 'before' and 'after' respectively, as Levene's test for equality of variance was found to be violated for the 'before' analysis. There were significant differences between the groups in both 'before' scores ( $t = 3.26$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and 'after' scores ( $t = 6.71$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The effect sizes for this analysis were moderate ( $d = .661$ ) 'before' and strong ( $d = 1.31$ ) 'after'. These results suggest that TOEIC scores of the AY group are different from the AN group both in their first year and in their most recent year by 85.4 and 171.4 on average, respectively.

Paired-samples *t* tests were conducted to compare 'before' and 'after' TOEIC scores within AY and AN groups separately. There were significant differences in 'before' and 'after' scores for AY group ( $\Delta = 122.1$ ,  $t = 6.42$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = 1.01$ ) with a strong effect size and for AN group ( $\Delta = 34.59$ ,  $t = 5.17$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = 0.47$ ) with a moderate effect size. These results suggest that TOEIC scores of both AY and AN groups increased over time, but the AY increase is statistically stronger and much larger ( $> \times 3$ ) than the AN increase. **Figure 6** summarizes the results.

To distinguish the effect of English Café participation from the effect of overseas experiences and assess the degree of impact by each factor on TOEIC score gains, we analyzed the data in and between four subgroups: they are the EC-AY group including English Café participants with overseas experiences (27 students), the EC-AN group including English Café participants without overseas experiences (6), the NEC-AY group including non-participants with overseas experiences (13), and the NEC-AN group including non-participants without overseas experiences (116). The average, maximum, and minimum TOEIC(IP) scores of four subgroups are  $502.6 \pm 169.6$  (*SD*), 945, 192 (EC-AY),  $484.2 \pm 100.7$  (*SD*),

650, 380 (EC-AN),  $463.1 \pm 127.0$  (*SD*), 800, 320 (NEC-AY), and  $400.3 \pm 92.10$  (*SD*), 670, 210 (NEC-AN) 'before' and are  $671.6 \pm 125.2$  (*SD*), 970, 450 (EC-AY),  $528.8 \pm 108.9$  (*SD*), 710, 420 (EC-AN),  $487.7 \pm 117.6$  (*SD*), 765, 340 (NEC-AY), and  $435.8 \pm 106.7$  (*SD*), 705, 200 (NEC-AN) 'after'.

Independent *t* tests were conducted, as equality of variances was not violated in all cases by Levene's test, to compare the means of TOEIC scores within one group with two different variables: i) EC-AY v.s. EC-A, ii) NEC-AY v.s. NEC-AN, iii) EC-AY v.s. NEC-AY, and iv) NEC-AY v.s. NEC-AN. There are significant differences in TOEIC scores between two subgroups iii ( $t = 2.166$ ,  $p = .032$ ,  $d = .869$ ) and iv ( $t = 2.137$ ,  $p = .027$ ,  $d = .566$ ) 'before' and i ( $t = 2.586$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $d = 1.221$ ), ii ( $t = 4.434$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = 1.514$ ) and iii ( $t = 2.069$ ,  $p = .041$ ,  $d = .463$ ) 'after' with strong to moderate effect sizes. The differences were insignificant in i ( $t = 0.254$ ,  $p = .801$ ,  $d = .131$ ) and ii ( $t = 7.440$ ,  $p = .462$ ,  $d = .264$ ) 'before' and iv ( $t = 1.646$ ,  $p = .102$ ,  $d = .463$ ) 'after'. These results suggest that TOEIC scores of students are indistinguishable in their first year among English Café participants with or without their overseas experiences and among students with overseas experiences whether they participated English Café or not, and are indistinguishable now among students who did not participate in English Café with or without overseas experiences.

Paired-samples *t* tests were conducted to compare 'before' and 'after' TOEIC scores within each subgroup. There are significant differences in 'before' and 'after' scores for EC-AY ( $\Delta = 169.0$ ,  $t = 7.527$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = 1.448$ ) and EC-AN ( $\Delta = 29.05$ ,  $t = 3.724$ ,  $p = .014$ ,  $d = 2.449$ ) subgroups and NEC-AN ( $\Delta = 35.50$ ,  $t = 4.891$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $d = .454$ ) with moderate to strong effect sizes, but not for NEC-AY group ( $\Delta = 24.62$ ,  $t = 1.838$ ,  $p = .091$ ,  $d = .510$ ). These results suggest that TOEIC scores increased over time in three subgroups, but did not increase in NEC-AY subgroup. TOEIC score increases were not observed among students with overseas experiences unless they participated in English Café, and if they did, their average increase was

significantly larger than the average increases seen in other subgroups ( $> \times 5$ ).

