

Abstract

<Part 1>

The Objectives and Principles of Standards for Japanese-Language Education

The Japan Foundation

1. Steps toward the “Third Place”: Proposal on “Japanese for Mutual Understanding” Standards

Since its establishment in 1972, the Japan Foundation has consistently supported efforts in Japanese language education overseas. The driving force in international cultural exchange is person-to-person interchange and mutual understanding fostered and enhanced through language communication. At the time the Japan Foundation was established, the number of learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) was only around 100,000 worldwide and Japanese language education was viewed primarily in the context of higher education and the training of Japanese studies scholars.

With the collapse of the Cold War order and the advance of globalization since the early 1990s, the climate of Japanese language education has changed dramatically. Many countries began revising their foreign-language education policies, and one aspect of that trend was a Japanese language boom that has brought the number of JFL learners to more than one million. That unprecedented figure continued to rise even after the collapse of Japan’s “bubble” economy, and with the added spread of Japanese language learning from higher to elementary and secondary education, by the late 1990s the world population of JFL learners topped the two-million mark.

Along with this numerical increase has come a diversification of learners’ reasons for studying Japanese. Whereas most had once been concerned primarily with such pragmatic goals as passing examinations, gaining opportunities to study abroad, and finding employment, today interest in Japanese culture, in communicating in Japanese, and in the Japanese language itself are among the main motives for JFL learning at all levels of education. The globalization of culture that has swept the world in recent years has heightened interest in and appreciation of Japanese culture, and this in turn has led to dramatic changes in Japanese language education overseas. Various cultural products of Japan, such as manga, anime, digital games, and music, now enjoy widespread popularity, not only in the West but in many parts of the world including Asia and the Middle East.

In its efforts to meet the growing and diversifying needs of Japanese language education overseas, the Japan Foundation has developed and implemented programs aimed at providing assistance for local initiatives in Japanese language education—that is, assistance based on the

understanding that Japanese language education overseas should be conducted in each case in accordance with the education policies of the country or institution involved, and that teaching staff should be made up primarily of local teachers. Such assistance has included planning and implementation of programs for dispatching specialists, for giving overseas teachers opportunities for training in Japan, for developing and donating teaching materials, for building and enhancing overseas networks among people in this field, and for conducting the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. The activities of Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, established in 1989 as a body specializing in teacher-training, resource-development, information-exchange, and other Japanese language-related programs, embody this approach. A second institute, the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai, was established in 1997 and focuses on providing advanced Japanese language training as required in various specialist fields. Through the development of these programs over the past 30-plus years, the Japan Foundation has accumulated an incalculable wealth of experience and expertise in Japanese language education.

The idea of supporting local initiatives in Japanese language education was an appropriate way to fine-tune assistance to local needs and to respect the principles of local control and ownership of the programs conducted. It was also based on a sense of remorse for past approaches whereby Japan used Japanese language education as a tool for its colonial rule over other countries. As JFL learners increase in number and Japanese gains recognition as an international language, however, this approach of simply responding to demand is no longer adequate. As a Japanese public institution, the Japan Foundation is now being called on to promote Japanese language education more proactively in the international community, such as by exercising qualitative control over programs in accordance with clear standards and in some cases by actively tapping new sources of demand. In “The Importance of Japanese-Language Education around the World,” an appeal prepared by a special committee of scholars, business leaders, and other specialists in Japan and submitted to the chief cabinet secretary on December 1, 2004, the committee members stated: “We believe that switching from ‘passive support’ to ‘active promotion’ of Japanese language education could prove an effective means for further bolstering Japan’s role in the global community.” The Foundation is now expected to take a more active role in this area, not only by supporting Japanese language education but by promoting it in ways that, while not being preemptory, are nevertheless proactive.

In undertaking this shift of role from support to promotion, we must decide what kind of Japanese language should be promoted and how Japanese language education should be conducted from now on. In other words, we have a responsibility to establish standards for Japanese language education for the years ahead. Accordingly, the Japan Foundation undertook to apply the intellectual resources it has amassed over the past 30 or so years to the formulation of such standards, and to that end decided to hold a series of three roundtable discussions in fiscal 2005, the third round of which will be open to the public so that ideas and information can be shared among people from a broad spectrum of relevant fields and backgrounds.

