



Dispatch of Young Japanese-Language Teachers for Ten Months

– JENESYS Young Japanese-Language Teacher Dispatch Program –

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The JENESYS Program – the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths Program by the Japanese government – is a large-scale exchange project under which senior high school and college students, teachers and representative individuals in various fields in Asia and Oceania are invited to Japan and Japanese youths are sent to these regions. The Japan Foundation collaborates with the JENESYS Program and conducts several projects. In this issue, we would like to introduce one of these, the JENESYS Young Japanese-Language Teacher Dispatch Program.

Under the JENESYS Young Japanese-Language Teacher Dispatch Program, Japanese young people who have majored in Japanese-language education in university or who have taught Japanese are sent to Japanese-language education institutions in Southeast Asia and Oceania for approximately 10 months. The program's purposes are to teach Japanese in cooperation with local Japanese-language teachers, introduce Japanese culture, and deepen understanding and interest in Japan, in addition to promoting international understanding among Japanese young people.

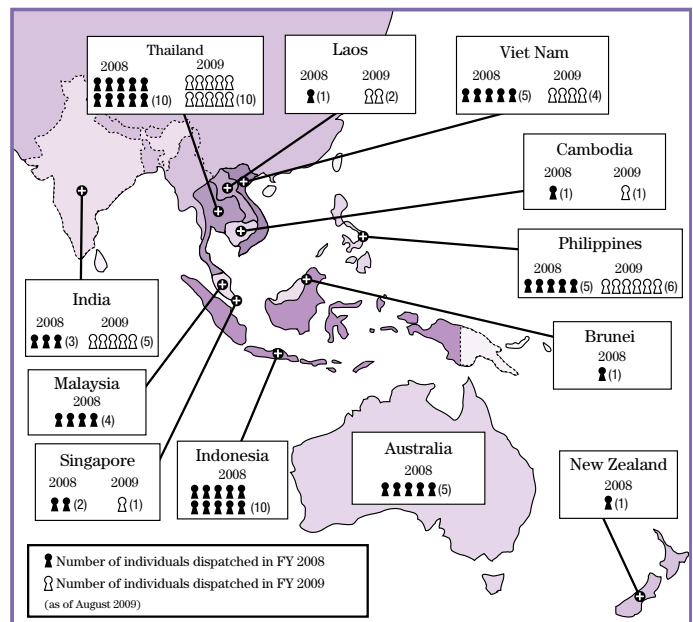
In fiscal year 2008, 48 teachers were dispatched. This year, the total will reach 60, including those already dispatched.

Young Japanese-language teachers are selected through strict screening from a large number of applicants. Prior to dispatch, they receive two weeks of training at The Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa (Saitama Pref.). During training they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct Japanese-language education overseas, including knowledge of the local circumstances of Japanese-language education, Japanese-language pedagogy overseas and methods of culture study. This is designed to raise awareness of their roles. Many non-native Japanese-language teachers stay at The Japanese-Language Institute for training, and the curriculum of young Japanese-language teachers includes speaking with these non-native teachers and planning a Japanese-language lesson with them. This allows them to learn about the actual circumstances of education overseas and to have authentic experience of working with non-native teachers in Japanese-language education. Even when there is no teacher from the country to which they will be dispatched, young Japanese-language teachers are able to imagine the situations they will encounter.

In addition, local offices of The Japan Foundation support young Japanese-language teachers after dispatch through training and consultation to ensure that the education process proceeds smoothly at their assigned sites.

We asked four individuals who were sent overseas as young Japanese-language teachers to report on their activities and exchanges with local teachers and students. We hope to see more and more exchanges in coming years.

(All texts translated by Junko Igarashi & Tom Conrad)



About JENESYS Young Japanese-Language Teachers Dispatch Program

Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/jc_koryu21/sdk_keikaku.html

The Japan Foundation website: <http://www.jpf.go.jp/j/japanese/new/0905/05-01.html>

Country of dispatch: Philippines
Dispatch period: June 2008-April 2009
Name: Arihiko Hasegawa

I was assigned to Davao on Mindanao in the Philippines for 10 months. Mindanao International



College, the institution where I was sent, is a leader in Japanese-language education in the Philippines, and at the beginning I wondered for days how I should face my students and what my role should be.

At first I focused only on staying on a friendly footing with students and always tried to be gentle. After about two months, however, I was intentionally strict at times, a change that was triggered by a remark by a fellow Japanese-language teacher.

“You can quit teaching but you cannot stop being a teacher.” Even after I stop teaching as a profession, I will continue to be ‘a teacher’ for students I have taught, and things I have taught will stay with them forever. When I heard this, I realized that even a short-term temporary teacher needs to deal with students on a serious level. It might have been difficult for students, but by the time my assignment was up, I could see they had made significant progress, and many students expressed their appreciation; they found it tough to say good-bye.

From these students, I learned something important as a person.

On the anniversary of the end of World War II in August, I talked about the war in the first-year class. The Philippines is a country Japan occupied during the war and a place where we caused great damage. I thought that as a Japanese I should not forget the past tragedy. In that class, one student began in English, saying “although we shouldn’t forget the war,” and then continued in Japanese, using a pattern we had just learned: “I like Japan.” At that moment I realized that I was not only teaching Japanese but standing in front of the class as a bridge between Japan and the Philippines.

In the Philippines, where economic well-being is not widely seen, many students take Japanese out of necessity for their jobs or to make money, and as someone who was sent there to teach Japanese, I sometimes had mixed feelings about my job and position. However, through exchanges with cheerful and forward-thinking Filipino students, I reconfirmed that being a Japanese teacher is rewarding and meaningful for me. The 10 months I spent in the Philippines is a precious time when I learned a lot and grew both as a teacher and as a person.

