

Preparing students for an internship in an Australian school:

Insights from a Japanese expatriate

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Currently university students are being encouraged to undertake study or internship programs abroad before they graduate. The following is a discussion of the current state of study abroad programs for Japanese students, followed by the results of an interview with a long-term Japanese resident of Australia. The interviewee, Takaaki Toden, a teacher of Japanese in an Australian primary school, was asked to provide his insights of his experience as a Japanese national who has been successfully working abroad for twenty years. He first worked as a teacher in Japan and then adapted to the very different environment of an Australian school. He is able to provide advice for students who wish to study or work as an intern abroad, and anticipate the benefits and challenges they may face from an insider perspective.

Trends in Study Abroad

Lassegard (2013) alerts us to the declining numbers of Japanese students choosing to study abroad relative to students from other countries. He highlights this by explaining that although Japan's population is double that of South Korea, the number of South Korean students studying abroad is more than twice that of Japanese students. He discusses many possible reasons for the decline in student numbers, such as demographic factors and the possibility of students or parents becoming more risk averse. Nevertheless Menking (2012) explains that international exchange is being encouraged by MEXT, and university exchange agreements are increasing. Furthermore the number of school trips abroad has shown an increase between 2004 and 2011 (Educational Tour Institute, 2012, cited in Leis, 2015). There is a need to produce graduates who can both engage cross-culturally and represent their country globally (Kirchhoff, 2015). Because of the policy of encouraging study or internship abroad, it is important to consider the English language preparation students receive in schools.

Limitations of the Traditional Classroom in Terms of Preparation for Study Abroad

Students who study abroad are likely to only have had the traditional classroom as a basis for the development of their English language skills. Studies predict that this is the least effective basis for at least one linguistic skill, that is, socio-linguistic competence. Regan et al. (2009) compared the socio-linguistic gains in L2 competence of students in a range of settings such as the traditional classroom, immersion programs in Canada, naturalistic acquisition and a year of study abroad after

having completed extensive classroom training. They found that the traditional classroom was lacking in terms of fostering gains in socio-linguistic competence.

Holliday (1994, cited in Nagatomo, 2012) distinguishes two distinct methodologies of English teaching. The first is the methodology of BANA (Britain, Australasia and North America) countries which tends to be learner-centred and to favour the communicative approach. The second is the TESEP (tertiary, secondary and primary) education of English as a Foreign Language. The latter tends to favour traditional methodologies such as grammar-translation. BANA methodologies enjoy greater global prestige than TESEP ones (Nagatomo, 2012). Nagatomo (2012) describes a Japanese university classroom of English, in which there is an emphasis on the lower-order thinking skill of comprehension, but which neglects higher-order thinking skills such as those required when answering open-ended questions. Students from this kind of background are likely to encounter difficulties if they transfer to a system which tends to cultivate higher-order thinking skills.

Wright (2005, cited in Nagatomo, 2012) outlines the transmission method of education, which means that teachers transmit knowledge to students as a one-way process and confirm their learning through tests. Nagatomo contrasts this with discovery learning common to BANA cultures, and outlines the critical view teachers in the BANA system and the TESEP system may have of each other: “These differences can lead to the feelings among those from one academic culture that those from the other academic culture may not be doing their jobs properly” (p.164). She provides a defence of the TESEP methodology, considering it from the teacher’s point of view. One of the teachers in her study “spends class time deconstructing the textbook materials phrase by phrase and word by word and provides a commentary for students while she translates the texts into Japanese” (p.178).

Given the gulf between BANA and TESEP practices and belief systems it could be anticipated that students transferring to the BANA system from a TESEP one could experience difficulties due to the conflicting beliefs underlying the respective educational practices. The current study addresses the kind of problems that may be anticipated for Japanese students participating in an internship in an Australian school.

The Interview

Takaaki Toden responded to a series of questions, designed to elicit advice for Japanese students wishing to study or work as an intern in Australia. It is anticipated that most readers of this paper will be able to read Japanese, and therefore, although fluent in English, Mr Toden was requested to respond to my English questions in Japanese. The questions were designed to provide answers which could shed light on the differences between Japanese and Australian language pedagogy, and inform students who wish to both volunteer as a Japanese language teaching assistant, and participate in a homestay in Australia. Mr Toden’s responses appear in full in the Appendix, and some of the key points are discussed below.

The need for Communicative English

Participation in an internship abroad demands a greater need for communicative competence than the kind of skills which are required in the Japanese EFL testing system:

英語でのコミュニケーションで積極的になる必要（失敗を恐れない。下手でも良い）

“It is necessary to become positive about English communication (not to fear errors; it is alright to have poor skills.)”

The official educational policy promoting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Japan described by Tahira (2012) and Seargeant (2009) is clearly designed to foster the kinds of skills required by students studying abroad. However the entrenched current practices are not in accordance with the practices of CLT, and therefore despite current policy students may not be adequately equipped with communicative skills.

