

Year in Japan Midterm Report

Business Japanese study at Kai Japanese Language School



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INTRODUCTION

This document is a midterm report submitted to the Swiss-Japanese Chamber of Commerce (SJCC) as part of the Year in Japan Scholarship program.

As per the current requirements for the midterm report, it focuses on differences to other scholarship grantees and comparisons between Japan and Switzerland. For the former, this is the procedure from changing from a tourist to a student visa, the business Japanese course I was able to take due to my Japanese level already being somewhat higher than most other grantees, as well as the internship search through job hunting agencies. For the latter, I compare the process of taking the JLPT and the differences between the process and documents in job hunting.

MOTIVATION

Like many others, my initial contact with Japan was via the anime boom in the early 2000s, which happened just during my early school years. My interest in Japan varied over the years, but after starting to learn Japanese as an optional class during university and two visits to Japan in 2014 and 2015, I started wondering what living in Japan would be like. After graduating from ETH, I stayed in Japan for three months in 2017, for language study and a one-month unpaid internship. Based on this experience, I decided to attempt to find longer-term work in Japan, at which point the SJCC scholarship was recommended to me as a first step on that path and I applied.

VISA CHANGE PROCEDURE

As I was visiting Japan with my family for personal reasons in January – my sister was living in Japan at the time but has since moved back to Switzerland – I decided to simply stay in Japan in the time between that visit and the start of my language study. This meant that unlike most other scholarship recipients, I entered Japan with a tourist visa and would then later have to apply for a change in status of residence (在留資格変更許可 zairyuu shikaku henkou kyoka) at the Immigration Bureau.

The Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau (東京入国管理局 toukyou nyuukoku kanrikyoku) is rather infamous for its overcrowdedness. Depending on the time of day, wait times can exceed three hours, and I was appropriately warned by school staff to not go on a day I have anything else planned. While the official opening times are only until 16:00, those are just the opening times of the reception, and anyone who has received a number ticket at the reception will get processed the same day.

The visa change procedure requires two visits to the Immigration Bureau, one to submit the application and one to receive the new visa and resident card once it has been approved. The time between submitting the application and receiving the notification of approval is typically around one month, so it should be started as early as possible.

Besides the long waiting times and despite what I'd heard from other people, my experience at the Immigration Bureau was actually rather pleasant. The clerks were very friendly, particularly upon realizing that I could communicate with them in Japanese.

JAPANESE STUDY

KAI JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL

I decided on Kai Japanese Language School for my language study primarily due to recommendations from my sister who had previously studied there and from Genki Japanese and Culture School in Shinjuku where I had previously studied. The convenient location in Shin-Ookubo, just one station from Shinjuku, as well as the fairly modern curriculum making extensive use of digital materials and iPads were also major factors in my decision.

I studied in levels 6 and 7, (out of 8) which turned out to be quite interesting as level 6 is the last which uses a textbook extensively and focuses on grammar and kanji, while level 7 is built on practical application with reading newspaper articles, watching TV drama as well as holding presentations and writing essays.

My overall experience at Kai was fantastic and I can warmly recommend the school to future scholarship recipients.

NBJ PROGRAM

KAI Japanese Language School offers a business Japanese program, called *Nisshinkyou Business Japanese* (NBJ) for higher level students. Since my Japanese was already near N2 level at the start of my study, I had the opportunity to take part in this program.

The NBJ program consists of two mornings a week for two terms, and covers a variety of topics related to business Japanese:

- **Job Hunting Japanese:** Topics such as how to fill out documents like 履歴書 (see below), interview manners, and finding answers to typical interview questions
- **Japanese State of Affairs:** More of a general education than a language class, covering Japanese business and factors that affect it
- **Work Japanese:** Practice in communicating at the workplace
- **BJT:** Preparation for the Business Japanese Test

While I found some of the classes somewhat tedious due to them being heavily focused on practicing in roleplay which I personally somewhat dislike, they did prove helpful in getting used to the grammar and vocabulary used in communication at the workplace.

The BJT class also proved to be useful since I had the opportunity to actually take the test

during class and achieved a rather good score, which should be a useful qualification and is considered in Visa evaluations.

The Job Hunting Japanese class however did end up being somewhat too late, as I ironically missed the first session of it due to a job interview and got the job offer I ended up accepting on the day of the second session.

At the end of the program, I received a diploma for completing the NBJ program in addition to the diploma of the general course.

TAKING JLPT IN JAPAN

As I was taking classes at just about the N2 level, I decided to take the test in summer during my time at Kai. Since I already had taken N3 in Switzerland the previous December, this gave me the opportunity to compare between the two countries.

JLPT works differently in Japan than in Switzerland, presumably due to the much larger scale. It is run by Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (JEES), as opposed to the Japan Foundation which organizes the exams overseas together with local institutions.

Registration is much more automated and runs through the MyJLPT website. Registration by mail is also possible, however none of my friends or classmates who also took the test utilized this option.

