

## J.LIVE Report – Zizhou Wang

I greatly appreciate the J.LIVE Organizing Committee for providing me with a great opportunity to spend a wonderful time at International Christian University this summer. It not only motivated me to study Japanese much harder but also made me recognize the importance of effective communication using different languages.



Before the program started, I heard that the workload is quite heavy at ICU. Indeed, we did have a lot of homework to do after class; however, I not only enjoyed the program but also made full use of it to improve my Japanese skills. At the very beginning our class, one of my teachers asked me “Why do you want to work hard? What are you working hard for?” The reason the teacher asked me this question was because I wrote in my worksheet that I would put all of my effort into whatever I do. This has always been the motto of my life, but I did not know what is the goal of my life. Throughout the whole summer course, this question lingered in the back of my mind.

I was placed in a Special Japanese level class, and our teachers were very responsible. They not only taught me Japanese but also support me with my everyday life. Because I would start working after the program, I visited the housing agencies, visa vendors, etc. to prepare for my new life here in Japan. They taught me how to communicate with people from Japanese society in different these settings. Thanks to them, everything went well without any difficulties.

Although I was confident about my Japanese language, as soon as I started class at ICU, I realized I still have a long way to go before mastering it. For example, we had a Japanese debate with the level-7 class students who were at a lower level than us. At first, I was confident that we would win since we were in a higher level; however, to my surprise, we lost the debate. From that experience, I realized that being able to speak fluent Japanese does not equal being able to debate in Japanese. I also noticed that I tend to become nervous easily especially when standing in front of the audience. Since then, I began to fully prepare for my presentation. Thanks to the summer program, we had plenty of opportunities to do the presentation – I took every chance of our weekly presentation to improve my public speaking skills. By the time we had to do the final presentation, I was comfortable with giving a 20-minute presentation in front of the audience.

I also made friends with some of the students from this program, especially my two classmates and my roommate. My classmates are both Japanese, but they were raised in foreign countries. Thus they have both a Japanese and a Western mindset. As a Chinese student who was raised in Japan, I love having conversations with people from a multinational background just like them. In addition, I had a wonderful roommate. Her father is Japanese, but since she was born and raised in the US, she does not speak fluent Japanese. This was an interesting experience – sometimes, I, a non-Japanese, was teaching a Japanese person Japanese. Before I got to know her, I assumed that she could definitely speak Japanese like a native speaker because of her Japanese name. This experience reminded me that one should never make assumptions about others before getting to know them.

The farewell party at ICU made me aware of the power of language once again. All the students from different level classes displayed their Japanese skills through amazing performances. Some sang their hearts out to Japanese songs; some wrote interesting rap, which was of course, in Japanese; and others performed a popular Japanese dance. All of these performances united all 57 students of the ICU Summer Program together. Our class created an original game that aimed to let students interview each other using their Japanese skills. We came up with the interview questions by ourselves, and we created them to meet different levels of Japanese skills for different students. After the performance, we prepared a little surprise for our teachers. We presented a speech to the students as well as our teachers. We told them how much we have achieved after the 6-week summer course and how we were grateful to have them. At that time, I realized how beautiful and important it was to say thank you to the people who supported us. When I left the International Christian University, I felt a little bit sad. Even now, I miss the bus that goes between Mitaka and the university. I miss the hot and humid summer that I spent in ICU. I miss my student life.



If I were not given the opportunity to join the Summer Courses in Japanese Program at ICU, I would not have met the wonderful teachers and students at ICU, and my Japanese skills would not have improved. Participating in J.LIVE made me feel that all of my effort put into Japanese studies was worth it. Moreover, it also helped me realize that in a global society, the most important thing is the ability to communicate with people efficiently in different languages.

Now, I know the answer to the teacher's question – my own question: The reason I put all my effort into whatever I do is because it gives me a sense of achievement whenever I manage to achieve something new. The summer course helped me think before talking to people, and think about people before talking to them about something. Since I started working, I can clearly see the impact this summer course has had on me: I have become more comfortable speaking in front of an audience, I have gained a new-found confidence in using Japanese to communicate with others.