



## The graduate awarded the MEXT scholarship

By Agis Georgiou

Graduate 2014

BA (Hons) in Japanese and Cultural Studies



Almost four years ago at the age of 28, and even though I already had a BSc, I decided to follow my dream, which was to study the life and culture of Japan. At that point, four years ago, I had never been to Japan and the things I knew about this “mysterious” country came from samurai movies, lots of anime, manga and the occasional trip to the Japanese Embassy in Athens. After asking myself the same question many times, my favourites being “And what exactly will you do after you graduate?” and “How otaku are you?” – I decided to come to Newcastle University. Even though I was 28 at the time, I was quite afraid of the change. This is because it was the first time for me to leave my home country and study abroad. Moreover, I was just following a “hunch”. Many have pointed out to me several times, before my Year abroad, I had not even travelled to Japan. I cannot say it has been an easy decision, as I found out later (see Greek economic crisis) but I managed to have two part-time jobs and to study full-time. Luckily, I was awarded the JASSO scholarship for my Year Abroad, which made it possible for me to study at Kyoto University as an exchange student. This text is too short to describe my Year



Abroad in Japan, but I can honestly say that, in retrospect, I am more than glad I did it. Which brings us to the present time, in five months I will be returning to Japan in order to do an MA on the MEXT scholarship; this is the largest scholarship that one can get from the Japanese government and I feel privileged to be able to receive it. Once again I am a little afraid, but mostly excited as to what may come, but to be honest, I think that the decision I made four years ago, has been one of, if not the best I have ever made thus far.

# Job search using Japanese language

Dagija Kugeviciute , Graduate 2014, BA (Hons) in Japanese and Cultural Studies



Having been interested in Japan for about eight years and as a fresh graduate from Japanese and Cultural studies, I knew one thing, finding a job which would allow me to use my Japanese language skills would make me especially happy. However, apart from my wish to employ my Japanese, I had no idea what kind of job I wanted to do especially since a language degree can be adapted to a variety of areas.



I soon discovered that there are a few employment agencies in London helping Japanese speaking people to find employment. I applied to a couple of these agencies and after face-to-face interview in Japanese with one of them, I started getting interviews with Japanese companies in London. Unsurprisingly due to my lack of experience and often very short notices, I failed several of them. To make matters worse, on the way to one of the interviews, I managed to fall down and sprain my foot so I missed an interview and had to go to hospital instead! Although afterwards I could not get out of the house for almost a month, the employment agency kindly organised for me a couple of Skype interviews with the company - T&S Enterprises Ltd./Atariya foods. Later after the third interview in London, I was informed that I got a job as a sales representative!

T&S Enterprises Ltd./Atariya Foods is the wholesale seafood supplier of the top Japanese (and some non-Japanese) restaurants throughout London. Also, it is quite famous among the Japanese community in London because it has eight shops and restaurants of Japanese food. The company itself is quite different from the common stereotype of Japanese companies which are seen as having strict rules and specific working culture. Rather, Atariya is quite open to new ideas, there are many international workers and my managers and colleagues are outgoing and extremely helpful. I have been working for Atariya for only three months but I can already tell that I love my job not only because I use Japanese every day but also because sales involves so many different duties, so everyday is not the same. Some of the time I do office work, answering the phone (brushing up my 敬語), designing brochures etc. we also have to spend quite a lot of time out of office visiting our clients throughout London which gives me invaluable experience of ways of communications with various people.

I feel lucky to have found a job I like in only a couple of months: and sometimes, I think that if it was not for my injury, I might have been doing something else instead, maybe a job that I wouldn't like at all.

If you are not sure how to start job hunting make use of employment agencies, they are quite helpful. Also, I remember that when I started studying Japanese many people would ask me what would I do with Japanese and whether it is useful at all. Now I can say that even if you are not going to work in Japan you do not necessarily have to be a translator/interpreter there are quite a lot of Japanese language related jobs in travel, sales, administration, banking etc. and in Europe as well. So you can be sure Japanese is a language worth learning.





# Japanese Speech Contest

## for University Students

Lewis Leung (BA in Combined Honours), a stage 4 student studying Japanese language, was selected as a finalist for the 10th Japanese Speech Contest for University Students held in London on 28th Feb, 2015. This is the fifth consecutive year that we have successfully had a finalist selected for this prestigious contest.



