

# Home from home

Living and learning in a teacher's home appeals to a range of clients who, for whatever reason, may not be keen to study in a classroom environment. AMY BAKER reports.

**D**anny Chang, Marketing Manager at Stage – the Education Foundation of Europe in Taiwan, says that in his experience, home tuition programmes “have never been popular in Taiwan”, estimating that less than one per cent of clients choose them.

However, he acknowledges that, despite low demand, home tuition programmes do offer a preferable alternative for some students, especially those “who have limited time for study”. Daisuke Yamamoto, from the International Education Exchange Centre at the Ryugaku Times in Japan, agrees. Sending up to three per cent of clients per year on home tuition programmes in the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, UK and Germany, Yamamoto says the courses are popular with “seniors, business people or students who can only spend a week or two weeks” studying.

Certainly, there are learning benefits from intensive tuition while living in a teacher's home. As Kristopher Jemel-Karami, Vice President of Marketing for American Language Programs (ALP) in the USA points out, “Students who study in this manner make rapid results that far exceed other English courses and methods of instruction. Our methods are scientifically documented.”

Barry Haywood, International Director of Eurolingua Institute, which offers home tuition programmes in 150 locations throughout the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and Spain, backs up this point. “One-to-one tuition is recognised as the most efficient, cost-effective method of learning a language,” he says. “It is easier and more effective to do

something than to be taught. The first [method] implies choice, the second coercion.”

And far from being in a claustrophobic learning environment, students usually participate in local excursions to places of interest as well as different social and leisure activities with the teacher, their family, friends and colleagues outside of lesson time. Lynn Procopides, at Intuition Languages in the UK, says, “Overall, the opportunity to converse with other native speakers is very high.”

In the USA, in Saratoga Springs, New York state, English Connection Language Schools offers students the opportunity to combine living and learning in a teacher's home with classes at the school centre. “After classes, the student continues to learn – 24 hours a day,” says Joanne Kubricky.

An advantage of home tuition programmes is that students are able learn in a way that suits them best, enjoying lessons that are tailored to their needs. “A one-to-one Eurolingua programme is tailor-made and meets a student's exact linguistic needs and requirements,” says Haywood. Jemel-Karami underlines, “Since ALP's inception, we have taken a student-centred approach to teaching English, realising that everyone learns differently.”

In South Africa, Avril Dawson of the Cape Garden Language Centre says that students become close friends of her family once they have studied in her home. “They become honorary family members during their stay,” she says. “[Students] are taught at their own pace and once their particular requirements are revealed, we divert from the course book until they feel confident. I work very hard at creating a relaxed and affirming atmosphere.”

Dawson says that courses are offered from three weeks in duration onwards. “I am getting enquiries for as long as six months now,” she adds, indicating a shift away from the traditional “time-pressed” client that usually enrolls on such programmes. Students often tend to be quite independent, according to Dawson, hiring a car and going off at weekends. “I think [students can] feel apprehensive about a class situation where they feel they may not cope as well as others,” she ventures.

Haywood points out that repeat bookings are common in this sector. “We have one client who has been doing two homestay programmes each year since 1994, one in France and one in Spain,” he says. “There are a few clients each year who wish to study for two or three months, but we always arrange a multi-location programme for them, with a maximum of four weeks with any one tutor.”

The sector is clearly evolving, and attracting a more diverse range of clients. Daniela Maccolini, of Coming agency in Italy, says these courses appeal to a variety of her clients, “mainly executive people, but there are other types of students. Generally, [older] students who don't feel like attending a class with other students, and thirdly, young students, from 11 to 16 years old, whose family likes the idea of their child in a safe learning environment.”

In the UK, British Council accreditation became available for home tuition courses in 1999. Procopides at Intuition – the first UK centre to earn British Council accreditation – adds that their programmes provide an “ideal environment for a crash [intensive] course – a key type of student is the motivated learner who is studying for an exam”.

## Growing the market

Language teaching providers offering home tuition programmes are quick to point out that there is much scope for agencies who want to work in this field. “We welcome bookings through agents but in effect they represent less than 20 per cent of bookings for this type of Eurolingua programme,” says Barry Haywood at Eurolingua Institute, which operates in a variety of countries. He adds, “I think the field is wide open for agents in this respect.”

Agent Dag Gårdeman, of Pro Linguis in Sweden, who offers home tuition programmes, acknowledges that there is market potential too, although he points out that there is minimal demand from his regular agency customers for home tuition products. “There is a market for these programmes, but it needs more direct marketing,” he comments. “I believe that it is a

product that you buy on recommendation, not through brochures.”

Recommendations and repeat business are both key ways that home tuition providers attract clients, and this accounts for about 20 per cent of business at Intuition in the UK, for example. However, like most other providers, Intuition is keen to work with agencies. “We work with agencies including a lot of language schools,” says Lynn Procopides, “and this accounts for 60 per cent of bookings.”

Many agencies may not have considered working with home tuition providers or schools that can offer home tuition – even if this is achieved by working with a third party, such as Intuition. However, the benefits for certain clients can be great, as Daniela Maccolini, from Coming agency in Italy, underlines. “The quality that you can find in a home tuition programme is irreplaceable”.



PHOTOGRAPH: INTUITION LANGUAGES