

Hello! My name is Annabelle Chang, and I graduated from UCSD in spring of 2022 with a double major in Japanese Studies, Linguistics, and a Psychology Minor. After graduating from UCSD, I moved to a rural town in Hokkaido on the JET Program. I worked for three years as an Assistant Language Teacher before moving back to America in August of 2025 to pursue a graduate degree. I'm currently a Master's Candidate in Translation & Localization Management at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey studying Japanese Translation and specializing in Creative Media. After graduating, I want to work with Japanese entertainment and media.

A funny story is that I actually applied into UCSD with Japanese Studies as my major. I decided I wasn't a huge fan of potentially learning about politics, and as purely as a language nerd, I switched to Linguistics. I kept taking the language courses and eventually felt the need to study more about Japanese culture to complement progress in the language, so I decided I might as well declare a minor. While researching the required courses for the minor, I found that classes for the major were not that much more, and I had credits to spare, so I ended up in a double major. A real full circle moment, and I think shows that a lot of unexpected things can happen during your college career. Be open to anything and be passionate!

I'm glad I ventured beyond just language classes. I thoroughly enjoyed the history courses I took with Professor Matsumura more than I thought I would, and I loved the customizability of the research and writing components of the major, especially the higher-level classes. I truly loved all the language faculty, but I have to give a special shoutout to Inada-sensei and Sato-sensei. Unlike other classes at UCSD, the Japanese Studies classes are always very small, giving you a chance to get to know your classmates and professors, and them to know you. Please don't take this for granted! All of my letters of recommendation came from professors in the Japanese Studies department, because I knew that the small class sizes and repeat classes let them get to know me more than other classes.

Japanese has been in my life for the past 15 years. After graduating, I used it every day when I lived in Japan, making my life infinitely easier in so many ways and my coworkers were much more willing to talk to me in their downtime. I am now pursuing further studies in translating Japanese to make this my career in a field I am passionate about. The topics and grammar points I studied in the 130 and 140 series primed my knowledge and vocabulary I use in my translation studies.

The graduate student in me will say: Talk to your professors! Get lunch and/or coffee with your classmates! Be open to opportunities and search them out. Use your time wisely while you still can in undergrad. And most of all: Just because you are studying Japanese doesn't mean it's useless. The biggest piece of advice I have for students majoring in a language is to pair it with something else, either a minor or even a skill or interest. Having a goal in mind for what you will do with it helps a lot too. It's ok if you don't know what you want to do with your life. As long as you have an idea and a story to tell, let the pieces fall into place.