### successfully granted funding for

## Japanese Language Local Project Support Programme

The project, "The expansion of resources to enhance the Japanese language education in the North of England" was successfully granted funding for Japanese Language Local Project Support Programme from the Japan Foundation in March, 2015. This project was led by Kumi Casey, Japanese Language Coordinator to support teachers and learners of Japanese language in the North of England as well as promoting Japanese language education in the region. Resources include: textbooks, audio / listening exercise books and JLPT practice books (for all levels), teaching guide books, bilingual comics, Japanese novels, DVD's and calligraphy sets. These resources are available in the Language Resource Centre and in the Robinson Library to both students and staff of Newcastle University as well as the general public via the membership scheme.



# My experience of learning Japanese in Newcastle University

**Nur Shazreen Aiza Shaharuddin, BA Combined Honours**

My name is Nur Shazreen Aiza Shaharuddin and I am a stage one Combined Honours Degree student at Newcastle University. One of my subjects from the Combined Honours Degree is Japanese which I find an extremely interesting language to learn. I am really lucky to be born into a multi-cultured as well as multi-lingual family from Malaysia. Before I started learning Japanese, I could already speak Malay, English and also three different dialects of Chinese which are Mandarin, Hokkien and also Cantonese. I was always interested in other people's cultures and languages especially Japanese which is why I chose to study this language.



So far, my experience in learning the Japanese language at Newcastle University has been great fun! Not only did I get to learn about the culture of Japan but also I got to meet lots of people from different parts of the world. I got to learn about other people's languages and I have made friends with exchange students from China and France; this gave me lots of opportunity to learn about other people's cultures. In addition to the fun experience of studying the Japanese language at Newcastle University, I also had two very kind and helpful lecturers, Etsuko Suda and Kumi Casey sensei. Whenever I needed help with something, they always did their very best in order to help me learn, which I think is the main reason that makes the experience enjoyable for their students. Although, learning a new language has not been very easy for me, however, the enjoyment of attending Japanese classes, as well as having such supportive lecturers teaching me, has made me forget about all the challenges I went through while learning. I look forward to further study of the Japanese language in the future and I would definitely recommend more people to join.





# Our Staff

## Dr Gitte Marianne Hansen



After finishing a BA in Japanese Studies and a MA in East Asia Studies from the University of Copenhagen, Dr Gitte Marianne Hansen studied and worked in Japan for five years as a teaching and research assistant to Professor Kato Norihiro at Waseda University. She then returned to Europe to start her PhD research at the University of Cambridge before joining the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University in 2013.

Dr Hansen's current research focuses on femininity, eating disorders and self-harm in Japanese narrative and visual culture since the 1980s. Her book will be published later this year with Routledge as part of the Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series. She has also worked

on Murakami Haruki's literary texts for many years, giving lectures and seminars to the general public. This past year she gave a talk at the Japan Foundation London office in connection with the publication of Murakami's latest novel in English (pictures).



# Rethinking 'Japanese' Pop Culture

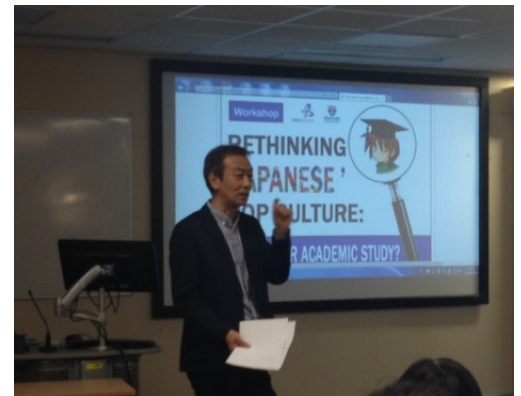
## A topic for academic study?

By Ms. Yui Ishikawa, Deputy Director, Japan Foundation London

Today Japanese pop culture is very popular among young people worldwide, and the UK is not an exception. Many students have said that pop culture was their first contact with Japan and the main reason why they became interested in Japanese Studies. However, at many universities, the extent to which pop culture can be studied in an academic manner is a topic that often comes under debate; so how can we study 'Japanese pop culture'?

