



**Title of Report:** Japanese Dentists Improving Their English

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## **1. Identify and describe the training program.**

This case report describes a short-term, content-based English language program for Japanese dentists. For this five-week intensive program, students were in class in Monterey, California twenty-five hours per week for the first, third, fourth, and fifth weeks. During the second week, students traveled to San Francisco, where they attended classes, workshops, presentations, and networking sessions with local dentists and local graduate students of dentistry. The students also attended a state-wide conference of the California Dental Association.

There were five teachers in the program. One is a professor at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS), with a PhD in Applied Linguistics. One holds a graduate certificate in TESOL and has years of experience, especially in teaching pronunciation. The third has an MA in Comparative Literature and a California teaching credential in ESL, and is an instructor at a local four-year college in Monterey. The fourth has her Masters in English with a focus in TESOL and taught Academic English reading and writing skills for four years in Morocco. The fifth teacher was a current graduate student at MIIS, pursuing her Masters in TESOL as well as a Certificate in Language Program Administration. Her experience included teaching English to naval personnel in Chile for four years.

The program staff included an activity guide who was also a graduate student, pursuing her Masters in TESOL. She had previously spent four years teaching English as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Additionally, the program hired another current graduate student to act as the cross-cultural coordinator in charge of helping students adjust to life in the United States. This person had had three years of previous experience living and teaching English in Japan.

## **2. Describe the target audience for the training program.**

The students in the program were ten practicing dentists from Japan, who were also graduate students at Osaka University, Graduate School of Dentistry. There they were studying advanced dentistry specializations, including maxillofacial surgery, prosthodontics, periodontics, and pediatric dentistry. These students had earned scholarships to attend this

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program from the university based on their merit and performance. Therefore, the program was paid for by Osaka University, Graduate School of Dentistry.

### **3. Describe the needs assessment procedures utilized to develop the program.**

A few months prior to the start of the program, a survey was sent to the graduate students in dentistry via email, asking various questions about their perceived proficiency levels, their experience learning English, their interests and experience in the field of dentistry, and their expectations for the English classes and the program in general. The surveys were returned and analyzed by the academic coordinator of the program, who relayed the information to the teaching staff. The teachers were then able to make curricular decisions based on this information.

### **4. Explain the English language training program's over-arching goals and specific objectives.**

The over-arching goals of the program were for students to be able to attain higher English language proficiency in all four skills areas—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—in order to participate in dentistry-related professional activities (e.g., conferences, tradeshow, etc.) on an international scale. The curriculum was designed specifically to target the four language skills as well as relevant content areas.

In the Pronunciation Skills course, the specific objectives were for students to (1) improve their pronunciation skills by becoming aware of their own pronunciation, and (2) to improve their production of the sounds that are typically difficult for Japanese speakers, as well as to (3) feel more confident in their pronunciation skills when interacting with English speakers.

The specific objectives of the Reading and Writing course were to (1) improve students' English literacy skills through extensive reading and real-life writing tasks; (2) increase students' English writing fluency through timed journal entries; and (3) work on their accuracy through a process of drafting, editing, and revising.

In the Discussion and Presentation Skills course, the specific objectives were for students to be able to (1) give impromptu speeches using effective body language, articulation, and projection; (2) provide constructive feedback on their own speeches and those of their classmates; and (3) conduct a question-and-answer period at the end of each speech.

Finally, the specific objectives of the Community Language Skills course were for students to be able to (1) communicate effectively in realistic social and workplace situations; (2) understand how language is used in different contexts; and (3) discuss troublesome communication situations.

### **5. Describe the teaching methods and training procedures used in the program.**



The overall design of the course was content-based, specifically English for Dentistry. In each of the classes, students were encouraged to work with partners and in small groups on various in-class tasks and activities related to the field of dentistry. In the Reading and Writing course, students participated in a peer editing and revising process. In the Community Language Skills course, students prepared for their community visits by conducting role plays and interviews prior to their visits.

The individual courses were broken down by skill as follows: Pronunciation Skills, Discussion and Presentation Skills, Reading and Writing, and Community Language Skills. During the second week of the program, when the students traveled to San Francisco, they spent a week interacting with other dental students and practicing professionals in the field. They attended dental courses and seminars, social events with dental professionals, and a large conference of the California Dental Association.

## **6. Describe the teaching materials used in the program.**

The program used mainly authentic materials from the field of dentistry. The Reading and Writing course used texts from newspapers, magazines, and academic journals from the dental field. Students wrote journal entries about their experiences visiting local dental professionals and then practiced the peer review and revision process using these writing samples. The Pronunciation Skills course used authentic English songs as class materials.

