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Abstract
The University of Wollongong introduced a Japanese Language major in 1991. This course in Japanese language is an innovative and a unique course in Australia in that there is an intensive beginners program including 12 hours a week offace to face classes in session 1 and 2 followed by an intensive 7 week program summer session in year 1. Between years 2 and 3 there is a compulsory in-country study program during the summer session in Japan for a period of 5-6 weeks. The aim is that by the end of year 3 of the Japanese studies course, students will be able to communicate fluently in Japanese and will understand the Japanese culture and way of life. This full program is available for students enrolling in BA or BA/BCom degrees.

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The effectiveness of short term in-country study/work programs

Noriko Dethlefs

The University of Wollongong introduced a Japanese Language major in 1991. This course in Japanese language is an innovative and a unique course in Australia in that there is an intensive beginners program including 12 hours a week of face to face classes in session 1 and 2 followed by an intensive 7 week program summer session in year 1. Between years 2 and 3 there is a compulsory in-country study program during the summer session in Japan for a period of 5–6 weeks. The aim is that by the end of year 3 of the Japanese studies course, students will be able to communicate fluently in Japanese and will understand the Japanese culture and way of life. This full program is available for students enrolling in BA or BA/BCom degrees.

January and February 1998 marked the sixth in-country summer session for second year students majoring in Japanese. Needless to say, there are profound advantages for language students to experience living in the country where the target language is spoken. However, after co-ordinating this program in Japan for five years, I have found that the benefits extend to more than language and culture acquisition.

This paper outlines some ideas and directions for establishing and organizing in-country programs. Many of the points come after adjusting and re-adjusting the Japanese 5-6 week summer session program in order to enhance the students' confidence and competency levels of functioning in Japan.

Establishing the aims for in-country programs

In the case of the program for students majoring in Japanese, the aims of the in-country program are as follows:

- To develop performance in speaking and understanding Japanese;
- To develop reading and writing skills with an emphasis on functional literacy;
- To experience basic research in Japan;
- To experience living with a Japanese family;
- To develop understanding of and capacity to operate and communicate in Japan's cultural environment; and
- To develop understanding of culture in general.

In short, the aim is to provide students with an effective environment for enhancing learning and as much exposure as possible to both the language and culture of Japan.

For students majoring in other subjects, site inspection, exchanging information relating to specific areas of interest, practical work experience, attending seminars or workshops may be a priority. The aims of the program need to be clear and the objectives must be those that can only be achieved or better achieved by actually going to another country. It would waste precious resources if the aims of the trip could be easily achieved at home. Whatever the field of study, communicating with others in the same field in another country will broaden the overall education for the students. Simultaneously, experiencing global communication and adapting to foreign customs can only enhance future advantages in the work place. To be effective communicators, it is not purely acquiring accuracy in grammar or pronunciation but being able to speak and act appropriately in the environment where one is placed.

Establishing connections and organizing the program

The International Office at the University of Wollongong has numerous connections with other universities all over the world with which some arrangements may be made. Approaching government bodies or appropriate private organizations may be more suitable in some cases.

The Japanese in-country program was made possible for our students through the sister city arrangement between Wollongong and Kawasaki, a city close to Tokyo. The international organizations affiliated with the city of Kawasaki provide us with a classroom to hold lectures and arrange home stay for students at a nominal rate. The Kawasaki city also kindly arranges numerous excursions and opportunities for the students to experience exchanges with various groups in the city. For example, students visit schools and universities and hold exchanges with the people in Kawasaki to enhance their understanding of Australia as part of their internationalisation program. They attend civic ceremonies and are often asked to introduce themselves at local meetings such as Rotary. The local TV/radio stations and media have also been able to utilize this program by introducing what the local government is doing to promote international sister-city relationships. These exercises not only extend language abilities but provide additional opportunities for the students to exchange with people in different fields.

Being in homestays not only minimizes living costs but helps students to experience and understand the complexities of life in Japan. It also provides opportunities to develop long lasting friendships. In return, students are encouraged to participate actively as members of their home stay families.

It is worth making inquires and trying to establish in-country programs which will be most effective and most inexpensive. There may be ways, without increasing the cost of the program, to return the favours and generosity of the host institution such as speaking to groups in the community about Australia or providing seminars and offering expertise to the host institutions.

Assessing the effectiveness of the in-country program

Despite the fact that the study program is relatively short, most students to date have experienced a noticeable development in their interactive competence in Japanese. Certainly living with a Japanese family for 5–6 weeks gave students a first hand experience in the Japanese way of life and knowledge of home settings. The building up of relationships through social interaction with a Japanese family was one of the most precious and beneficial experiences for most students. However, initially there were families who volunteered to be homestay families hoping to have a resident English tutor and it was important to diplomatically ask for families that were keen to assist in achieving our aims for the students. On the whole, the students' increased confidence in communicating in Japanese has been profound. Many even exchange jokes with

their families towards the end of the program. Including cultural activities such as a tea ceremony, a *kimono* class, calligraphy, and pottery classes to the program provided the students not only a taste of traditional culture but topics to discuss with their home stay families.

On return to Australia, students have displayed a renewed desire to achieve further competency in the Japanese language as well as a desire to further their understanding of the society and economy of Japan. In fact, a number of the students return to Japan after graduating to work or to study further at one of the universities in Japan. Having contacts in another country is a significant factor in deciding to return to that country to work or study.

Australian universities are seeking to establish strong international links and fruitful collaborative research programs and to attract overseas students to the their institutions, so cultivating students with an understanding of another country can only enhance the chances of achieving such objectives. I have seen how effective in-country study/work programs are in maturing and broadening the education of university graduates. Providing in-country training opportunities for students is also a worthwhile contribution to the society in which they will be working after graduating.