

Fact-finding Survey on Representations concerning Short-term Language Training Programs in Foreign Countries (Summary)

December 19, 2006
Japan Fair Trade Commission

1 Short-term language training programs in foreign countries

Under the recent circumstance where the number of short-term overseas training programs for foreign language (Note) offered through arrangement service agents tends to increase mainly among young people, the Japan Fair Trade Commission (“JFTC”) has conducted a fact-finding survey on representations concerning those programs, and it has organized and summarized its point of view based on the Act against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations (“Premiums and Representations Act”), in order to contribute to consumers’ appropriate commodity choice.

(Note) “Short-term overseas training programs for foreign language” means training programs for the purpose of studying foreign languages at language schools in foreign countries for less than three months, and thus, it does not usually require student visas.

2 Representation which is likely to induce consumers’ misunderstanding

The following representations are possibly shown to consumer to be much better than the actual one.

(1) Representation concerning language schools in foreign countries

- (i) Representation in which a relationship between language schools and colleges is not clear

Representation which shows as if a college is an administrator of training courses, although in reality a language school is unrelated to the college.

- (ii) Representation concerning percentage of Japanese student in language school in which its calculating standard is not clear

Representation which shows as if students can always learn a foreign language under an environment where not many Japanese students are in a class by showing it against the fact or by describing only annual average of the percentage, although there are some cases where percentage of Japanese student in language school differs greatly from the represented figure according to season and/or class to

attend.

(2) Representation concerning homestay

- (i) Representation which shows as if students can experience an environment such as close relationship with host families etc.

Representation which shows as if students can experience fulfilling his/her livings with host families with no exception, although in reality sufficient living experience and close relationship with host families in the country are not always assured.

- (ii) Representation in which host family's language environment is not clear

Representation which shows as if the environment where host families speak English with no exception, although there are some cases where daily conversation is spoken in a language other than English in host families, even when a student is studying in an English-speaking country.

(Cases in other language countries are considered as same as the above)

- (iii) Representation of service agent's name which is confusingly similar to that of public institution

Representation which induces consumers to misunderstand as if a company is a public institute by showing only a trade name, such as "○○ institute" or "○○ center" etc, which is different from the actual company name, although it is not a public institute.

Representation which induces consumers to misunderstand as if a company is a public institute by describing "○○ institute" or "○○ center" etc. as a name of the company, and "authorized by ○○ (county name)", although in reality it is not a public institute.

3 The JFTC's response in the future

- (i) Requesting trade associations for undertaking efforts to make representation appropriate

The JFTC has requested to Japan Association of Overseas Studies and the Homestay Tour Adjustment Council, which is an organization under the Japan Association of Travel Agents including some companies which provide arrangement services of language training programs, for making representation by affiliated members more appropriate. The JFTC also requested to the Travel Agent Fair Trade Council, which enforces the Fair Competition Code for representation concerning tour arrangement

services, for incorporating the point of view indicated above into the code according to the Premiums and Representations Act.

(ii) Strict response against misleading representation

The JFTC, based on the view described in this survey, will continue to enforce the Premiums and Representations Act strictly when facing the violation concerning short-term language training programs in foreign countries.