

***Utilizing U.S. TESOL Undergraduate Internship Students to Improve Japanese College Students' English Skills and the TESOL Students' Teaching Skills***

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how utilizing U.S. TESOL undergraduate internship students can help improve Japanese college students' English skills effectively in an EFL environment while simultaneously developing the interns' teaching skills. The internship students spend about six weeks at Konan University in the spring semester. During that time they are involved in teaching, co-teaching, observing, tutoring, lesson planning, and having individual conferences for a total of more than 120 hours. The biggest benefit that interns provide to our students is an increased amount of opportunities to communicate in English both in the classroom as well as outside of it through tutoring. The presenter will give detailed information about how he usually recruits interns, organizes their teaching schedules for different classes, and how each instructor supervises them. Furthermore, he will talk about student survey results that show how they felt about their interns and how interacting with the interns has helped improve their language skills. The presenter will also explain how the interns' experience at Konan will help them prepare for their teaching at any institution in the States and overseas in the future.

Keywords: TESOL, EFL, Internship

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## **Introduction**

In the beginning of 2014 I received an email from a BYU (Brigham Young University) Hawaii TESOL undergraduate student asking me to accept a student teaching internship at Konan University in Kobe, Japan, where I am employed as an EFL professor. The internship is a credit bearing course at BYU Hawaii, and is required for graduation. Since I'm a BYU Hawaii alumnus, I invited him to come to our EIC (English Intensive Course) classes to teach, co-teach, observe and tutor for six weeks during the spring semester. Since then one BYU Hawaii TESOL student came to Konan until 2018. In 2019, three interns came in the spring and one intern came in the fall semester for five to six weeks.

The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how utilizing U.S. TESOL undergraduate internship students can help improve Japanese college students' English skills effectively in an EFL environment, as well as help develop the interns' teaching skills. Numadate and Stephens (2016) indicate that having an intern in EFL classrooms and outside of the class helps Japanese students gain confidence in speaking English, motivates them to use the language, and actively engage in classrooms. Regarding the internship, Hurst, Thye, and Wise (2014, p. 58) state, "Internships provide one of the best ways for students to attain that work experience, refine their professional development and career preparation skills, and become a more marketable candidate."

## **Konan University EIC (English Intensive Course) students**

In 2006 Konan University established the EIC (English Intensive Course) for freshman students who would like to improve their English and later study abroad in their sophomore or junior year for up to one academic year. The course enrollment started with less than a hundred students. In the year 2019 the enrollment increased to 240. In the beginning of their freshman year all students are expected to take the TOEFL ITP, and their average score is around 430 which is a low intermediate level.

The EIC curriculum focuses on linguistic competences such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in the freshman year. In the sophomore year, the subjects are geared toward more academic skills and content-based learning. Freshman students take four ninety-minute English classes (meeting twice a week for each class) in one academic year instead of taking two ninety-minute English classes a year as in the regular freshman curriculum at Konan. In the sophomore year, students take two or three additional English classes and they can also sign up for additional elective courses such as TOEIC and Career English, according to their needs.

In addition to this curriculum, the EIC offers non-credit-bearing, seven-day TOEFL courses in the summer and spring intersessions. Students attend the intersession course for three ninety-minute classes every day for six days and take the TOEFL test on the last day.

## **Internship Procedure**

Almost every year BYU Hawaii students send me an email with a resume. Then I request students to send me a letter of recommendation from one of the BYU faculty

members. After going through the resume and the reference with my coworker, we make a final decision to choose an intern. Then I write a letter of acceptance to the student's supervising instructor explaining that I'll be an experience provider and guarantee more than 120 hours in the internship including teaching, co-teaching, observing, tutoring, lesson planning, and having individual conferences.

Before coming to Konan University, prospective interns often ask me questions regarding internship duties, classes, housing and students. As soon as the decision is made to recruit an intern and the schedule is set, I contact several EIC teachers to get permission to accept the intern in their classes. Then I complete the intern's schedule for classes and tutoring (see the Appendix A for the intern's schedule). Meanwhile, in my class I'll make an announcement to my students about the intern's schedule at Konan and show them a photo and a part of their resume. Students are also informed that they have opportunities to have a tutoring session every week, and they are encouraged to participate to practice their English. During the class, students sign up for the tutoring sign-up sheet (see Appendix B).

A few weeks before the intern's arrival, I inform him or her about their housing (homestay) and what time I will pick them up at the airport. I also make transportation arrangements to take him or her to their host family. Most previous interns had never come to Japan and did not speak the language. However, they usually made a smooth transition to living and working as an intern at Konan. The transportation including airfare and some living expenses are paid by BYU scholarship. The intern arrives on Saturday and make an adjustment for time difference until Sunday.

