

ID 1

General experience

Positive 4/5. Japanese university small class groups helped

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Edinburgh classmates especially at first. Didn't feel much need to have contact with Edinburgh tutors.

DSI tutorial exercises

No prior use. Wireless access difficult. Didn't use any other function. Tutorials useful revision but not very interactive, would prefer to seek out language learning games/software from Japan.

Screen size awkward for writing longer pieces of text.

Groupwork – didn't attempt – timing coincided with busy time (JLTP test) and couldn't contact other members of group.

Generally thought working on a PC was the most useful way forward.

Assessment

Didn't see the reflective blog as helpful and not keen to have it or exercises compulsory. More use as revision. But suggested some marks as an incentive. Not keen on Facebook use by University either although vague on way it's used....

Other

"Definitely the size of the console I think lends itself to being able to just be tucked into a bag or a pocket or something and then if you've got a spare few minutes, just do something quickly, it would be a good idea."

Suggested that those who had a regular commute might get more out of it.

"I think probably sticking to the computer would be the best option. I'm not entirely sure what other devices there would be available that could be used but I think by now most people are familiar with how to use a computer and internet, whereas if you haven't used a particular console or if you've used something different, then ...for example if someone has a PSP but hadn't used a Nintendo DSi, it might be ..prove a bit difficult. "

ID 2

General experience

Very positive, appreciative of the special arrangements at Japanese university, and of the demanding level of the course.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Happy to know Edinburgh tutor support was there but at low level. Had classmates at same university, also kept in touch via Facebook with others.

DSI tutorial exercises

Happy to know Edinburgh tutor support was there but at low level. Not used DSi before but found useful Japanese language games etc and has acquired some to use on brothers' DSi.

Wifi access via classmate dorm but otherwise would have been difficult.

Assessment

Enough to do while in Japan, not keen on what was suggested but thinks replacing final report with continuous blog entries - in Japanese or in a mix.

Other

About the blog and reflections

“I think honestly it would be a bit hard to do, to have to think about doing it on top of everything else I don't think... it wouldn't have been priority because the main thing was the language learning, handing in homework, doing class work, essays and everything else. So then I think it would become a bit stressful if I didn't manage to stay on top of it, because... well I suppose it would be a priority if it was made to be assessment.”

ID 3

General experience

Loved it, very positive. Heavy workload at host university. Year away made huge difference to level of language proficiency. Host family important for this.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Good social life supported by university but also had other friends. Didn't make much contact with other EU students but had been away from cohort prev year.

DSI tutorial ex

Heavy workload meant additional DSI tasks a bit of a burden. Not familiar with console so Kyoto ws helpful but still hard, and took time to find good wifi access etc. liked knowing contact was possible but additional tasks stressful.

Using DSI

“I don't know I found it really difficult at the start but I think it was because I was making it difficult it's not actually that hard to use. If you just get taught how and I think having a little stylus pen and everything, you can draw and write and things and I think that's quite good. Like the assignments were quite interesting I guess in that respect rather than just typing out an answer and emailing it to your teacher it's nice that you get to create your own presentations and things like that yeah. So I think it's quite a good learning tool.”

“... It's a very creative way of getting people involved in it. I think a lot of the students in my university were very jealous that I got given a DS ... and they are *I don't understand why you aren't loving this* and when we got given that kanji game, I think you have to pop bubbles and stuff... So maybe it is a good thing but for me it was a bit stressful.”

“... I don't know if you can do that but I think those games, especially those little popping bubble games and things like that if you introduced more of those and get people to get high scores, I don't know or things like that maybe people enjoy it more then say doing like ... I don't mind doing those like *fill in the blank things* but I think a lot of people find it really tedious.”

Assessment

Found it very stressful to have the exercises, on top of Japanese university workload. Not sure if it should be compulsory or remain voluntary.

Other

About the blog and reflections

"I actually think it's a really good idea. I think that blog site should have been a big success. I don't know ... the reason why I didn't do it is because I kept thinking that I would have to do everything on my DS so every time I'd want to write something I figured I would have to save it and then wait until I go to a DS thing and I found ... I made it more of a hassle than it actually was..."

"I think it's very helpful especially if it's in Japanese as well. And even one line every week or every couple of weeks or a month or whatever it's really good ... a good way of keeping up your own diary for a start and also yeah for the reflective report it's very good and practicing diary writing in Japanese is a good way as well."

