

# A Study on Class Management for Returnee students

— Based on Survey to Staff and Students —

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**要旨：**本研究は環太平洋大学次世代教育学部国際教育学科における留学プログラムの学生の1年留学の体験を基に帰国後の指導や対策を考察する目的である。2012年～2016年の間100名の学生がニュージーランドへ留学を体験し英語と異文化体験に触れ帰国し、習得した言語力を維持するために様々な取り組みが行われた。しかし、英語環境が不十分であったり、学校の異文化に衝突を原因に英語が思うように伸びない事例の数は少なくない。特にこれらの課題を改善するためにはどのような取り組みや教育指導の改善が必要なのかを考察する。

**Keywords：**EFL, Language motivation, culture adjustment, class management, Language attrition

## 1. The research

This report will provide details of the Department of International Studies seminar classes between the years 2012 to 2015. Over those three years, the writer of this section was in a mentor role of responsibly for second year students. Those members had returned from a study aboard program in New Zealand where they participated in a foundations program of English. As young adults returning to Japan from abroad, they went through a process of adjusting to their home country, referred to as reverse culture shock. In addition to readapting to their own culture, they also had the added pressure of starting at a new school (IPU Japan Campus). Brown (1995) refers to the language learners requirements as a, 'needs analysis' for the development and approach to constructing a syllabus.

As an English teacher the writer's role was initially to assist Mr. Hayashi in the inaugural year of establishing the class. The following two years consisted of assisting another colleague Mr. Ochante. Together accompanying support from co-workers both with English teaching backgrounds and without. Through reflecting on the duties involved in this position, representatives are able to grasp a deeper understanding of student management, institutional requirements and English language matters which arise throughout the process of facilitating the seminar class for sophomore.

## 2. Mentor Responsibilities

From the point of students returning to Japan, the mentors met the returnees at the airport and welcomed them home. The young adolescents naturally were exposed to a range of experiences

during their time abroad and were more than willing to share their experiences in both Japanese (L1) as well as in English (L2). As their advisor the role consisted of the following duties, enrolment into elective and core subjects, maintaining a high level of class attendance while keeping track of absenteeism, counselling and guidance both academically and personally, preparation for Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), cleaning and maintenance of the new building on campus (Philosophia) as well as provide details of student progress during department meetings with teaching colleagues. To generalize the English teacher's role, it was important to make the learning process thought-provoking with the belief that what they were learning was important. Yashima (2002) coined the phrase, "international posture" which is the attitude the Japanese student has towards anything foreign. Accordingly, through regular classes conducted in English along with informal conversations in the corridors, International Department members embraced the role of English communicators. Despite the fact they did not lose their Japanese identity by acting like a westerner when they spoke. Hence, they spoke to each other in Japanese, unless asked to do so otherwise.

### 3. Student and Parent interviews

Once a semester, the mentor was required to meet with their mentees to discuss their progress at school in their personal lives. This information was then put into the school record system held in a software program for administration purposes. As this interview was held in English and the students all came from Japanese speaking background, having the questions written down in front of them assisted in language barriers. Despite language not being an issue, students tended to be reluctant to share personal information in a second language. As they were aware this information was not private and confidential, it may have made them more anxious to share their thoughts than normal. The questions which were asked are as follows, firstly, have you been attending all of your classes? (Students

attendance records are available, but some teachers do not regularly update their lists). Secondly, how is your relationship with other students and teachers? (A list of classes with teacher's names and times is also available). Thirdly, are you doing a part time job, if so how many hours a week? Fourthly, where are you living? Who cooks dinner? Are you getting enough sleep? (They included general follow-up questions about their day to day living). Fifthly, trying to assess how students are going to continue to develop their English skill in preparation for the TOEIC test as well as general English ability in all forms of communication.

