米国オレゴン州ポートランド市で実施している
北海道工業大学海外語学学研
—事前研修・実地研修とその評価—
Hokkaido Institute of Technology Study Abroad Program in Portland, Oregon
— Preliminarily lessons, on-site training and evaluation —

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1. Introduction
Students majoring in engineering or science and technology often think that they should focus on their field of study, and don’t need to spend much time for other general education such as English. Unfortunately they are wrong. Those students in particular must study general education, especially English. Almost all references, papers and monographs are written in English, and English is definitely and undoubtedly the lingua franca. Moreover, there are many job opportunities and a wide variety of possibilities for students who have a good command of English.

2. How the Study Abroad Program became the way it is today
Every year, Hokkaido Institute of Technology (HIT) sends a group of students to Portland State University (PSU) as a study-abroad program. The present program originated from a homestay program for spending approximately 4 weeks in the Seattle area, which started in 1989 with 30 participants. Staying with host families in the U.S. provided a home-away-home environment for students, and gave an opportunity to learn a different culture and the English language. However, the homestay experience was not enough for students to acquire English skills; therefore, HIT took a new look at the program. The English Language Center at Oregon State University was chosen, and a brand new program was started in cooperation with Cultural Homestay International for participants’ accommodations in 1995. The program had been bearing fruits slowly but surely, and was acknowledged within HIT. As a result, HIT began to offer participants financial support in 1998, and to grant official credits to students who participate the program. After 14 years holding the program at Oregon State University - taking cost, location, contents, etc. into consideration - the venue of the program has been changed to PSU. Another phase of the program started in 2008. It is the 24th year of the program. Due to changing economic, technological and demographic circumstances, the number of participants varies year by year. However, the total number of participants has been accumulated.
to 307 so far, including this year's.

3. What students do in advance
HIT students who wish to participate in this program need to take preliminary lessons for one year prior to the program; therefore, they can raise the level of their English abilities beforehand, and they will be able to accomplish more when they study at PSU. However, it doesn't mean that all students taking preliminary lessons can participate in the program. They are interviewed both in English and Japanese in the middle of the fall semester preceding the program. They are not evaluated merely on their English ability, but also on their motivation and willingness to study abroad. Students who pass the interview test can join the program at last.

4. What students do abroad
On the way to the home base of the program, Portland, the group visits San Francisco for a couple of nights. Also, there is an excursion to Seattle during their stay in Portland. Since HIT students major in engineering or science and technology, the program includes some visits to companies such as Apple Inc., Microsoft Corporation, an architecture firm, an engineering department in an American university, etc, between San Francisco and Seattle. Not only can they study English and learn about American culture, but they can also experience and feel at first hand some workplaces for world-leading companies. In Portland students have English Class and American Culture Class every morning. Along with classroom learning, they have practical English training. For example, they are given a card with an item on it. Students ask around and try to find a place or a store which has the item. Another example is that they come up with some question. They talk to passers-by and ask their opinions about the question. Afterward they present and discuss the result in class. In the end of the program students are responsible to make and perform a final presentation about the topic of their choosing and a skit with a group.

5. Next steps

Each year, the contents of the program need to be adjusted to the times, considering the needs of the students, their parents, and companies that make up the job market. The English Study Abroad program isn't just an opportunity to study English and to look at a different culture. English isn't just another school subject, but a way of communication. Therefore the program should stimulate and motivate students, and be a good influence for their future careers. More exposure to real world situations or practical situations make students aware of what's going on in the world, giving them a better view for the course to take after graduation. The next step is to give students an opportunity to have an experience at workplaces abroad in order to foster more students who can spread their wings to fly globally. The program must evolve, giving top priority to our students.