Group work: didn't work at all, group contact not made and no coherence or clarity.

Big difficulties with connectivity and ended up doing a lot of the tasks online instead of using DSi.

"I think I didn't take it very seriously as a learning tool before I starting doing these tasks, I always just assumed it was for games, I never considered buying one or using one"

Completely forgot about Facebook and wasn't really thinking about other possible uses for social networking or blogging, or using DSi

Advice for future - download the dictionary first.

ID 4

General experience

Fantastic experience, good course. Not much handwriting practice in course. Cultural immersion 7/10

Contact with others, Edinburgh

More contact with other non-Japanese, would have liked more opportunity to mix. Some contact with some Edinburgh fellow students.

Liked the contact with tutors in Edinburgh, felt it was supportive, not invasive, but didn't do much of the Hanabi stuff.

DSI tutorial exercises

Used DSi fairly often and liked it generally. Mostly playing games tho. Not very active on tutorials. Not enough time.

Assessment

Liked group project, and New Year card.

“I think they were more fun plus it was writing a story as well and I really like writing as well, so I thought I'd do it because it sounded like the most fun thing to do, I think.”

Trouble finding wifi spot. Did buy some language-based games in Japan but hasn't used much.

Thought the touch screen tricky (small and sensitive) but quite useful.

“Well I think it's a really good idea actually, it's good that you can... first of all the tutors could see how the handwriting was developing and stroke order and things like that for Japanese and Chinese, obviously. So I think in that regard it's quite a good idea, definitely, but again the only problem I have with it is the Wi-Fi issues and time concerns I think.”

Other

Mostly used Facebook to keep in touch.

Blog:

“I think it would be quite good actually, because you're getting it as its happening rather than thinking about it X months down the road. I'd be for it I would think. I was writing big long emails to family back in Japan and admittedly I could use some of it, potentially, or looking back on it, but I think it's a good idea to use a blog because then you can see it developing as well.”

Now has own DSi, but mostly for games.

ID 5

General experience

Good, good social life, improved language confidence, some written work mix handwriting and typed.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

A little contact with some classmates in Japan

Happy with contact from Edinburgh tutors, not too much but happy to know they were there.

DSI tutorial exercises

Had own console for gaming etc, used DSi for exercises but only when at McDonalds for wifi access. So access problems a big - . + were the exercises - kanji and so on. Unable to participate in groupwork because was already back and couldn't connect.

Assessment

Didn't do all. Liked the casualness of the exercises and 10 mins to spend, would not want them to be heavyweight assessment.

Other

Had some language learning games on own DS. Some insisted on kanji being written in a specific way (strokes in specific order) to recognise them. Tricky on small screen, not like "real" writing

"Because you're obviously used to writing with a pen per se, writing them on there is like a little bit more complicated, because obviously when you're writing something that is not looking for specific recognition you can just obviously draw the kanji how you like ... but it was still very different to kind of writing with a pen and paper."

Blogs:

"Like, I know I've made a lot of specific notes about my stuff and eventually, you know, I'll be writing like an email for like family and friends which is basically detailing kind of what I've done, so there'll be some written record for myself, for example, but I think that's what generally everyone has. They already have their own."

Not keen to use Facebook for university, prefers this to be a private personal space. Thinks a mobile phone might be better for exercises, because everyone always has it with them.

ID 6

General experience

Good, "pretty standard" - Japanese language classes including Kanji, plus classes about Japan (taught in English). More computer-based writing than handwriting. Social life fairly good, joined groups to meet Japanese people. Limited contact with other Edinburgh students via mobile phone but not travelling to see them. Lived in International dorm so limited contact with Japanese students.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Happy to have some contact with Edinburgh tutors but very against Facebook for contact, wanted it to remain own space.

DSI tutorial exercises

Hadn't used before. Didn't really use it but ended up buying own one for games. Didn't seem to know about Kanji handwriting options. Tutorials could be useful for revision but lack of wifi connection made it less useful. Didn't try speaking or taking pics or video or any of the more elaborate options. Didn't do

groupwork. Didn't see the point of the camera or mic. Screen too small for kanji.

"I think they're mainly just there for gaming. That is the DS's main purpose really; it's a game console. It's a Gameboy."

Assessment

Mixed views on weekly blog and how useful it might be for reflective journal. Thinks all of this would be better online but downloadable.

