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J. LIVE has generously provided resources for me to attend Nanzan University in the summer of 2019. I have learned many things. However, the most important idea I have learned is that a study abroad is one of the best options to acquire proficiency in a foreign language.

Although I have benefitted from three semesters of Japanese in college, life in Japan has also vastly improved my Japanese.

Before coming to Japan, I was more anxious than I expected as my Japanese was not good. I could not understand anything when I landed in Nagoya. Therefore, I was not sure if I will be fine for the next two months. However, that worry withered away a bit as I met my host family. They were very kind and considerate. My host family assured me that I will pick up the language soon.



However, the first week of school worried me again as I could not understand anything. The Japanese classes were from 9:20 AM to 12:35 PM. Teachers spoke to us in Japanese. Students were not supposed to speak English. When the teachers were making a joke, everyone smiled except me as I could not understand the joke. They were talking as if they had been living in the country for a long time. I could not pick up anything. I missed some assignments as I could not understand the directions. When I tried to speak, all the grammar and words that I memorized scrambled into something I could not recognize.

Nothing had really changed during the first week and the second week. I woke up, I went to school, I came back home, I had dinner, I took a shower, I did my homework, and I slept. However, on the second week, I was somehow able to pick up some words in sentences. In the third week, I finally understood what was going on in the class.

Now that I think about it, that progress was possible as Nanzan University made sure that students would get as much exposure in Japanese as possible. Even though I was unaware of it, the program had many features that promoted students' proficiency in Japanese. For example, there is a student lounge called Stella, in which international students and Japanese students meet and socialize. In the lounge, there are various kinds of tables, such as "Make-A-Friend" or "Japanese-Only" tables, where one could practice Japanese and interact with other students. Also, there is a center for international students called Japan Plaza. Students must speak Japanese in Japan Plaza. As there are Japanese TAs, Students can work on homework or simply have fun as there are TV, board games, books, etc.



Also, students can take elective courses that are "open" to everyone. International students take a course with Japanese students. Therefore, it is a great environment to practice one's Japanese and exchange one's cultural knowledge with one another. I took two open courses: Fieldwork Method and Global Perspective. The former was a class made of interviewing my fellow students in the class and forming a conclusion about a topic. For example, my first topic was to examine the differences between Japanese and American definitions of a good friend. Although there were some differences, both cultures valued

reliability. Students presented their findings to each other in both English and Japanese. The latter class examined Japanese customs and compared them with those of other foreign countries. In the first week, we examined and discussed the differences between the primary school education in Japan and other countries. After learning the differences, I also had an opportunity to interact with Japanese students and listen to their thoughts about the given topics.



After school, I would go back home. However, that did not mean that my Japanese study ended. I spent the evening with the host family. Even though it was not perfect, I shared how my day was like in Japanese and ask how their days were. The dinner table was another place where I could learn more about Japanese culture. How Japanese place a spoon and chopsticks horizontally, how they lift the rice bowl, how they drink miso soup and use chopsticks... these cultural differences were interesting. In Korea, we put a spoon and chopsticks vertically, we do not lift the bowl, we use a spoon to eat the soup as the soup is usually served when it is boiling.

Not only that, I got to join them in preparing dinner. In the picture, I was helping them prepare *tonkatsu*. We would season the meat, put it in egg and flour, and fry them. When the host family was eating, they put miso paste on it. After trying it, miso katsu became my favorite Japanese food. During the dinner, I listened to find more about their hobbies. My host father showed me his katana and the proper form for using the katana. My host mother



goes to a temple every other Sunday. We talked about her religion (Shinnyoen). It was interesting to hear about its main ideas and compare it with other religions.

Every dinner was different. I am grateful that I have tried different kinds of Japanese foods. For example, one night, we made *takoyaki* for dinner. We put newspaper on the table. We mixed some flour and pancake batter, put some octopus and vegetables, put on some takoyaki sauce and mayo. Voila! Now I did not have to go out to get *takoyaki* because the ones that we made were as good as the ones

outside.

I am grateful that I had an opportunity to experience the culture that I have only heard or seen from a TV show or a book.

It would be strange if my Japanese had not improved as I was exposed to Japanese in every way possible for two months. I wish I could have stayed there to study Japanese more. Even though I am back in the United States, I am planning to keep studying Japanese and hope to travel around Japan someday. Although the program was very short, I would like to express my gratitude once again to J. LIVE, Nanzan University, teachers, friends, and my host family for such a wonderful opportunity.