Love of Language – Japanese Language Classes at IITH

I have offered Japanese Language courses as an external Japanese language instructor at IIT-H since 2016. Spoken Japanese basics (1 credit) and Japanese Reading Writing Basics (1 credit) have provided an opportunity for IIT-H students to learn Japanese language and culture fundamentally and systematically in Liberal Arts department with the supervision of Dr. Badri Narayan Rath, Dr. Haripriya Narasimhan, and Dr. Mahati Chittem. A total of 756 students completed the courses for the past 5 years.

Spoken Japanese basics course focuses on the communication skills using the modern English alphabet (which is called Romaji), and the method makes an easy step for them to start learning Japanese. On the other hand, Japanese Reading and Writing course introduce Japanese original characters and the writing system from the beginning. There are three types of characters, Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji in Japanese. Remembering the different characters and writing system is the first hurdle for them to overcome, but it generally requires a lot of time and effort. The course aims to help students to recognize, read, and write the characters step by step as well as increase their vocabulary and grammar knowledge through practical exercises.

Although learning Japanese as a Second and Foreign Language (SFL) requires a huge amount of time and effort, we believe the combination of face-to-face interactions during classroom hours and voluntary self-study outside classroom hours are very helpful in enhancing the learning effect. Several culture hands-on sessions such as calligraphy and traditional dress are introduced during classroom hours (as shown in following figures).

Japanese Calligraphy hands-on session in the classroom
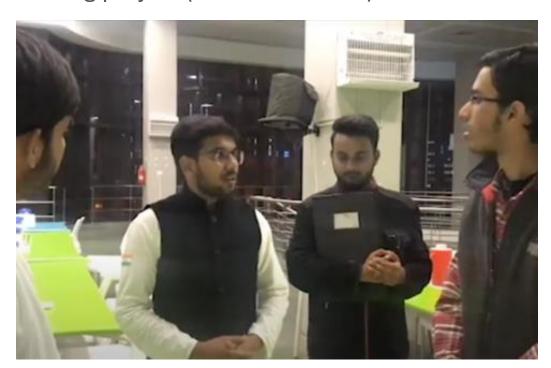

Japanese traditional dress (yukata) hands-on session in the classroom

Also, we have designed and deployed a Moodle-based Learning Management System, "ORP Gym" to support their self-study outside classroom hours and complement classroom activities since 2018. The name of the system came from the fitness gym and students can voluntarily practice many quizzes with automatic and manual feedback from language instructors on the system whenever they have time. One of the features of the courses encourages them to use practically what they learn as many times as they want using the system, not just input the knowledge. The process of making mistakes and repairing them through retries are similar to our real daily life. "Failure teaches success" ("Shippai wa seikou no moto" in Japanese proverb). Mistakes teach us a lot.

Once they comprehend the topic in each lesson and get used to sentence patterns and useful phrases, we also encourage group work such as a short skit performance and short movie-making project (as shown below).

Short movie created by IIT-H students

So many meaningful video contents have been produced by students' initiatives until today and have had a positive impact on others' language learning. Since IIT-H students are excellent in academics and very humble to learn, we are always impressed with their positive, active, and creative attitude toward learning.

We would be happy if many IIT-H students are interested in Japanese language and culture and deepen mutual understanding. We are hoping for them not to be shy and afraid to explore different languages and cultures. Learning with fun and the process with trial and error could be impressive for you just like your childhood.

When students in IIT-H are interested in going on a business trip/ internship to Japan, going to graduate school, or joining a company in Japan, we believe both courses can provide an opportunity to be ready for a new life. In addition, there are many research collaborations between IIT-H and Japanese universities and companies, we would be happy

if we can contribute to the smooth communication between Indian and Japanese researchers.

Now I am back at Keio University to research Educational Technology under the supervision of Dr. Rodney Van Meter, we would like to contribute to enhancing the learning effect in SFL education by utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT). We would be happy to work together with IIT-H researchers in terms of our research field more from now on.

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