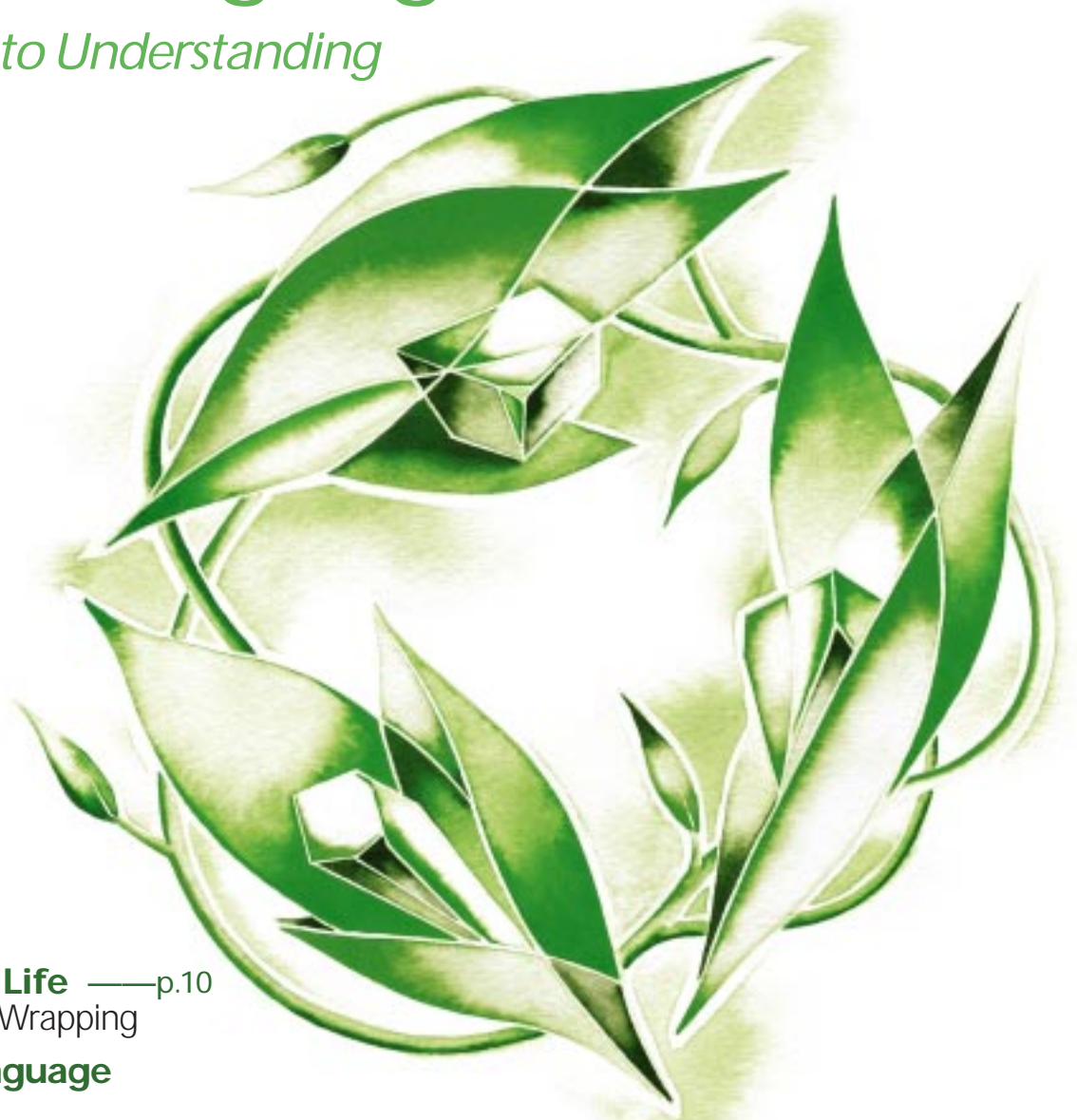




Feature:

## Teaching Culture in the Language Classroom

*Pathways to Understanding*



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# Teaching Culture in the Language Classroom

## *Pathways to Understanding*



At the 1997 meeting of the American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (Nashville, Tennessee) the Japan Forum held a session on November 22 entitled "How Can Culture Be Taught in the Language Classroom?" At the session, Sandra Lopez-Richter, winner of the grand prize in TJF's first (1995) Lesson Plan Contest: *Ideas and Examples of How to Teach Culture in the Japanese-language Class* (targeted at Japanese-language teachers at elementary and secondary schools in countries other than Japan) and Kanō Yōko, another prize-winner, talked about the reasons they teach culture in Japanese-language classes. Peggy Hagmann, who won a prize in the foreign-language education division of the 1995 American Teacher Awards presented by the Walt Disney Company and McDonald's, discussed the importance of linking cultural understanding to Japanese and other foreign-language education for young students.

This issue of The Japan Forum Newsletter introduces summaries compiled from the presentations in this session and considers the place of Japanese-language education in American schools. The experiences recounted here confirm the importance of cultural understanding in foreign-language education, not only in the United States but everywhere.

## Culture Through Food

*Sandra Lopez-Richter*



**Sandra Lopez-Richter**

Teaches Japanese and Spanish at Crestwood Middle School, Royal Palm Beach, Florida. Her lesson plan "History of Japanese Rice" won the grand prize at the secondary school level in the 1995 TJF lesson plan contest.

I owe my idea of teaching about Japanese rice to my Mexican roots. I've always loved cooking, and my father owns a couple of Mexican restaurants, so our family was always involved with food, preparation of dishes, and other things to do with eating. I knew how important tortillas and chiles are to Mexican cooking. In Mexico, the different Mexican tribes have special ceremonies in which corn and cornmeal is used, for example, in rituals for the dead. Then again, the Mayan culture has a cuisine very different from that of the Aztecs. When I learned about the role of rice in Japan, I realized that there are many similarities to the role of corn in these cultures.

So I dedicate one entire week to teaching about Japanese rice and related foods. The first thing I have to do is get rid of the misnomers the children have acquired—that Japanese eat "dogs and cats," or "chow-mein"—so that they will begin to see that each Asian culture has its own particular foods and customs. And, rather than talking about how "weird" these foods are, I try to give them the background, show

the rich history of rice, for example, and show the correspondences to the tortilla of Mexico, the bread of France, the pasta of Italy.

In teaching you have to plant the seed of enthusiasm, and for this purpose I think that culture is crucial. It is impossible to separate language from culture. If you do not incorporate culture into language instruction, you may find that students grow fluent to a certain extent and become very knowledgeable, but they don't become really enthusiastic. It is important to develop linguistic proficiency in Japanese, but if you don't have a love of the culture, it's not going to be contagious. In our society today, I think people are finally coming to understand that Japanese is a unique language and Japan has a unique culture. They are realizing that Japan is different and distinct from Thailand and China, and are learning to appreciate it. This can be accomplished through teaching about food and other aspects of culture. While each culture is unique, there are also many universalities and features shared among different cultures.



It is quite a joy, I must say, to go to a sushi restaurant in my community and find children from my classes there, enjoying the food. They go regularly, the sushi maker tells me, and the kids themselves tell me they are going to study Japanese in college. This gives me a real thrill. I have found that the longer I teach, whether it be Spanish or Japanese, the more I realize both the unique qualities of each culture and the similarities among them.