The First Roundtable discussion, held in May 2005, involved eminent scholars and specialists

in language policy, language education, and assessment invited from Australia, China, Korea, Europe, and the United States. The consensus upheld at this meeting was that the planned standards should be “comprehensive, applicable to as many people as possible, open-ended, flexible, creative, a process not a finished product, conducive to networking, and non-binding.” The understanding of the standards’ non-binding nature, in particular, accords with our policy of promoting Japanese language education in ways that are not peremptory or dictatorial, an approach that is also reflected in the deliberate use of the term “reference” in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, published by the Council of Europe in 2001.

The Second Roundtable, held in November 2005, brought together domestic scholars and experts and Japan Foundation dispatches, language instructors, and other specialists for talks at the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa, the participants lodging at the Institute itself. Building on the progress made at the First Roundtable, they discussed what kind of Japanese language education the Foundation should aim to promote and what kind of standards should be devised for it. The consensus reached this time was that our goal should be to promote Japanese “as a language for mutual understanding.” From now on, that is, Japanese language education must proceed from a more global understanding, recognizing that Japanese is no longer confined to the Japanese people but rather is common to Japanese language users of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds. In other words, we should work together toward attaining what Lo Bianco, Crozet, and Liddicoat call the “third place” of Japanese language usage, where distinctions between “Japanese” and “non-Japanese” people, and between “native” and “non-native” Japanese speakers no longer apply. For a foundation established on the principles and for the purpose of promoting world peace through international cultural exchange, this is a fitting approach to Japanese language education. Accordingly, it is within this framework of understanding that we decided to devise a set of standards for Japanese language education.

In the Third Roundtable, Session I will be devoted to elaborating the concept of such standards based on our idea of “Japanese for mutual understanding,” a task in which we look forward to input particularly from Professor Yi Dok Bong and Dr. Richard Brecht, both of whom also took part in the First Roundtable. In Session II we will consider what can be learned from the excellent precedents provided by similar efforts in German- and French-language education around the world and for foreign language education in the United States. In Session III, we hope to formulate a preliminary draft of a set of standards for education in “Japanese for mutual understanding,” inviting input not only from panelists but also from the floor.

We believe that the formulation of standards based on the notion of Japanese as a language for mutual understanding can play an important role in international society as well as in the increasingly internationalized society of Japan itself. But this is not a task that the Japan Foundation can or should undertake unilaterally. That is why this series of roundtable discussions has been designed to include input from both Japanese and overseas experts, and why the Third Roundtable, in particular, will take the form of an open, public symposium. In the work that will follow these discussions as well, we intend to solicit the understanding, cooperation, and support of concerned parties from both within Japan and abroad, and representing not only

academia but various relevant fields.

2. Looking Back: The Legacy of Japan Foundation Programs

The following summarizes the Japan Foundation's main achievements in programs for Japanese language education and the challenges those programs face in the years ahead.

Dispatch of Japanese Language Specialists

Japanese language specialists, junior specialists, (formerly known as “young Japanese language instructors”) and related personnel are currently dispatched by the Japan Foundation to a total of 113 positions at education ministries, secondary and higher educational institutions, Japan Foundation overseas offices, and other organizations in various countries. In addition to actual classroom teaching, the duties of dispatches include course administration and management, training of local teachers, and advisory work (consulting with local educators, assisting in the development of teaching materials, and so on), the focus of their activities being to support local initiatives for Japanese language education. The following is an overview of the dispatch program in terms of the different types of dispatches and the various levels of education at which they are involved.

Elementary and secondary education

Roughly two-thirds of the total number of learners of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) worldwide are in elementary and secondary schools. Accordingly, the Japan Foundation has dispatched advisors to education ministries and departments in various countries to assist in the training of local teachers, and has also sent junior specialists for classroom teaching. In Australia, where a languages-other-than-English (LOTE) program established in 1987 recommended the study of Japanese as one of nine priority languages, the Foundation began dispatching advisors to the Department of Education at the Government of the State of Queensland in 1988 to provide assistance and guidance in syllabus development and development of teaching materials and methods. Such advisor-type dispatches, the first of which were to Australia and New Zealand, now account for more than half of all of the Foundation's dispatches of Japanese language specialists. This statistic attests to the fact that many countries and regions have attained a certain degree of autonomy in their Japanese language education programs.

Higher education

In the early years of the Japan Foundation's activities, the bulk of its dispatches of Japanese language specialists were at the higher education level, but in recent years the number of personnel dispatched to provide focused direct assistance to language courses in the higher education level has relatively decreased. Cairo University's Japanese language and literature department, which was established through the Foundation's specialists dispatch program in 1974, has since itself become a supplier of Japanese-language-related human resources to neighboring countries and

a major center of Japanese language education in the Middle East. In China, this component of the program led to the establishment in 1980 of the “Ohira School” (the predecessor of the Beijing Center for Japanese Studies), where training programs for in-service Japanese language teachers and a master’s degree program have been carried out.