In the case of parent interviews, normally the mentor and the student's parent or parents would speak together in private away from the student. Yet, due to communication clarity, the writer invited students to sit in the talk. As seen in Figure 1.0, less than half of the students required a face to face interview. Others chose to speak on the phone while the rest chose to relay messages themselves about their own progress. As the writer has a lower intermediate level of Japanese according to the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, their communication ability was limited, despite living in Japan for well over a decade. (The surnames of the students have been erased for confidentiality)

Figure 1

|          |      |                 |
|----------|------|-----------------|
| Kotone   | NA   |                 |
| Kaito    | ?    |                 |
| Masataka | 8/6  | 10:00           |
| Souta    | NA   |                 |
| Kouji    | Call | Anytime         |
| Chiho    | 8/6  | 9:00            |
| Hisaki   | 8/5  | 11:00           |
| Youta    | 8/4  | 11:00 Telephone |

|         |     |       |
|---------|-----|-------|
| Taichi  | NA  |       |
| Kentaro | 8/4 | 9:00  |
| Jun     | NA  |       |
| Seiji   | NA  |       |
| Takashi | ?   |       |
| Sou     | 8/8 | 9:15  |
| Junji   | 8/3 | 16:00 |
| Tomomi  | NA  |       |

|         |      |         |
|---------|------|---------|
| Kenta   | 8/5  | 10:00   |
| Kazuki  | NA   |         |
| Yoshiki | Call | Anytime |
| Hiromu  | 8/6  | 14:00   |
| Kazuaki | NA   |         |

#### 4. School Events

As with all universities the school events consist of Sports Day, Cultural Festival, Speech Contest, My Favourite Book Contest, Entrance ceremony and Award Ceremony along with Special department events. One of those special events is English Summer Camp for junior high schoolers as well as an English Day for high school children. During Seminar classes which are held one a week for an hour and a half (15 lessons per year in first and second semester)

#### 5. English language Development

Within the second year group, naturally everybody learnt at different speeds. Therein, smaller groups were formed and they were generally based on TOEIC scores. Be that as it may, there was a case of a male student that had a western girlfriend. His test taking scores were relatively low; however, his willingness to communicate was higher than anybody else in the group. DeKeyser (1990, 1991) indicates students that have been abroad for a year or less do not necessarily develop higher levels of grammatical structures in the second language compared to students that study in their home countries. Expanding on this Pellegrino-Aveni (2005) suggests second language speakers may avoid native speakers in order to save face by not making a mistake. By limiting the amount of face to face time with natural speakers they limit their chances of receiving language input. Within the group there were a small number of students which appeared to have very little benefit from the abroad program in terms of linguistic development. Visa-versa there was also a small number of students which improved dramatically. As a mentor, conversations were not based on TOEIC scores, but based on the temperament.

Undoubtedly, one of the dangers returnees to Japan face is losing their English Second language (ESL) skills due to not having exposure to meaningful language practice. Yashima (2007b) advocates students communicate with stronger intension and with clearer fluency when they are faced with providing solutions for global issues. Therefore, during seminar classes, content which consisted of a range of social sciences such as history, social studies, geography, economics, law, sociology and linguistics was taught through English. To begin with, it is important to celebrate both cultures of New Zealand (Western) and Japan (Asian). Instead of comparing both countries though pointing out strengths and weaknesses or good and bad points, the students looked at contrasts. Focussing on the differences without making judgements provided opportunities to celebrate differences while appreciating the uniqueness both backgrounds have. Naturally, students could appreciate the efficiencies Japan possesses while appreciating the warm kindness of the New Zealanders provided. In another session, Australian culture was chosen with students addressing regional dialects and slang. An example of Australian slang is G'day mate, meaning hello as a standard greeting. Along phrases and expressions some heavier topics were touched upon, such as Aboriginal reconciliation process and what it means to be an Australian.

Continuing with making comparisons, students warm up activities were often choice making, where there was not a right or wrong answer. Here is an example in Figure 2 where students need to put in order from 1 to 9 most difficult to easiest for themselves personal.

