

## 英語再教育 (2)

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### English Re-education (2)

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The author introduced some of his plans to improve the English re-education for his students in engineering majors (Uchida, 2004). To realize one of the plans, he took some of his students to Australia to join a two-week English study program at Southern Cross University (SCU). This article provides an overview of the program and what he observed by experiencing a homestay.

#### 1. Preface

Among my students there are those who are good at English, not so many though. All of them remember clearly being motivated and given chances to use English by their teachers who were earnest about English education. The desire or distaste for learning English may come from many different causes. It is clear that teachers have a great influence on their students and highly motivated students can be better learners. (Uchida, 2004)

Mr. Shane Goulding, one of my colleagues who came from SCU, introduced an SCU English study program to our students and encouraged them to take part. Six students joined the program. They were not so good at English but had a will to learn from the basics. I expected this program would drastically change their learning attitudes for the better. I also joined the program not as a chaperon but as one of the participants.

#### 2. Overview of SCU

SCU is an Australian Government University. It has 5,000 students in the city of Lismore on the far north coast of New South Wales (NSW) and offers high quality academic programs in an environment that is safe, relaxed, friendly and supportive. In fact SCU has a good reputation for providing the most supportive environment for international students of any Australian University.

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The University is a popular destination for students who are seeking a non-city experience, the opportunity to discover the true culture, environment and hospitality of Australia. It offers subjects in areas typically of interest to study abroad students, and is situated in one of Australia's most beautiful locations.

The departments are Environmental Science, Coastal Marine Science, Sports Science, Australian and Aboriginal Studies, Natural Medicine, Outdoor Education, Fine Art, Business, Computer Science, Resource Management, Contemporary Music, Tourism, Education, Social Sciences, Multimedia, Fisheries Management, Law, Media Communications and Production, Nursing, and Forestry.

### 3. The English Study Program

This program is organized by SCU "English Language Centre" of the Education Department. It consists of three activities: ten English language sessions(ELS) for over 30 hours, seven different kinds of field trips (FT) for more than 40 hours, and a two-week homestay with an Australian family. The outline of these activities is as follows.

Chart 1 The first week

29/8 Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pick up from Brisbane airport &amp; drive to SCU</li> <li>● 1pm-3pm: English Language Session (ELS) 1 : Orientation of basic English, campus &amp; homestay</li> <li>● 4:30pm: Meet with homestay families and familiarize with Australian family life</li> </ul>
30/8 Tue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-12pm: ELS 2: Australian geography, currency and shopping</li> <li>● 12pm-1pm: ELS 3: Australian animals, preparation for Excursion</li> </ul>
31/8 Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-5pm: Field Trip (FT) 1 : Vist to wildlife park, students experience Australian animals</li> </ul>
1/9 Thu.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-11pm: FT 2 : Excursion to a local public school &amp; integration with students</li> <li>● 12pm-3pm: FT 3: Barbecue lunch at Rocky Creek Dam</li> </ul>
2/9 Fri.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-12pm: ELS 4: Feedback on FT 2, Study about multi-cultural Australia</li> <li>● 1pm-3pm : FT 4 : Visit to Lismore Art Gallery &amp; tour with native speakers</li> </ul>

Chart 2 The second week

5/9 Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-12pm: ELS 5 : Language activities for camp &amp; study about preposition</li> <li>● 1pm- FT 5: Overnight camp, depart for camp, overnight at camp in Ballina by the sea, dinner, communication activities &amp; star watching</li> </ul>
6/9 Tue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-4pm: FT 6 : Excursion to Byron Bay, trip to Cape Byron lighthouse, coastal walk</li> </ul>
7/9 Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-12pm: ELS 6 : Pronunciation &amp; Adjective</li> <li>● 1pm-4pm: FT 7 : Visit to a local macadamia nut farm &amp; nation sub-tropical rainforest park</li> </ul>
8/9 Thu.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-12pm: ELS 7 : Comparison between Australia &amp; Japan</li> <li>● 1pm-3pm : ELS 8 : Writing thank you letters to homestay families</li> </ul>
9/9 Fri.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 9am-12pm: ELS 8 : Preparation for speech presentation, reflection on experiences</li> <li>● 1pm-3pm : ELS 9 : Class presentations by students</li> <li>● 3pm-4pm : ELS 10 : Farewell afternoon tea, Graduation at SCU for the participants</li> </ul>

I understood it was very rare and bewildering for the staff of SCU to accept a university language teacher as one of the participants but they were generous enough to accept me when they understood my intention. I think it is really meaningful and necessary for a language teacher to discover the button to press that provokes interest and involvement in learning English. In addition, I wanted to see whether the program was suitable enough for our students to take part in for English re-education in the future.

