

2007 Annual Programme participants report back



Anne Rajakumar (third from left) with fellow course participants

Training Programme for Teachers of Japanese in Europe

From the 2nd to the 6th July three teachers from the UK took part in the Training Programme for Teachers of Japanese in Europe, organised by the Japan Foundation Paris office (Maison de la culture du Japon a Paris - <http://www.mcjp.asso.fr/>), and the European Centre of Japanese Studies in Alsace. 18 participants from the UK, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria were invited to participate in an intensive programme, which covered workshops on course design and evaluation, techniques for teaching speaking and reading skills, direct method teaching and the use of audiovisual materials in classes. The Japan Foundation London Language Centre's Chief Japanese Language Advisor Hiromi Kijima led the session on Course Design. The UK was represented by Anne Rajakumar, South Wolds Community School, Sadako Yamamoto, Bexley Grammar School, and Lydia Morey, from Colston's Girls' School.



Reflections by Lydia Morey

I initially applied for the course in Alsace as it was a long time since I had been on a course with the JF (Urawa, 1992), and had thoroughly enjoyed that experience. The course in Alsace was similarly stimulating and worthwhile, and had the common theme of cycling (I spent my time in Urawa cycling back and forth to the public swimming pool in Yono, much to the amusement of the kanrinin no ojisan). The part I enjoyed the most on this course

was meeting teachers of Japanese from all over Europe, particularly from Eastern Europe. The standard of Japanese they reach and the expectations they have of their students was quite amazing from my perspective!

The programme was arranged around the different skills, and we had sessions on how to teach reading, how to teach listening, how to use audio visual materials, how to teach speaking, and on the different examinations available. It was good to be reminded of some basic teaching skills, although the course was lacking in any discussion of the use of IT or interactive whiteboards. This just made me reflect on how unthinkable such an omission would be in a UK based course: judging from discussion with the other participants, I concluded that UK secondary schools were really the only place where computer technology was being routinely used in the teaching of Japanese. During the sessions we had input from various staff members from the JF, and then quite often we were asked to produce lesson plans collaboratively. This proved quite interesting, as I think everyone had the perfect lesson in their heads for their own students, and it was often hard to negotiate and come to a compromise! It gave us an opportunity to learn from each other's ideas, and to explain our own ideas and methodologies. The most notable feature about the course was that no-one was backward in coming forward: in fact, I think the sensei gata often had trouble in controlling an unruly bunch of teachers who were all opinionated and had a lot to say for themselves! The training centre was in a remote location, which was perfect for getting away from it all. It was surrounded by beautiful vineyards, and we enjoyed our bicycle rides and walks every day after class, not to mention the extra curricular study visits to the local wine cellars. It was my first time in France, and I was very impressed with Alsace, as well as with the way the staff at the centre looked after us. I would definitely go again if the opportunity arose.

Japanese Language Programme for High School Students

In July three secondary school students from the UK took part in the Japanese Language Programme for High School Students at the Japan Foundation's Japanese Language Institute, Kansai, Japan. Guanmei Wang from King Edward VII School in Sheffield, Nicola Buckner and Matthew Wilkinson, both from Katharine Lady Berkeley's School in Gloucestershire joined participants from around the world to take part in language and cultural classes, as well as study trips to Kyoto, Hiroshima and Tokyo. Nikki Buckner tells us about her experience of the programme.

What have you been doing since you arrived in Japan?

Since arriving in Japan, we have had a very busy schedule! We have been on a four day study trip, as well as taking part in Japanese cultural activities such as wearing yukata and tea ceremony. I have found the Japanese language classes very good practice for speaking Japanese, especially as all the teachers here are so lovely! We have also been able to borrow bikes and ride around Osaka, which is really good fun. There is so much to do all the time, no-one is ever bored.

What has been the highlight of your trip so far?

For me, the highlight was definitely the study trip to Tokyo, Hiroshima and Kyoto. In particular I enjoyed visiting Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and Museum. I also loved visiting Miyajima, as it is probably the most beautiful place I have ever been to. In addition to this, I would say that meeting people from all around the world has been wonderful. Being able to gain a deeper understanding of such a variety of cultures is a unique experience.

What message would you give to students who are thinking about applying next year?

I would say don't think about it, just do it! This programme is an amazing experience, one you will never forget. I would definitely recommend this programme to anyone who has never been to Japan before, as it will give you an amazing first impression of this country, language and culture.

What are your aspirations for the future in terms of studying and using Japanese?

Although I am not planning to study Japanese at university, I hope to be able to take Japanese as part of my degree. The Japan Foundation programme for high school students has also inspired me to want to continue my learning of Japanese language and culture, and I hope to also take part in evening classes whilst at university. I really hope that one day I will become fluent in Japanese!

Thank you very much!



Participants on the 2007 Japanese Language Programme for High School Students.