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PREFACE

This Technical Report includes nine papers, eight of which were presented at the Association of Teachers of Japanese (ATJ) Thursday Seminar held in Honolulu, Hawai‘i in 1996 in conjunction with the Association for Asian Studies. These papers are representative of the several important issues that studies in the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language at the university level are currently addressing:

- Literature and literature teaching

- Technology in language classroom

- Orthography

- Testing

- Grammatical vs. pragmatic approaches to language teaching

Japanese literature courses are part of Japanese language programs in many colleges and universities in the United States. One of the challenging questions is how do such courses teach American students Japanese literature that is often written in a different set of cultural and historical frames of reference from those of the West. The focus of Nobuko Miyama Ochner's paper is on the different perceptions of values of students who read Japanese literature in translation. Ochner surveys students' reactions to Enchi Fumiko's *The waiting years* (*Onnazaka,* 1949–1957) which describes a long-suffering neglected wife and her ultimate revenge. Ochner concludes that the instructor must endeavor to show the students the specific historical and cultural conditions surrounding the protagonist in order that they truly understand her response to them.

One of the effective ways to teach Japanese literature is to utilize new vision technology in classroom. Visionary images take students to a specific time and place depicted in the Japanese literary work while they are in the classroom. Elaine Gerbert focuses on the role played by film and other new vision technologies which have opened up new possibilities for literary expression. Among the works she refers to as being rich in visual effects are Uno Kōji's novella, *Love of mountains* (*Yamagoi,* 1968, [original work published in 1918]), Satō's *Gloom in the country* (*Den'en no yūutsu,* 1993 [original work published in 1918]) and Tanizaki Junichirō's *The carbuncle with a human face* (*Jinmensō,* 1968 [original work published in 1918]).

The computer is a technological tool that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries and allows students to experience direct contact with people using the same technology in different countries. A new trend in the field of teaching Japanese as a foreign language is utilization of this technology. Its adaptation is already seen at many colleges and universities in the United Sates and will certainly

be necessary for effective language teaching in the 21st century. Yukie Aida discusses how advanced technology, via electronic networking activities, can be integrated into Japanese language programs. Activities such as the use of personal computers, e-mail, electronic discussion and conferencing, and reading authentic materials enhance both language skills and motivation. Software and hardware requirements, their benefits and related issues are also discussed.

In learning Japanese, orthography — in particular, *kanji* (Chinese characters) — presents a great challenge for many learners of Japanese whose native language does not use *kanji*. How and when to introduce *kanji* has been a controversy. And yet there has been little scientific research on the cognitive effects on learning *kanji*. In order to develop an effective instructional strategy for teaching *kanji*, instructors of Japanese need to understand the cognitive processes underlying *kanji* learning. Hideko Shimizu reports and compares the results of recent psycholinguistic research on word identification in English orthography and that in Japanese *kanji*. She points out that these research results indicate that various levels of information, including orthographic, phonological, and semantic, are involved in processing *kanji*. She concludes that *kanji* identification skills will improve when learners are intensively exposed to the characters visually in a meaningful way.

Another problem surrounding learning *kanji* is whether or not students should be exposed to *kanji* at the beginning level. Taking the position of the primacy of spoken language and authenticity of material, some scholars (e.g., Unger, Lorish, Noda, & Wada, 1993) claim that *kanji* as well as *kana* (Japanese syllabic characters) should not be introduced at the beginning level and that romanized texts initially reduce the burden of learning Japanese. Do different approaches to *kanji* teaching influence students' belief systems on how to learn *kanji*? If so, what effects do these approaches have on students? So far there has been no scientific research on this issue; Yoko Okita's study is the first of this kind. Her study focuses on students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (many of them are Japanese Americans with past Japanese learning experience) from 1994 to 1996 when the basic Japanese textbook was switched from *Japanese: the Spoken Language* (Jorden & Noda, 1987–1988) to *Situational Functional Japanese* (Tsukuba Language Group, 1992). These two textbook series represent opposite poles in Japanese pedagogy. The former takes the position of the primacy of spoken language and uses romanization whereas the latter uses *kana* and *kanji* from the beginning. Detailed statistics are provided, and Okita concludes that students' beliefs about *kanji* learning did not differ regardless of the textbook used and that beginning students require instruction on how to learn *kanji*.