Upon arrival on campus on Monday, I give an orientation for a couple of hours conducting a campus tour, taking them to classrooms, meeting all the teachers, explaining about my own class and answering questions regarding students and living in Japan. As you can see the intern's sample schedule in the Appendix A, they are usually busy as they need to be in school for six to seven hours every day.

### **TESOL 399R (2 credits)**

BYU Hawaii TESOL students who are taking the internship course, TESOL 399R by Dr. Neil J. Anderson have the following requirements:

1. complete a total of 120 hours of experience within an educational setting,
2. submit five lesson plans that you have used during the internship,
3. submit two observation reports,
4. submit a final written report, and
5. participate in an Internship Report Night on campus (typically in Fall semester sponsored by TESOL Society)

### **Observing, Co-teaching and Teaching**

Since everything is very new to interns, I usually ask them to simply observe my classes for the first day. I may ask them to join students' discussions every once in a while. Other than that, I ask them to get a feel for the atmosphere of the class, the students' levels, and recognize how a text is used in class. Meanwhile, I ask students to write their first name on a big piece of paper and place it right in front of them so

that our intern can memorize each student's name. In my reading class, I use an intermediate reading skills book called *Active Skills for Reading Book 3*, in which the text consists of pre-reading discussions, reading skills, a reading passage, a vocabulary activity and post reading discussions. From the second class I give interns an assignment such as prepare a pre-reading activity or vocabulary exercise for 15 to 20 minutes to see how they perform in class. Then I gradually increase their time to teach in my class. After their each performance, I take time to review their teaching. For example, I ask questions such as "What did you think about your own teaching?" and "Is there any room for improvement?" to see how they reflect their own performance. I also add a few other things that interns need to be aware of in order to improve their own teachings in the future. This reflective time is important for them to think about how they can apply principles of teaching they have learned in their TESOL classes more effectively in actual EFL classrooms. When giving them each assignment, I simply ask them to prepare for a certain section of the text, but I never tell them to prepare using a certain methodology or technique. They take responsibility of handling each activity in their own creative ways. In other classes, most teachers do the same thing, and some teachers even ask interns to be responsible for teaching the entire 90-minute class alone toward the end of their internship. In a few weeks, BYU Hawaii interns can adapt their teachings in Japanese college classrooms and develop their teaching skills. They become more independent as they feel confident in their own teachings. One of the interns indicates the following:

Interning at Konan University was the best choice I could've made in internships for TESOL. The school provided a great opportunity to observe, interact, and teach in multiple ESL classroom/tutoring settings. In addition, because the English teacher pool is quite diverse--with Japanese, Australian, American, and English--it allows you to see various pedagogical implications be used in a united effort to achieve the same goal. As an aspiring ESL teacher, this was invigorating to witness/experience. Above all else, it is easy to care and love the people there (especially the students and teachers). Mr. Tsuda helped a great deal to ensure my transition into the school was smooth and heartening. In fact, the teachers were always eager to answer my questions and share their knowledge of ESL teaching based on their experiences and studies. Because of them, I believe I could improve my teaching significantly during this short time. If you ever have the opportunity to intern at Konan University, then I would encourage you to go. There are only positive things to be said and done there.

According to Batey and Lupi (2012, p. 41), the University of North Florida had sent their students to schools in Plymouth, England from 2008 to 2012 as a student teaching internship, and they found that participants "were able to meet the challenges with Emotional, Resistance, Flexibility and Openness, Perceptual Acuity, and Personal Autonomy." Just like our intern's testimonial, they had very positive experiences in their internship.

### **Summer intersession Class**

In addition to teaching regular classes, one intern stays until the beginning of August to teach a seven-day intersession class geared toward a Disney World internship in Florida. We started this internship program in 2017 and every year a few students apply for the program. In 2018, BYU Hawaii changed the schedule for the academic

year. Before then interns came around the middle of June and stayed until the end of July. However, in 2018 the intern couldn't come until the end of June, and our semester ended in July. Therefore, we weren't able to accommodate a six-week internship. Instead, I created a one-week intersession where our students study 4.5 hours each day from the intern as a non-credit bearing course. In 2018 six students signed up for this class. Five students applied for the Disney Internship and four students passed the interview from a Disney recruiter. In 2019, five students signed up for the course. Three students applied and two passed and one is still waiting for the final interview. All the students who participated in the intersession said that this course was very helpful to prepare for the interview and improve their speaking skills. I oversee the intersession, but basically the interns usually start from scratch to think about the curriculum and lesson plans all by themselves. They are usually given preparation time during the final exam week toward the end of July for one week. It is a great opportunity for them to develop their teaching skills as they need to create their own lesson plans independently.

