



SECOND PLACE

Japanese Speech Contest for University Students

We are proud to introduce Laura Onciu, a stage one student who has won a second place in the 9th Japanese Speech Contest. This is the fourth consecutive year that we have succeeded in producing a finalist in such a prestigious contest as this.

By Laura Onciu (BA Modern Languages and Business Studies)

When I first applied for the Japanese Speech Contest for University Students I did not think, for a second, I would even be a finalist, let alone win second place! Now, having said this, I believe everyone should apply in the following years and test their strength. After all, the worst that could happen is building on your experience and language skills...oh wait, that does not sound bad at all, does it?

The most difficult part, you would think, is putting together the presentation and the script. Not really! Once you decided on the topic, it is easy to create the script. In my case, my teachers at Newcastle University gave me advice on my draft and we met up and discussed what I should keep and what I should take out, and more importantly how to structure it so that I can deliver a coherent speech.



Having completed the script, the PowerPoint presentation was a piece of cake. As we were allowed to use transitions and effects, I played around with them until the presentation looked as scary and thrilling as it could get.

The third and most difficult part of all was the actual speech. At first, I was shy and my voice kept cracking, not to mention that due to being nervous in front of the camera (oh yeah, we had to record ourselves and send the video in – it took me over 5 hours!) I couldn't even smile properly. From the moment I finished the script to the day I did the presentation in London, at SOAS, I practiced almost every day, with the help of a Japanese Masters student and in the final week, with all the Japanese teachers at Newcastle University who kindly gave me valuable advice.

It is very important to deliver a confident presentation, one that gets your message across, more so than its contents. As for my presentation? A complete success in my opinion! The student who won 1st place had an amazing presentation, he captivated the whole audience with a funny and interesting story on the history of Cambridge. We were the last two to present and we couldn't have had more different stories to tell!

All in all, it was a rewarding experience and I look forward to participating again when I return from my year abroad in Japan, this time in the Speech Category!



My study life in Newcastle University

By Huiyao Deng, BA Linguistics with Japanese



I came to Newcastle University to study from July, 2012. First I spent 6 weeks in INTO Newcastle to improve my English skills. As an Asian student whose native language is not English, that period was really helpful for me. I not only made many friends from all over the world but also gained a fundamental knowledge of how to study at this University which is totally different from my country. There were so many activities in INTO

set to help us knowing each other and make friends. We had free buffet, wine night, free movie and volunteering performance and so on. As a foreigner who came to the UK for the first time, this was really helpful for my integration into this University and country.

Then in September, 2012, my first year began. I have to admit it; it was very hard at the beginning. As a linguistics student, my English was not as good as other Asian students with other majors. However, the way of teaching is very effective. Besides the hour of teachers teaching lectures, there was also time set to let students discuss with their seminar leaders. In my country the most important



thing is to listen to what the teacher says but in Newcastle students can also discuss with the teachers. This system gave me more spaces to think for myself and co-operate with other students. My English was progressing gradually.

The first time I joined the Japanese class was in September, 2012. We have 8 hours Japanese seminars per week. Two teachers are Japanese, they are really considerate and gentle just like many other Japanese people. Everyone in the class is very friendly. We were gathering not only to learn the same language but also sharing everyone's culture. I find my life in Newcastle University is very enjoyable!



RACHAEL LEVITAN WON THE BEST UNIVERSITY SOCIETY OFFICER AWARD

By Rachael Levitan, BA Combined Honours in Music and Japanese

As I claimed the award for best university society officer for my work as president of the Anglo-Japanese Society last month, the judge asked me one question, "What has been the best part of this year for you?"



The answer was simple: the people I've met. Seeing many people from all over the world come together and make friends, have a good time and get some great experiences they wouldn't otherwise get outside of the society is just so great. This year has been another amazing year for the society. We have had trips to Alton Towers and the beautiful Lake District, as well as huge parties, mini weekly socials and cultural taster sessions for both Japanese and other students wanting to experience Japanese culture.

If you are thinking about studying Japanese at Newcastle (and you should – it's awesome!) then the society gives you an amazing chance to practise your Japanese with the exchange students, and also to get a better picture of what life in Japan is really like. And although our society is largely made up of Japanese exchange students and students studying the Japanese language, we also have a variety of students from all sorts of courses who are simply interested in learning more about Japanese culture. You're sure to meet a whole host of interesting personalities that will enrich your experience at Newcastle. Joining a society at University is probably one of the best things you can do. University can seem daunting, but if you find other people who are interested in the same things as you, the whole process of finding friends becomes so much easier and fun! I would definitely recommend everyone to try out as many societies and experiences as possible whilst at university – you won't regret it!