This special workshop with Prof Koichi Iwabuchi (Monash University, Australia) looked into the possibility of pop culture as a topic for academic study. After a short ice-breaking discussion, Prof Iwabuchi gave a talk on what 'Japanese pop culture' means. He stressed the importance of thinking critically, mentioning important aspects of Japanese pop culture such as the trans-nationalisation of its production and distribution processes, and in addition, the diver-

sity of Japanese society which is often not represented in popular anime, such as manga, TV drama and films. At the end of the presentation, Prof Iwabuchi raised this question 'what kind of programme would you make if you were in charge of introducing/teaching Japanese pop culture as an officer at the Japan Foundation or a coordinator of public seminars, so as to go beyond the mere introduction of Japanese culture?' This question led to a lively discussion with various interesting ideas such as a cultural video series on YouTube, film screenings with open discussion on social media and 'machi-kon' style matchmaking event for British people interested in Japan and Japan related places. Although due to time limitations, many of these ideas still have some room for development, this discussion certainly was a good opportunity for us to rethink 'Japanese pop culture'.



The workshop and following drink reception were kindly sponsored by the Japan Foundation.



JAPAN FOUNDATION



Dr Yoshioka gave a talk in Teikyo University entitled

# AN INTRODUCTION TO ANIME



On 21 November 2014, our lecturer Dr Shiro Yoshioka gave a talk entitled “An Introduction to anime or Japanese animation. What is it? Why does it matter?” at Teikyo University of Japan in Durham. The public seminar was well attended, almost filling the venue which can accommodate almost 100 people. Among the audience was Mr Hajime Kitaoka, Consulate General of Japan in Edinburgh, who himself is an avid fan of anime.

In the one-hour lecture, Dr Yoshioka challenged stereotypical view of anime that it is often “violent”, “sexually explicit” and “has science-fiction related themes”. He first explained that anime, unlike western cartoons, is not only for children but also for older audience such as teenagers and adults. To show the reason for such differences, he discussed the history of postwar anime and also how anime is related to other media such as manga, emphasising that such connections resulted in anime having a great range of genre beyond science fiction.

Another point of the talk was about the significance of anime in contemporary Japan as a business as well as a flagship of Japanese cultural export that attracts interest to Japanese culture and language outside Japan. Dr Yoshioka showed that the so-called “anime industry” consists not only of anime studios but also a number of different business, and the market for anime is growing to form a significant part in Japanese economy. He also showed some examples of anime fandom outside Japan to illustrate anime's global popularity.

The audience, many of whom knew little or nothing about anime, commented that they thoroughly enjoyed the talk especially because his speech was well organised so that it was accessible for those who are not familiar with anime, and also thanks to his “animated” presentation skills, one of them even told Dr Yoshioka that she would envy his students.



# Anime Attacks

Alexandra Leahy, BA Combined Honours



Anyone who happened to be passing through Gateshead on October 25th probably started to wonder if they'd stepped into some kind of parallel universe where people

walk around with shocking blue hair and dressed for monster-hunting like it's the most ordinary thing in the world. In Gateshead at least, for one day every year it is. Anime Attacks is a one-day event held annually in Gateshead Library, catering for the hundreds of local fans of Japanese animation and comic books, or anime and manga. Throughout the day, events such as panels with artists or creators take place, allowing those with an interest to learn more about how anime moves from conception to the screen. Fans often dress up, filling Gateshead with a host of colourful characters from popular series.

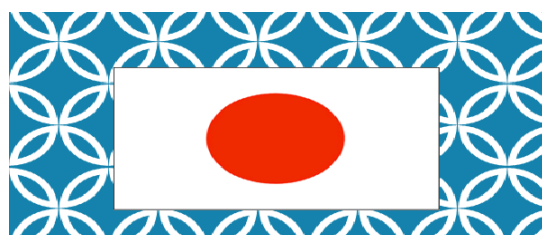
This year, the Newcastle University Japanese department ran language taster sessions at Anime Attacks, in which I was lucky enough to take part. Twenty-two students volunteered to run the sessions, made up of a mixture of Japanese exchange students visiting Britain for the year and those currently studying Japanese at Newcastle. Three sessions were run scattered through-

out the day, all of which were well-attended. In the session I was involved in, in addition to basic phrases and teaching people to write their names in Japanese, we also

talked about various aspects of Japanese culture, including food and kimono. Japanese is still rarely studied in the UK, so for me personally it was lovely to have the chance to share this amazing language and culture with people who were keen to learn more. It truly was a brilliant experience, and I hope that all of those who attended the sessions at Anime Attacks enjoyed themselves as much as I did.



Illustrated by Ken Cavanagh



LET'S LEARN  
ABOUT JAPAN!

日本を知ろう!

## Contact us

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