Figure 2

- Run a marathon.
- Ride 100km in Switzerland (lot's of mountains)
- Swim 2 km in cold water (winter)
- Brush your teeth using your feet and toes.
- Write opposite handed for 3 hours, nonstop.
- Sing a Katy Perry song in front of 3000 people.

Write a 5000 word paper in English.  
Live on 15,000 yen a week for a year.  
Split up with a girl / boy you love.

Turning attention to the next lesson, students looked at the background of Japan's economic history from the 1950s to present. As this era was particularly successful, students could feel a sense of pride in identified the way their country became an economic success. Many companies in the automobile and electronic industries excelled and continue to do well. In the next session the theme crime and punishment was addressed. Students were encouraged to share their opinions on suitable punishments for a variety of offenses. They included major and minor wrongdoings. An example of a major crime discussion was the price to pay for revenge murder and minor crime such as shoplifting.

In collaboration with the library committee, students wrote a book report in English. The book they chose was predominately from the graded reader collection. Mentors were required to conduct a lesson in the library introducing the group to the collection of English works available to them. Most students had not hired a book previously and in a previous questionnaire conducted by the library staff, approximately 50% of students had not read a book in the past twelve months. In addition to the My Favourite Book Competition, students also were welcomed to join the 'Bibliobattle' a 3 minute speech contest describing their favourite book as the title suggests. Only one student was nominated for this event after students performed in front of peers. Some students took the contest more seriously than others and the results often were represented in their English skills, with high level communicators showing more confidence than their counterparts.

In order to continue language development, a informal speaking activity took place, with mixed results. Students were given a diverse range of speaking tasks that was based on the TOEIC speaking test. This included the following activities, reading aloud, describing a picture, answering a

telephone conversation, providing solutions and giving opinions. This practice was moderately successful in teacher expectations, yet does engage student's attention.

In conjunction with a speaking activity, students took part in a vocabulary and reading event coined, "The Philosophia Challenge". A listening section was included with modern Top 40 Pop Music from the United States as the listening content. The vocabulary came from the Cambridge Textbook, English Vocabulary in Use Second Edition. According to Charles (2000) recommends Cambridge's materials as first-rate and comprehensive. Although, the two sections consisted mainly of 36 multiple choice questions, which could be viewed as narrow in evaluation technique and followed by 20 questions of listening drills with 3 trivia questions. Students finally attempted the reading section of 19 multiple choice questions, again using the same testing format. Overall, the students who participated in the Philosophia Challenge were provided with a more captivating alternative to the TOEIC listening and reading test. At least nobody fell asleep during the Philosophia Challenge, whereas several students are found to be dozing off during formal TOEIC test. Answers were given at the completion of the Challenge and a winner was announced. Prizes included basic stationary goods supplied by teachers. Therefore, the cost was very low for organizing this event. For students that required more explanation of questions, a follow-up test with descriptions of the answers was given.

At Christmas, students were given the task of writing season's greetings to each other. Every member wrote a small message to each other member. The one rule was every person had to have a different personal message. As there was over thirty participants, the task was challenging enough to keep them sustained over the session. This activity was complimented by a New Year's resolution when they returned in January. The areas of resolution included, health and lifestyle, school and academic progress, friendships and relationships (could they

make 100 new friendships this year?), saving money, travel and anything else personal they could think of.

## 6. Recreational Activities in the Gymnasium

For the purpose of developing leadership skills, teamwork and overall motivation of the group, two classes were performed in the gymnasium on campus. After a series of warm-ups which included everyone holding a ball for the majority of the time, students played a game of mixed basketball. For safety concerns the rules were modified. The first game was played without dribbling and boys were not allowed in the key (area under the basket). As students possessed a mixed gender in their teams alongside various levels of ability, the rule changes levelled the game considerably. In the second game students insisted they wanted to dribble the ball and that the game would be more interesting playing regular rules. In reflection of playing sports during seminar, it was decided the safety of students was more important and playing sports was cancelled after the first year.

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