Preparatory education

By arrangement with their respective sponsoring governments, Japanese language education has been provided for exchange students from Indonesia, China, and Malaysia prior to their departure for Japan.

Non-school education

Specialists have been dispatched overseas to conduct Japanese language courses at institutions outside the framework of formal education, such as public organizations of the host country and the Foundation’s overseas offices. The Foundation also dispatches Japanese language specialists to the Japan Human Resource Development Centers (commonly called “Japan Centers”) established by the Japan International Cooperation Agency in a number of Asian countries (e.g. Uzbekistan and Vietnam) to assist them in developing the market economy in those countries.

Dispatch of advisors

As touched on above in the section on elementary and secondary education, one of the biggest changes in the Foundation’s Japanese language specialist dispatch activities over the past twenty years has been a greater focus on the dispatch of advisors, whose main task is to assist teachers in the host country, such as by conducting training courses, consulting with local teachers to answer questions, and helping to develop teaching materials.

Training Programs

Every year since 1973, the Foundation has conducted intensive training courses in Japan for a set number of Japanese language students and teachers from overseas. It also provides courses for Japanese nationals in Japan to train as Japanese language teachers. Initially, the programs for overseas trainees were limited in terms of the number of overseas students that could be accommodated and the variety and duration of the courses, but with the establishment of the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa in the city of Urawa (now Saitama) in 1989, those programs have been expanded considerably.

The number of overseas students and teachers invited to Japan jumped from 249 in the year prior to the Institute’s establishment to 348 in its first year of operation. With increases in the number of specialist instructors and administrative staff as well as in the budget, the variety of courses available and the number of trainees have grown accordingly. In addition to its short- and long-term training courses for overseas Japanese language teachers, the Institute implements country-specific courses developed to match the needs of countries with large numbers of Japanese language learners. Also, the Institute, in cooperation with the National Institute for

Japanese Language and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, also offers master's and doctoral degree courses for young and mid-career Japanese language teachers.

In 1997, the Foundation established its second specialist Japanese language center, the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai, which conducts professional Japanese language training and study-visit programs for foreign diplomats, public servants, librarians, university students, researchers, and other Japanese language learners.

Today, the Urawa and Kansai institutes together provide training for a total of around 1,000 overseas Japanese language teachers and students each year.

Development of Teaching Materials

In the development of Japanese language teaching materials for use overseas, the Japan Foundation, recognizing the need to develop materials specifically for Japanese language learners in other countries, rather than for students and trainees who come to Japan, has focused efforts under the following three categories.

Development of basic and introductory teaching materials and dictionaries in various languages other than English (languages that do not attract interest from private publishing companies because of low prospects of profit)

Nihongo shoho series (1981)

Nihongo chukyu series (1990)

Nihongo: The Pronunciation of Japanese (since 1978)

Nihongo: Kana: An Introduction to the Japanese Syllabary (since 1978)

Nihongo: First Lessons in Kanji (since 1978)

Bilingual dictionaries in the “The Japan Foundation Basic Japanese-xxxx Dictionary” series (*The Japan Foundation Basic Japanese-English Dictionary, The Japan Foundation Basic Japanese-Korean Dictionary, etc.*) (since 1986)

Development and provision of audiovisual teaching materials that cannot be developed overseas

Slide Bank series (since 1980)

Photo Panel Collection series (since 1995)

Yan and the Japanese People video series (1983)

Yan and the Japanese People II video series (1988)

A Television Course Let's Learn Japanese Basic I (1986)

A Television Course Let's Learn Japanese Basic II (1996)

Reference books for Japanese language teachers overseas

Nihongo Handbook Series (since 1974)

More recently, as needs and demand for the Japanese language diversify, in keeping with the premise that materials development should be locally based and managed, and after various deliberations on how best to develop versatile Japanese language teaching materials overseas, the Foundation has published *Kyokasho o tsukuro* (1999), a collection of teaching resources for teachers of elementary Japanese, and has created the website “Minna no Kyozaï” to disseminate this and other resources via the Internet. Drawing on the experience and expertise built up from its training programs, the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai published *Shokyu kara no Nihongo supichi* [Speech for Basic Level Japanese] in 2004 and the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa plans to publish the series *Kokusai koryu kikin, Nihongo kyoju ho* [The Japan Foundation, Japanese-Language Teaching Methods] in 2006.