In the Community Language Skills course, the students took field trips to various local dental offices and interacted with the dental professionals (dentists with various specialties, hygienists, dental technicians, etc.) and experienced dentistry in the US firsthand. This class also used websites, handouts, brochures, and other authentic materials from the individual dental offices, both as preparation for and reflection on the visits.

## **7. Explain what the content of the English language training program consists of.**

### **A. What written and spoken genres are covered in the training program?**

Students gave formal presentations on a dental topic of their choice. They wrote journal entries and gave written and oral constructive feedback to their peers. They also wrote a number of reports in various styles, including narrative, informative, comparative, and persuasive writing. Students wrote an academic abstract related to the research topic of their oral presentations. In the Community Language Skills course, the students practiced personal introductions, asking questions, answering questions, interviewing, and being interviewed.

### **B. What communicative functions are covered in the training program?**

Students practiced introducing themselves, clarifying, reporting, explaining, describing, arguing a point, giving instructions, getting and giving information, and making requests. These communicative functions were used in a range of practice activities.

### **C. What speech events are covered in the training program?**

Students will most likely use their English skills for professional conferences in the dental field, where they will need to perform a number of tasks, including networking, participating in presentations, group presentations, and asking and answering questions during a presentation. They may also use English in meetings with dental patients.

### **8. Explain the delivery mechanisms employed by the program.**

The classes were taught face-to-face in Monterey, California. The ten students were in the same classes at the same times.

### **9. Explain the assessment procedures used in the program.**

At the end of the program, each of the teachers gave each student a letter grade and wrote at least a paragraph describing the student's progress, achievements, ability, and attitude in class. The grades and evaluations were based on the students' work in each class (e.g., final presentation, written and oral feedback on writing samples) and their participation and attitude during class time.

### **10. Explain the program evaluation mechanisms used.**

At the end of the program, each student completed a program evaluation form. The form asked for the students' input regarding the efficacy of the program, how they felt about the content of the courses, how comfortable they felt with their teachers, how helpful the support staff was, how engaging the out-of-class activities were, and how the program could be improved.

The results of these evaluations were summarized and sent to the program coordinator at Osaka University, Graduate School of Dentistry, who then wrote a final evaluation of the program based on the students' feedback, as well as his own experience working with the program staff. His report included information about the problems and successes in various areas, including teachers, classes, class materials, activities, homestays, etc.

### **11. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this English training program.**

There were a number of challenges involved in offering this program. First, the students were selected to participate in this program based on their academic excellence at Osaka University, not on their English skills. Due to the small number of students, it was impossible to separate the students into two classes based on their English proficiency levels, so there ended



up being a very wide range of skill levels within the class. There were some students who were considered lower-intermediate, and then there were others who were upper-intermediate or advanced.

Second, the students as well as the administrators at Osaka University had extremely high expectations for such a short-term program. The students made some great improvements, but with the wide range of levels to start with, the students did not all reach the same levels by the end of the program.

Finally, the idea to have the San Francisco visit in the middle of the program was excellent, because students were able to get a bit of an introduction in class the first week and then dive into the actual dental field for a week, getting authentic experiences with professionals in the field. Then students were able to return to class with more motivation and focus to work on refining their English skills. The program staff would have benefitted greatly, however, from knowing more about what the students were going to be doing during their week in San Francisco. More information would have allowed the teachers to help students prepare better for their trip and then reflect more effectively upon their return.

**12. Describe the successes of the program and explain how they are documented. That is, what evidence is there that the program was successful?**

The successes of the program are reported in the final evaluations from both the students and Osaka University administrators. Students rated the program, the classes, the teachers, and the activities at a range from 4.3 to 5.0 on a five-point scale. They reported that they really enjoyed the variety of class types and teaching styles. They felt that their visits to local practicing dental offices were extremely valuable. Their biggest complaints were the lack of internet connection in the classroom and the length of the program; they wished the program had been longer.

Also, the students created a bound book with their final writing course products, the abstracts about the research topics of their oral presentations. All of the students received a copy of the bound book with their final products, and they were very proud of their work. They also created a course website where they stored all of their individual work, along with pictures from their experiences in Monterey. At the final graduation ceremony, all students attended with their local host families. The students selected two of their classmates to give graduation speeches, which were very heartfelt and inspiring. Finally, the teachers presented each student with a graduation certificate, and the students gave gifts to the teachers in appreciation of the program. Many students cried at the end of the ceremony, because they did not want the program to be over.

Upon their return to Japan, students gave their final presentations, which they had prepared in Monterey. The audience for these presentations was their fellow dental classmates as well as the professors at Osaka University, School of Dentistry.