



Feature:

Teaching Language to Children: Its Significance and Methods



As part of programs aimed at Japanese-language education for promotion of intercultural and international understanding, the Japan Forum has held the "Lesson Plan Contest" in alternate years since 1995. In March 1999, the winners in the elementary school and secondary school divisions of the 1997 contest were invited to Japan. With the cooperation of the Nishimachi International School they presented model classes using their prize-winning lesson plans. A seminar was also held, attended by 100 persons engaged in Japanese-language education, educators broadly involved with foreign-language study and teaching for cultural and international understanding, government administrators, and researchers. The presentations and discussion sought to reexamine the question of what it means to teach language to children, whatever the language and whatever the status of the person involved, as well as the methods by which it is taught.

The Way We Are —p. 8
Club Activities at Japanese High
Schools

A Day in the Life —p. 10
旬の食べもの *Shun no Tabemono*
(Seasonal Foods)

Translation Pathfinders
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A Creative Profession

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Workshop on Photographic Resources
Held in Australia and New Zealand



Classes incorporate discussion with various illustration aids.

Personal Experience as a Teaching Resource

Hu Xing-zhi

Lecturer, the Institute of Japanese-Chinese Studies, former teacher, Kanto International Senior High School



Hu Xing-zhi
B.A. Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. M.A. (Life-long Education) Tokyo Gakugei University. From 1988 to 1997 he taught Chinese at Kanto International Senior High School and was involved in development of Chinese language textbooks for the senior high school level.

At the senior high school level, foreign-language education consists of three endeavors: enhancing awareness of cultural differences, deepening appreciation of the language and culture of one's own country, and cultivating receptivity to different languages and cultures. In pursuing these goals, I have found it helpful to draw on my own personal experience in illustrating situations and helping students expand their understanding.

Enhancing Awareness of Cultural Differences

In teaching Chinese in Japan I make it a rule to assure that students are aware of the differences between the two countries. Just because both use kanji to write with does not mean that they share the same culture. For example, intuitive, non-verbal communication and empathy with others, as expressed by the words *ishin denshin*, may be greatly admired in Japan, but in China straightforward, verbal communication is more highly prized. By explaining to my students the nature of these different ideas and behavioral patterns, I believe I can help students expand their own horizons and see the options from which they can learn about life. I encourage them to become more aware of cultural and language diversity by being sensitive, in the good sense, to their feelings of strangeness and resistance to cultural differences.

I also try to avoid making sweeping statements about "China" or "the Chinese." China is a vast country of great diversity and I believe it is dangerous to try to generalize too broadly.

Deepening Appreciation of Own Language and Culture

After returning from a short-term study program in China, one of my students once remarked how frustrated he became when he could not answer the questions people put to him about Japanese culture. As he discovered the hard way, learning

about another culture is also a process of coming to reflect more closely on our own culture and language. It is just as important to be able to explain your own culture to others as it is to understand and accept other cultures.

As students advance in their language learning they will be expected to express themselves. I meet many high school students in Japan today who do not have much confidence in themselves; some even lack the fundamental pride in being Japanese. In order to gain confidence in themselves and pride in their identity, they need to think about what they are. If they do not know themselves or have a measure of self-confidence, in the good sense, their attitudes toward other cultures may get out of proportion, giving them either an inferiority complex or filling them with a dangerous sense of superiority.

Cultivating Receptivity to Other Languages and Cultures

It is my hope that when my students study Chinese and Chinese ways of thinking they will cultivate in themselves a receptivity to the world's diversity by relating it to themselves and their own language and culture.

In teaching the Chinese language, it is not my intention to try to inculcate my students in the ways of thinking and behavioral patterns of Chinese. I hesitate to tell them what I consider "common sense" or "good manners." I make no attempt to foist Chinese culture on my students, presenting them instead with stories of my own cultural missteps and other experiences. I tell them, for example, of the time I took a present of chrysanthemums to a friend's house. I didn't know that in Japan, unlike in China, chrysanthemums are mainly associated with flowers for the *butsudān* altar in homes or as offering at the graves of the dead. I present such situations to my students and ask them what they think and how they would respond. While enjoying the

process of solving such cultural riddles, they can develop an interest in the ideas and traditions that lie behind language and culture and study the behavior and customs that express them. In the process, I hope they will acquire the capacity to understand such differences and accept them for what they are.

This approach has earned me the nickname “nazo-Chu,” or “the mysterious Chinese.” I’m

quite content with this nickname and am looking forward to continuing the pleasures of solving more riddles along with my students.