The number of students enrolled in college-level Japanese language courses in the United States as of 1995 is 44,723, which ranks Japanese fourth after Spanish, French and German (MLA Newsletter, October, 1996). In fact, Japanese is the most commonly taught Asian language in the United States. As the number of students who study Japanese increases dramatically, more students enter the Japanese language program at the college level with prior training. Placement of such incoming students at an appropriate level of the Japanese class has become an

increasing burden in many departments and units which offer Japanese courses. Thus, there is an urgent need to develop an effective measurement tool for placement in all Japanese language programs. Yukiko Hatasa and Yasu-Hiko Tohsaku found that SPOT (Simple Performance-Oriented Test), which was developed by Tsukuba University, is a time-saving measurement of over all language proficiency and a highly efficient and reliable test method. The authors discuss the designing principles, development process, and administration procedure as well as the interpretation of test scores for placement purposes. They also explore the possibility of SPOT as a standardized test or a proficiency test based on the conceptual validity of indirect tests and their response process.

The *cloze* procedure, which is similar to that employed by SPOT, has been studied extensively by researchers in the field of ESL. Based on the results of these studies, the cloze procedure and has been considered as a reliable measure of the inter-sentential components of language. Thus, it has been applied to testing ESL students' reading proficiency (e.g., Oller, 1979; Hinofotis, 1987). However, this procedure has not been investigated much in Japanese. Sayoko Yamashita's study is the first systematic research on the cloze test applied to Japanese. She compares native Japanese first-graders and learners of Japanese as a second language with respect to their performance on a reading comprehension cloze test. Statistical analysis indicates that while in some areas the groups performed similarly, in other areas they show significant differences. Although the cloze test used in this study has limitations, the study indicates that first and second language development are different and further provides some evidence that classroom learning improves JSL performance.

Situation-driven versus *structure-driven* language instruction has been a long-standing issue in foreign language methodology. In recent years, the current theoretical trend strongly favors situation-driven or pragmatically-oriented methodology in the second and/or foreign language teaching. In Japanese, a number of textbooks have incorporated the situational and pragmatical orientation (e.g., *Situational and Functional Japanese*, Tsukuba Language Group, 1992). The last two papers of this volume take contrastive positions with respect to this issue. Naoya Fujita's paper is a challenge to the currently favored trend of situation-driven methodology. He reexamines this old issue with the fresh insight that one approach is not necessarily superior to the other, but rather the issue of situation-driven versus structure-driven language instruction is a language-specific issue. The distance between the target language and the learner's language is the crucial point in his argument. He argues that the structure-driven approach is more suitable in teaching Japanese to native speakers of English, for it can fill the crosslinguistic conceptual gaps created by the different grammatical patterns of the two languages. He concludes that the structure-driven approach takes precedence in teaching Japanese to English speaking learners, although he acknowledges that both strategies are important and necessary in developing language proficiency. Andrew Cohen's paper was presented not at the ATJ Seminar but at the Brownbag Seminar of the ESL Department of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. In contrast to Fujita's position, he presents his

arguments from the perspective of development of pragmatic ability. His paper is a report of his own language learning experience in one of the accelerated Japanese language classes at the University of Hawai'i. His description of the class in which he was enrolled indicates that the class was more structure-driven than situation-driven. He concludes that this approach, which requires long hours of study gives students a lot of linguistic information about the Japanese language, but pragmatic ability does not develop and retention level is low. The fact that there are diverging views such as those expressed by Fujita and Cohen is perhaps healthy for the discipline.

It is our sincere hope that the issues brought up in this volume will stimulate discussion and improve the language teaching profession.

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