

I was first introduced to the Japanese language when I stumbled upon a video of Detective Conan while browsing the internet. I distinctly remember that I was immediately engrossed in finding more videos because I had never seen anything similar on TV in America. In retrospect, I believe it was a combination of the sound of the language and the art style that caught my attention the most. The more I learned about the Japanese culture, which was completely foreign to me, the more I drifted away from anime and into an interest in the language itself.

My interest grew to the point where I decided to try learning Japanese on my own. I began by studying simple grammar and kana through games and second-hand textbooks. In my junior year of high school, I interned with a Japanese teacher, who inspired me to enroll in my first official Japanese course at community college. In my senior year, with two semesters of Japanese classroom experience, I won second place in a Japanese Speech Contest, which bolstered my enthusiasm for learning the language. I also started a Japanese culture club at my high school, where I introduced significant cultural elements and taught simple Japanese language skills.

I am currently taking upper-division Japanese classes (taught in Japanese), I am the secretary of Japan Club, and I am employed on campus as a Japanese language tutor. I continue to study Japanese outside of the classroom by practicing Japanese songs for karaoke, talking with friends, and reviewing work from past Japanese courses.

I chose the University of Kitakyushu in particular because the program and location appealed to me. I was especially drawn to the many opportunities I will have, both financially and academically. For the program, I was especially drawn to the community relationship, with opportunities such as home visits and potential part-time jobs or internships in the community. I am also interested in courses about the East Asian region, because they may fulfill one of my major requirements for secondary culture. The financial benefits of UKK also interest me, particularly the low cost of living and the scholarship opportunities. The location was also a key attraction for me because I have always lived with a blend of the city and nature, so I feel Kitakyushu is a good fit for me.

During my time at the University of Kitakyushu, I would like to further my conversation skills. By the end of my time abroad, I want to be comfortable speaking in Japanese for long periods of time, be able to navigate around Japan on my own, and understand short texts in Japanese unaided. In addition to studying and doing well in my classes, I will supplement my education by making friends with Japanese students, utilizing the immersive environment by watching Japanese TV shows and going to karaoke, as well as documenting my experience through photos and journals.

While I am in Japan, I have a few more goals in addition to my academic goals. Although I no longer watch anime, I still have a great sense of gratitude toward Detective Conan for introducing me to the Japanese language, therefore my greatest non-academic goal is to see a Detective Conan movie in theaters. In addition, I also want to travel Japan in order to try many delicious foods and teas as well as show my friends where I have travelled before in Japan. I hope that by exploring Japan while I am studying

abroad, I will also have better idea of where I would like to return to in the future for JET.