Related activities overseas include the publication of *Akiko to tomodachi* [Akiko and Her Friends; 2005], a secondary school-level Japanese language textbook published in collaboration with the Thai Ministry of Education; and the publication of *Indonesia e yokoso* [Welcome to Indonesia; 2005], a Japanese language textbook for people in the tourism and service sectors that was produced in collaboration with the Department of Secondary Education of the Indonesian Ministry of National Education.

Support for Networking

In addition to its assistance for overseas Japanese language courses, speech contests, and so on, the Japan Foundation’s support for symposiums held by Japanese language teacher associations and related academic groups in various countries has been particularly fruitful in promoting networks among concerned persons in those countries. Furthermore, many regional teacher associations have been created from networks among people who have taken part in training programs of the Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa. One example is the Association des Enseignants de Japonais en France. Recent networking-related efforts by the Japan Foundation include its significant involvement in the organization and implementation of the biennial International Conference on Japanese Language Education, the next meeting of which is scheduled to be held this year at Columbia University, New York.

Tests of Japanese Language Proficiency

The Japanese Language Proficiency Test

Administered worldwide since 1984, the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) is an official test to evaluate and certify the Japanese language proficiency of non-native speakers of the language. The test is held every year in December and is administered jointly by the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (JEES). The test is given in four levels of difficulty, and at every level consists of three sections: writing and vocabulary; listening; and reading and grammar.

The JLPT is another aspect of Japanese language education that has grown dramatically in scale over the past two decades. In its first year, 1984, the test was administered to about 7,000

examinees in 21 cities in 15 countries and regions. In 2005, some 356,000 examinees took the test in 138 cities in 45 countries and regions around the world.

A key component of our efforts to improve quality control of the JLPT is the *Nihongo noryoku shiken bunseki hyoka ni kansuru hokokusho*, an annual report analyzing and evaluating the test. In 1994, the Foundation also published *Nihongo noryoku shiken shutsudai kijun* [Japanese Language Proficiency Test: Test Content Specifications], a guidebook for JLPT question writers. This guidebook has gained widespread acceptance among Japanese language students and educators as a general standard for Japanese language education, significantly influencing course content and curriculum development.

There are, however, many problems with the test's current proficiency criteria. For example, language proficiency is described not in connection with real-life situations but rather with a focus on linguistic knowledge as seen from the standpoint of teaching. This makes the criteria difficult for students to use as an indication of the actual competence they have acquired as the fruit of their studies. It has also been pointed out that the test scores are not equated from one year's JLPT to the next with the aid of item response theory (IRT).

In light of such problems, the criteria are currently being revised so as to incorporate the following guidelines by the time the new JLPT is administered in 2009:

- Make the JLPT a measure of task-accomplishment competences and of the communicative competences required for such.
- Include can-do statements in stipulating proficiency criteria.
- Equating/Standard deviation scoring.
- Devise a component testing proficiency in spoken Japanese (though implementation of such a component would not begin until 2010 at the earliest, given the need for careful consideration on how to conduct it).

Internet Japanese language test: The Sushi Test

The Sushi Test is a Japanese language test available on the Internet for young, beginner-level learners around the world. Once users register online, they can take the test as many times as they like, free of charge. The site currently receives an average of around 20,000 hits a month.

3. Appreciating Diversity: “Japanese-Language for Mutual Understanding” Standards (draft)

A Concept for “Japanese Language for Mutual Understanding” Standards

Efforts to promote the teaching and learning of a language must be based on specific principles and policies, and the purpose and goals of such education must be clear. Only after such principles, policies, and objectives have been established does it become possible to devise syllabuses, develop teaching materials and methods, and stipulate proficiency criteria appropriately.

The standards presented here are conceived as the framework of the Japan Foundation's principles, policies, and purposes for Japanese language teaching and learning, and as guidelines for a range of specific educational activities, including syllabus and curriculum design, development of teaching materials and methods, and proficiency assessment. These standards are not meant to be preemptory or restrictive. Rather, they represent a general frame of reference for not only the Foundation but Japanese language educators and educational institutions in general, both within Japan and overseas, and for that reason they are designed to be versatile. Furthermore, these standards constitute a process, not a finished product. As such, they require constant review in response to, and adjustment so as to reflect, ongoing developments and changes in the world at large.