### 3.1 The English Language Sessions(ELS)

As the charts show, these sessions consisted of ten classes. Students were not allowed to use any Japanese during the class. The content of the sessions were really useful and helpful for the students to experience new and exciting activities during their stay in Australia. The class I joined had fifteen students from several different Japanese universities, such as Kyoto University, Osaka University, and Kyoto Women's College.

During our stay we had a lot of opportunities to meet and talk with the participants from many different countries, not only Japan and Australia.

### 3.2 Orientation

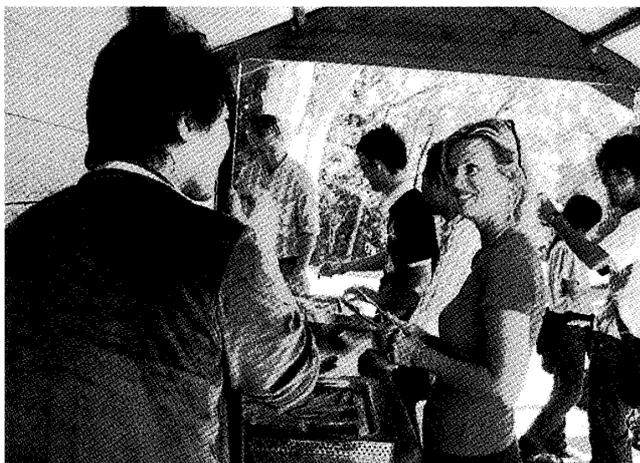
This orientation was offered on the first day as an ELS before regular classes and the homestays began. This session was very important because it included advice on homestay, a number of field trips and familiarization with the campus and surroundings. The staff placed an emphasis on being generous with different customs, cultures and ways of thinking, and being adventurous in tasting new foods at their homes. Students were also expected to use beautiful and courteous English expressions, to keep good manners at home and in classes, and especially to ask before doing something. This orientation was held in a very friendly atmosphere.



English Language Session



Visit to an Elementary School



Field Trip



Graduation

### 3.3 How Teachers Talk to Students

I was especially interested in seeing the way how the instructors would talk to the students who were rather quiet and inactive. Soon I found there seemed to be no noticeable differences among the learners especially in listening and speaking competence. It was clear that every student found it rather hard to communicate effectively.

Once the students found there was little difference among themselves, the students' attitude became relaxed and more active. They began to use English without being afraid of making grammatical mistakes. On the second day they already acquired the point of real communication.

Other reasons why I found the students became relaxed and more active were as follows: The instructor, Ms. Virginia Cook, who mainly taught the class spoke with less complex grammatical structures. The vocabulary she used was generally restricted and she used physical movements a lot, which were very helpful for the students. She was always trying to give instructions as simple and logical as possible. She used several ways to check if the students had understood what they were being asked to do and was always patient enough to listen to the students.

Thanks to her consideration on these points, students became confident and hence willing to be involved in the class. Gradually they became accustomed to listening to English for a long time, and began to express themselves in English vividly. It was a happy moment to see our students using English as a means of communication.

### 4. Field Trips

As the chart shows we had seven different kinds of field trips to exciting places such as a public elementary school, a wildlife park, a national sub-tropical rainforest, and a local macadamia nut farm. We also had an over night camp at a site with good facilities. They had experiences which were full of wonders, new discoveries and unforgettable memories. Students really enjoyed those trips and the more they had field trips, the better their attitude became. We went to these interesting places in a bus driven by some of the staff, who were also wonderful tour guides.

## 5. Homestay

This was one of the highlights of this program and I expected it to be one of the best ways to expose students to natural English. Two students stayed at one host family and there were no family members who understood the Japanese language. They had to communicate in English with the family to survive for two weeks. They had been very nervous before they met their host families.

It was like making a student swim in the sea though they could not swim well and telling them to swim back to the shore. "Sink or swim." However, this experience would surely make them understand how important and wonderful it was to be able to communicate in English and have a great influence on their future attitude in learning English.

### 5.1 Family Life in Australia

We had a special session about family life in Australia, which was really new and useful to the students. We were told the following:

"Family life is similar to that in North America. Families include nuclear families in which both parents live with their children, single-parent families, step-families, unmarried adults living together and extended families. Australia is also a multicultural society, and many migrants maintain their own family traditions. About 20% of the population were born outside Australia, and another 20% have at least one parent born outside the country. Families and individuals in any country are different. In Australia, some families live in big houses, others live in small flats, some are wealthy, while others are not, some like sports while others have other interest."

