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Japanese Language Education in the US

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a. Japanese Language Education in the World

The Japanese language has been viewed as an esoteric language that is difficult to learn. This view is still prevalent today; however, Japanese language learning has increased in its popularity especially since the 1980s. The worldwide survey on Japanese language learning in a 1998 report stated that approximately 11,000 institutes offered Japanese language instruction in 115 countries. The total number of Japanese language teachers was 27,611 and about two million students studied Japanese (The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, 2000).¹ According to this survey, in the years from 1979 to 1998, the number of institutes that offered Japanese language instruction increased 9.5 times; the number of Japanese teachers grew 6.7 times; and the student population augmented 16.5 times. Japanese language enrollment began to increase from the early 1970s in Korea, the late 1970s in China, the late 1980s in Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, and from the 1990s in England. In this report, the US was ranked as No. 3 in terms of the number of institutes after Korea and Australia, and as No. 4 in terms of the number of teachers following Korea, China,

¹ In 1993, approximately 6800 institutes offered Japanese language instruction in ninety-nine countries. The total number of Japanese language teachers was 21,034 (full time instructors: 11,475) and that of students who studied the Japanese language was 1,623,455 (The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, 2000). During the five years from 1993 to 1995, the number of institutes increased 1.6 times, of Japanese teachers, 1.3 times, and the student population, 1.3 times.

and Australia. In terms of the total number of students, the US was ranked as No. 5 after Korea, Australia, China, and Taiwan.

b. History of Education in Japanese Language in the US

The history of Japanese language education can be roughly classified into the following three periods: (1) around the 16th century to the end of the 19th century: research and study of Japanese language by a small number of foreigners²; (2) the end of the 19th century to 1945: compulsory Japanese language instruction under a colonial educational policy in Asian countries; and (3) 1945 to present: Japanese language education for mutual understanding (Seki, 1997). The history of education in the Japanese language in the US has not been researched extensively; however, Miura (1990, 1998), Seki (1997), and Nagara (1991) have provided a historical overview of Japanese language training in the US.

In the 1880s and the 1890s, Japanese language instruction was offered for children of Japanese living in Hawaii and on the U.S. Pacific coast at Japanese schools (*nihongo gakkou*).³ Japanese was taught to maintain their identity as Japanese, and offered as *kokugo* (a mother tongue, national language) rather than a foreign language.

² The earliest dictionaries on Japanese language were composed by the Jesuit missionaries in the 16th and 17th centuries, including Dictionarivm Latino-Lvsitanicvm ac Iaponicvm (Dictionary of Latin, Portuguese, and Japanese) (1959), Vocabvlario da Lingoa de Iapam (Portuguese-Japanese dictionary) (1603-1604), Arte da Lingoa de Iapam (Japanese grammar) (1604-1608), by Juan Rodriguez. The documents on Japanese language learning were published by scholars in many countries: China (16th century~), Russia (18th century~). In the nineteenth century, many scholars in European countries published materials on Japanese language: the countries include Holland, German, France, English, Australia, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Finland, Belgium, and Denmark (Seki, 1997).

³ The first recorded Japanese school was founded by Japanese clergyman in Hawaii in 1893. Soon after, the Buddhist church also started Japanese language education. It was very common for Christian missionaries and the Buddhist church to start foreign language education including the Japanese language (Nagata, 1991).

However, in the 1910s, this *kokugo* education began to be criticized because it focused on raising loyalty to Japan among the *nisei* (second) generation, who were U.S. citizens. Consequently, the nature of Japanese language education shifted from *kokugo* education to Japanese as a foreign language for Japanese Americans. Despite the anti-Japanese movement in the 1920s and the 1930s, the Japanese American community continued to offer Japanese language instruction. During World War II, approximately 29,490 Japanese Americans were sent to the Tulie Lake internment camp, one of ten camps, from 1942 to 1946. The camp had eighty wards, and each ward had *kokumin gakkou* (National schools), following a Japanese educational system at that time. At the camp, former teachers and Buddhist monks provided instruction in the Japanese language, and school events included Japanese speech and essay contests (Seki and Hirataka, 1997, pp. 138-139). In the post war period, most Japanese Americans did not insist that their children speak or learn the Japanese language.⁴

Before World War II, Japanese language instruction was offered at a few universities. These universities included the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard University, Yale University, Columbia University, Northwestern University, the University of Washington, Stanford, the University of Michigan, and the University of Hawaii. Miura (1998) stated that Japanese language training really started just before and during World War II (p. 21). The US Navy and Army recruited military personnel and civilians who were thought to be able to handle Japanese. They opened their own

⁴ I have met many Americans with Japanese heritage during the past 15 years. Many third generation persons stated that their parents did not teach them Japanese at home. They were encouraged to pursue a professional career in a medical and technical field. Some said that these professional skills are far more beneficial to them than Japanese language skills in terms of obtaining a job.