The test site cannot be chosen except for the region, which in my case was Kantou (関東), the region around Tokyo including the prefectures of Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo and Kanagawa. While I assume (or at least hope) that there is some effort made to assign examinees to test sites near where they live, the distance can vary widely. While some of my classmates had over an hour to get to their test sites, I got somewhat lucky and was assigned to a test site that was just a 15 minute subway ride away on the same line.

After registration, the test voucher including the test site assignment is sent via mail as a postcard. It includes directions to the test site and rules for before and during the exam.

The number and size of test venues are also on a completely different scale than in Switzerland, and as far as I understood each test venue only holds tests of one level. The test venue I was assigned only held N2 tests for what I estimated to be several hundred examinees.

The results can be viewed on the MyJLPT site, which is more convenient than the somewhat clunky system of examinee number and PIN on the registration form which is used by the international tests. It is also easy to see all past test scores if one has taken multiple tests under the MyJLPT system. There is also a certificate sent as a postcard similarly to the test voucher.

The test voucher (right) and the certificate (below)

会場までの案内 Direction
とうきょうと いはばし くまかしまむら
東京都板橋区高島平1-9-1

○ 都営三田線「西台」駅西口から歩いて約10分
○ About 10-min walk from Toei Mita Line
"Nishidai" Sta. West Exit.



2018 ねん だい1かい
にほんごのうりよくしけん
じゅけんひょう
The 2018 (July) Japanese-Language
Proficiency Test, Test Voucher

じゅけんレベル (Level)

N2



じゅけんばんごう (Reg. No.) 133721249

しけんかいじょう (Test Site) だいとうぶんかだいがく いたばしきやんばす
しけんしつ (Room No.) 3ごうかん 2かい 30212
しめい (Name) LUKAS ANDREAS MUELLER
せいべつ (Sex) M
せいねんがっぴ (Date of Birth: y/m/d) 1992/10/05
くに・ちいき (Country/Region) SWITZERLAND

しけんかもく Test Sections	しけんじかん Test Hours
N2 げんごちしき(もじ・ごいふんぽう)・どっかい Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)・Reading	12:30-14:30
ちょうかい Listening	15:10-16:15

2018年第1回 日本語能力試験 合格結果通知書
The 2018 (July) Japanese-Language Proficiency Test
Test Result

受験日: 2018年 7月 1日 (日曜日)
Test Date: July 1, 2018 (Sunday)

受験レベル: Level: N2

受験番号: Registration No.: 133721249

氏名: Name: LUKAS ANDREAS MUELLER

生年月日: Date of Birth (y/m/d): 1992/10/05

国・地域: Country/Region: SWITZERLAND

得点(区分別)得点 Scores by Scoring Section			総合得点 Total Score
言語知識(文字・語彙・文法) Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	読解 Reading	聴解 Listening	
60/60	54/60	60/60	174/180

参考情報
Reference Information

文字・語彙・文法
Vocabulary Grammar

A A

A 正答率67%以上
The number of correct responses is 67% or higher

B 正答率50%以上67%未満
The number of correct responses is between 50% and 67%

C 正答率50%未満
The number of correct responses is less than 50%

合格 Passed 2018年8月19日
August 19, 2018

公益財団法人 日本国際教育支援協会
理事長 井上 正幸
Masayuki Inoue
President
Japan Educational
Exchanges and Services

独立行政法人 国際交流基金
理事長 安藤 裕彦
Hiroyasu Ando
President
The Japan Foundation

日本語能力認定書
Certificate of Japanese-Language Proficiency

N2A187717J

受験レベル Level: N2

受験地 Test Site: 日本 Japan

受験番号: Registration No.: 133721249

生年月日: Date of Birth (y/m/d): 1992/10/05

氏名 Name: LUKAS ANDREAS MUELLER



上記の者は2018年7月に公益財団法人日本国際教育支援協会および独立行政法人国際交流基金が実施した日本語能力試験に合格したことを証明します。2018年8月19日

This is to certify that the person named above has passed the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test given in July 2018, jointly administered by Japan Educational Exchanges and Services and the Japan Foundation. August 19, 2018

公益財団法人 日本国際教育支援協会 理事長 井上 正幸
Masayuki Inoue
President
Japan Educational
Exchanges and Services

独立行政法人 国際交流基金 理事長 安藤 裕彦
Hiroyasu Ando
President
The Japan Foundation

INTERNSHIP SEARCH

Internships in the western style are rather uncommon in Japan. Many companies will hold internships, but typically this is used to refer to periods of a week or two. That being the case, finding an Internship in the sense of the scholarship can be rather tricky, in particular in more specialized areas.

It is important to always be clear about what one means by internship, since a Japanese person might understand it as meaning something somewhat different.

JOB HUNTING AGENTS

An easy way to get help in job search in Japan are job hunting agencies. These introduce companies, as well as giving advice on CV (resp. 履歴書, see below) and interviews. Since they are paid via commission from the companies from actual hires, this comes at no cost.

However, in most cases this is aimed towards employing people full-time rather than for internships (which, as mentioned previously, don't normally exist in the first place) and therefore not very suited if only looking for an internship. In my case, since I was also interested in working in Japan long-term, there were agents and companies interested in offering me the internship as a sort of trial period for a later proper position. This was where I focused most of my effort.