TEA CEREMONY AT ALNWICK GARDEN

The tea ceremony was conducted at Alnwick Garden as part of the Cherry Blossom Ceremony on 11th of May.

Mrs Cavanagh who is the teacher of Japanese at Newcastle University and other Japanese ladies participated in this ceremony.



The **Japanese tea ceremony**, also called the **Way of Tea**, is a Japanese cultural activity involving the ceremonial preparation and presentation of *matcha*, powdered green tea. In Japanese, it is called *chanoyu* (茶の湯?) or *sadō*, *chadō* (茶道?). The manner in which it is performed, or the art of its performance, is called (*o*)*temae* ([お]手前; [お]点前?). Zen Buddhism was a primary influence in the development of the Japanese tea ceremony.

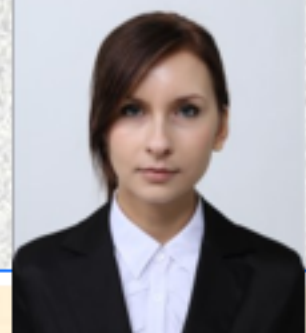
(From Wikipedia)



Crazy visa-less adventures with a happy ending

Job search in Japan

By Anna Mihejeva, Graduate 2013, BA Combined Honours



After graduating from Newcastle University (Japanese and Business Management), I spent some time at home to go look for work in Japan afterwards. Fast forward to now, and here I am, working at an accounting/tax office in Fukuoka. This was a surprising development, but I am truly excited to be working here, as the firm is very flexible and innovative - a complete opposite of the common stereotype of both accounting firms and Japanese companies! Hired as support staff for overseas expansion, I am involved in various projects including creating a client database for the new Singapore branch, attending seminars and relaying information to my colleagues, and translating company pamphlets. Every day brings something new, and though my head is about to explode from all the business information (studying for a bookkeeping exam now), I enjoy this intensity very much.

So, how did I end up here? Warning: my job search path is not to be imitated! I set out to Japan on a 90 days visa-free arrangement, which does not guarantee success at all - it is hard enough to find a job, go through the several interview stages and get your certificate of eligibility in such a short period of time, but to make things worse, most companies are not willing to go through the trouble of sponsoring a visa.

Why did I do such a crazy thing? Actually, I had already found a job through my Year Abroad acquaintances, but in the end could not get a visa for it, as there were no international activities involved (I should have been aware that to work in Japan you have to use your foreignness...). As it was already October, it was time to look for other solutions. My country does not participate in either JET or the working holiday program, which left me with the feeble option of trying my luck on the 90 day visa-free arrangement.

I chose Fukuoka as I knew the place well enough to skip the adjustment period and get straight to work... that is, searching for it! A family I knew kindly agreed to house me, so I immediately started meeting with everyone I knew asking for advice, while looking at Internet advertisements and contacting every company that might have international vacancies. As expected, most places were not too fond of my visitor status, and there were not many international vacancies to begin with. I will skip the description of the frustrating two months of fruitless searching, let us just say the experience was tough, and it is only the support of my mom, friends and love for Japan that

kept me going.

One day I spotted an ad for "overseas expansion staff" at an accounting firm and applied - lucky enough not to have realized they were primarily interested in someone with law/business qualifications and job experience... Without any preconceptions, I handed in my CV, and soon was invited to an explanatory meeting. To my question about the visa, the company director replied that if I succeeded in the following stages, sponsoring would not be a problem! Inspired, I did the first assignment, and a week later was invited to the final interview, which I miraculously passed! Without qualifications (except JLPT1), I had to rely on enthusiasm, passion for knowledge and, of course, language skills. They made an exception and hired me as a fresh graduate to be taught on the job.

Although I did not experience the traditional 就活活動 with endless briefings and entry sheet writing, I did spend two months looking for a job in Japan all on my own, and this experience made me much stronger, not to mention the rewarding feeling of having succeeded. However, I owe a lot to luck, so I would recommend that you check the visa application procedures and thoroughly research your options even before you graduate. For those going on a Year Abroad - make as many acquaintances and connections as possible, as this may help you in unexpected ways in the future. Use the time to learn about Japan's policies, culture and work style to decide if this is where you want to live - and earn a living!