*The Japan Forum is presently engaged in programs to promote the teaching of Chinese and Korean in Japanese high schools. Details on the status and challenges of these programs will be discussed in a feature published in *Kokusai Bunka Foramu Tsūshin* (TJF’s Japanese-language newsletter), No. 45.

What It Means to Teach Language

Yoshida Kensaku
Professor, Sophia University

Teaching language is much more than giving instruction in simple, superficial linguistic elements and forms. No matter how well you understand grammar, how excellent your pronunciation, or how large your vocabulary, those skills mean nothing if you cannot use them to communicate with people or for your own spiritual or intellectual growth.

Ms. Kambe’s explanation of her theme-based syllabus is an excellent example showing that language is not an end itself, but a means for learning about something. Mr. Hu, for his part, teaches language through very specific examples and situations in order to help each individual student learn about the diversity of culture and humanity. Ms. Kashimura spoke about the importance of using teaching materials that deeply affect students, of impressing them with the importance of cultivating their skills of self-expression, and of viewing communication as the occasion of learning, bringing the students into contact with all kinds of people and with other worlds outside the classroom. Her approach demonstrates cogently that teaching language must be education in “humanity” that far transcends the teaching of language per se.

Language is one of the most important tools upon which human beings rely for their survival. Of course, you can live without being

able to speak; communication can be achieved through gestures, posture, facial expression, attire and other non-verbal forms of communication. But without words and their structures there are many things that cannot otherwise be understood or transmitted accurately. The reason language is important is not because of some intrinsic value in words and forms themselves, but is because it is linked to the creation of meaning and communication with others. We treasure language because of the role it plays as the most basic tool of human affairs in transmitting feelings, meaning, and intentions.

Language education is the teaching of communication. It is the way we awaken awareness in students to the tremendous diversity and splendor of our world. It is the pathway for cultivating recognition of universality, the understanding, in other words, that amid all the diversity, in the final analysis human beings all over the world are basically the same.

One of my colleagues, Professor Donald Doyle, often reminds his students that they should approach something they don’t know with a skeptical “Ha?” Then, when their understanding is clear, they will say, “Aha!” expressing their intellectual comprehension. But that alone, he says, is not enough. Even if they achieve such intellectual understanding of something, it is not enough unless they can feel a sense of wonder that elicits an “Ah!!” A teacher’s aim must be to get students to understand with their hearts that which they have already grasped with their brains.



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Ph.D. University of Michigan. His specialty is applied linguistics. He is a leader in the fields of English teaching methodology, bilingualism, and education for intercultural communication.



Foreign-language Classes for Encounter and Empowerment

Kashimura Mineko

Teacher (English), Edogawa Ward Third Komatsugawa Junior High School



Kashimura Mineko
B.A. Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University. She has been engaged in teaching and research on international exchange and education for international understanding since 1990. For her classes she uses teaching materials she originally developed in the fields of human rights, environment, cultural understanding, and development. She is a member of *Shin-Eiken* (New English Teachers' Association) and editor of the monthly *Shin Eigo Kyōiku* ("New English Classroom.")

The teaching of culture brings all sorts of encounters. "Cultural understanding" begins, I believe, with recognizing that there are cultural differences even between yourself and the student who sits next to you in class. It is crucial to face those differences patiently and grapple with them honestly.

The Meaning and Challenge of Secondary School Education: Re-thinking the Significance of One's Life

When we speak of foreign-language education there is a tendency for the foreign-language part to be relatively emphasized, when of course the work of teaching other languages is simply added to the fundamental task of education in the broader sense. In order to help young people live and grow today, I believe that secondary school education should help them understand and appreciate their reason for living, feel their connection with the world as a whole, as well as give them the desire to relate to other people and the courage to deal with its rigors. Students who reach secondary school age are at a stage of life when they are becoming very self-conscious of themselves; they are not interested in anything that does not resonate with their own pursuit of such questions as "Why was I born into this world?" or "What am I going to do from now on?"

My daily challenge is to construct classes for my students that will encourage them to build links and connections with others through learning that will help enhance students' self esteem and give them greater confidence in themselves.

Making Foreign-language Education Real: Activating Mind and Body

So how can we attain this objective in the course of foreign-language teaching? Let us ask ourselves how best this can be achieved given the nature of the subject itself. Here are four points to be kept in mind: First is encounter with teach-

ing materials that make students think and reflect. I choose themes that are both global and local in significance—whether it be the problem of street children in Brazil or the issue of trash disposal in our own community—and get the students to think about them as immediately relevant to themselves.