ID 7

General experience

Very good, very intensive. Enjoyed living in own apt with other J people. Course intensive but developed good language skills incl handwriting kanji. American style university - workload very heavy but immediate goals spelt out which was helpful.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Only really other student at same Japanese university, some mobile phone contact with others. Reassuring to know contact with tutors in Edinburgh was easy. But wasn't able to engage fully with Hanabi project and felt a bit guilty about that. Travelled a bit but didn't take laptop or DSi, just mobile phone.

DSI tutorial exercises

Hadn't used before. Found online stepbystep useful but only used it for groupwork, had attempted tutorials before but didn't get far. Preferred the group work anyway.

"I thought that was the most interesting task and also I felt that it was most important that I do that one so that I wasn't letting down the other members of the group. I thought that was possibly the most interesting one because there was a chance to see other people's work and try to change your own way of thinking to follow on from them. I thought that had a lot of really interesting challenges in it."

Tutorials etc: **"I wish I'd have challenged myself in that way. I think that I could have paced myself according to those ... I could have looked to see what we were expected to know and if I had been lacking I would have been able to know where to go from there. Or it could have been motivational because I might have found that I knew them. I thought that the kanji testings were a good idea. I was slightly uncomfortable with the idea of the speech because I would have been embarrassed to think of other people listening to it ... I don't know maybe that means that it's a good think that we're set that task because I could have maybe got over the embarrassment by forcing myself to do it but it could have been a drawback of it as well. I don't know too much about the grammar ones I don't think I looked at those."**

Similar comments for the group work - embarrassment but possibly motivating too. Participated in group task to avoid inconveniencing others.

Took a little while to get writing on screen looking good.

“Possibly for me I might be more motivated to participate in some kind of assessment that's just done through a computer because I would already know how to work it and I wouldn't be intimidated by the knowledge that I would have to find out how to use certain tools on a new console. Also I use the computer often and so there would more opportunities for me to think, *arr, right I've got a spare half hour here I'll start on this assessment.* I don't think changing the actual tutorials is essential to create motivation because I think they were quite good.”

Assessment

Not sure about optional vs assessed memo tasks - can see usefulness of compulsory but wary of time it might take.

Other

Blog etc:

“Yeah I kept briefly a blog online as part of the course that I was doing we were asked to keep a weekly blog. ... So yeah I think a blog would be really good as grammar and vocabulary practice and practice for just being able to eventually write relatively fluently without having to think about it too much. I'm not sure what I think about it being through the DSi because I quite like just doing it by computer but in general I think a blog is a good idea.”

Didn't use Facebook much but liked getting the email reminders.

“I think if I could I would recommend to my past self to attempt to do more of the DSi language tutorials if I could find the time yeah.”

ID 8

General experience

Very good, really liked it there, wants to return as soon as possible. Quite immersive course and including culture etc but lots of typing no handwriting.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Didn't have a lot of contact with other Edinburgh students, found it hard at first to get to know J people, but joined some clubs and learned ways of getting to know students too. Not very good at keeping in touch via emails, Facebook etc anyway. But liked contact from tutors in Edinburgh. Travelled carrying DS bought for self - for entertainment.

DSi tutorial exercises

Didn't look at them. It's not the kind of thing (communication?) preferred. But does use own console all the time and gradually got used to stylus, good practise once you're used to it.

Assessment

Didn't do the groupwork either, had lots of homework for Japanese university. Didn't really check University emails regularly. If it were compulsory part of assessment would have a go.

Other

Blogs - should be up to individual's discretion. Thinks Facebook could be really useful but need to make students more aware of these things before they go away.

ID 9

General experience

Loved it, very structured courses at Japanese university and lots of language practice, lots of handwritten essays in class, very little typing.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Orientation groups at start helped get socialising started, had host family, good opportunities to socialise with range of people. Some contact with Edinburgh classmates Skype etc. Contact from Edinburgh about right, felt supported. Took laptop when travelling, used DS on train.

DSI tutorial exercises

Had used DS Lite before for games. Liked DSi and kanji tutorials, but stylus and screen made writing difficult. Used a lot in class for Kanji notes.

"But yes I made little flash cards and I'd sit on the train and go through my kanji flash cards and things on it. I did that quite a lot."

Liked the tutorials.

