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**(1978, 80~81, 90~91)**  
**LIOJ Director: 1990~91**

It is difficult to comment on LIOJ in 1990 and 1991 without making reference to what LIOJ was like in earlier years. I had worked as an instructor in the Business Communication Program (BCP) in the late 1970's and early 1980's before I returned as the administrative director in 1990.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, Japan was experiencing economic success. Companies had plenty of money to spend on training, and one area where training was needed was in English. LIOJ at that time realized that English language skills could not be separated from intercultural communication skills, and both components were woven into the curriculum.



It was not uncommon to encounter businessmen at that time who had tremendous discomfort interacting with people from other countries. Conversations in the cafeteria were often strained, and you could see the nervousness and tension in some of the students when an instructor joined them for a meal. At the same time, some students were relatively comfortable with instructors who were all from other countries, and they were highly motivated to find out everything they could about the instructors, their opinions, and experiences. Asian Americans were also a novelty that many students knew little about. Compliments on my use of chopsticks were not uncommon, and when I told the person complimenting me that I had used them my entire life, they were shocked. It was not uncommon to be asked questions that would be considered inappropriate or mundane, such as, "Are you married?", "How old are you?", "Do you like Japanese people?", "Do you like raw fish?", or "What do you think of Japanese women?"

By contrast, in 1990 and 1991, instructors from other countries were no longer a novelty. More students seem unphased when instructor joined them for meals in the cafeteria. It was rare to be asked those awkward questions, and it was obvious that students were more sophisticated in their knowledge of people from other countries and more comfortable with them. There were other noticeable changes in the composition of students and their experiences during this ten-year period. In any one term there were many students who had changed employers, whereas earlier it was unusual to have even one student who had changed employers. There were also many more women enrolled each term, whereas earlier it was not uncommon to have many terms in succession without a single female student.

By 1990, the enrollment in the Business Communication Program had already begun to decline. The reasons for the decline were unclear; however, many of us thought it might have been due to one or a combination of various factors, including the need for better marketing with new clients and for more nurturing of existing relationships with existing clients. There was also a growth in "in-house" training programs in numerous companies. Few of us

thought that the decline in enrollment might have been caused by the beginning of a decline in the Japanese economy and with that decline shrinking training budgets.

The university program had also experienced a similar decline in enrollment. However, the reasons for the enrollment decline in the university program seemed clearer: It cost about the same to send a student to a program overseas as it did to send a student to LIOJ's summer program. Why spend a month in a program in Odawara when you could pay about the same amount to spend a month in a program in the US?

The faculty of LIOJ had also changed considerably in this ten-year period. In the late 1970's, there were fewer applicants with master's degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and it was not uncommon to find numerous instructors on the faculty without a master's degree in TEFL. However, by 1990, there were plenty of applicants with MA degrees in TEFL, and the number of faculty without an MA in TEFL were very few. The field of TEFL itself was expanding, and the credentials of instructors in Japan mirrored this development. Although it was relatively easy for instructors who only had a bachelor's degree to find full-time employment at a language school somewhere in Japan, by the mid-1990's it was difficult even for instructors with MA degrees in TEFL to secure employment in Japan.

On the one hand, the quality of instruction at LIOJ had vastly improved because more teachers had more training, credentials and teaching experience. On the other hand, the level of energy and enthusiasm amongst the teachers appeared to have diminished, particularly in the Business Communication Program where teachers who were quite willing to spend evening and weekend hours socializing with students were fewer in number. Some of us thought this may have been due to the "institutionalization" of social outings with students. Some evening outings were now required, whereas previously they occurred only if the teachers chose to initiate them. As some teachers lamented, "You can not mandate fun."

One of the sad results of this diminished enthusiasm toward bonding with students was that a major feature of the LIOJ Business Communication Program was also diminished. There was a certain "magic" to the BCP. The experience was often very powerful and profound for many students and teachers. For many students, an attitude of discomfort and even fear of "foreigners" was replaced with an attachment, fondness and openness toward those from other countries, and this metamorphosis undoubtedly played in integral part in their future relationships and interactions with those from other countries.

Regardless of the level of enthusiasm toward bonding with students, LIOJ continued to employ the highest quality faculty. LIOJ has always commanded respect from those in the world of TEFL. LIOJ was instrumental in the founding of JALT. The LIOJ Summer Workshop for Teachers of English annually brought in renowned educators in the field of TEFL, and many of LIOJ's former instructors have moved on to positions of high visibility and influence in the world of TEFL.

The Community Program had begun its expansion by 1990. In the late 1970's, there was only one full-time Community instructor, and most Business Program instructors taught part-time in the Community Program. By 1990, there were six full-time Community Program

instructors, and the Team Teaching Program in the public schools was in full swing. The Community Program had grown from a secondary program ("Oh, I almost forgot to prepare for my night school class tonight, what can I whip together in the next 30 minutes?") to a full-fledged program with a full-time supervisor and a teaching staff demanding more attention and resources from LIOJ administrators. Few of us imagined that the Community Program would one day replace the Business Communication Program as the main program at LIOJ.

Two main improvements in the quality of instruction at LIOJ were initiated in 1990. One was the development of a performance appraisal system. Performance appraisals had not been used systematically at LIOJ, and an attempt was made to develop such a system to evaluate teaching performance as well overall employee performance. Second was a revision of the Business Communication Program curriculum. In the mid 1970's the Business Communication Program was based on the premise that each instructor should have freedom to teach whatever s/he wanted in whatever manner s/he wanted. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the curriculum became more defined with specific components and competencies. In 1990, retreats were being held with LIOJ administrators, supervisors and senior teachers to re-examine the curriculum and program design. Unfortunately, I resigned from LIOJ before the implementation of either the performance appraisal system or the revised Business curriculum.

The senior management and administration of LIOJ was experiencing some difficulty in 1990. It appeared as though there had always been an inherent ambiguity between the roles and functions of the general manager and the director of LIOJ. Most directors assumed that as director they would have final authority in all matters relating to the operations of LIOJ, including personnel, program design, curriculum, and finances. However, most all of the directors were non-Japanese, and all general managers were Japanese. Thus, the general manager usually was more familiar with the history of LIOJ, its finances, and its relations with program clients, be they companies, public schools, or community residents. They understandably would yield influence on the director's decisions in matters ranging from finances to personnel decisions to curriculum. And directors would understandably question the validity of an opinion on classroom matters from a general manager who had limited, if any, training or experience in the classroom. In most organizations, the director has the final authority and responsibility for all matters including financial decisions. However, the directors of LIOJ up to 1990 were minimally, if at all, involved in developing budgets or monitoring revenues and expenses. As a result, general managers tended to become "big fish in little ponds," often resisting the authority of directors, and 1990 was a year when the difficult transition of general managers had to be made for the second time.

Regardless of the changes that have occurred over the decades at LIOJ, it will undoubtedly continue to be a special place of learning, of intercultural experience, of growth and innovation and excellence—for these are the qualities that have always made LIOJ the special and unique place that it has always been and hopefully will always be.