2019 The Japan Foundation Japanese Teaching Methods Program for Teachers of the Japanese-Language

Rebecca Li, Matraville Sports High School, NSW

Essential questions:
1. What are the different ways that we can teach about Japan through Japanese?
2. How can we learn about teaching Japanese from other international educators?

These were two key questions that I pondered during the 2019 The Japan Foundation Teaching Methods Program held in Urawa, Saitama, Japan. The program consisted of 36 teachers from 26 countries. It was a six-week program centred on teaching methodologies and networking. This was the first year that such a "methodology course" had been held, and it proved to be a big success amongst participants.

PHOTO: Our first day

PHOTO: Presentation about my Japanese teaching context

I had the opportunity to present information about syllabus changes in NSW, Australia and the ongoing focus that language teachers have in teaching interculturally and communicatively. I also was able to hear the context of Japanese teachers in many other countries. Many were impressed by the innovation in our syllabus, our continued focus on reflecting on identity and culture and overall commitment to providing Languages education at the primary and junior high school levels. There was great interest in Australian texts for Japanese learners too, with many teachers from Europe expressing a desire to have similar books written in their own language!
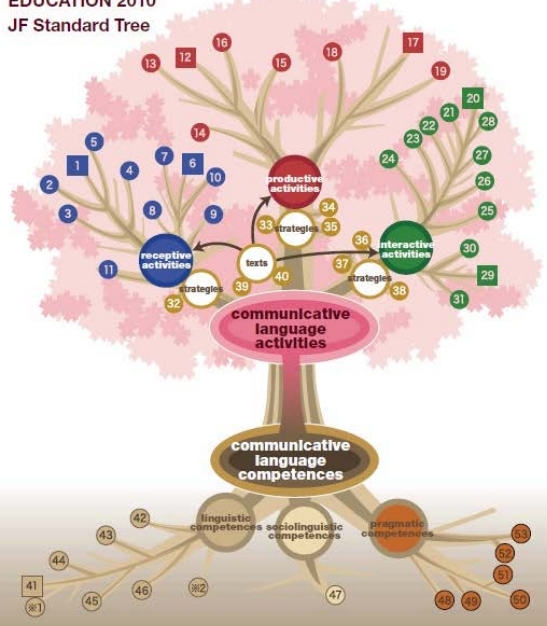
Lectures

The program included many lectures on the topics of:
- Second language acquisition
- How to teach speaking, reading, writing, listening, vocabulary and culture
- How to evaluate and create tests
- Our role as a Japanese teacher
- How to use The Japan Foundation's textbook and online series: Marugoto
- How to increase motivation using the ARCS model: https://www.arcsmodel.com/

The lectures were centred about The Japan Foundation standards. We worked in teams to design lesson plans that reflected the standards as well as evaluate our own teaching.

JF 日本語教育スタンダード https://jfstandard.jp/　　著作権 © The Japan Foundation

PHOTO: The Japan Foundation Standard. Are there any areas that you feel your lessons are catering heavily towards?
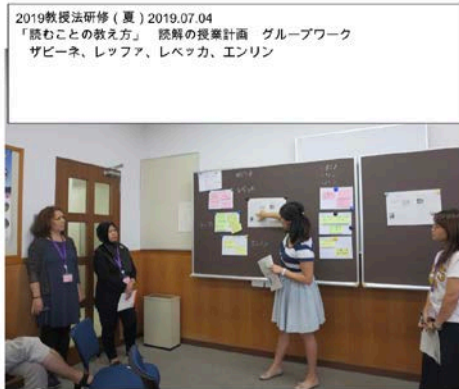
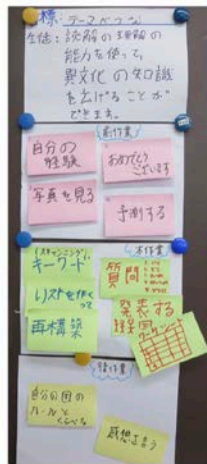PHOTO: Team teaching on the topic of reading

PHOTO: Cultural investigation: Mt Fuji

Excursions

We were able to go on many excursions that also enriched our understanding of Japan and culture. Many of the teachers attending had a keen interest in developing mature age students' career opportunities in Japan.

