

KALT

THE KANTO ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

PROFILES

LIOJ

LANGUAGE INSTITUTE OF JAPAN

The Language Institute of Japan (LIOJ), located in Odawara about 80 kilometers southwest of Tokyo, is a private organization supported by a non-profit educational foundation. The institute offers a residential intensive program and various community programs in language/communication skills. It was begun in 1968 through the support of Masahide Shibusawa and the guidance of Rowland Harker and Toneko Kimura. LIOJ was conceived as an experimental school specializing in preparing Japanese to work and/or study abroad.

Our purposes as an institution today extend in two basic directions: those which center on the ways in which we serve the needs of Japan in the area of international communication; and those which center on maintaining a teaching environment which is conducive to creative involvement and research in the field of language learning/teaching. Our faculty uses a variety of methods and materials in all of our programs. Examples include the functional or communicative approach, Silent Way, values clarification, CLL, use of drama in English, and the student-based-objectives approach. Innovative efforts by our teachers which have been well-received by students include a media-centered approach (slide tape, photographic essay, VTR production, news overdubbings, etc.), story squares and Lipson squares, radio plays, and rapid reading rapid writing. These as well as innovative ideas for classroom application from language educators elsewhere in Japan and overseas have found focus in the pages of Cross Currents, a professional journal published twice a year at LIOJ.

The four-week residential program is based on the "total immersion" concept in which students join the faculty at certain social activities and at mealtime as well as in the classroom. A policy of "English only" is stressed. Emphasis is given to maintaining a small, quality program where personal encounters become the rule rather than the exception. Our enrollment averages 35, primarily businesspeople working in a variety of corporate or technical settings in the various regions of Japan. Present and recently-graduated university students join our program throughout the year, though the number is small save during March and summer holidays. Through an institutional relationship with a college in Bangkok, several Thai students each year join this program on a scholarship basis. Class size in all of the residential classes averages 8 and never exceeds 10.

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In the residential program, a "general English" curriculum is offered from 8:30 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. five days a week. An effort is made to have the students meet the English language in a meaningful context. Attention is paid to skill areas such as pronunciation, intonation, sentence structure, or vocabulary-building within a general problem-solving atmosphere. Students have to cooperate, take responsibility for learning, and push at the borders of their knowledge to express what they want to communicate. The methods mentioned above (and others) lend focus to this underlying philosophy. From 2:50 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., students enroll in elective courses such as listening comprehension, survival abroad (basic social English), creative dramatics, or discussion through contemporary Asian affairs. Businessmen (and a slowly increasing number of businesswomen) continue their day in our "business English" program from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. In this course, specific attention is directed to such areas as technical vocabulary, business letters, role plays of business situations, public speaking, simulated market studies, or discussion of business-related topics. Language ability level of the students determines to what extent this course serves as review and support for the "general English" instruction earlier in the day.

LIOJ community courses have a combined enrollment of 275-300. Night school classes for adults on Wednesday and Thursday evenings (7:00-8:30 p.m.) account for more than half of this enrollment. Children's classes, ladies' classes, junior high school classes, and a class in beginning Spanish and beginning French make up our other course offerings for local citizens. Class size varies in our community program from 8 to a maximum of 15. LIOJ enjoys its relationship with the city of Odawara and frequently plans special parties or programs for the participants in this program.

Our most recent efforts are related to preparations for our 10th annual Summer Workshop for Japanese Teachers of English. It takes place August 13-19 when 130 Japanese secondary school English teachers join us for special presentations and language training. The presenters this year are Dr. Sumako Kimizuka of USC, Father Paul LaForge of Nanzan College in Nagoya, and Richard Via of the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii.

Roger M. Pehlke

(NOTE: Mr. Via's visit to Japan was made possible by the cooperative efforts of JALT and LIOJ. We would like to thank LIOJ for its assistance - and its money.)