Second is to have students learn to talk about themselves. For example, the final class for the third year junior high school students is devoted to speeches by each student on the theme of "My Dream." There are some students who think they don't have any dreams, but often they realize this for the first time with this assignment and it is just as meaningful to get them to think about why they don't have a dream as well.

A third point is to give students the experience of learning through relationships with others. I think that cooperative learning is very important. The new Ministry of Education Guidelines for the Course of Study for school curriculums emphasize "practical communication" and I believe it can be said that learning to communicate is also learning to get along with and relate to others.

A fourth point is to go out of the classroom and establish communication with and links with people in the real world around us. Learning English helps us establish this kind of interchange and sense of the real world. I try to give students the experience of being connected with other people through a foreign language by holding various international exchange events in the classroom or by exchanging messages with the world outside the classroom.

I myself try to be conscious of being active, both physically and mentally, making use of the principles and methods of global education and peace education as I work to achieve "foreign-language teaching that brings to students human encounter and self empowerment." In the actual planning and conduct of such lessons, I keep following three principles in mind:

1. Development of Original Thematic Teaching Materials

Broadening and deepening classroom learning activities by linking global and local issues such as human rights, environment, development, and community studies to each unit of the class textbook using supplemental materials.

2. Classes Activating both Mind and Body

Encouraging participatory learning in which stu-

dents engage both their brains and their bodies, activating all five of their senses, and learn to relate to one another.

3. Integration of Unit Theme and Language Components

Giving students a firm grasp of grammatical rules and basic vocabulary incorporated into lessons shaped by thematic learning.

Original Teaching Resources

KOMATSU AND THE WORLD NO.32
Everyone wants to live with pride!! 39.2

Crane, crane, Father and mother and child Fly over the mountain together We are like you We hold hands and go through life together

ツルよ ツルよ 親ツル 子ツル みーんね ぞろぞろ 山を越え みーんね 手をつないで 生きていこうよ

The cranes have their eggs and raise their young on the plains of Mongolia and Siberia. Then they migrate to India in the fall.

When the monsoon rain strikes the snow on the mountain, all rises and makes mountains, adding and not making their wings

The people of Nepal believe that the mountains of the Himalayas holy, the houses of the gods. They adore the mountain every morning and evening. They never thought about to live to climb them to "conquer" them.

All the Nepalese men wear a hat called a Topi.

The Nepalese carry things in a Doko that is held by a stick called a Namoo. They don't carry things on their shoulders but hanging them on their hands instead.

There are more forests than houses, and it is said that there are more monks and priests than there are ordinary people.

国名	ネパール	人口	22,200万人(推定)
首都	カトマンズ	言語	ネパール語
宗教	ヒンドゥー教、仏教	通貨	ルピー
主要産業	農業、観光	主要都市	カトマンズ、ポカラ

住きるのは みんな 才申さ(山)のもの。 物手なし 人間と みんなで 分けあて 生きていこう。

The junior-high school English textbook, Sunshine Book 3, includes the story of a doctor named Kawahara who founded the Asia Health Institute (AHI) in Nepal. After reading the material in the textbook, however, students are often left only with the impression of the hard and difficult conditions of life in Nepal. They do not have enough information to achieve a balanced understanding of the nature of international cooperation programs. To supplement the textbook, Ms. Kashimura therefore developed original reading materials and worksheets using the AHI Newsletter. Incorporating text and illustrations that show the warmth and sentiments of the people who live in the beautiful landscape of the mountains of Nepal, she draws attention to what can be learned from the way people live. Her aim is to create an opportunity for learning in which students will not simply feel pity for the hardship and poverty of the Nepalese and assume their only link with such people is by contributing to a charity or aid fund, but will be empowered by learning that makes them feel the links between their own lives and those of other people living far away.



The children are busy with books.

Language for Enrichment of Life

Kambe Yoshimi

Teacher (Japanese and Social Studies), Katoh Gakuen Gyoshu Elementary School



Kambe Yoshimi
B.A. Faculty of Education, Yokohama National University. She has been involved with the English immersion program at Katoh Gakuen since its inception in 1992 and in charge of Japanese language courses for the students in the immersion program.

In the English immersion program at our school, the elements of English (e.g., sentence structure, vocabulary, etc.) are not taught in a bare-bones theoretical fashion, but presented through skillful and natural integration into specific settings and contents through thematic learning.