My program begins with telling the children about the different words for rice in Japanese—*kome*, *gohan*, *raisu*—and so on. The seventh graders know how to write “*raisu*” in katakana. I explain how this food is called “*raisu*” when eaten with Western food and “*gohan*” when it comes with Japanese-style food. I tell them about the different types of rice—related ceremonial foods including *sekihan* and *o-mochi* for *O-shōgatsu*. Right before Christmas break I buy frozen *o-mochi* and this year we will grill them on grills that I brought back from Japan. We’ll wrap them in *nori* and dunk them in *shōyu*, and explore some of the other customs that go with *O-shōgatsu*.

I tell them about *shinmai*, about how rice was once used in place of money, and why it is so important to eat every little grain of rice in your bowl. We learn about *onigiri*. I have access to

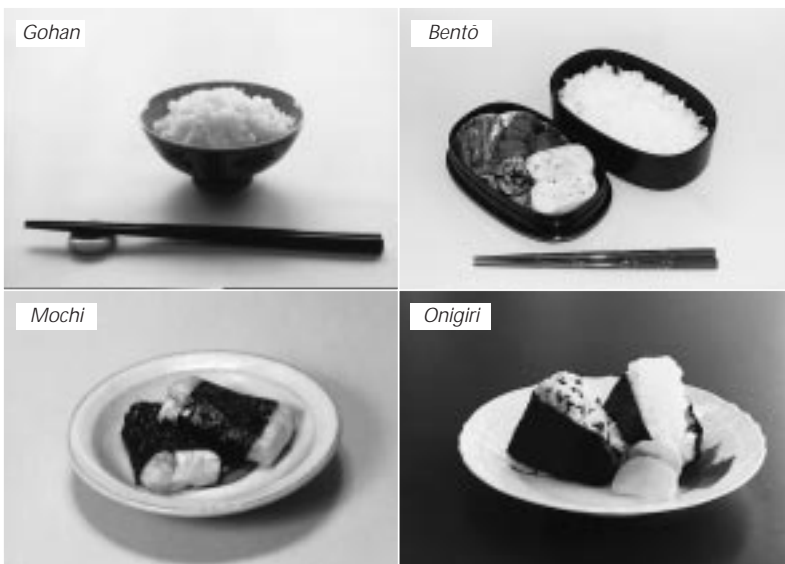
an Asian food store that sells *umeboshi*—which I love myself—and we make proper *onigiri*.

About two weeks ago we had a lesson on Japanese breakfast. I got fish, *nattō*, *tsukemono*, and made *tamagoyaki* and *misoshiru*, and the kids had quite a time. It was wonderful. And now the children are saying, “Is there a traditional Japanese lunch we can have?” So this year we will have a little *bōnen-kai* in the classroom, learn about the ingredients for *sukiyaki* and try it out. In that connection I think I’ll tell them about the differences between Kansai and Kanto.

There is a great deal you can teach about culture in the Japanese classroom. For example good table manners: they have learned that one does not point with one’s *o-hashii*. You should not suck on your chopsticks, put them in the bowl or stick them upright in your rice. We note the differences between Chinese and Japanese chopsticks. I have also done a lesson on noodles and slurping, telling them how it’s all right to slurp Japanese noodles and the louder you slurp the more you express how good it is, but that they shouldn’t slurp their chicken noodle soup.

I can feel the children developing a fascination in Japanese language through this kind of cultural experience and I know that it will foster

in them a desire to learn more and perhaps to go to Japan. I love teaching. It is priceless to be able to touch the hearts of young children who at one time perhaps viewed Japanese as people with “slanted eyes” or other stereotypes, but who become really interested in this different culture. And I have found that teaching about the culture of food is a very effective approach for drawing out students’ interest and enthusiasm. ♪





## Learning Body Language

*Kanō Yōko*



**Kanō Yōko**

Former Japanese-language teacher at John T. Hoggard High School, Wilmington, North Carolina. Kanō now teaches Japanese at the University of North Carolina. Her lesson plan "Body Language" won a prize in the 1995 TJF lesson plan contest.

At the very beginning of the school year, first level, on the very first days of class—when enrollment has settled down—I start teaching about Japanese language and behavior in the culture.

I take due advantage of myself as a native speaker, because for many of them I am the only Japanese they have ever come into contact with. Although I have been living in the United States for seven years and have become rather Americanized in many ways, in the classroom I try to be "Japanese," to go back to my roots. For example, instead of pointing to my chest, as Americans do, to indicate myself, I point to my nose, as Japanese do. If I have an assistant teacher who has just come from Japan, I tell the students to notice the typically Japanese character of their hand gestures. For example, when they are embarrassed, their hands go to their mouth. It is an ideal opportunity for students to see how Japanese behave and interact with each other. They can eavesdrop on what we are saying in Japanese. They can see us bowing to each other and saying "Onegaishimasu," and so on.

I encourage the students to be observant, and to exercise insight and understanding about things that may initially strike them as strange or different. Observing others perceptively also helps students think about their own character. They may think it odd to see Japanese bowing into the telephone, but when they think about it, Americans, too, use hand gestures and expressions as if the person on the other end could see them. Behavior may be displayed in different forms, but it plays essentially the same role. Students don't have to start acting like Japanese themselves, but they need to become aware of different gestures used in other cultures and that some gestures mean different things in other cultures.

One aspect of learning Japanese—learning any foreign language—that is particularly valuable is that it is an opportunity to acquire different characteristics. The American friends I came to know as foreign students in Japan, whom I met later here in the United States, behaved quite differently in Japan from the way they do here in their own country. Obviously they adopted some characteristics in Japan as Americans speaking Japanese. I always tell my students that they will acquire something different in the course of studying Japanese. These are young people who are still learning social expectations, rules, and manners. It is a good chance for them to become more aware of what they are doing and how they look.

At the very beginning stage, I introduce bowing and nodding (*aizuchi*) during conversation. I emphasize that nodding means "I see," "I'm listening," not necessarily, "I agree." I explain how, depending on your relationship to the other person, the way you bow or nod will be different. We also talk about smiling and laughter. They sometimes think that Japanese laugh at the strangest times. In Japan, if you step on somebody's foot, you might grin





or laugh in embarrassment and apology, but sometimes it makes American people angry—they declare it's not something to laugh about.

