

**Adam Brandt**

***The adaptation of international students to living and studying in Japan***  
**JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship**

Host university: **Kansai University, Division of International Affairs**

Host researcher: **Professor Yuriko Kite**

As evidenced by the very existence of JSPS, and the Postdoctoral Fellowships which they award, universities in Japan have been undertaking a process of internationalization for some time now. This push for a stronger presence of non-Japanese on campuses around the country has increased further in recent years, with the Japanese government increasing investment and legislation to promote the recruitment of teachers, researchers and students.

Despite this, the enrolment figures for international students Japanese universities are not increasing sufficiently, and the government is some way from achieving its goal of 300,000 international students by 2020. The goal of my research was to learn something more about the experiences of existing international students, in order to inform recruitment of prospective future students.

**The project**

Due to my research interests in language and communication, I was particularly interested in the communicative experiences of international students. With the permission of the university and the individuals involved, I recorded a number of non-experimental, on-campus settings – including language classrooms, undergraduate classrooms, one-to-one staff-student tutorials, and the International Office helpdesk – in order to analyse, in micro-detail, real-life interactions between international students and local students, administrative staff, and academic staff. Interesting analytic focal points which emerged from the data included: (1) how the language of communication (i.e. English or Japanese) was negotiated, (2) how students displayed knowledge of various languages and cultures in their classes, and (3) the role of university documentation in the display (and resolution) of students' queries to staff.

**The working community**

I was incredibly fortunate to be based at Kansai University, which is an excellent example of a private university in Japan which is internationalizing. The Division of International Affairs run a number of exchange programs for international students, which provided me with a number of sources of data. Being placed in the Division also provided me with the opportunity to meet some very interesting and friendly students and staff from Japan, and various other parts of the world.

I was lucky to be hosted by Professor Kite, and to work closely with Dr Keiko Ikeda (a Program Director in the Division) and Yosuke Ogawa (a fellow researcher and teacher of Japanese to international students). The

administrative staff in the Division were also very supportive of my research, as well as very helpful in helping me settle into work and life in Japan.

Due to the personal and professional connections of some of Kansai University's staff, I was also afforded many opportunities to meet, and work with, a broader network of researchers within the area, and further afield in Japan; I attended monthly workshop meetings in the Kansai region, and also attended a number of international training workshops and conferences over the course of my two years. I am also happy to say that the personal and professional connections that I have made did not end with my Fellowship, and I will be maintaining my links in this country for future research. In fact, my first return trip is planned for just one month after the end of my Fellowship, when I will give a presentation for the *Japan Association for Language Teachers* (JALT) Osaka Chapter, and co-lead a research training workshop for the JALT Pragmatics Special Interest Group.

### **JSPS**

From my initial application to the end of my Fellowship, JSPS have proved to be a very supportive and understanding organisation, both on the London and Tokyo side. I was lucky enough to have my application for fellowship extension accepted after 18 months, and again for a further final month prior to leaving Japan. I will always be grateful to JSPS for allowing me the opportunity to develop both professionally, through working in a Japanese research environment, and personally, through spending two years living in this endlessly stimulating and fascinating country.