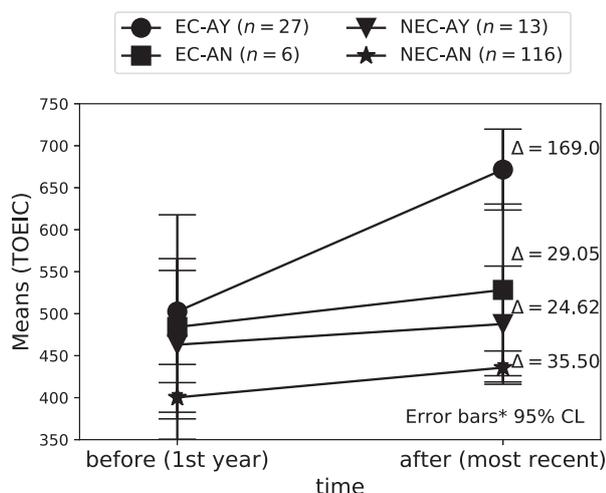


Figure 7. Means of 'before' and 'after' TOEIC scores in four subgroups.

Note: The increases in means are shown for EC students with overseas experiences (*circle*), EC students without overseas experiences (*square*), NEC students with overseas experiences (*triangle*), and NEC students without overseas experiences (*star*)

The results are illustrated in **Figure 7**. In the EC group, the initial scores are indistinguishable, but the TOEIC score increase of EC-AY is greater than that of EC-AN. In the AY group, the averages are different at both times, 'before' and 'after', but the score increase of EC-AY is greater than that of NEC-AY. Note that the three slopes (EC-AN, NEC-AY, NEC-AN) are indistinguishable from each other.

The mean number of participation and the mean number of overseas experiences among 26 EC-AY students are 28.00+18.84 (*SD*) and 2.19+1.57 (*SD*) compared to 8.29+8.77s (*SD*) and 1.45+.920 (*SD*) among 75 EC-AY students who did not participate in our questionnaire. As before, two students who visited English Café only once are excluded from the analysis, but all 33 EC students with TOEIC scores participated in English Café

more than once. We also note that we do not have a record of one of the students in the EC-AN group, but he was a Japanese student co-founder of English Café after returning from a year of study in Canada. The difference in means of the numbers of participation is 19.7 and is statistically significant ( $t = 4.65, p = .000$ ) by Welch's *t*-test with a strong effect size, as Levene's tests for equality of variance were found to be violated for the analysis ( $F(1,94) = 25.60, p = .000$ ). The difference in the means of overseas experiences is .737 and is statistically significant ( $t = 2.74, p = .007$ ) by Welch's *t*-test with a moderate effect size ( $d = .407$ ). These results suggest that the EC-AY students whom we studied for the correlation between EC participation/overseas experiences and TOEIC score increases do not represent the entire population of English Café participants with overseas experiences. They attended English Café approximately 20 times more than the rest of the English Café participants, and they also tend to have slightly more overseas experiences on average.

In the end, we note that 99 (76%) out of 131 NEC students know about English Café, but do not choose to participate for the following reasons: they are too intimidated and/or too shy to come to English Café (36%), they want to have lunch with their friends during lunch break instead (27%), they do not see the necessity to participate (9.9%), they have lectures (1.5%), or they are not interested (0.76%).

#### 4 Discussion

Forty percent of all students who went abroad between August 2013 and July 2017 for academic purposes came to English Café. It is hard to interpret this number, however, we could say it is high considering that English Café is held during lunch time on Fridays only and many students have classes before and after this time. Our analyses showed that students with overseas experiences and international students participate in English Café more frequently than Japanese

students without overseas experiences. In particular, students who made more than one academic travel participated in English Café more than 20 times on average, and we hold English Café about 16 times a semester. Therefore, we think English Café is attracting globally oriented students, and is inspiring those who persistently participate to venture into the world.