Mr Toden advises students to improve their communicative English skills in order to help them interact in the society:

英語力を少しでもアップして、できるだけ多くのオーストラリア人の友人を作り、異文化体験から学ぼうとする好奇心と積極姿勢を持つ。

“You should improve your English even a little, make as many Australian friends as possible, and have the curiosity and positive attitude to learn from a cross-cultural experience.”

Pedagogical Practices

The following comment illustrates how Mr Toden perceives the need for Australian educators to engage the students' interest:

オーストラリア人生徒に日本語を教えるときは、内容と共に興味付け、動機付け、面白さを考えることが大事。ペア練習、ロールプレイなど、いろいろな要素を授業の中に取り入れて教える必要がある。（退屈させない）

“When teaching Japanese to Australian students, it is important to consider both content and engaging student curiosity, motivation, and interest. To prevent boredom it is necessary to incorporate pairwork, roleplay, and various activities in class.”

小学校では、目標や目安はあっても、教科書を使う使わないは、教師次第。教師の教材作りの工夫が問われる。

“At primary school, even if there are objectives and goals, the issue of whether or not to use a textbook is up to the teacher. Teachers are asked to create their own teaching materials besides the textbook.”

Mr Toden’s observation is in accordance with the findings of Holliday (1994), who explained that teachers in BANA countries have “considerable freedom to develop classroom methodology . . . to suit the precise needs of language learners” whereas teachers in TESEP countries have “constraints . . . on [their] individual teaching style. An English language teacher behaves not only according to the needs of language learning, but also according to the norms set by other subjects” (p. 4).

L1 Literacy Differences

Mr Toden is in the unique position of having direct experiences with the L1 literacy practices of both cultures. He explains the major differences as follows:

国語は読み書き中心で、日本語で自己表現をすることを重視していない。教材も文学的な作品が多く、感想を書くことが主。感情的には豊かな表現が多い。

英語は、いかに、周囲に正確に、分かりやすく物事を説明するかが問われる。正確さにおいて表現方法が多い。

“In Japanese reading and writing is central, and self-expression is not emphasized. The teaching materials tend to be literary, and the writing of responses to the literature predominate. There are many rich emotional expressions in the literature.

In English you are expected to explain things simply and accurately. There are many ways of expressing accuracy.”

Assessment Practices

Mr Toden has taught in both Japanese and Australian schools and understands the differences in the two from the point of view of the teacher. His response to the question of the differences in assessment practices in the two countries is as follows:

日本の評価は、まだテスト中心であるが、オーストラリアでは、生徒の反応、積極性も含め、授業への参加度、理解度を自己評価、生徒同士の評価、教師の評価と多方面から総合的に評価する。

“Tests feature at the centre of Japanese assessment practices, but Australian assessment includes a comprehensive range of various practices such as students’ positive response, student participation, self evaluation of comprehension, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation.”

Learning about oneself through participation in another culture

欧米文化の基礎、欧米人の考え方の基本は学校教育の中にも見られる。他の文化の中に自分を置いて学ぶことができる。

“You can observe the foundation of western culture and western thinking in the education system. By situating yourself in another culture you can learn about yourself.”

Practices which may be taken for granted in one’s own culture can be seen as culturally situated rather than universal, when one is transplanted in a different culture. Accordingly students undertaking an internship in another culture can identify aspects and acquire insights into their own culture.

Wierzbicka (2010) identifies English vocabulary which English speakers may assume have universal equivalents: “Words of this kind may be ‘invisible’ to native speakers, who simply take them for granted and assume that their equivalents exist in other languages.” (p.5). However L2 speakers can identify this tendency because they already possess an alternative perspective provided for them by their L1. Mr Toden identifies the tendency to assume one’s own culture to be universal to be evidenced by many westerners:

欧米人、白人のほとんどは、まだ、自分が世界の中心、自分たちの文化、思想が世界基準と
思っている人が多い。（そういう面ではシンプル）

“Most westerners still think they are the centre of the world, and many of them think that their culture and ideas are the global standard. (In that sense they are simple.)”

Accordingly it is not only beneficial for the Japanese student to identify her own culture by being placed outside it, but also for members of the host culture when they observe alternative ways of problem solving by the internee.

Conclusion

This interview has raised a number of important questions for further research, such as the way different pedagogies are designed to motivate students, the role of teacher improvisation in the curriculum, comparative modes of teaching the L1, comparative assessment, and learning about oneself through participation in another culture. Japanese students are likely to have been educated in a TESEP culture, and make the transition to the pedagogical demands of a BANA culture when they volunteer as a teaching assistant. They are likely to encounter differences between the ways in which they have been taught and the ways in which classes are conducted in Australia. Anticipated benefits are that by participating in another culture, students will learn to identify the values of their own education in Japan, and learn about themselves. The data speaks for itself, and accordingly, Mr Toden’s full responses appear in the Appendix below.