Country of dispatch: India
Dispatch period: June 2008-April 2009
Name: Makiko Ikeda

I was sent to the Indo-Japan Chamber of Commerce & Industry in Chennai in southeast India. Students ranged



from junior and senior high school students and college students to housewives, company employees and retired individuals in their 60s, and included those who simply had an interest in the Japanese language to those who wanted to use it in business. All the students were very motivated.

My role included training local Japanese-language teachers, teaching students, preparing students for speech contests and introducing Japanese culture. Except for a teaching practicum at college and technical college, I did not have any teaching experience and worried if I would be able to instruct teachers. However, I decided to teach local teachers after learning that they had no opportunity to be exposed to the real Japanese language and of their eagerness. They let me teach freely through trial and error, based on my ideas about what is necessary for Japanese teachers and local teachers’ requests and opinions about class. When local teachers made a suggestion, at first I felt pressured because my ideas on teaching seemed to be rejected. However, reactions to my teaching improved incredibly when I changed my style. Receiving and accepting straightforward opinions – from such an exchange, mutual trust was established, and I was able to learn and grow.

India is very different from Japan in terms of climate, food, language and culture, and I encountered some difficulties until I became accustomed to them. However, through exchanges with Japanese teachers and students at the institution where I was sent as well as with other local people, I came to know the warmth, generosity and fun-loving and accepting nature of the Indian people, and I came to love Chennai. Being able to have exchanges with Indians on a level different from that of traveling or business was a truly valuable experience.

I am grateful to The Japan Foundation, its New Delhi office, the Chennai Consulate-General of Japan and the people at the Indo-Japan Chamber of Commerce & Industry for getting me through my 10-month stay. I hope that many more people will have this wonderful opportunity.

Country of dispatch: Malaysia

Dispatch period: January 2009 (-November 2009)

Name: Yuka Igarashi

Sekolah Tun Fatimah, the institution where I was sent, is a girls boarding school with an integrated lower and upper secondary education system. Here, with two local Japanese teachers, I teach students taking Japanese to meet the requirement for a second foreign language.



Team teaching is used in all the classes I am involved with. I discuss lesson flow, activity details and necessary teaching materials with other teachers prior to class. During classes themselves, we capitalize on each other's strengths, such as me taking the lead in certain activities or at other times assisting other teachers. I often take the lead when introducing new vocabulary and paying special attention to pronunciation as well as in advanced exercises focusing on conversation and introduction of Japanese culture. In the fifth grade class where Japanese culture is often discussed, we used *Erin's Challenge! I Can Speak Japanese.*¹⁾ to compare high school students' lifestyle and fashion in Japan and Malaysia; as a "living resource," I was asked a number of questions, and this made a strong impression on me.

Aside from teaching regular classes, I am also involved in events and activities that touch on Japanese culture and language. For the "Senior High School Students Japanese-language Speech Contest," which is held for senior high school students in Malaysia in April, I led instruction of participating students, from preparation of their speeches through practice of delivery. In coming months, together with the school and other teachers, I will be preparing for and participating in "Japanese Culture Day" for students taking Japanese at schools all over Malaysia with an integrated lower and upper secondary education system as well as getting ready for the *bon-odori* contest that takes place in Johor Bahru. In addition, to raise the level of knowledge of Japan not only among students who take Japanese classes but also among other students and teachers, I post materials on the introduction of simple Japanese in school and wear a *yukata* when I participate in school events.

Every day is very new because I learn the Malay language and culture through school life. From the standpoints of both teaching and learning, I am striving to make my remaining time here with students more productive and fulfilling.

1) The Japan Foundation. *Erin's Challenge! I Can Speak Japanese.*
http://www.jpff.go.jp/j/urawa/j_rsorcs/erin/index.html

Country of dispatch: Australia

Dispatch period: February 2009 (-December 2009)

Name: Kyoko Nagashima

I was sent to the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training in February this year. I am currently assigned to Fort Street High School and Nihongo Tanken Centre as a Japanese-language assistant.



Nihongo Tanken Centre is a Japanese-house facility that is managed and operated by the Department of Education and Training. Every day, students taking Japanese at various locations visit the center and learn Japanese through various activities. All teaching materials used in the activities are original and have been developed and created by staff. I work here twice a week as an assistant and also have been gradually getting involved in teaching material development.

My other assignment, Fort Street High School, is a selective public school located near central Sydney. A foreign language (Japanese is one of the options) is a requirement for the seventh and eighth grades (first and second years at junior high school in Japan) and is elective from the ninth grade. All students who study Japanese through the 12th grade choose it as a subject for the graduation exam -- called the Higher School Certificate (HSC) -- which determines the institution of their higher education. At Fort Street High School, I mainly teach 12th grade students who have chosen Japanese for the HSC to be ready for the exam.

Japanese is a popular subject at schools in New South Wales State. However, no matter how long students have been taking Japanese, not many have the opportunity to talk with native Japanese speakers. Within Australia, Sydney has a particularly high immigrant population, and various languages are heard in town. Of course, many Japanese people are staying in Sydney. Yet even in a city like Sydney, how to teach a new language as a way to communicate is a challenging task. Through my assistant work at the Nihongo Tanken Centre, I sense the desire of local Japanese teachers to expose their students as much as possible to real Japanese.

Teaching here is very different from the Japanese-language instruction I did in Fukushima Prefecture where I grew up, and I often found myself puzzled at the beginning. Now, every day I find the new challenges to be very rewarding.