PHOTO: Create your own windchime (風鈴)

Projects

We had time to work on our own project. During this time, I used my experience of working as a group to create a basic assessment task that I could use for my beginner Year 7 class.

Based on what I learnt during this course, I aim to support a more communicative approach to Japanese teaching. As the whole course was in Japanese and all the participants communicated in Japanese, it was a real challenge for me to test my own ability. However, from this experience, I feel much more confident in using Japanese in all my classes and aim to do so in order to lift my own students' ability in speaking Japanese.

TASK INSTRUCTIONS

You and a friend have been asked to create an international Junior high school (JHS) in Japan. The students attending your school are Japanese students who want to go to an English school. A junior high school includes students from years 7 to 9.

You will both create a **Junior High School poster** for your new JHS.

To do this, you will include :

Slide 1: Create a <u>name</u> for your Junior high school **in Japanese.** Refer to the "Names" list.

Slide 2: A mission statement. This is an <u>opening paragraph</u> introducing prospective students to the school **in English**. Refer to the "Opening paragraph" scaffold.

Describe the values your school promotes and best characteristics of the school.

Slide 3: A <u>classroom rules section</u>. List at least five important classroom rules **in Japanese. Explain** why you've chosen these rules (5 sentences).

Slide 4: A <u>classroom stationary section</u>. List at least ten objects that students need to bring to school **in Japanese.**

Slide 5: A Japanese timetable including how many periods a day, times and subjects.

Slide 6: At least 10 **images** of your school, classroom or facilities. You will only have **ONE period** to do this so you must work in pairs or individually if your partner is away.

The period allocated will be: _____

Slide 7: A personal reflection answering the following questions. Answers must be clearly written on the poster.

Q1. What are the differences and similarities between Japanese and Australian schools?

Q2. What do I want to learn more about in Japanese schools?

Q3. How did my group decide on the school we were designing, including it's names, timetables, rules and images. What experiences did you use to inspire your ideas?

Q4. What challenges did you face as a group and how did you overcome them?

Q5. What would you change about your school if you had another chance?

Other activities that I plan to incorporate into my teaching:
- Greater use of project work
- Interesting ways to understand the intricacies of Japanese language. We had a few lessons on how to use Corpus to clarify the meaning of specific language. Corpus is similar to a linguistic library for analysing the meaning of words. If you are interested in understanding further about Japanese linguistics and meaning, we were recommended these sites:
  KOTONOHA: http://www.kotonoha.gr.jp/shonagon/ (Japanese corpus research site)
  ひらひらのひらがなめがね：http://www.hiragana.jp (To add furigana to Japanese writing)
  The Reading Tutor Web Dictionary: http://chuta.jp/ (Dictionary for Japanese to English)
  NINJAL-LWP for BCCWJ: http://nlb.ninjal.ac.jp/search/ (Corpus search engine)
- Providing more opportunities to teach hiragana and katakana concurrently
- Using recent news and trends in the class with sites such as NHK news website; NEWS WEB EASY: https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/easy/
- Increasing the use of interactive websites such as Marugoto.
  MARUGOTO: https://www.marugoto.org/en/
  MARUGOTO Plus Japanese Learning: https://marugotoweb.jp/en/index.php
  HIROGARU,get more of Japan and Japanese: https://hirogaru-nihongo.jp/en/
  Erin's Challenge! I can speak Japanese: https://www.erin.ne.jp/en/
  Japanese in Anime & Manga: http://anime-manga.jp/index_english.html

Reflections
Most of all, the program impressed upon me how important networking is to the business of Languages teaching. The challenges we each face are sometimes not only within our context, but widespread and commonly felt by many languages teachers around the world. Through open communication and networking, we can build a community of learners that are intrigued by Japanese and experience success in using it.

I am very grateful to the staff at The Japan Foundation, Sydney for supporting me in my preparation, the NSW Department of Education, as well as to the wonderful and expert staff from Urawa, Japan and other Japanese teachers for their inspiring ideas and perspectives.

Please visit below page for more information about course applications for the next Japanese financial year.
2020 Japanese Language Grants: https://jpf.org.au/language/for-teachers/grants/