## **Tutoring**

In addition to co-teaching and teaching independently, all interns are expected to work on tutoring students for almost 18 hours a week. Since our class time is 90 minutes, we divided the tutoring in half of the class, 40 minutes and a 10-minute break. The maximum of four students can participate in one tutoring session. Since this year, however, we changed the maximum participants for each slot is three so that our students have more opportunities to talk to our interns. This tutoring is mainly helping students to develop their communication skills and interns usually come up with their own questions to ask students. However, often times interns may run out of discussion questions and end up playing language games or other speaking activities with students.

## **Making a Presentation**

All the interns are expected to make a 15-minute presentation in three different classes. The topic is usually given prior to their departure to Japan. The main purpose for this presentation is have our students become familiar with different cultures and have an opportunity to listen to a lecture and take notes. This helps them prepare for studying at a college overseas where they are supposed to listen to lectures and participate in discussions. In our classes while listening to a presentation, we ask our students to take notes about any interesting points they find and they work in pairs to talk about them after the lecture. Finally, they ask interns some questions. Interns usually make a PowerPoint presentation as a visual. For example one intern who was born in the States was raised in Hong Kong. He went back to the U.S. when he was a middle school struggling with English. He went to several different middle and high schools. Upon graduation he moved to Canada and Macau for a volunteer work for a couple of years and then he studied in Idaho and transferred to Hawaii. He talked about his high school experiences such as how he asked a girl out for the prom. He also showed us some photos of an outfit and a luxurious limousine. This experience was something new to our students, and they learned about American high school culture since we don't have such a fun event in our Japanese high schools.

## **Students' Surveys**

Because four interns came to our university, it is worthwhile to conduct open-ended surveys this year in four different classes. Overall, students are very positive about interns' role as a teacher and a tutor. They expressed that interns are very helpful for improving their English, having an opportunity to use English outside of the class and learning about their cultures. Furthermore, unlike their teachers, interns are close to our students' age, so they find it easy to talk to. Some of their representative comments are : "I enjoyed your class!! I think I could improve my English skills because of you." "Your teaching was very exciting for me. Your English was clear and easy to understand. I love your tutoring too. It was fun!" "The class was a lot of fun. Your great passion for teaching helped me motivate to study hard." "Thanks to the interns, I was able to communicate with students from different countries. They have shown great examples. Because of them I want to become a more diligent student." "They always pay attention to listen to me. I'm happy to see that they're concerned about me." "Since I don't have many opportunities to talk to students from abroad, it was a great chance to talk to them." "I've increased my desire to study abroad because of them. They're very friendly and our age is close and easy to understand each other." "It was a rare opportunity to communicate with interns. I was able to increase my understanding about their countries and cultures."

## **Teachers' Evaluation**

Until 2018 each individual teacher gave regular feedback to the interns. However, from 2018 I asked each teacher to give me their overall brief feedback toward the end of the internship, and I sent all the teachers' feedback to the interns. In this way, they can reflect on their internship experience at Konan University. Here is one example of an evaluation from one of the teachers:

Sadie was present in my classroom for two 90-minute lessons per week between October 7<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the class content being first-year English Presentation. In this period she assisted in planning some activities, and seemed especially interested in learning about how to instruct presentation structure activities. These activities were applied as warm-up and model activities. In terms of aptitude and attitude, Sadie proved herself to have an excellent ethical commitment, and displayed some solid understandings of foundational TESOL pedagogy. She was consistently polite, enthusiastic, and dedicated, and wrote and reviewed notes of her observations of each lesson and activity. I wish her all the best in her future studies.

Most teachers indicate that interns are very enthusiastic about improving their teaching skills and willing to help our students. It is a surprising fact that most interns make an adjustment to our culture in such a short time and can be an effective assistant to our teachers. In fact they play an active role in every class. Their experience is very different from interns in other universities in Japan. In one university they recruit American college students as an intern, but since their major is not in TESOL, their role in class is limited to give self-introductions, speak with students, give comments or ask questions to students who give their presentations (Numadate & Stephens, 2016). In another university interns' role is demonstrating speeches, giving feedback to students, participating discussions, and supporting

students' PowerPoint presentations (Bussinger 2013).

## Conclusion

Having an internship is a very rewarding experience, as each intern comes to a new environment to learn about teaching in real classrooms. Perrin (2014) observes that this kind of experiential learning helps college students foster autonomy and accountability. Furthermore, Batey & Lupi (2012, p. 25) state that international internship opportunities "provide significant positive benefits by impacting a students' personal growth and maturity and further increase appreciation for diversity and language differences."

