University of Shizuoka Visit (May 8, 2008)

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The main goal in coming to Shizuoka University was to foster communication with the staff and students there building on the experience gained from the first group that came in December 2007. The abbreviated 3-week initial program in December brought various challenges that needed addressing. In addition, communication of the types of tasks addressed in a typical class was made. The classes we offer are mainly geared toward preparing the students for making presentations of their research in a clear concise language and style that will be able to be understood by colleagues and laymen. This is accomplished through: **Daily readings, Practice leading discussion groups, Pronunciation practice, Dictation practice, Interactive class work , Progressive presentations, Presentation summaries, and Tutorials**. The visit also included some time to share about some programming and teaching tips that we, as a program, have gleaned over the years. Some of these are as follows: **Length of time** for a program is an issue that many times gets second place to quality, but they are both equally relevant. Language learners are always benefited by having a **variety of input** (whether it be people or methods). **Pre-program preparation** is suggested in the sense that learners having constant contact with the target language in their regular studies via classes, contact with target language professors, or correspondence, encourages acquisition. Reference was made to the **"tree/forest"** syndrome referring to the focusing in on details of small changes of test scores while missing out on the communicative clarity which is the target of the program. **"When in Rome"** is the general advice to the language learner to be flexible and absorb all of the language-learning opportunities and cross cultural experiences that are available. Various ideas for **presentation skills** were addressed such as: Volume practice using dual overheads and explaining items to student at projector, impromptu speeches, strip topics, everyday speeches with topics of daily life, powerpoint hints and tips, and gestures and audience interactiveness. **The importance of interaction** between students and the teacher is essential and can be enhanced by infogap exercises, negotiating, discussion, weaning from the "T-centered class", Q & A, writing responses, and using the environment they are in. On a side note some general advice in **teaching mixed ability classes** was given as well as some **various teaching tips** such as self discovery, highlighting vs. correcting, group choral pronunciation, overhead error correction, formulating questions from readings, and use of the internet such as Facebook/ Myspace…etc for interactions and news podcasts/ lecture podcasts, etc.