



## Important issues in international study

Daniel J. McIntyre

The international experiences of individuals and the concept of *internationalization* were principal driving forces of governmental educational policy of Japan in the Meiji era. The educational system has seen an increasing intensification of the focus on *re-internationalization* over the past 60 years. The JET program has undertaken to introduce foreign language and culture to youth in the educational system on a massive scale. Many universities in Japan have sought to expand their international exchange programs. Educational planners have formed new departments that are based on the premise of an interdisciplinary approach to international issues. Some educational planners have also established new campuses that are specifically intended to serve the needs of Japanese students who have returned from abroad, and students in Japan who are from abroad. Educational planners have also begun to design curricula that include overseas study as a required component for graduation. These phenomena have coincided with an accelerated advance of information and communications technology, and globalization in general, that has resulted in a heightened global interest in the place and importance of overseas study in formal curricula; and a heightened interest in the interplay between language learning and cultural adaptation. In the broadest terms, it has been increasingly recognized throughout the world that institutionally sponsored overseas study has the potential to afford opportunities for language learning, personal development, cross-cultural understanding and adaptation, and might even contribute to the achievement of world peace.

In light of the above, the establishment of the Study Abroad SIG at this time is critical, and it raises several critical issues that should be discussed, researched, and resolved. I will briefly describe some of them. It should be noted that I have not presented them in a chronological sequence, or in order of importance. It should also be noted that these critical issues are not exclusive to Japanese as a cultural/linguistic group. These issues have implications for members of any cultural/linguistic group who participate in formal study abroad in home context, host context, or both.

### Important Issues to Consider

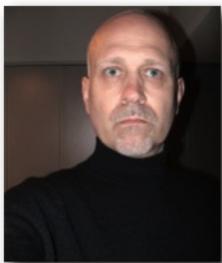
1. Culture influences individual tendencies to adopt attitudes and beliefs. In a specific study abroad context, what are the discrepancies in the mutual role expectations among the three principal groups of participants: the sojourners, the educators of the home institution, and the educators of the host institution? How can discrepancies be reconciled?
2. How do professional staff and immediate stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, and students) conceptualize the processes, conditions, and desired outcomes of overseas study?
3. What are the specific learner needs (e.g., academic, linguistic, and cultural needs) that should be bolstered in preparation programs for overseas study?
4. How can the needs of sojourners be addressed by formal instruction?
5. What are appropriate curricular goals that instructional designers should incorporate into the construction of the preparation and overseas phases of study abroad programs?
6. What are desirable characteristics of the techniques and activities of instruction?



7. What tangible curricular objectives can be set to reflect the achievement of the competencies that the sojourners need?
8. The current mean of Japanese takers of the TOEFL iBT™ is 65. The overwhelming majority of tertiary institutions in North America require a minimum score of 71 for participation in long-term overseas study. Is it feasible to use dedicated TOEFL preparation courses to bridge this gap? If so, how should such test preparation courses be designed?
9. Sojourners often report experiencing pre-departure anxiety. What are the sources of this anxiety? What are remedies for it?

I would like to thank the organizers of the forming Study Abroad SIG of JALT for their interest and work in this field, and for giving me the opportunity to nominate these critical issues for discussion. They should be highly commended. I hope that the group will develop into a vibrant forum that will contribute to the personal development and the achievement of the objectives of sojourners, and the advancement of international understanding locally and globally. Best wishes and bon voyage.

#### *About the Author:*



Daniel J. McIntyre is managing director of Creative Communications. He has taught at universities in the United States and Japan. He came to Japan in 1989 under the auspices of an international faculty exchange. He has also participated in the design and implementation of four preparation programs for overseas study for Japanese university students. He has published four research papers and completed a doctoral dissertation on the topic of long-term overseas study. He was a member of the editorial advisory board of *The Language Teacher* from 1995 to 2007. From 1996 to 2005, he was editor of two occasional columns for that publication that focused on Instructional Design. His academic interests include Activity Theory, instructional design, Contrastive Rhetoric, computer-mediated instruction, and English for Academic purposes.



Japan Association for Language Teaching  
**Study Abroad Special Interest Group**

全国語学教育学会海外研修研究支部会

[Revised February, 12 2012]

Document URL: <http://jalt-sa.org/PDF/1-1-McIntyre.pdf>

(The original version can be downloaded from [http://jalt-sa.org/PDF/Ryuugaku-1\(1\).pdf](http://jalt-sa.org/PDF/Ryuugaku-1(1).pdf))

NOTE: The copyright of all articles in this publication belong to their respective authors.