Who Will Use These Standards

The present standards have been formulated for use not only by Japanese language educators, language education course designers, policymakers, and test developers and implementers but more broadly for all persons involved in intercultural exchange, such as student exchange administrators and employees of international companies both in Japan and abroad. The standards may also be used by Japanese who are involved in teaching the Japanese language either as a national language or a foreign language, as a way for Japanese native speakers to reflect on their own language.

The Japanese Language in a Multilingual World

Terms such as “multilingualism” and “multiculturalism” have become increasingly prominent in recent years, reflecting society's growing interest in linguistic and cultural diversity. With the advance of globalization and global networking, people are enjoying more and more opportunities for contact with languages and cultures other than their own. This situation brings with it an increasing need throughout the world for effective communication and mutual understanding. In attaining such communication and understanding, the more options available the better, and the Japanese language can of course be counted among the languages that can serve that purpose. The Japanese language has a significant role to play in promoting good relations, human security, and peace throughout the world and especially in the Asia-Pacific region. In that sense, the Japanese language can be regarded as an international language.

The Concept of the Japanese Language for Mutual Understanding

It is in this context that we regard the Japanese language as a language for mutual understanding, by which term we mean accepting, striving to understand, and respecting the human dignity of people whose views, beliefs, or situations differ from our own. “Japanese for mutual understanding” refers to the Japanese language that enables addressers and addressees of the language to work together toward accomplishing specific tasks in a given field or situation. This concept of Japanese for mutual understanding is characterized by the following three elements.

Collaborative Act

First of all, the use of language by two communicators in an effort to understand each other is a collaborative act or so-called “joint activities” as called by Herbert H. Clark. The speaker/addresser’s mere transmission of intended meaning or information does not constitute a collaborative act; it is important that he or she also take into account the listener/addressee’s circumstances and point of view. In order for collaboration to be achieved, the addressee must properly receive and understand the addresser’s intended meaning or information. This applies both to readers trying to understand written messages and to speakers and listeners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds trying to understand each other through interpreters. Language use is a collaborative act aimed at ensuring the transmission and reception of the meanings intended, and it is only through such collaborative act that understanding is possible. In using Japanese for mutual understanding, addressers strive to send messages that addressees can understand, and addressees strive to understand those messages.

Users of Japanese-Language for Mutual Understanding

Second, the concept of Japanese for mutual understanding is not limited to the use of the Japanese language by Japanese people to disseminate information about Japanese culture to the world. Rather, it also encompasses the reverse scenario in which non-Japanese people provide information about their own native cultures in the Japanese language for reception by Japanese people. When communicating to the world about the culture or conditions in their home country, people sometimes use the Japanese language in addition to their own language, English, or some other international language. Japanese for mutual understanding facilitates communication among such users of Japanese in international and multicultural contexts (whom we shall hereinafter refer to as *Nihongojin*, “Japanese language people”). Overseas learners and users of Japanese play an important bridging role in such contexts, particularly for native speakers of Japanese who do not speak the language of the country concerned. In order for such bridging to be effective, we must confront the question of the attitude that native Japanese language speakers should adopt so as to learn about and accept the nature of the Japanese language as used by non-native speakers.

Attitudes of Speakers/Addressers and Addressees

This brings us to the third aspect of Japanese-language for mutual understanding; namely, that the Japanese-language used for mutual understanding among *Nihongojin*, “Japanese language people” is not confined to an *a priori* norm of “standard Japanese language” or “orthodox Japanese language (or *Kokugo*, ‘National language’).” This point is self-evident when we consider that mutual understanding is eventually achieved not only through the standard Japanese language but also across different dialects. Rather, the key question in Japanese language for mutual understanding is whether or not it enables communicators to work together toward accomplishing a given task. Accordingly, the concept of Japanese language for mutual understanding requires not only an emphasis on normativeness but also a flexible attitude toward the language.

Rather than viewing the Japanese language solely from the viewpoint of native speakers, what we need is a willingness to understand the kinds of Japanese language used by non-native users and learners, and to broaden our tolerance of different varieties of Japanese. This means to be aware of language varieties other than one's own, and to appreciate diversity. In this approach, the distinction between native and non-native speakers is superseded by the new, concept of *Nihongojin*, "Japanese language people". On the other hand, this does not mean that we would go along with a simplified Japanese language being artificially created and taught.