Japanese language schools and gave the recruits intensive language training.⁵ There were several programs to train Americans to be fluent in Japanese (Miura, 1998; Seki, 1997). The Navy started a school specifically for the purpose of training officers for the future occupation of Japan. The Army aimed to train specialists to decipher Japanese military codes and they opened the Civil Affairs Training Schools to train military government officers for the occupation. The Army also started a program at Michigan University to train Caucasians to check the validity of translation, questioning, and reports made by the *nisei*. In 1943, the Army began the Army Specialized Training Program that offered twenty-seven foreign languages including Japanese.

The impact of intensive Japanese language training during World War II was tremendous. The US war efforts had produced not only an incredibly large number of people that studied Japanese, but also approximately 250 Japanologists in such fields as literature, political science, history, geography, law, art history, linguistics, and sociology. These Japanologists who possessed a high proficiency level in Japanese could conduct research and exchange ideas and opinions with Japanese scholars in Japanese. These scholars and researchers boosted the field of area studies and emphasized the importance of international education.

At the collegiate level, the number of students taking Japanese began to rise steadily during the 1960s due to the funding from the National Defense Education Act and private foundations. Even in the 1970s when most universities began to suffer from budget cuts, Japanese kept rising. In the 1980s, there was a sudden large increase in the

⁵ Miura (1998) stated: “After the Pacific War broke out, the Navy Japanese language schools, which originally opened at Harvard and UC-Berkeley, together moved to the University of Colorado in Boulder. The Army Japanese language school, which originally opened in San Francisco, moved to Camp Savage in Minnesota” (p. 130).

enrollment at the university level and Japanese language instruction even began to spread at the pre-collegiate level. Jorden and Lambert (1991) stated:

Until the recent past, Japanese language instruction was offered, for the most part, only at a limited number of major universities with a well-developed related area studies program... Today, Japanese courses are offered in countless U.S. colleges, junior colleges, and universities-public and private, large and small, highly competitive and noncompetitive, with and without related area study programs. Mainstreaming is being extended below the college level: In ever-increasing numbers, elementary schools and middle schools, to say nothing of high schools, are adding Japanese language instruction to their curricula. Initially, this movement began on the Pacific Rim, with Hawaii claiming the bulk of the enrollment, but today it is not unusual to find Japanese courses in institutions in eastern states as well as western...The United States is experiencing a genuine *nihongo-buumu* (Japanese language boom) (p.1).

The enrollment at the collegiate level doubled every five years in the 1980s. The Japanese language became known as one of "the most commonly taught foreign languages" and it was ranked fourth after Spanish, French, and German at the collegiate level (Brod and Huber, 1997, p.1).

At the pre-collegiate level, a sharp increase in enrollment in Japanese language classes at the US public high schools has been recorded since the mid 1980s. In the survey on foreign language enrollments in public secondary schools in 1994, Draper and Hicks (1996) commented, "the fastest growing language continues to be Japanese, which almost doubled its secondary school enrollment between 1990 and 1994" (p. 2).

I must note, however, that Japanese has been studied by less than 1% of public high school students enrolled in a foreign language course. The Japanese language retains a peripheral status in the field of foreign language instruction: it has a very marginal, and provisional presence in US school curriculum. Nevertheless, considering the historical

Table 1. Number of students who enrolled in foreign language classes at college (including two year colleges) in 1977, 1980, 1986, 1990, and 1995.

	1977	1980	1986	1990	1995
Spanish	376, 637	379, 379	411, 293	533, 944	606, 283
French	246, 115	248, 361	275, 328	272, 472	205, 351
German	135, 371	126, 910	121, 022	133, 348	96, 263
Italian	38, 327	34, 791	40, 945	49, 726	43, 260
Russian	27, 784	23, 987	33, 961	44, 626	24, 729
Japanese	10, 721	11, 506	23, 454	45, 717	44, 723
Chinese	9, 809	11, 366	16, 891	19, 490	26, 471

Note: Enrollment data from Modern Language Association of America (MLA)

Table 2. Number of students who enrolled in foreign language classes at public high school level (Grade: 9-12) in the US in 1978, 1982, 1985, 1990, and 1994.

	1978	1982	1985	1990	1994
Spanish	1, 631, 375	1, 562, 789	2, 334, 404	2, 611, 367	3, 219, 775
French	855, 998	857, 984	1, 133, 725	1, 089, 355	1, 105, 857
German	330, 637	266, 901	312, 162	295, 398	325, 964
Italian	45, 518	44, 114	47, 289	40, 402	43, 838
Japanese	-	6, 246	8, 557	25, 123	42, 290
Russian	8, 789	5, 702	6, 405	16, 491	16, 426

Note: Enrollment data from American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

dearth of non-Western languages in school curriculum, the rapid rate of increase in the enrollment in pre-collegiate Japanese language classes in the early 1990s was remarkable.