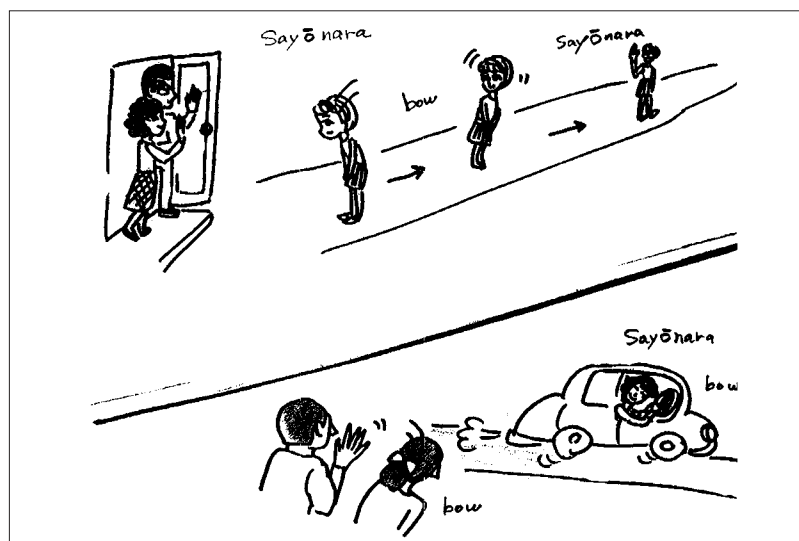
We talk about saying good-bye. Japanese have a tendency to repeat farewells over and over, until they are out of sight. But some Americans do the same. I point out the similarities and they realize that it's not just some kind of strange Japanese behavior. They like to point out how Japanese still try to bow when they are inside a car moving away. I remind them that this is the custom that goes back even before there were any cars.

I do notice the students acquiring new kinds of behavior. When they meet their American teachers in the hallway they greet them American style, but when they see me—especially at the beginning of the semester—they start bowing deeply to me, saying "Ohayō gozaimasu." Little by little they will learn when to use a very deep bow and when a brief dip and wave of the hand is appropriate. That shows them how in Japan, as we move from very distant relations to very casual ones, the way we bow changes.

My second objective in teaching these things is as a technique for achieving classroom discipline. That's why I do this lesson very early in the beginning. I tell them I am still adapting to American culture, and some kinds of behavior really make me very angry or uncomfortable. I ask for their cooperation. There are certain kinds of behavior I find very distasteful and it's the kind of thing that Japanese in general find distasteful. If they want to achieve good or smooth communication with Japanese, they have to be aware of certain things.

I always teach the various common gestures, such as for indicating that something is delicious, for signaling for someone to come closer, and for meaning "money." I talk about eye contact, which was something I found difficult to get used to in the United States, where people look you straight in the eye from first acquaintance.

What students learn with their bodies, they won't forget. They may forget how to say "Kon-nichiwa. Hajimemashite" or "Ohayō gozaimasu"—they may forget the words—but they will not forget the body language. So in the future when they come into contact with Japanese, they will remember the body language. Their usage and accent may be wrong, but their body language will help those who meet them to trust them and feel at ease. ☺





## Passing on Passion

*Peggy Hagmann*



**Peggy Hagmann**

Japanese-language teacher at North High School, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Prize winner in the foreign-language education division of the 1995 American Teacher Awards presented by the Walt Disney Company and McDonald's. Former Spanish-language teacher

Interest in culture in the classroom often begins as an expression of curiosity by the teacher. A teacher who is interested in things—differences, similarities, characteristics—can be the driving force in learning. It puts us in the powerful position to *pass on our passion*. Teaching culture can be a vehicle not only for learning about another way of life but for encouraging students to seek and pursue things about which they feel passionately, no matter what it is. It can affirm that curiosity is good and important, now and throughout their lives.

I approach the teaching of culture through what I call “Kyō no Bunka” (“Today’s Culture” or “Culture for the Day”). I have a sign hanging up in one corner of my classroom over the blackboard, and under this sign I write the word and various notes when introducing Kyō no Bunka. It is part of the way I keep my program organized. I introduce a wide variety of topics from broad conceptual themes to very specific, concrete things—from morning greetings to *mimikaki* (ear picks)—sometimes plan-

ning well ahead of time, sometimes on the spur of the moment. I don’t attempt to do a Kyō no Bunka culture point every day. I don’t let it become a burden. I chose when to present something—occasioned perhaps by a day that falls on one of Japan’s annual events (like Setsubun), by the visit of a guest from Japan, by a gift I’ve received from Japan or a question that comes up in the classroom. I always include language with culture.

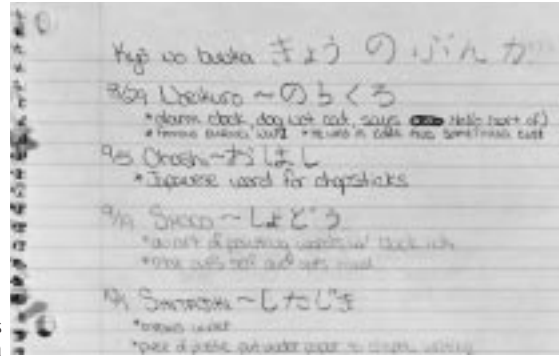
The teaching time for Kyō no Bunka is from 5 minutes to 5 days; I like it to be flexible, but organized. It can be adapted to any level, K through 12. Terms and expressions can be introduced as appropriate to the level, and the materials used include anything and everything Japanese, a *ramune* bottle, a *mimikaki*, or a Daruma figure. Or sometimes nothing, nothing tangible, that is. It can be simply to explain a particular topic, like “Shōgatsu” or “haiku.”

I write the term on the board, at the very first only in romaji, and after that in hiragana or kanji. The students are expected to be accountable for the information I tell them about each Kyō no Bunka topic, so when they need to, they take notes. I have them repeat the word over and over, and this repetition is important for unfamiliar terms. Then I demonstrate or tell a story. Since I am usually working in a team with a Japanese assistant, we may present a little dialogue, with myself as the curious American and the assistant as the Japanese, responding to my questions. Or, I may have a guest speaker who has brought a gift for the classroom or for me, and we talk about it and I ask questions about it. I always give the kids plenty of time to write what they hear in their notebooks.

The items used for Kyō no Bunka, which we keep in what I call the Bunka Bag, can be brought out and used over and over. For example, I started out one year with a Norakuro alarm clock. The alarm chimes with voice of



The souvenir Daruma Ms. Hagmann brought from Japan for her students with the explanatory note she always provides for Kyō no Bunka items



A student's notes on Kyō no Bunka



After a class using the Norakuro alarm clock, one student who enjoys baking made this cake, decorated with the ditty heard from the clock, in hiragana

the little black and white dog saying “*Ohayō! Ohayō,*” so we can use this in the very first days teaching *aisatsu*. The Daruma figure can be brought back to use for eyes, nose and mouth, for “*Ikura desu ka,*” and many other things. I introduce *mimikaki* because it’s something we don’t have in American culture, but they’re a common sight in Japan.

Other topics that are keyed to certain times of the year are *seibo*, *nengajō*, *Shōgatsu*, etc. One brief topic I introduce is *nori*, because before we do *onigiri*, we have to know what *nori* is. I pass out pieces of *nori* and let the students touch, smell, and feel it, and then I give them *arare* with little specks of *nori* in it or wrapped in *nori*. Later, when we take up *onigiri*, they know what *nori* is and how healthy it is.

I organize the topics somewhat, making sure I cover seasonal topics at the right time of year, but otherwise move things around flexibly or shift them to Japanese 3 or 4, when the students will be ready for them.

The students take notes, some more carefully than others. I tell them a lot of detail and tell them that they are responsible for knowing the details. But I don’t write it all down on the board

and I don’t give them handouts. I make them responsible for keeping notes if they need to.

I don’t check their notebooks or demand that they look neat and nice, but I tell them they’ll have to study from their own notes, because there’s no other place to look up these things. Some don’t take many notes and some can be pretty sloppy; but what matters is whether they remember what I told them; they can each do it in their own way.

