

< The LIOJ Experiment, 1968 to Present: >

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Director

Since the spring of 1968, LIOJ has conducted a variety of educational programs at Asia Center, under the auspices of MRA Japan. LIOJ has changed considerably since its beginning as an experimental school that prepared college students to study in the US. Over the years, the school has changed with the times, evolving to meet new needs and adapting to changing conditions. Through all the changes, however, LIOJ has remained a place that offers an opportunity for tremendous personal and professional growth, and, for some people, for life-changing experiences. The aim of this and the following sections is to tell the story of LIOJ, and stories of the people behind LIOJ.

We asked LIOJ directors to help us track LIOJ evolutionary shifts. We asked them to recount what LIOJ was like when they began as director, and how it changed during their tenure. They have discussed the conditions at LIOJ, while also describing the backdrop of Japan's changing environment during their term. Through their collective insight, we have attempted to answer the question, "How did LIOJ get from where it was in 1968 to where it is today?" Sincere thanks to Bill Harshbarger, Roger Pehlke, Lance Knowles, John Fleischauer, Bob Ruud, Warrick Liang, Don Maybin, and Ken Fujioka for telling this part of the story.

Since LIOJ is not only the sum of its programs, but is all about people and their experiences, we also set out to discover what the LIOJ experience has meant to its teachers over the years. To that end, we invited teachers across the "generations" to describe an aspect of their experience here: a memory of LIOJ, Asia Center, Odawara, or Japan. This section shows that although programs have changed with the times, the essential core of LIOJ has remained. It is a core that its members and partners respond to and recognize as unique among organizations. From the responses, we have compiled a montage of memories that are arranged chronologically by the year the teacher arrived at LIOJ. Heartfelt thanks to all the teachers who contributed an essay, from Bill Crutchfield, and Robin Miyaguchi (1968) through Diane McCall and Stephen Shrader (present). Special thanks to Bob Hazen who helped conceptualize the montage and put us in touch with teachers from the early days of LIOJ.

In addition, this record includes recollections from the Japanese office manager perspective through essays by Masami Takahashi, Nobu Seto, Miyuki Ohno, and Kazumi Masuda. Furthermore, BCP student Kazunori Morishita and Workshop participant Minoru Nanatsumura share their experiences in respective LIOJ programs. Many thanks to everyone who contributed in Japanese, and especially to Kazumi for planning and putting together this section.

We would like to begin with an article entitled 'Why LIOJ?' written by Rowland Harker who, together with his wife Terttu, helped launch the institute in 1968 and served as its

first director until 1975. In the article which was published in the first issue of Cross Currents (LIOJ Journal, Summer 1972, pp. 73-76), Harker gives his thoughts on English education in Japan and describes the goals, programs, and staff of LIOJ during his time.

Why LIOJ? Rowland Harker

Japan today is emerging into a position of new responsibilities and new opportunities. These involve contact with the rest of the world greater than any imagined heretofore. This fact, along with the problems inherent in changing an old style of language education has resulted in a great shortage of people adequately fluent in English. The Language Institute of Japan was founded in order to help train the people efficient in English that are needed [*sic*].

The first session of the Language Institute of Japan was organized in order to help a group of young people associated with the activities of the sponsoring foundation prepare for college study in America. These young people had been through the normal six years of English in Japanese junior and senior high schools and had had more than usual contact with English speaking people, but even their English was far from adequate for entrance to an American college.

As with other Japanese high school graduates, they knew fairly well how to read difficult English and translate it into Japanese, but as far as speaking or writing English was concerned, they had very little to show for their six years of study of the language.

At this point it may be proper to give a word of appreciation for the Japanese educational system. For a hundred years after the opening of the country to the rest of the world, the primary aim of foreign language education was to make the learning and experience of the world available to the Japanese. One can only marvel at the success in achieving this goal.

However, this success itself sometimes seems to be the greatest barrier to creating the kind of English education that is needed today, when Japanese contacts with the world in every field are exploding in number, and the need to give ideas and information is as great as the need to get them. Those who have grown up to positions of leadership in education, because they have succeeded in arriving at the old goals so spectacularly, find it hard to believe that what was good enough for themselves is not adequate for their grandchildren. Thus, the heads of English departments in universities, who set the entrance examinations for new students, create tests that coerce teachers in the schools at lower levels to teach English in the old way with the emphasis on reading and translation.

It is a strange thing that in the countries of southeast Asia which do not have long histories of successful public education, it is the governmental agencies that are

pushing the use of the latest methods in teaching English, while in Japan the educational authorities tend to stick to the old ways and it is the great business concerns, desperate for people who can use English who are pressing for modernization.

All this leads to the fact that today there are many people like those students who first entered LIOJ and the need for schools where people are taught English with which they can communicate is greater than ever.

In LIOJ we aim to do the following:

1. We try to create the habits needed for English speech. Learning to speak is a matter of acquiring patterns of habitual action that are more akin to a physical skill such as swimming than an intellectual understanding such as mathematics. It might be said that traditional language study is like reading books about the theory of swimming while our work at LIOJ is like throwing people into a pool of water and helping them get the skills that will keep them afloat. Teaching people *about* English (grammar, syntax, etc.) is like studying books about swimming. Because we want to create a whole new system of habits as quickly as possible so as to make people able to use English in real situations, we spend a great deal of time on drills and we insist that our students speak "English only."

2. We undertake to give an understanding of the culture and patterns of feeling and reacting of English speaking people that will make possible an understanding not only of the vocabulary and grammar of English but also the underlying attitudes, concepts and feelings that must be known if successful communication is to take place. This we try to do through the interchange that comes both in intimate contact between teachers and students in very small classes and in our life and meals, in parties, and in the association that comes from living all in the same building 24 hours a day.

3. We want to give an outlook on the world that will make the knowledge of English not only a tool for personal communication, but also a means of participating as world citizens in the on-going life of the community of nations.

LIOJ has five main types of courses:

1. The basic course, running from 10 to 13 weeks (autumn, winter, spring) primarily for those planning to study abroad. These students attend eight 40-minute periods per day as well as participating in the social and recreational life of the school. Students can come for a portion of these longer terms if their circumstances make a longer time impossible.

2. Four-week courses for businessmen who are planning to go abroad for work or research. These students attend twelve 40-minute periods per day as well as taking part in the life of the school.

3. Two-week vacation courses in spring and summer, primarily for high school and university students who want to supplement the English they are studying at school. These courses have eight periods a day of study and many sports and recreational activities suitable to a vacation program such as picnics, beach parties, dance parties and the like.

4. Workshops for Japanese teachers of English. These are one-week sessions in the summer where half of each day is spent on the theory, methods and materials for modern language education and half on teaching English to the teachers themselves.

5. Night school and afternoon classes for the local community where LIOJ is located. These classes range from one hour per week for children to two or four hours per week for adults.

The staff of LIOJ is recruited from the United States and Canada. We aim to have a mixture of mature, professionally trained teachers who can set the teaching standards for the school, and younger men and women freshly out of American and Canadian universities who can easily establish rapport with young Japanese and inform them of the latest social and linguistic trends.

For the workshops for Japanese teachers of English a special staff, principally from the University of Southern California, is invited to come and lead the sessions.

The solid growth of the Language Institute of Japan over the last four and a half years since its founding indicates that it is meeting a real need. While we trust that some day the educational system of Japan will develop to the place where a school such as LIOJ will not be needed, we hope to be of service for some years to come.