Kryssa, who is currently teaching at a middle school in Hawaii, reflects on her internship experience as follows:

It's been over three years since I interned at Konan, and I still think about my time there often. At first I struggled with adjusting to a new culture, building rapport with the students, and coping with an unexpected death in the family. But as trying as it was at times, I absolutely loved it and am so grateful for the experience. The principles I both learned and observed from my leaders and co-workers helped me to grow as a teacher as well as a person. I know for a fact that I am a better teacher and a better person because of my time at Konan.

Teaching with interns is very beneficial for teachers and students as well. For example, since I'm a non-native speaker of English, I often ask the intern to pronounce vocabulary and have our students repeat after him or her. When it comes to teaching culture such as how to get a driver's license in America, the intern can elaborate his or her own experience. In addition, learning the language by two different "teachers" can be very stimulating to our students. Our students find a variety of teaching styles in one class fascinating, which in turn increases their motivation to learn the language. In my class this year two different interns came during the spring and another came during the fall semester. This meant we always had at least one intern on campus for a total of 18 weeks in the entire academic year. I could see that our students got used to speaking to them without hesitation and as the time went by, they were able to speak to them more smoothly and naturally. Numadate and Stephens (2016) found that interns in class and outside of the class help students increase their motivation, build their confidence, actively participate in the program and improve the language. Bussinger (2013, p. 9) also states, "Teachers felt that the student interns' contribution to classroom activities and classroom atmosphere in general was very conducive to effective language learning."

In conclusion, the internship at Konan University is very valuable for BYU Hawaii TESOL interns to gain knowledge and have practical teaching experience. In addition, our students have an increased amount of opportunities to improve their English while learning about other cultures. Some of our students still keep in touch with our former interns through social media such as Instagram. Given that this is such a unique program in a Japanese university and provides a tremendous benefit to both interns and students, we would like to continue this program to help BYU Hawaii students and Konan students to achieve their own goals in the future.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## Appendix A

### Sadie's Weekly Schedule at Konan University

| Period          | Monday               | Tuesday              | Wednesday                 | Thursday                  | Friday               |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> |                      |                      | Intermediate Writing      |                           | Tutoring             |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | Tutoring             | Tutoring             | Intermediate Presentation | Intermediate Writing      | Tutoring             |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Tutoring             | Tutoring             | Tutoring                  | Tutoring                  | Tutoring             |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> | Intermediate Writing | Intermediate Writing | Tutoring                  | Intermediate Presentation | Intermediate Writing |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> | Intermediate Writing | Tutoring             |                           | Tutoring                  |                      |

1<sup>st</sup> period: 9:00-10:30 a.m.

2<sup>nd</sup> period: 10:40 a.m.-12:10 p.m.

lunch break: 12:10-1:00 p.m.

3<sup>rd</sup> period: 1:00-2:30 p.m.

4<sup>th</sup> period: 2:40-4:10 p.m.

5<sup>th</sup> period: 4:20-5:50 p.m.

#### Instructors:

Intermediate Writing: Nobuo Tsuda Monday 5th & Wednesday 1st Room 2-64

Intermediate Writing: Greg Sholdt Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> & Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> Room 2-31 (Tuesday)  
Room 2-64 (Thursday)

Intermediate Presentation: Steve McNamara Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> & Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>  
Room 11-208

Intermediate Presentation: Michael Griffiths Monday 4<sup>th</sup> & Friday 4<sup>th</sup> Room 3-36

## Appendix B

### Sadie's Tutoring Schedule

チューター予約表（11月11日～11月15日）週1回のみ希望する時間帯に名前（ローマ字）を記入してください。参加できるのは、1回最大3名まで 場所は2号館1階 Global Zone です。

11月11日（月）午前10時40分～11時20分

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月11日（月）午前11時30分～12時10分

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月11日（月）午後1時～1時40分

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月11日（月）午後1時50分～2時30分

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

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11月12日（火）午前10時40分～11時20分

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

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11月12日（火）午前11時30分～12時10分

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11月12日（火）午後1時～1時40分

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月12日（火）午後1時50分～2時30分

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11月12日（火）午後4時20分～午後5時

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11月12日（火）午後5時10分～午後5時50分

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月13日（水）午後1時～1時40分

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11月13日（水）午後1時50分～2時30分

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11月13日（水）午後2時40分～午後3時20分

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月13日（水）午後3時30分～午後4時10分

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月14日（木）午後1時～午後1時40分

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月14日（木）午後1時50分～午後2時30分

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11月14日（木）午後4時20分～午後5時

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

11月14日（木）午後5時10分～午後5時50分

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11月15日（金）午前9時～9時40分

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11月15日（金）午前9時50～10時30分

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11月15日（金）午前10時40分～11時20分

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11月15日（金）午前11時30～12時10分

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11月15日（金）午後1時～午後1時40分

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