I do reviews and quizzes of the Kyō no Bunka culture points. This corner can be helpful in filling in extra time, too, if you finish early after a guest speaker or you have an extra pocket of time. I teach them phrases and terms to go with each topic, like “*Oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi!*” with *Setsubun*; “*Itadakimasu*” with *hashi*, “*nengajō*” and “*Akemashite omedetō gozaimasu*” with *Shōgatsu*. Big topics bring up smaller topics, perhaps better taken up separately.

It helps to personalize culture, by having a native speaker talk about topics, telling about personal experiences, and so forth. It also helps if students teach “*Amerika no Bunka*” to Japanese assistants or guests who come to the classroom. In this way, passing on passion also prompts students to teach the culture they have learned to friends, substitute teachers, parents, and family. 🍁



A student who carved the characters for “Japan” on a Halloween pumpkin, and her father

# Japanese Language Study in the United States

**Richard D. Brecht**

Director, National Foreign Language Center, U.S.A.

Many, if not most, Americans are unconvinced that languages other than English are relevant to their lives. If they have thought about language at all, they basically believe that the learning of another language is unnecessary (“the world speaks English”), impossible (“no one really learns a foreign language”), or irrelevant (“most language courses fail to address my real world communications needs”).

These attitudes result in the current situation in the United States, where only one third of students enroll in a language course at any level in the educational system. Of these, only approximately ten percent attempt a language other than French or Spanish, the only languages generally available at most schools and universities in the United States. Of the students who even attempt the “harder languages” (like Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian), only a small proportion ever reach even a basic level of functional proficiency.

The study of Japanese in the United States has to be considered against this broader context as well as in light of its difficulty for English-speaking Americans. Studies have shown that it takes approximately three times as long to reach a basic functional proficiency in Japanese as it does in French or Spanish. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that study abroad in Japan, the prerequisite for any degree of language mastery, is not generally accessible to most students, given the high cost for Americans to live and study there.

In spite of these obstacles, enrollments in Japanese language expanded significantly through the 1980s,\* producing a spate of new programs at the school and college levels. This growth was supported by school systems, colleges and universities, as well as by private foundations and governmental agencies in the United States and in Japan.

There are now signs, however, that the situation of constantly expanding enrollments is over and that public and private sector resources supporting Japanese-language programming are shrinking. Now, as never before, strategic planning is required to ensure that future investment of resources will support the building of a strong field architecture capable of sustaining Japanese-language learning in the most effective and cost-efficient manner for the foreseeable future.

In response to this new reality, the Japanese-language field currently is engaged in a field-wide process which is unprecedented in American language education. The goal is to develop mechanisms to guarantee the health of Japanese language programming in the United States for the foreseeable future. The major Japanese language teachers' organizations, the Association of Teachers of Japanese (ATJ) and National Council of Secondary Teachers of Japa-

nese (NCSTJ), are joined in this effort by founders as well as by other national voices concerned with the language in the United States.

In the United States, a new vision on the future of language learning in the new world of global communication is emerging. This vision assumes that language programming has to do “more with less”: more languages, more students, more tasks, more competencies; and it has to do all of this with steady or even diminishing resources. This new system (termed “System III”) assumes that the language-learning programs of the future will “customize language learning” to enable students, whatever their interests and schedules, to select additional learning opportunities from an on-line menu of modules and tutorials, as well as learning communities.

This vision depends on full advantage being taken of the incredible advances in modern communications and information technology, particularly the WWW. It also assumes that language fields, and their representative organizations, will play a much stronger role in school and campus programming than they have in the past. In addition to providing services to individual members through conferences and journals, field-wide organizations will have to support the establishment and enhancement of programs in schools and on campuses. This will require that founders broaden their focus from strengthening individual programs to building strong language field architecture.

The Japanese-language field in the United States is particularly well positioned to implement a new vision of language learning, one more capable of addressing the changing Japanese language needs of the twenty-first century. The leadership of the field has begun the process. With great anticipation, we all await the results of their efforts.

\* Draper and Hicks of ACTFL report that between 1982 and 1990 Japanese enrollments in public high schools grew from 6,246 to 25,123 and that “The fastest growing language continues to be Japanese, which almost doubled its secondary school enrollment between 1990 and 1994.” The Modern Language Association reports that Japanese language enrollments between 1968 and 1990 grew tenfold, from 4,324 to 45,717.



# How Can Culture Be Taught in the Classroom?

## *Points to Keep in Mind*

This feature of our newsletter considers Japanese-language education, particularly at the elementary and secondary level, through the three presentations given in the TJF-sponsored session at the ACTFL conference. One of the most important purposes of teaching Japanese—or any foreign language—at the elementary and secondary level of education is to foster among students familiarity with other cultures and international understanding. The ways to achieve this goal presented in this session are summarized here.

### Purposes

- \* To contribute not only to knowledge of language but to the education of students in the broad sense
- \* To expose students to unfamiliar languages and cultures
- \* To foster communication skills through knowledge of culture
- \* To cultivate students' interest in culture and motivation for learning

Foreign-language education, because it provides an opportunity for contact with a previously unknown language and culture, can be much more than simply the learning of language; it can contribute immensely to the education of young children in the broadest sense. The study of language and culture is useful in many ways in the development of young people's abilities: exposure to unfamiliar sounds and writing systems cultivates powers of concentration and perception; contact with other cultures enhances the ability to observe and enriches powers of imagination; learning to speak other languages brings with it the discovery of shared human traits and the awareness of universal human qualities that transcend culture.

In the course of such study, moreover, students begin to think consciously about language and culture, thereby acquiring heightened appreciation of and tolerance toward other peoples that can be catalysts for broadening their worldview.

### Stance of Teacher

- \* Curiosity, open-mindedness, and enjoyment

Particularly regarding foreign languages and cultures, students learn the most from the attitude and stance of the teacher himself or herself. Enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and enjoyment of learning another language and culture on the part of a teacher is infectious, readily prompting students to accept the challenges the teacher presents. An atmosphere in the classroom that is flexible about the mistakes students make is also very important for teaching a foreign language in a way that will promote cultural and international understanding.

### Topics, Activities, Resources

- \* Familiar, easily-understood topics
- \* Activities that students can do and experience themselves
- \* Practical items that will arouse students' interest

It is important to choose materials that are suited to students' age and stage of development and that are familiar and easily grasped. Their interest can also be aroused by incorporating information or topics about Japanese young people of their same age. At the elementary school level, songs, dances, and other activities with physical activity and use of the five senses, are particularly effective.

### Points for Incorporating Culture

- \* Emphasize critical thinking
- \* Do not over-generalize
- \* Encourage comparison with own culture

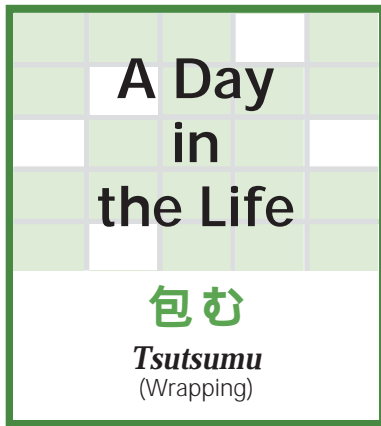
Above all it is important to have students think about the language and culture in question, rather than simply memorizing information. Care should be taken not to make statements that over-generalize about or stereotype Japanese culture. It is also important to have students look at their own culture and make comparisons, not only in order to notice the differences but to shed light on the common qualities that lie beneath the disparities. Also, by becoming aware of the fact that there are people of many different backgrounds within their own culture, they can think about the diversity within culture and realize the danger of generalization.