Thematic Study

Let me give an example showing how we approach a theme such as, for example, "animals":

Study animals to see whether they are herbivores or carnivores (science)

Visit the zoo and see the animals firsthand

Sketch the animals and write explanations of the pictures (crafts and English)/Sing songs on animal themes (music)/Listen to, read, tell, write, and perform stories about animals (English)/Act out the characteristics of animals (athletics)

The students are naturally aware that they are studying English, but even more than that they think of themselves as learning about the animals. Thematic study, in which study of the language and study of the subject matter at hand go hand in hand, makes it easy for students to grasp the material and enables them not only to understand the content but acquire a natural use of language. There are limitations of time and in other respects, but we should be aware of what students are learning in their other subjects and adjust what they are doing so that it relates as much as possible to other subjects. We believe this will make it possible to learn language naturally as it is manifested in the content of what they are learning.

Integration of Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing

Language learning comes even more naturally and easily when students study reading and writing, not separately, but together, reading in order to write, writing after reading, etc. By, for example, drawing a picture of an elephant and writing an explanation of the picture below it, then reading the explanation to the teacher and classmates, the child advances in writing, reading and speaking ability. For something that one has written oneself, reading it out loud has meaning because it supports the impulse to share it with others. If this sharing is done among friends and classmates it also provides listening practice.

In this way, rather than teaching language as a nebulous conglomeration of grammatical rules and vocabulary, it becomes the teacher's challenge to show how skillfully he or she can incorporate the material to be taught into the content of the lessons. Toward that end, a teacher always has to have his or her antennae out, striving to cultivate the ability and ingenuity for turning ordinary things into teaching resources and devising ways to weave them into the curriculum. Certainly this



An immersion program class in session.

approach can be adopted regardless of whether we are teaching a foreign language, the Japanese language to native speakers, or Japanese to non-native speakers.

Helping Students Toward Richer Lives

In the course of their Japanese classes my goal for Japanese native-speaking students is for them to find their lives enriched through the study of language. I want them to learn the joy of finding a book they like and staying up all night to read it to the end, the satisfaction of looking up facts they do not know and learning how to summarize and digest them, the surprise of discovering new things by talking to others, and the fulfillment of getting others to listen to what you say and understand you better. And through these endeavors, I hope that their lives will grow broader and richer. By studying not only their own language but other languages they will discover how much larger their world can become.

Immersion Program

This is a second-language learning program begun in Quebec in 1965. Students study their regular school subjects in the second language.

Immersion is divided into early, middle, and late immersion depending on when it is introduced. Immersion is either total or partial depending on how much the second language is used in school subjects.

The English Immersion Program at Katoh Gakuen

Introduced in 1992, it parallels the regular curriculum taught in Japanese. The first class of students enrolled in the immersion program are now second-year junior high school students. As they advance, the school will establish immersion-program classes at the senior high school level as well. Immersion-program classes in the lower elementary grades, excluding Japanese language classes, are taught in English, but the content follows Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines.

Immersion-program teachers are all native-speakers of English. The condition for participation in the immersion classes is sufficient Japanese-language ability to understand textbooks written in Japanese in their grade. Ninety percent of the students in immersion classes are native speakers of Japanese, both of whose parents are Japanese.

Katoh Gakuen Web site:

<http://www.katoh-net.ac.jp/>



The classrooms at the Katoh Gakuen Gyoshu Elementary School are decorated with the colorful and creative artworks of the students.

Seminar:

“Teaching Language to Children: Its Significance and Methods for Foreign-language Education Aimed at Cultural Understanding” with the winners of the Second TJF Lesson Plan Contest

Date: March 16, 1999, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Place: Nishimachi International School, Tokyo

Sponsored by: The Japan Forum, Nishimachi International School

With support from: ANA

Participants: Approx. 100 persons involved with Japanese and foreign-language education and education for cultural and international understanding and members of the media.

Morning Session: Model teaching / Q & A

9:00-9:45 a.m. Model teaching by the contest winner in the elementary school division
Lesson title: “Mixed Pizza” by Sagae Satoko, Japanese language teacher, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School, Florida, U.S.A.

9:45-10:15 a.m. Q & A

10:30-11:15 a.m. Model teaching by the contest winner in the secondary school division
Lesson title: “Do You Keep Pets?: Tamagotchi” by Janina Carlon, Japanese language teacher, Armidale High School, New South Wales, Australia

11: 15-11:45 a.m. Q & A

Afternoon Session: Panel Discussion

“Teaching Language to Children: Significance and Methods for Foreign-language Education Aimed at Cultural Understanding”

Chairperson: Yoshida Kensaku

Panelists: Hu Xing-zhi, Kashimura Mineko, Kambe Yoshimi



1:30-2:00 p.m. Comments by the panelists

2:00-3:15 p.m. Discussion I (seminar meeting)

3:30-4:30 p.m. Discussion II (section [subgroup] meetings)