Table 1 and Table 2 present the number of students enrolled in Japanese language classes at the collegiate and high school levels from the 1970s to the 1990s in the US (See Table 1 for college; and Table 2 for high school).⁶

Many high school students chose to learn Japanese to gain cultural knowledge and proficiency to communicate in Japanese; at the same time, the purpose for learning the Japanese language varies according to the students' ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic background as well as gender (The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, 1995 & 2000).

The sudden expansion has also caused confusion since the Japanese language field did not have much of a mechanism to deal with this rapid growth. As Walton (1993) pointed out, there was a lack of trained teachers, few states with teacher certification standards and procedures, few training programs, little planning on how to integrate high school instruction with its continuation at the college level, a paucity of quality instructional materials designed exclusively for high school students, little national experience in designing curriculum at the high school level, no historical tradition of teaching methods at the high school level for such a difficult, non-European language, and no standardized assessment procedures to judge the quality of student mastery of the

⁶ There is other enrollment data on Japanese language classes at the public high school level based on the 1994 High School Transcript Study Tabulations for from National Center for Education Statistics (1997). APPENDIX 1-3 presents the percentage of high school graduates earning indicated minimum credits (Carnegie Units) in foreign Languages Courses (Japanese) in 1994, 1990, 1987, and 1982 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). The data shows that the majority of students enrolled in the elementary level Japanese language course (Level 1 & II). It is interesting to note here that there is a difference in the enrollment numbers in Table 1 and 2, obtained from the ACTFL/MLA, and those from the National Center for Education Statistics.

language nor of the effectiveness of program (p.1). Walton (1993) also pointed out that there was a persistent concern that the difficulty of Japanese grammatical structures and the writing system would occupy so much of the teacher's time and efforts that, as a result, instruction in the cultural facets of communication would tend to receive insufficient attention. The central challenge of P-CJLI in the 1990s has been to find a way to overcome these difficulties.

c. Overview: Expansion of P-CJLI

In this recapitulating section, I describe the expansion of P-CJLI in relation to the International studies and collegiate Japanese language instruction (Table 3). The expansion of Japanese language instruction in the US has been spurred on by Japanologists, created by America's World War II efforts. They played a significant role in establishing international and area studies for mutual understanding and individual cultivation during the 1950s and 1960s in higher education. In this movement, Japanese language instruction became a core part of the curriculum of Japanese area studies. Cummings et al. (1997) stated that international education has been expanded by a progressive involvement of the federal government in the sponsorship of international education. During the post war period, the federal government supported international and area studies under the rationale of mutual understanding, national security, and competitiveness, in addition to the long-standing concerns for individual cultivation, scientific advancement, technical and cultural influence (p. 54). Japanese language instruction at the collegiate level began in the 1940s and experienced a major expansion in the 1980s. Most pre-collegiate Japanese language instruction began in the 1980s with the rationale of individual cultivation and mutual understanding, and experienced major

expansion in the 1990s. A survey report on Japanese language education abroad indicates that the enrollment in Japanese language programs at the pre-collegiate level in the US shows an upward trend (The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, 2000).

Table 3. Expansion of P-CJLI in relation to the International studies and collegiate

Japanese language instruction

	International Studies	Collegiate Japanese Language Instruction	Pre-Collegiate Japanese Language Instruction
1880s - 1910s	< Beginning > Individual Cultivation ("Grand Tour" to Europe)	< Beginning > Individual Cultivation UC Berkeley (1900)	
1920s - 1930s	Individual Cultivation	Individual Cultivation (Approx. 10 US universities)	
1940s	Individual Cultivation Mutual Understanding	National Security	
1950s	Individual Cultivation Mutual Understanding Technical Advancement	< Real Beginning > Mutual Understanding Individual Cultivation Emergence of Japanologists	
1960s	< Major Expansion > Individual Cultivation Mutual Understanding Technical Advancement National Security	Mutual Understanding Individual Cultivation More Japanologists	
1970s	Individual Cultivation Technical Advancement National Security	Mutual Understanding Individual Cultivation	< Beginning >
1980s	Individual Cultivation Technical Advancement National Security Competitiveness	< Major Expansion > Competitiveness Mutual Understanding Individual Cultivation < Peak >	< Real Beginning > Individual Cultivation Mutual Understanding Competitiveness Grassroots
1990s	Individual Cultivation Grassroots Regional Order Competitiveness	Technical Advancement Competitiveness Mutual Understanding Individual Cultivation < Plateau > < Decline >	< Major Expansion > Individual Cultivation Mutual Understanding Competitiveness Grassroots < Upward >