

Final Report to SFFJLE

2016 NCEA Workshop at the University of Canterbury

Canterbury Network of Teachers of Japanese

The University of Canterbury (UC), in conjunction with Canterbury Network of Teachers of Japanese, recently held its fourth workshop for senior secondary students studying Japanese. The aims of this annual day-long event are to boost students' confidence and competence in dealing with NCEA assessment topics, introduce them to some inspiring and entertaining aspects of Japanese culture, and facilitate greater engagement within the local Japanese-learning community.

This year's workshop was the largest so far, with 269 students from 17 high schools, supported by 28 UC student volunteers and 24 Japanese teachers from secondary schools and UC. Indeed, the workshop has now grown to become the largest such event in New Zealand, and among the largest in Oceania. The workshop's plenary session was given by Ms Ashleigh Stewart, a journalist for the Christchurch Press, who inspired the assembled students with her account of how her passion for Japan and its language had led her to her dream job. In his welcome address, the UC Vice Chancellor Dr Rod Carr expressed his admiration for anyone working to boost their linguistic and cultural competency, especially those learning a language as challenging but rewarding as Japanese.

The students spent the day engaging in three interactive activity-based classes geared to the separate year levels. Then the 320-plus workshop participants reassembled for the final session, which started with a rousing performance by the Christchurch-based Takumi Japanese drum group which included students from Christchurch schools studying Japanese. It was then time for the much-anticipated group dance, which has become a prominent and popular feature of this event. The YouTube video of the previous year's dance - *Youkai Taisou* - received 52,000 hits and for a short while topped the Yahoo Japan's *Eizou Toppikusu* ranking. This year the chosen dance was *Odoru Ponpokorin*, which has been posted to the Facebook page of the Japanese Studies Aotearoa and has attracted over 55,000 viewers all over the world. <https://www.facebook.com/JapaneseStudiesAotearoaNZ>

This year's cohort of UC student volunteers included 5 undergraduates who had, in previous years, participated as high school learners, and then worked their way up to become senior students in the UC Japanese Programme. One of these, Jack Hayes, recollected his first meeting with students from other schools who shared his passion for the Japanese language, and the thrill of engaging in challenging communicative activities with new teachers and classmates. For another, Aidan Jackson, working as a teaching assistant had enabled him to see classroom activities from a new perspective, which had increased his respect for language teaching as a profession. Both agreed that they had learnt much from their role as mentors for the young learners, and the experience had highlighted the value of a strong learning community as a ready source of knowledge, encouragement and advice.

We think the general evaluation of the project is very high and it has successfully achieved our aims, which include (1) enhancing the network and cooperation among secondary schools and tertiary institutions involved in Japanese-language education in the Canterbury region and (2) outreaching and fostering Japanese-language study to the public. This project contributed to strengthening the network of Japanese language education in the region.

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