Problems with wifi connection and problems with emails, contacting for groupwork so didn't do that.

"One thing I definitely found was writing on the DS made it a bit tricky because it was quite a small screen, it made it a bit tricky. That was the only thing I could find that was wrong with it. Because before I actually wrote them on the DS I wrote them out by hand. Or I typed them up on the laptop so I had copies of things I was going to put up on the DS and then I could copy them out again on the DS. So I found if I'd copied it out on the DS I went back to it and sometimes I couldn't read what I'd written, I couldn't work out what it was, it was like, 'oh, I'll type it up first!'"

Assessment

Likes the idea of a blog, as part of assessment.

Other

For the voice recording ones it was really easy because it was press the button and it recorded it straight away. It was quite good. ... Generally I felt it really easy to use. It was quite good because I had it in my bag, I could sit and do it on the train as well. When I had a little bit of spare time I could work on things.”

ID 10

General experience

Good experience, small groups in class, lots of handwriting experience, more than typing. Lots of social opportunities organised by Japanese university and joined some clubs. Some travelling too.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Stayed in contact with friends from Edinburgh. Quite immersed in culture but dormitory etc artificial. Liked supportive contact from Edinburgh tutors. Took netbook when travelling, had some issues with mobile phone.

DSI tutorial exercises

New to DSi found it difficult at first, only used it for tasks. Liked the tasks but problems with wifi access. Problem with big gap between tutorial in DS use and actually doing tasks. Screen OK once you got used to it.

“It was fine for the tasks, like the kanji ones and the grammar. They were fine, but the collaborative writing task was quite hard. It took a long time to write the story, obviously just because you’re making it so much smaller. And I couldn’t read xxx’s handwriting at all. That was why he had to put it on Facebook. But I think you just got better with practice, so I think it’s fine. You just need to practice doing it.”

Assessment

Did groupwork mostly through Facebook, easier to communicate. If tasks were to be part of formal assessment need to make sure people had adequate access.

Other

Blog a good idea, would have done more if an incentive. Facebook made it easier to communicate, the wifi obstacle for DSi.

ID 11

General experience

Very good, gained a lot in confidence, lots of language practice. Courses more handwriting than typing in class. Had external jobs so also learned language skills then.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Some contact with classmates at same university, friends elsewhere. Liked contact with tutors from Edinburgh.

DSI tutorial exercises

Had own DSi, mainly just used for tasks. Didn't travel with it. Just a games console. So much work from Japanese university didn't have much other time. Couldn't contact teammates for group task so didn't do it. Prioritised work for JLPT. Liked Kanji tests, writing kanji practice.

"I liked Kanji tests. I just like ticking if I knew them or writing Kanji was useful whereas grammar was a bit harder because I didn't always know what the answer should be - I couldn't guess sometimes. So I think it's good for Kanji"

Assessment

Don't know how well it would work if assessed and therefore compulsory. Would choose a blog as assessment, but wouldn't want to write much on DS, would use computer.

Tasks assessed:

"I think it could potentially work but I think if you go to xxx then you're really busy so having Edinburgh work as well would be a little bit of a pain but I didn't mind doing the tasks but I knew they weren't assessed so it was fine. I think third year is maybe enough for most people without assessments."

Other

"I think it could be a bit of a pain downloading everything and then editing and uploading ... like I wish there was a more easy way to do these things but it wasn't hard just time consuming"

There were some good games for language learning.

Facebook OK but annoying if staff sometimes use email / WebCT / facebook other should use one channel and stick to it.

If more options for a portfolio maybe DSi would be useful as one option.

ID 12

General experience

Enjoyed the year away thought it helped language skills. Lots of spoken practice and handwriting, very little typing.

Contact with others, Edinburgh

Had problems with email account so v little contact from Edinburgh, but liked in principle to know some support was there.

DSI tutorial exercises

Hadn't used before (but has PSP), found console "fiddly and complicated".
Didn't really like the tests and didn't think they were particularly helpful, too much extra pressure.

Problems with wireless access. Felt a bit intimidated by the technology.

Assessment

Likes idea of a blog, uses blogs already, but should be optional.

Other

Wasn't keen to have the sort of tutorials offered, suggested that tutors could identify a key digital textbook for checking work / backup - but not compulsory, there's enough work on the Japanese university courses.

"I think teachers using Facebook is a little inappropriate maybe."