The agencies I utilized were *ASIA Link* and *Originator/Ryuukatsu*. Both of these held seminars at KAI and are specialized in foreign students, and therefore the companies they introduced were typically more flexible than others.

CV AND 履歴書

The Japanese equivalent to a CV or resume, called the 履歴書, (rirekisho) is much more defined in structure, indeed it is more comparable to a semi-standardized form, such as the example shown to the right. Blank forms can be bought at stores, and some companies demand a handwritten version to be submitted at the first interview.

The image shows a blank Japanese resume form (履歴書). It is divided into several sections with labels in Japanese. The top section is for personal information (氏名, 性別, 生年月日, etc.). Below that is a section for education (学歴). The middle section is for work experience (職歴), with columns for company name, position, and dates. The bottom section is for other information (その他), including a section for hobbies and interests (趣味・特技). The form is designed to be filled out by hand.

The 履歴書 includes some information typically not present in western CVs, such as closest train station and married status, items that would be included in a cover letter such as the motivation for the application. It also notably doesn't have a section for skills besides the one for certifications.

新卒 AND 転職

Japan has a rather unique system of job hunting after university, where typically students are job hunting during their last year of university and will mostly have a job offer by the middle of that year, to then start in April of the succeeding year right after graduation at the same timing as all the other new graduates. This system of hiring new graduates in one group is called 新卒一括採用 (shinsotsu ikkatsu saiyou).

Job hunting for people with work experience is usually run completely separately and, since many (however a decreasing number) of the more traditional Japanese companies use a lifetime employment model, typically less common.

Many of the job hunting agencies mentioned above specialize in either new graduates (新卒 shinsotsu) or in job change (転職, tenshoku) or at least have separate groups for the two categories. The exception to this are agencies specializing in foreign students, like the ones I utilized in my search.

PROCEDURES

Standard application procedures for Japanese companies can be quite tedious. Typically they start with a presentation of the company called a 説明会 (setsumeikai), followed by a written or computer based aptitude test of some sort. Typically three interviews are held.

The aptitude tests take various forms from a short paper test held during the 説明会 to an extensive computer-based test held at an external testing center. One common standardized test is called SPI, (Which somewhat confused me as an electronics engineer since there is a common interface protocol called Serial Peripheral Interface which uses the same abbreviation, however in this case it stands for Synthetic Personality Inventory) used by many larger companies. One of the companies that was introduced to me also used this test, however I had a variety of technical issues with the registration site of the test center it was to be held at and ended up cancelling since I already had an offer with better conditions at that point.

Depending on the company, there might not be any technical questions at interviews or in the aptitude tests. For new graduate hires, the focus is more on the personality and potential of the applicant rather than technical skill. This also comes from the lifetime employment model, as it is assumed that people will stay in the company for at least a relatively long time and thus potential is more important than current ability.

FINDING AND BEGINNING WORK

I was introduced to the bonding machine manufacturer Shinkawa (株式会社新川, kabushiki gaisha shinkawa) by one of the recruitment agents I had met through school. I was very interested in the company since one of my main reasons for being interested in working in Japan is the semiconductor industry. After a comparatively uncomplicated application procedure, I was offered a position after the first interview, which as mentioned above is rather uncommon.

Bonding machines are a key step in the manufacturing of integrated circuits, connecting the silicon die to the leads in the package which is then connected to the circuit board. In many cases this is done using micrometer-scale gold wire attached via heating and friction, at an accuracy of a few micrometers and a speed of around 20 wires placed per second. This is called *wire bonding* and wire bonders are the main product line of Shinkawa.



An example of a wire bonder

At the time of writing, I have already begun working at the Shinjuku office of Shinkawa, which is very conveniently located and on sunny days offers a great view used on the title page of this report. I am part of the 戦略技術開発室 (senryaku gijutsu kaihatsushitsu, Strategic Technology Development Office) whose task is to work on new technologies for future generations of bonding machines.

CONCLUSION

I would consider the first half of this year in Japan a complete success. I have successfully found work, completed my half year of Japanese school with good grades and passed JPLT N2.

I would like to thank SJCC for the support both financially and in advice. While I would have done my language study either way, the additional financial reserves allowed me to have less things to worry about and focus more on studying and job hunting. I am also grateful for the support of my family and friends as well as the teachers and school staff at Kai.

REFERENCES

- SJCC: <https://www.sjcc.ch>
- Tokyo Immigration Bureau: <http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/soshiki/kikou/tokyo.html>
- Visa change procedure: <http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/tetuduki/kanri/shyorui/02.html>
- Kai Japanese Language School: <http://www.kaij.jp>
- NBJ Program: <http://www.kaij.jp/course/general/nbj.html>
- MyJLPT: <http://info.jees-jlpt.jp>
- Recruitment Agencies:
<https://www.asialinkryunavi.com>
<https://www.ryugakusei.com>
<http://oneterrace.jp>
- Shinkawa: <https://www.shinkawa.com>