The next analysis suggests the positive effect of English Café participation on TOEIC score increases among participants compared to those among non-participants. The average 'before' score of English Café participants is higher than that of non-participants, so it is difficult to conclude whether or not English Café has influenced the participants to study harder for TOEIC exams with this result alone. We suspect that English Café participants might have improved their TOEIC scores irrespective of English Café participation. Thus, it is rather correct to state that English Café is attracting globally oriented, motivated students who view their TOEIC scores to be important in their future. However, most of these students participated in English Café very frequently, so we know that they value English Café as well.

Another analysis suggests the positive effect of overseas experiences on TOEIC score increases. Without the dates of travels in relation to the dates of their TOEIC exams, we can only infer that the students with overseas experiences tend to study harder for TOEIC exams than the students without.

However, further analysis between the four subgroups suggests that TOEIC score increases were significantly higher among the students with both English Café participation and overseas experiences than students with only English Café participation or students with only overseas experiences. Interestingly, the effect of English Café participation on TOEIC score improvement was not observed among students without

overseas experiences, and the effect of overseas experiences on TOEIC score improvement was also not observed among non-participants. Therefore, we are led to conclude that the students with both English Café participation and overseas experiences are causing the observed TOEIC score increases in the first and second analyses. In addition, these 27 EC participants with overseas experiences were the students who attended English Café much more frequently than other English Café participants and who made two or more academic travels abroad and continued to come back to participate in English Café after their travels. We have seen them grow at English Café: their presentation skills have improved, they are more outspoken, they have more international friends on and off campus, and they are more globally aware. They have been empowering themselves to become global leaders. English Café may be attracting a special group of students as we set our goal high, that is to become global leaders, distinguishing ourselves from English learning classes or activities. However, our results support that English Café is fostering global awareness in these selected, motivated students.

## 5 Conclusion

We studied the relations between English Café participation and overseas experiences, and between English Café participation/overseas experiences and TOEIC score increases. Not all students who went abroad academically from the Faculty of Engineering have participated in English Café. However, among the students who visited English Café, the students with overseas experiences participated more consistently. In addition, the fact that the students with two or more overseas experiences attend English Café more frequently than others suggests 1) English Café is valued by globally oriented students and 2) English Café is supporting and fostering their global awareness so that they want to venture out

to the world more.

Moreover, TOEIC score increases were significant only *when both conditions were met*: students participate in English Café and they have overseas experiences. Although TOEIC is not the only good measure of communication skills, we believe that students who value higher TOEIC scores study for TOEIC exams more. Thus, given that the Japanese society views a TOEIC score as a measure for one's communication skills in business, it is very likely that these engineering students want to work in global industries in the future. Our study suggests that English Café attracts globally oriented students initially, but once they start to participate frequently, we think English Café fosters global awareness in them through presentations and discussions on global issues with international students. As a result, English Café may be indirectly motivating students to i) study harder for TOEIC exams and ii) go abroad more for studies and internships.

English Café has been evolving since July 2017, when this study was made. Our current focus is on discussions rather than presentations. Although we observed improvements in the presentation skills of those who presented at English Café, we noticed that some participants were not improving their communication skills as they did not actively participate in discussions by stating their opinions. In the fall/winter semester of 2017, we created more time for monthly topics with in-depth discussion. Recall our motivation for English Café is to empower students themselves to become global leaders, and our three steps to become global leaders are 1) to have opinions, 2) to want to express them, and 3) to express them effectively to others. We are still improvising with step 1) and 2): many students do not seem to have opinions about matters surrounding them or in the world, and even when they do have opinions, they do not have confidence or assertiveness to express their opinions to others, especially in English.

Therefore, we have introduced a dual language system since October 2017 which allows students to join discussions in Japanese and English. Moreover, our plan for 2018 is to tackle one global problem ('Let Girls Learn: gender equality and equal access to education') for the entire year, and we will not only discuss the problem, but also come up with solutions and bring them into action. Although it is called English Café, 'English' is not the primary focus of our English Café. English is just a tool to achieve our goal<sup>3</sup>.

### Note

- [1] TOEIC is a registered trademark of the Educational Testing Service. The TOEIC Program is administered by the Chauncey Group International Ltd., a subsidiary of the Educational Testing Service.
- [2] We stopped organizing English Café during breaks, starting in August 2017.
- [3] English Café is now called Global Café, starting in April 2018.

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Appendix I. Survey questionnaire