Students were encouraged to ask their families a lot of questions and try to answer as much as possible. They were told keeping quiet in a family is rather rude. It was true there were some differences among host families, but they were not expected to compare their families with each other.

### 5.2 Language for Homestay

It was a rather small but exciting discovery for me to find out that

students are asked to be courteous not only in their behavior but also in using language. This idea is disappearing in Japanese families. These are key polite expressions that SCU wanted students to use at home:

- When would be a good time for my bath or shower?
- What time are we leaving for the University?
- Is it OK if I watch TV?
- Can I help you do anything? (To share household chores is important because students are accepted as not guests but as family members.)
- Excuse me, I have some homework to do. May I ask you some questions?
- Thank you very much. I enjoyed it very much. It was really nice. (Students are expected to say something about the food and be honest.)
- Could you please speak slower?
- Where can I wash my clothes?
- I would like to ring my friends. May I please use your phone?

### 5.3 Minimal Manners for Homestay

The minimal manners for having a pleasant homestay are as follows:

To be on time. To offer help. Not to make noise while you are eating or drinking something. To say something about the food you are served. To ask and answer. To make the bed when you get up in the morning. To use the shower only for 10 minutes because water is very valuable in Lismore because of little rain. The following is a note which I found in the bath room of my host family:

#### Help Save Lismore Water

Lismore has to be careful of the use of water, so please assist by turning off all taps after use, and limiting showers to 10 minutes. Thank you!

Each host family had a few house rules, which were shown on the first day. The rules of my host family were as follows:

- Breakfast is at 7:45 am.
- We leave for the university at 8:40am so please allow enough time not to be late.
- We will pick you up from the university at the agreed time and place.

Please be waiting as taxis are VERY expensive!

- Washing of clothes – Your host mother is happy to put your clothes through the washing machine for you. Please do NOT rinse clothes out and hang them on the towel rails in the bathroom OR in your cupboard! We have clothes lines in the garage and garden for this purpose. If you wish to wash your underwear yourself we will show you where to hang them.
- Please leave your wet towels on the towel rails in the bathroom NOT in your bedroom.
- Please turn off the light when you go to bed.
- For health reason, we do not allow smoking inside the house.

It is important to us that you have a really good time during your stay in Lismore. Please feel free to discuss any worries you may have with us as we want you to feel at home as much as possible.

Your host father and mother.

## 6. The Significance of Homestay

Most of us learn about the essence of communication from our own families first. We learn it as one of the lessons our parents teach us about how we should care for each other, what degree of responsibilities we should accept for each other, and how much we should share both happiness and unhappiness each other.

However, this tendency seems to be declining in Japanese families. Communication within families has changed. During homestay our students might have seen only a small portion of Australian family life but learned that communication plays a major role in the determination of the quality of family life. Some students came to me and said, "We can't understand why our host families can be so kind and nice to us. We can't express our thanks enough to our host families now, but we will continue studying English hard and visit here again." Perhaps they wanted to say that their host parents were sometimes nicer than their real parents. They wanted to know why they could be so comfortable at host family's home. I was happy to hear this comment and now want more students to join the program in the future.

In the note which I found on the wall of my host family, there might be the answer to that students' question:

#### Our Home

This special house is our precious home where love and happiness are set free to roam, and here within these safe walls we offer friendship and sanctuary to all who call.

Your host parents

#### 7. Conclusion

I am sure that this program is good enough for our students to join for English re-education in the future. There are many reasons I can say that with confidence. As I wrote in chapter 2, the program is well-planned, SCU is located in a completely safe environment, all the staff are earnest, energetic, supportive, and friendly. Our students were exposed to English a lot through activities such as ELSs, field trips, homestay and offered plenty of opportunities to use English. Though our students sometimes had a hard time to express themselves in English, the staff were always patient enough to wait for the students' responses and encourage them with beautiful words. After two weeks our students drastically changed their learning attitude for the better as I had expected.

I have to express my thanks to Mr. Shane Goulding and his family for helping passionately during our stay, their hospitality and inviting all of us from Fukui to their wonderful home. His parents, brother and sisters entertained us by serving really good Australian food, drinks, and playing billiards. We felt really happy to be able to have such a wonderful time. At that time I realized our students speaking and listening competence had become much better, their facial expression, tone of their voice, and eye contact were much improved.

Though there are still a lot of problems ahead of us for an ideal English re-education, I believe there is a bright future if we make use of this program.

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