### Methods

- \* Promote visibility
- \* Encourage students to take pride in what they learn

Understanding of the benefits of learning a foreign language can be achieved through cooperation with teachers of other foreign languages and by introducing culture in the broad sense through cooperation with teachers of other subjects. For example, Japanese geography can be taken up in cooperation with classes in social studies, animals of Japan in science class, and Japanese arts in music or arts classes. It is also important, of course, to let the school principal and administrators know the results and impact of such efforts.

Presentations directed at the family members of students, students not currently taking language classes, as well as for the community and for other schools can be effective in garnering support. Such presentations need not be held only by teachers; it is valuable to have students themselves make presentations about what they have learned. Positive response to their efforts enhances their confidence and involvement.



When giving gifts or sending presents, it is customary in Japan to accord special care not only to the contents but to the way a gift is wrapped and the wrapping itself. So, when a Japanese gives someone a present, they may feel taken aback if the recipient tears the package apart without thought for the wrapping, even when they know the person does not mean to be rude. In Japan the polite way to open a present, especially in the presence of the giver, is to undo it carefully, without tearing the paper, and some people neatly fold the paper, saving it for reuse.

“Wrapping” things is more than a convenience in Japan. It is something to which people give special thought and care. Let us consider the meaning of wrapping in Japanese culture, looking at how it is a part of daily life.

### Tsutsumu

Wrapping (*tsutsumu* 包む) or tying/binding (*musubu* 結ぶ) things has special meaning in the context of Japanese ritual and belief, signifying not only enveloping something with a

covering but demarcating it as special and sacred. The significance of *tsutsumu* can be explained as an act that marks offerings as pure and clean and separates them from dirt or defilement. It is said, moreover, that *tsutsumu* derives from the word *tsutsushimu* 慎む, which means to be discreet and restrained, and to show respect.

*Tsutsumu*, or wrapping things, is done not only to keep them clean and protect them from harm, but also to express the giver’s heartfelt respect for the person they are presented to; *tsutsumu* signifies the spirit of giving not only some material thing but feeling from the heart.

### Gift-giving

Although the many very specific ways once used for wrapping things are not as widely known today as in the past, the spirit of those traditions is still prized. Even young people are particular about the color and type of ribbons and paper used to wrap birthday or anniversary presents and bouquets or flowers sent to others. Often the wrapping is done very simply with a minimum of paper and tape, making the gift easy to unwrap. It is sometimes said that Japanese gifts are over-wrapped, with various inner layers and very complicated folds, but people do prize and reuse good paper in which they have received gifts.

The main occasions of gift-giving in Japan are what are known as “seasonal greetings,” the chief of which are *chūgen* 中元 and *seibo* 歳暮 gifts. *Chūgen* gifts are given in the hot months of summer, mainly July, while *seibo* are winter, year-end presents. Both kinds are sent in order to express gratitude for kindness, help, or consideration the giver has benefited from over the preceding months. It is customary to give such gifts mainly to persons of higher standing, such as one’s employer or boss, or the *nakōdo* 仲人 or formal “go-between” presiding over one’s marriage. Once it was common to carry such presents directly to the person at their



A *seibo* 歳暮 gift

*Noshigami* のし紙 : Paper festoon for a formal gift. Features a *noshi*, originally a decoratively folded paper with a strip of dried abalone inside, an element symbolizing a happy occasion. A strip of yellow paper may be substituted for the abalone. Today, the *noshi* and *mizuhiki* string are often printed on the paper itself.

*Mizuhiki* 水引 : Decorative cord used to tie gift-wrapped articles and make ornaments. Red and white is commonly used for happy or auspicious occasions and other formal gifts; black and white is used for mourning and condolence gifts. Celebratory occasions require certain types of knots while funeral or sympathy gifts require others.

Name of person sending gift

Bottle of sake tied up in a silk *furoshiki* 風呂敷



Box wrapped in a *furoshiki*

home, but today the normal pattern is to have them delivered by a department store.

During the *chūgen* and *seibo* seasons, department stores and other shops cancel their usual holidays and hold sales of gifts especially designed for this purpose. While seasonal gift-giving is becoming less common among the younger generations, who tend to think of the practice as empty and old-fashioned, it is still vigorously continued throughout Japan.

For all gifts, including *chūgen* and *seibo*, there are many detailed rules and customs of wrapping, pertaining to the types and patterns of the paper, the direction of the paper's motif, ways of wrapping, use of traditional *mizuhiki* 水引 string or *noshi* のし, many of which have implications for the auspiciousness and message of the gift. When carrying a special gift to give to someone, moreover, sometimes it is first put in an attractively decorated box and then the box wrapped in a *furoshiki* 風呂敷 until it is presented directly to the person.

### Furoshiki

A *furoshiki* is a square of cloth used for wrapping up things, either for storage or carrying. *Furoshiki* come in various sizes, from about 70 centimeters square to larger ones 220 centimeters square (approx. 30 to 90 inches square).

The kanji used to write the word 風呂敷 evoke the urban lifestyle of the Edo period (1603-1867) when people made frequent use of the public bathhouses (*sentō* 銭湯) that were a fixture of every community. People would bundle their towel and washbasin in the *furoshiki* when setting out for the bath, and then use it to wrap up their clothing while in the bath, as well as a kind of bathmat: 風呂 *furo* ("bath") and 敷 *shiki* ("spread").

A *furoshiki* can be used, by simply tying the ends together, to wrap up things of almost any size and shape. Unlike a briefcase or bag, which has a predetermined form, it is ex-

remely handy and can be folded up after use and used to wrap or carry something else.

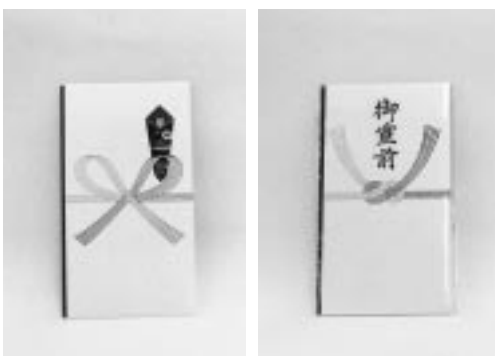
The simplicity and flexibility of the *furoshiki* wrapping cloth is similar to that of kimono. Kimono are made in such a way that they will neatly fit the body of the wearer by adjustment of length and breadth using sashes and cords. When taken off, however, a kimono folds up neatly into the simple shape of the original strips of cloth from which it was made.

Since the end of World War II, most people have opted to use modern-style bags, briefcases and satchels, so *furoshiki* are not seen as commonly as they once were, except at tradition-centered events such as weddings and funerals. *Furoshiki* today are made not only of silk and cotton, but synthetic fibers, and are printed with traditional as well as more modern designs.

