

Report – Sophia University spring 2018

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This spring semester in Tokyo was such an eye-opening and enriching experience for my entire college life. Every moment was admirable and adventurous. Although there were several difficulties I faced during my stay at Tokyo such as insanely crowding morning train or instructions full of kanji, it truly helped me to understand Japanese language, culture, and society in-depth and enabled myself to understand the concept of diversity and cooperation through my friends from various countries that I met throughout this semester. This experience made me grow up to become more independent and responsible.

When I first arrived at Haneda airport, I had hard time to communicate with Japanese people. At the train station, I did not know how to get to my dorm so I asked the station officer. Since I studied basic Japanese expressions prior to my arrival in Japan, I was able to ask question, but the real issue was that my Japanese was not fluent enough to understand the answer. Even, he could not speak English well so our communication was not smooth. However, he did his best to explain the route for me. I really appreciated of his willingness to help and of his kind heart. At that time, I realized the necessity of improving my Japanese language skill and desired to fully get improve in my Japanese. So, I aimed for getting into higher level of Japanese course. Fortunately, I was able to get into the intensive intermediate Japanese course at Sophia University. Since it was the intensive course, I had to deal with bunch of quizzes along with overwhelming tests, presentations and huge amount of lessons. Although sometimes it was overwhelmed and frustrated, I saw how passionate *senseis* are for teaching Japanese and encouraged us to keep it up every time. Through their help, I was able to finish my intensive Japanese course and eventually I got improve a lot in my Japanese language compared to the beginning of the semester which I could definitely tell the difference. I became able to understand Kanji in readings and even short newspaper articles. Also, I could have some daily conversations with Japanese people and got my part time job dealing with customers in honorific expressions.

In addition, I had a great opportunity to participate in practicum course through Human Ecology Rivers course. One of my primary goals for studying in Japan was to learn more about their environmental system, and this course made me achieve the goal. It was offered to both of undergraduate and graduate students so I was able to study together with graduate students along with my fellow undergraduate classmates about history and current situation of river system, wildlife, ecosystems, how government plays role to control the natural resources. It was such an interesting experience and my knowledge towards my major field, which is environmental and sustainability studies, expanded. Especially, field trip to Hokkaido enabled me to hear direct stories from local experts who are related to rivers and several government officers. We also held symposium for local community in order to explain the importance of Kushiro wetland within local community. Our group researched about the land and water use of Kushiro, and through this research, I learned a

lot about how Kushiro deals with their local environment systems and the deeper relationship between nature and human society once more.

Through this experience, since I acquired some Japanese language skill, I want to enrich it furthermore by volunteering Japanese associations or even participating on-campus Japanese club. I also plan take upcoming JLPT N2 test so that I can continue my Japanese. In near future, since I learned few things about Japanese environmental system, especially related to river system, I want to become a bridge between Japan and United States for further cooperation of solving current environmental problems. For the end, I express my deep appreciation for Japan-America Society of Washington DC for their huge supports which made all of these wonderful things happened in my life!