

## NOVEMBER, 2016: BREEZE ISSUE #109

A FREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE

### JAPANESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION UPDATE 36 (3 YEAR ANNIVERSARY): WHY I LEARNED JAPANESE

*by Amanda Rollins, Japanese Language Program Coordinator*



Recently, in a meeting with a number of Japanese language teachers, one of them looked me in the eye and said, “I hate anime. I never watch it and I never use it in class.” She went on to say that her students are very “elite” and that they probably didn’t want to learn about anime anyway.

All I could think was, “...Those poor students.” But when I looked back on my own Japanese language classes, none of my professors ever used anime to instruct. I remember one paragraph about *Doraemon* that we read in class, but that is the exception that proves the rule.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge Japanese language teachers to incorporate anime and manga into your lessons. Even if you hate it.

I decided to learn Japanese and go to Japan because of anime and manga. In fact, watching *Sailor Moon* was my first personal encounter with another culture. I did not even care about other *countries* until I learned that “Serena” was from “Tokyo.”

When I watched anime as a kid, I sang along with the opening theme songs and I repeated phrases that the characters were saying. In other words, I trained my ear for correct Japanese pronunciation at a young age. That helped me enormously when I later took proper classes in school.

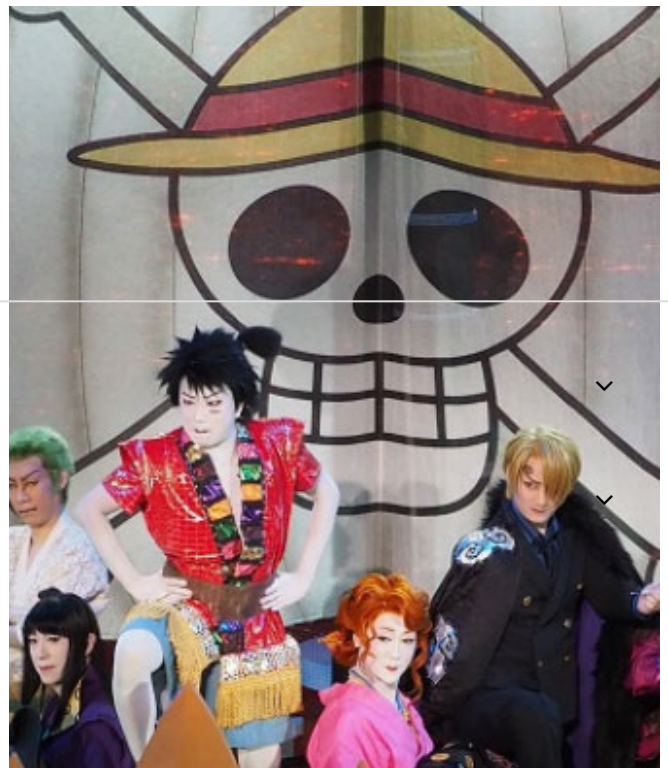
My love of anime and manga meant that I “studied” outside of class for my own personal enjoyment. I watched “authentic materials.” I had fun searching for familiar hiragana, katakana, and kanji in manga volumes. While studying abroad in Osaka for one year, I spent the entire winter break trying to read through a long manga series that has not been translated into English yet. As a form of self-study, I translated a manga-based light novel into English. Talk about “Project Based Learning!”

When I went back to Japan to teach English, I decided to try to pass the JLPT Level 2 (Now called “N2”). I failed the first time, so I bought an expensive set of flashcards to try to remember kanji. Guess what? That didn’t work. So I stopped carrying around the flashcards and started regularly reading manga on the train. Next time I took the JLPT 2, I passed with an extra 20 points in my reading comprehension score.

But learning a language isn’t about tests, and it certainly isn’t about being “elite.” It’s about understanding yourself and other people. It’s about exploring the world outside the classroom.

Anime and manga inspired me to reach outside my comfort zone, find friends, and experience life. I wish my teachers had tried to tap into that. If you’re worried about teaching your students about something you don’t understand, why not let *them* teach *you*?

If you’re in the Los Angeles area, give your students extra credit to come see the [One Piece Kabuki](#) free screening on November 27 (Sunday). Expose your students to a combination of traditional kabuki theatre and the most popular anime of all time!



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Japanese Language Education Update 36

2016 J-LEAP Report: Akiko Inagaki

2016 J-LEAP Report: Sakurako Hiroike

2016 Short-Term Teacher Training Program: Kristin Wingate

2016 Short-Term Teacher Training Program: Madeleine Graham

2016 Japanese Language Program for Specialists: Lin Li

2016 Japanese Language Program for Specialists: Samuel Timinsky

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