### Gifts of Money

Gifts of cash continue to be common in Japan, but they must be presented in a wrapping, appropriate to the occasion. The type and decoration of the wrapping varies for wedding gifts (*shūgi* 祝儀), condolence gifts (*kōden* 香典) at funerals or wakes, or other purposes. Such gifts are a feature mainly of adult society, but children, too, often receive gifts of cash, especially in the form of *otoshidama* お年玉 or "New Year's presents" from their parents and relatives. Some children surrounded by generous grown-ups have the good fortune to receive quite large sums in the form of *otoshidama*. These children may buy toys or other coveted items with the money, but many thriftily put it away in savings accounts.

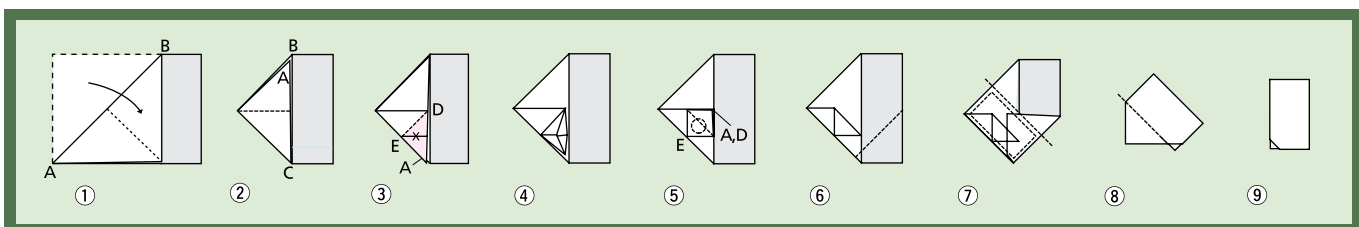
*Otoshidama* are also handed over in specially designed envelopes. The characters printed on the envelope in the photograph below are a simplified form of the decoration on the traditional wrapping, which would have been festooned with a *noshi* strip of folded paper. ♪



*Shūgi* 祝儀 envelope  
and *kōden* 香典 envelope



*Otoshidama* お年玉 envelopes



Way to fold paper for wrapping cash gifts for auspicious occasions (*shūgi tsutsumi*). This is useful when giving cash that includes coins.

- ② Align point A with point B. Then fold point A over to align with point C.
- ③-④ Open the upper flap of the small triangle (X) along the crease and fold by aligning point A with point D, forming a pocket.
- ⑤ After placing a coin in the pocket, close the pocket by folding over the corners marked A and D to point E.
- ⑥ Adjusting the length of the envelope to the size of currency enclosed, fold up bottom corner of envelope.
- ⑦ Close envelope by folding along long side and lapping corner over back.
- ⑧ These envelopes can also be used when presenting honorariums or other remunerations.

## Japanese-language Education Around the World

# Vortex of Cultural and Economic Interest



A Japanese-language class at Wat ra-cha-o-ros School. Students vie with each other in a game of gestures

Japan Foundation

## Thailand

**Noppawan Boonsom  
Prapa Sangthongsuk**

Teaching Program Officers  
Japan Foundation

Japanese Language Center, Bangkok

According to the National Education Development Plan instituted in Thailand in 1977, education is divided into four stages: preschool (kindergarten), elementary, secondary (first phase: junior high school; second phase: senior high school), and higher (junior college and university) education, with six years for elementary school, six years for secondary school (three and three), and four years for higher education.

### Japanese Language in the Schools

In Thai senior high schools (approximately 1,500 throughout the country), the primary foreign language taught is English. French as a second foreign-language is taught in about 250 schools and German in about 40 schools. Only a very few schools are believed to provide instruction in Chinese and Korean. As shown in the table below, the number of schools where Japanese is taught as a second foreign language, the number of instructors, as well as students enrolled in Japanese classes have increased annually, a trend that is expected to continue for the time being.

In Thai senior high schools today, Japanese is generally offered as a required subject, an elective subject, or an extracurricular activity. A required subject consists of approximately 600

hours of study, six hours a week and extending over three years. Japanese is a required subject at about 25 percent of schools where it is taught. Free electives consist of about 200 hours of study, three hours a week and extending over two years, and about 60 percent of schools where Japanese is taught offer it as an elective. Japanese is also taught as an extracurricular activity at about 15 percent of these schools, usually one hour a week for one year.

### Why Japanese?

What kinds of interests prompt Thai students to learn Japanese? There are two main reasons: One is that the trappings of popular Japanese culture are a familiar presence. Not only Japanese-made automobiles and household appliances but instant noodles and other foods, as well as many other items of daily use from Japan abound in Thai markets.

People wait in long lines to purchase popular Japanese toys such as *Tamagotchi*. Video games and children's comic books from Japan as well as CDs by trendy groups such as X JAPAN and SMAP also sell well. Children's cartoon series like *Sailor Moon*, *Doraemon*, and *Crayon Shinchan* as well as drama programs such as *Ie naki ko* [Girl Without a Home] and *Ai shite iru to itte kure* [Say You Love Me] are regular features on Thai TV. *Kero-kero Keroppi*, *BADBADTZ-MARU* and other Sanrio-brand character goods are among the bags and stationery goods popular among school children.

The other main reason for interest in Japanese is that it can be an advantage in seeking employment. In the case of senior high schools in areas where Japanese factories are clustered, there is a strong tendency for students to take jobs in Japanese corporations as soon as they graduate.

### Difficulties for Teachers

While interest in Japan and Japanese language is quite high in Thailand and

the number of schools where Japanese is taught is steadily increasing, there is a severe shortage of teachers. One reason for the shortage is that students who have majored in Japanese in university tend to seek out jobs in private industry, where employment conditions are favorable, rather than pursue careers in teaching.

In many cases instructors of Japanese have not had adequate training in teaching methods and are not equipped with sufficient proficiency in Japanese themselves. The average Japanese-language teacher is responsible for 20 (and some even 25) hours of instruction per week, and some must teach other subjects as well. Considering the routine administrative tasks they also have to perform, they are inordinately busy.

These circumstances force Japanese teachers to rely heavily on textbooks, but there are fewer textbooks available in Thai than in other languages for high-school-level students. Recently Thai and Japanese publishers have begun to translate language texts available in Japan with commentary for Thai students as well as produce original texts specifically suited to Thailand, but they are still very few in number. Budget resources for Japanese-language teaching, moreover, are far from adequate, as Japanese is simply one of several foreign languages being taught. Many teachers find that they have to pay out of their own pockets for copying and other costs of producing instructional materials.

Plans are in the works to change Thailand's university entrance examination system, and reportedly Japanese is being considered as one of the subjects to be included on the entrance examinations. If this should happen, the emphasis in Japanese-language education in Thai high schools is bound to shift from an emphasis on quantity to greater stress on quality. ☺

Japanese-language Education in Thai High Schools (between 1994 and 1997)

	1994	1995	1997
Schools	18	41	65
Teachers	32	60	105
Students	1,022	2,300	3,700

Note: 1997 figures are as of July. No. of schools does not include vocational or technical high schools. No. of students is calculated on the basis of the increase rate in the number of schools.

Source: Japan Foundation Japanese Language Center, Bangkok.