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Appendix

1. What benefits do you anticipate Japanese students would gain from working, studying or volunteering in Australia?

- *日本の大学生が、現代の日本の文化の情報を伝え、披露できる。(私は最近の日本文化をよく知らない)
- *徳島という地域の歴史、文化を紹介してくれる。(東京や京都ではない、四国の徳島の持つ独自性、日本の多様性を紹介)
- *日本語のアシスタントとして、モデル会話をしたり、生徒との会話練習を通して、日本語を学ぶオーストラリア人生徒のモチベーションを上げる。
- *授業内で、折り紙、習字、料理、音楽、PPなどを実際に紹介できる。
- *日本語教師がテストや、評価するときのお手伝いをする。
- *欧米文化の基礎、欧米人の考え方の基本は学校教育の中にも見られる。他の文化の中に自分を置いて学ぶことができる。

2. What are the challenges they may face?

- * 英語でのコミュニケーションで積極的になる必要（失敗を恐れない。下手でも良い）
- * 日豪の学校の生活規律（discipline）の違いを理解（日本式は通用しないことが多い）
- * 日豪とのマナーや習慣の違い（相手のためにというドア持ち、体が触れた時のマナー、レディーファースト、お客も「サンキュー」という、個室のドアの閉め方、鼻をすすらない、口を開けて食べない、歯並びの重視、などなど）
- * オーストラリア人の食事はシンプルである。（日本のような食べ物の種類、豊かさを期待しない）
- * 平日の繁華街の夜歩きは、普通の家庭では考えられない。（普通の家庭の子供の就寝時間は8時半頃） ホストファミリーでは深夜までネットをしない。
- * 安全面では自分の身は自分で守る心構えが必要。（日本ほど安全ではない）

3. How can they overcome these challenges?

- * 何事も、新しいことから積極的に学ぼうとする姿勢が必要。
- * 日本の文化を紹介するだけでなく、オーストラリアの習慣、文化から学ぼうとする姿勢（相手から学ぶ姿勢）が大事。
- * ホストファミリーと積極的に関わる。（自分の部屋にこもって、メールやネットばかりに時間を費やさない）
- * 自分のしたいこと、できること、希望を明確に伝える努力をする。
- * ポジティブな態度に心がける。（簡単にジャッジメンタルにならない）

4. In your experience, what are the major differences between Australian and Japanese workplaces?

- * まず、自分から積極的に挨拶や、話しかけをしないと相手にされない。（無視しているわけではない。それが彼らの文化）
- * 自分の気持ちを、正直に正確に表現することを身につける努力。
- * 相手に引っ張られない、自分を持つことを心がける。
- * 欧米人、白人のほとんどは、まだ、自分が世界の中心、自分たちの文化、思想が世界基準と思っている人が多い。（そういう面ではシンプル）
- * 日本人や日本の文化について聞かれるチャンスも多いから、日本の歴史なども勉強しておく。（日本人の宗教はと聞かれ、日本人は無宗教と、とんでもない答えをする人が多い）日本人自身の勉強不足がある。

5. How does the teaching of foreign languages differ between Japan and Australia?

- * オーストラリア人生徒に日本語を教えるときは、内容と共に興味付け、動機付け、面白さ考えることが大事。
- * ペア練習、ロールプレイなど、要素を授業の中に取り入れて教える必要がある。（退屈させない）
- * 小学校では、目標や目安はあっても、教科書を使う使わないは、教師次第。教師の教材作りの工夫が問われる。
- * 教室内のルールを明確にする。褒める時はしっかり褒め、ルールを破った時はそれなりの罰を与えることもある。
- * 日本語でパフォーマンス発表をすることも大事。（外部に向かって見せる努力もコミュニケーションの一つである）
- * 日本人は、身体も小さいので、なめられやすいから要注意。

6. How do assessment practices differ between Japan and Australia?

*日本の評価は、まだテスト中心であるが、オーストラリアでは、生徒の反応、積極性も含め、授業への参加度、理解度を自己評価、生徒同士の評価、教師の評価と多方面から総合的に評価する。

7. How does the teaching of literacy (*kokugo* vs English) differ between Japan and Australia?

*国語は読み書き中心で、日本語で自己表現をすることを重視していない。教材も文学的な作品が多く、感想を書くことが主。感情的には豊かな表現が多い。

*英語は、いかに、周囲に正確に、分かりやすく物事を説明するかが問われる。正確さにおいて表現方法が多い。

*小さい頃は「Show & Tell」、大きくなればドラマなどで、言語を通じた自己表現が鍛えられる。

8. What advice would you give to Japanese students preparing to come to work, study or volunteer in Australia?

*自分が好きな日本のものを、どのようにオーストラリア人生徒に伝えるかを考え、準備する。

*英語力を少しでもアップして、できるだけ多くのオーストラリア人の友人を作り、異文化体験から学ぼうとする好奇心と積極姿勢を持つ。