Finally, if you do feel that Japan is your place to be, maintain your motivation and keep learning the language despite the occasional setbacks. The feeling of being able to work alongside Japanese people without any communication barrier is just indescribable, and you can do it, too, if you brace yourself for success.



OUR STAFF

DR. SHIRO YOSHIOKA



Dr. Yoshioka is Year Abroad Officer for Japan (outgoing students). He obtained his PhD in comparative culture at International Christian University, Tokyo, in 2009. His dissertation analysed Miyazaki Hayao's view of Japanese culture and history in comparison with conservative and liberal arguments on Japanese culture (*nihonjinron*). While his main research interest is Japanese people's own view of their history and culture and its representation in contemporary Japanese popular culture, he is also interested in *nihonjinron* in general and in the history of Tokyo. He has published an article and a book chapter on Miyazaki's view of Japan in Japanese and English, and is currently working on revision of his dissertation for publication, along with an article on representations of the Taisho period in anime. In 2012-13, Dr. Yoshioka teaches on Levels C and D Japanese language, JPN1005 Introduction to Japanese History and Culture, SML1022 Introduction to International Film and JPN2003 Re-Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation.



Japanese Taster for Schools (JTS) Programme Volunteer Training Day



By Megan Balanck, the Japan Foundation London

On January 21st 2014, the Japan Foundation London held a training day for current and prospective volunteers of the Japanese Taster for Schools (JTS) Programme at Newcastle University for the first time. JTS volunteers are fluent Japanese speakers who deliver Japanese language taster sessions at UK primary and secondary schools, in order to inspire pupils to learn more about Japanese language and culture, and to encourage schools to start Japanese classes.



A total of 29 people attended the training day, which began with an overview of the Japan Foundation and the JTS Pro-

gramme. This was followed by a workshop by Hiroko Tanaka (Japanese Language Advisor and co-ordinator of JTS at the Japan Foundation), who introduced a variety of games and enjoyable activities to teach Japanese in an effective and engaging manner. These included songs to teach Japanese greetings, gestures for learning the numbers 1-10 in Japanese, and "Samurai Rock, Paper, Scissors"



which involves making and wearing origami samurai helmets!

The workshop was very well received by all participants.

One participant, Kimie Tanaka, commented: 「短期間のセッションなのに内容も充実していて面白かったです」

("Although it was a short session, it was fun and managed to pack everything in.")



Another participant, Sophie Kerr, said, "*Activity suggestions were really interesting and useful. Demonstrations of songs and games were also useful. And fun!*"

The Japan Foundation would like to thank all attendees for coming, as well as Kumi Casey and all the other staff at the School of Modern Languages for supporting this event.

If you would like to find out more about the Japan Foundation London and the JTS Programme, please go to www.jpf.org.uk.

MY EXPERIENCE IN JAPAN

Robert Gordon BA Linguistics with Japanese



During my study abroad, the most monumental thing I did to improve my Japanese and experience real Japanese family life was to do WWOOFing (World Wide Opportunities for Organic Farming): an organisation for connecting people to organic farms or small hotels where in exchange for meals and accommodation one must work. When you sign up to WWOOF Japan and choose the host families that you want to contact, their profile indicates their level of English, since it had already been six months into my study abroad and my Japanese speaking ability was not where I had hoped it would be, I made the decision to use my month-long spring holiday to go WWOOFing in Nagano prefecture and to not speak English.

The first family I stayed was an elderly couple with an orchard where they grew over 20 different kinds of fruits and nuts. This family spoke absolutely no English, and even needed me to translate some of the newer katakana words, like 'global', and due to their patience and generosity I was able to gain confidence in my speaking ability.

The next family I arrived at was a middle-aged man and his parents who owned a yacon farm. A yacon looks something like a potato, but can be used as a sugar substitute. This family, while still very generous, were not as interested in interacting with me. However, the friendliest member of this family was the old man, who was probably a bit deaf so he shouted everything at me. It took a few days to stop being terrified and actually understand what he was saying.



There were some problems with the final family that I was supposed to go to, but luckily the orchard family was still available and they took me in again. This turned out to be really great for me as it happened that their son was getting married that week, so I ended up being able to attend a traditional Japanese wedding.

In the end, in that holiday I learned a lot of Japanese and increased my confidence, but the most important thing I learned was that it's when plans fall apart that you get to experience things you'd never even thought of.

Contact us

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or visit <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/research/subjects/eastasian/>