# TJF News

## Review

From August 1997  
to January 1998

### Winners of the Second Lesson Plan Idea Contest Announced

TJF is pleased to announce the winners of its second Lesson Plan Contest: Ideas and Examples of How to Teach Culture in Japanese-language Class. The recipients of the grand and second prizes, who passed the first and second stages of screening by Japanese-language education specialists, are as follows:

#### Elementary education level

Grand Prize:

"Mix Pizza," Sagae Satoko (U.S.)

Second Prize:

"Communication/*Buntsū*,"  
Yoshida Yoshiko (Australia)

Content-based Lesson Award:

"Snails," Catherine Speechley  
(Australia)

Cultural Tradition Award:

"Kimono," Nobuko Weeks (U.S.)

#### Secondary education level

Grand Prize:

"*Petto o Katte Imasuka*," Janina Carlon  
(Australia)

Second Prizes:

"Picture Bride," Hiroko Vink-Kazama  
(U.S.)

"Let's Sell Canadian Products!"

Tsurumi Michiyo (Canada)

"Japanese Bath," Liu Shuyan (China)

"New Year," Helen Gilhooly (U.K.)

All Round Lesson Award:

"Initial Introduction," Mary Grace  
Browning (U.K.)

Japanese-language teachers at elementary and secondary schools in countries other than Japan were invited to participate, with the deadline for entries set at the end of September 1997. A total of forty-six lesson plans entered, not only from English-speaking countries (Australia, United States, Canada, Britain, and New Zealand) as in the first contest, but this time also from other countries including China and Brazil, revealing Japanese-language lesson plans that serve to increase students' international aware-

ness and understanding of Japanese culture. Most of the entries, as previously, dealt with popular topics from Japanese daily life that easily catch the interest of young students. *Karaoke*, *Tamagotchi* (the egg-shaped electronic toy), and other popular trends in contemporary Japanese society were also introduced. Some teachers showed how they use computers to teach language, and others teach Japanese jointly with other subjects in the same class.

The prize-winning lesson plans will be made available in a booklet and on the TJF Web site so that interested Japanese-language teachers can share their ideas. The grand prize winners will be invited to Japan in fall 1998, for a visit during which they will have opportunities for exchange with Japanese or foreign-language teachers and educators in the area of international understanding, through presentation of model lessons and seminars.

\*Persons interested in the prize-winning lesson plans for our first lesson-plan contest, entitled *Opening the Minds and Hearts of Your Japanese-Language Students—Selected Lesson Plans from the 1995 TJF Contest* (in English, summaries in Japanese), please contact TJF, attn: Lesson Plan Booklet.

### TJF Web Site Improvements in Progress

The TJF Web site has been continuously improved and amplified since it opened in March 1997. Expectations are rapidly rising in the potential and interactive capabilities of computers in our advanced information society for the supply, sharing, and exchange of information in the fields of international exchange and cross-cultural understanding.

TJF seeks to transmit information useful for cultural understanding in three languages, Japanese, English, and Chinese.

\* The eight windows on the TJF head page introduce its main topics.



### What is TJF?

Opening this window brings you to an outline of TJF programs, including publishing and other activities. TJF news and the latest issue of *the Japan Forum Newsletter* are available for downloading.

### TJF Plaza

Entering the brick gate takes you to a page for exchange between TJF and its Web site users. Introduced here are descriptions of programs for which applications are invited, TJF's philosophy of education for international understanding and foreign-language teaching, and its action plans, as well as comments and messages to TJF, and profiles of people who support TJF activities (forthcoming). We plan to make this plaza a base of two-way information exchange and discussion between users and elementary and secondary school students and teachers.

### Japanese-language Education



The gateway showing a teacher and students standing together at the window of a classroom is a corner for Japanese-language education, the main thrust of TJF programs, with resources for elementary and secondary school teachers.

Centering around topics dealt with in curriculum guidelines in various countries, the window presents teaching materials and information that can be used in actual classwork, as well as useful ideas for lesson plans.

For example, there is a series of links featuring a boy named Kentarō introduced with photographs showing how he spends his day and explaining related cultural items with pictorial and textual material. Study items, targets, and curricula, drawn up on the basis of the curriculum guidelines of the State of Wisconsin, outstanding Japanese-language lesson plans submitted by teachers from overseas, and teaching materials are all linked to one another, offering rich resources for encouraging cultural understanding among children through language education.

### Japanese-language Miscellany

Clicking on this sliding Japanese door brings you to a mixture of useful Japanese phrases and vocabulary. Illustrations complement explanations of the nuances of Japanese homonyms and synonyms as well as mimesis and onomatopoeia.

### Chinese-language Education

This link introduces information on Chinese-language education at senior high schools in Japan. TJF promotes the education of Asian languages in Japanese senior high schools.

It is TJF's hope that this link will promote networking by providing information to teachers and students of Chinese language. A guideline of senior-high-school Chinese-language education, data on Chinese-language education, how it is actually taught in the classroom, and ideas for lessons are also introduced. Teachers of Chinese and other languages outside Japan may also find helpful information here.

### Chinese-language Miscellany



This window, with its red Chinese motif, brings you tidbits of information for a better understanding of Chinese culture. The "photo studio" offers glimpses of the daily lives of three high school students in Beijing and Dalian, vividly described in both Chinese and Japanese. This corner is equipped with sound, making possible simple pronunciation practice for interested users. One link introduces characters used differently in Japan and China as well as Chinese expressions of special interest.

### Japan-related Books

This section, mainly dealing with Japan-related books, introduces TJF's book-donation program and invites persons or organizations to apply for the books available, as well as journals on Japan and further information on related books.

### Related Web Site

Links to organizations either related

to international and cultural understanding or to Japanese-language education are listed here.

Seeking to further improve the content of its Web site, TJF looks forward to receiving opinions and messages from those who access this TJF Web site.

### Photo Contest: Daily Lives of Japanese High School Students



Students studying Japanese outside Japan are interested in how young Japanese their own age live, how they spend their time, and what they think on various

issues. Because there is little information available about the way Japanese really live and think today, however, they have a hard time forming images of their counterparts in this country.

TJF sponsored a photo contest aimed at Japanese senior high school students, featuring scenes and moments from their daily lives. The contest invited entrants to submit a set of five photos showing how a high school student—the applicant him- or herself or a friend—spends a day. The process of preparing such photos can be a valuable opportunity for the photographer and/or the subject to pause and rethink their daily lives. We chose the medium of photography not only because it is familiar to young people, but because it can effectively capture images of Japanese as individuals, replacing the stereotypes that prevail in the minds of many people overseas.

The winners of the contest will be selected by a screening committee in February 1998, and the prize-winning photographs will be made available on the TJF Web site and introduced in TJF publications.

### Linking Japanese to Social Studies Curricula

Japanese-language education overseas, especially at the elementary and secondary level, lacks adequate resources for introducing Japanese society and culture to students. Information about Japan and its language is taught not only in language classes, but frequently by teachers in history, geography, and social studies classes as well.



TJF, which aims to promote cultural understanding among elementary and secondary school students overseas, arranged for a forum in the city of Boulder, Colorado in November 1997 in order to find out what Japan-related information is needed in Japanese-language and social studies classes. The meeting was attended by teachers of Japanese and social studies teachers with an interest in Japan, who would be unlikely to meet otherwise, to exchange information or ideas and to make use of the fruits of such exchange for further activities.

The thirteen participants included teachers at the high school level, specialists in university-level Japanese-language education, and officials of the Colorado State Department of Education in charge of foreign language and social studies education. The forum was realized with the cooperation of Laurel Rodd (Professor, University of Colorado, President of Association of Teachers of Japanese) and Lynn Parisi (Social Science Education Consortium, Inc.; leader of the Rocky Mountain Region Japan Project, a project for instruction about Japan in social studies classes at the elementary- and secondary-school level).

At the five-hour meeting divided by a luncheon break, participants pointed out specific needs pertaining to teaching materials, instructor training, and information and networking. The discussion revealed the little-known observation that materials on Japanese culture used by social-studies teachers can be very useful for Japanese-language teachers. Moreover, regular supply of good-quality information about present-day Japan of interest to young people is badly needed by teachers in both areas. High school social-studies teachers also pointed out their need for more detailed resources about Japanese high school students' perceptions and attitudes concerning religion, economic issues, and other topics, including their personal concerns and anxieties.

Starting with this first step, TJF

hopes to develop the information obtained at the meeting to further amplify beneficial links between Japanese-language study and other subjects. TJF is planning successive programs to furnish Japan-related information and create teaching resources not only for instruction about Japan and its language but for the enhancement of the quality of education in the broad sense.

### *Training for Japanese Teachers in China 1997*

More than 100,000 students are learning Japanese at the secondary level in China today, but there are serious shortages not only in teaching materials but in opportunities for teacher training. To meet these needs, TJF held its Second Study Seminar for Junior and Senior High School Teachers of Japanese in China, co-organized by Dalian Education College and other organizations. (The first seminar was held in Changchun, Jilin Province, in August 1996.) The training seminar was attended by Japanese-language teachers from 42 schools from the three northeastern provinces (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning) and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, where more than 90 percent of the secondary schools where Japanese is taught are located, as well as 6 Japanese-language specialists from educational institutes in those areas. Building on the experience of the first seminar, the content of the second seminar was as follows:

### *Compilation of Training and Teaching Resource Materials*

An original set of teaching materials was compiled, designed expressly to be useful not only for the training session but as resources in the classroom thereafter, including distinctions among synonyms, conversational phrases, and categories of verbs. These materials were all greatly appreciated by the participants. In anticipation of a third Study Seminar, these materials will be improved and pronunciation and reading materials added.

### *Japanese-language Education for Cultural Understanding*

TJF, which seeks to promote "foreign-language education for intercultural understanding," encouraged the participants, as at the first seminar, to consider ways of incorporating cultural understanding in their Japanese language classes. Foreign-language edu-



The teacher carefully corrects each student's pronunciation

cation, it was pointed out, should not be confined to simply teaching the language itself, but stress understanding of the culture that lies behind it, broadening students' perspectives and vision of world, and sensitizing them to differences in culture.

### *Links to Chinese-language Education in Japanese High Schools*

Part of the seminar schedule included an exchange meeting between Chinese teachers and four Japanese high-school teachers of Chinese. It is hoped that the friendship and rapport established at this meeting will lead to continued personal contacts among the participants that will further invigorate their language-teaching activities.

The Third Study Seminar will be held at Heilongjiang Educational Institute in Harbin. TJF will continue its programs promoting the teaching of Japanese in China until these training seminars are taken over as an ongoing activity by the Chinese side.

### *Broader Perspective for Japanese-language Texts in China*



In China, revision of high school Japanese-language texts (3 volumes) in response to the announcement in 1995 of new curriculum guidelines for Japanese-language teaching by the State Education Commission, began in March 1996 under the leadership of the Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute affiliated with the Commission. The revision and editing of the texts was done by committees in Japan and China with the cooperation of the Japan Foundation and TJF. In June 1997, the revised first-

year text was completed, and its use by new first-year students began in September.

The revisions, geared for the needs of the twenty-first century, include the following innovations.

(1) Conversation: Conversational language is introduced with the purpose of enhancing communication skills. Lessons are arranged in order to help students speak naturally in conversational language in the various situations students encounter in their daily lives.

(2) Topic columns: To link Japanese-language learning to better understanding of Japan, topic columns have been inserted to introduce the matters related to lifestyle, traditional culture, and fundamental aspects of Japanese society.

(3) New readings: A variety of topics are chosen for the readings, aimed at broadening students' international perspectives and interest in global issues, that touch not only on Japanese and Chinese cultures but also on issues confronting the entire world, including the environment, resources, peace, and the space exploration, as well as themes shared by people everywhere, like friendship and love.

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Publisher  
Ushijima Michihiko

Editor in Chief  
Nakano Kayoko

Associate Editor  
Oguri Akira

Production  
Furukawa Noriko

Editing and Translation  
Center for Intercultural Communication

Cover Design  
Suzuki Hitoshi+Takeuchi Saori

Cover Illustration  
Kino Toriko

The TJF Newsletter follows the practice of placing the Japanese surname first.

## What Is the Japan Forum?

### Quest for Common Understanding

The Japan Forum (TJF) is a private, independent, nonprofit foundation established in Japan in 1987 funded initially through a major grant from Kodansha Ltd., Publishers, and donations from five other Japanese publishing related firms, and other organizations. TJF continues to rely on donations, in addition to investment income, business revenues, and membership fees, for the funding of its operations. The main objective of TJF is to promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding among people of different cultures. Language lies at the heart of every culture. Those who inhabit the global community of the 21st century will need to develop new skills to traverse the boundaries between cultures—boundaries essentially defined by language differences. In recognition of the central importance of language skills in facilitating communication and mutual understanding among people around the world, TJF conducts a variety of activities centered around its two essential concerns: language and culture. In all these efforts, TJF honors the individual peculiarities of respective cultures and embraces their underlying commonalities, in order to illuminate both the individuality and the universality of every culture.

To date, these efforts have focused primarily on Japanese language education in elementary and secondary schools in the Asian-Pacific region and Chinese language instruction in Japanese high schools and we are planning to expand our program to include information on the teaching of other Asian languages in Japan.

TJF also works to disseminate vital information related to language and culture through its publishing activities and book donation program, and now through the use of the Internet as well.

### TOKYO Office

Shinjuku Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg. 26F  
2-7-1 Nishishinjuku, Shinjuku-ku,  
Tokyo 163-0726, JAPAN  
Phone: 81-3-5322-5211  
Fax: 81-3-5322-5215  
E-mail: forum@tjf.or.jp  
<http://www.tjf.or.jp/>

### U.S. Representative

Itoh Yukio  
12990 W. Blue Mound Rd. #202  
Elm Grove, WI 53122, USA  
Phone/Fax: 1-414-827-9079

### AUSTRALIA Liaison

Ishikawa Masaru  
51/15-17 Herbert Street,  
St. Leonards, NSW 2065, AUSTRALIA  
Phone/Fax: 61-2-9439-6920

**Our next issue will include a new column, “Reader Forum.”  
Please write to *the TJF newsletter* with your comments on TJF  
programs and publications at the address given on this page.**



Shinjuku Dai-ichi Seimei Bldg. 26F  
2-7-1 Nishishinjuku, Shinjuku-ku,  
Tokyo 163-0726, JAPAN