Learning and Teaching of the Japanese Language for Mutual Understanding

The learning and teaching of the Japanese language for mutual understanding are endeavors to promote collaboration in the language, to refine its transmission and enhance its reception. Learners and users of the Japanese language must improve their Japanese language proficiency so that the messages they send in the Japanese language are understood as much as possible; and the receivers of those messages, whether Japanese native speakers or not, must cultivate an attitude that will enable them as far as possible to understand the varieties of the language that such learners use. In this context, to undertake collaborative action in fields or situations specific to the Japanese-language so as to facilitate mutual understanding constitutes "learning" and "use" of the language.

Japanese language for mutual understanding enables people to experience multilingual and multicultural situations and gain a broader, more inclusive outlook on the world; they will also gain new perspectives on their own culture. Japanese language for mutual understanding is thus an effective way for people to develop the richness of their spirits as human beings.

Reference

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The Idea of Standards of Japanese Language Education for Mutual Understanding

Yi, Dok Bong

The nature of the standards

I concur with the characterization of the proposed standards as an evolving process. At the same time, I feel that the idea of “Japanese language education for mutual understanding” is particularly attuned to our times. In this approach, Japanese is regarded as an international language, that is, as one of a number of languages that can serve as tools for cross-cultural communication and understanding, and as a language that can thus play an important role in promoting friendly relations and peace in the Asia-Pacific region. In other words, this implies an approach to Japanese language education whereby Japanese serves as a regional common language in a context of linguistic pluralism.

The meaning and key elements of “mutual understanding”

“Mutual understanding [means] accepting, striving to understand, and respecting the human dignity of people whose views, beliefs, or situations differ from our own.”

- (i) The use of language as a means for speakers/senders and listeners/receivers to understand one other is a collaborative act.
“In using Japanese for mutual understanding, senders strive to send messages that receivers can understand, and receivers strive to understand those messages.”
- (ii) Facilitating communication among users of Japanese (Nihongojin) in international and multicultural contexts.
- (iii) An attitude of flexibility not constrained by prescriptive norms.

Issues concerning the interpretation of “mutual understanding”

- (i) When we say that mutual understanding involves “accepting, striving to understand, and respecting the human dignity of people whose views, beliefs, or situations differ from our own,” what exactly do we mean by “accepting” and “understanding” others?
- (ii) The key elements of mutual understanding are said to include the kind of attitude and linguistic flexibility whereby senders and receivers in cross-cultural communication collaborate in an effort to understand each other. When applied to actual communicative situations, this implies the need for linguistic understanding and flexibility mainly on the part of native speakers of Japanese.
- (iii) It is not clear whether the proposed concept of mutual understanding means message-level mutual understanding through use of the Japanese language, or cross-cultural understanding through use of Japanese as a means of communication. Although the characterization of Japanese as a language for mutual understanding appears to include

understanding at the cultural level, the description of the key elements of mutual understanding seems to be limited to understanding at the linguistic level. The factors identified as key elements of mutual understanding—reciprocity, a sympathetic, considerate attitudes, linguistic flexibility, and so on—are indeed essential, but mutual understanding based solely on the attitude and linguistic flexibility aspects runs the risk of being limited to the linguistic message. To achieve true mutual understanding, one also needs to know the other's standpoint and way of thinking and understand the meaning of his or her behavior.

- (iv) Linguistic flexibility is one of the principles that operate to facilitate harmony in all speech behavior, but incorporating such flexibility into learning contents could give rise to further norms.
- (v) Competence in paraphrasing and linguistic flexibility are cited as collaborative, reciprocal acts, but no mention is made of cultural flexibility in linguistic behavior. That is, the concept of flexibility does not appear to be based on a dynamic model of language.
- (vi) The kind of understanding that Nihongojin, as cultural mediators, need to have of the attitudes of Japanese native speakers should include an understanding of linguistic culture.
- (vii) If we incorporate cultural flexibility into the notion of flexibility, this raises the question of how the high contextuality of the Japanese language should be dealt with in Japanese language education.

The scope of mutual understanding

Mutual understanding in cross-cultural situations can be thought of as spanning three levels: understanding of the meaning of linguistic signs; understanding of linguistic behavior; and cultural understanding. The former two can be described as communicative understanding and the third as a kind of understanding that goes beyond communication. In my view, the understanding we should aim for in cross-cultural interaction is this third type of understanding. However, in incorporating culture and linguistic culture into language education, it is difficult to avoid problems involving individuals and cultural stereotypes.

Mutual understanding cannot result from any unilateral approach; true mutual understanding comes about through reciprocal learning. An attitude of reciprocal learning can therefore be regarded as axiomatic to the concept of mutual understanding.

Concluding remarks

Promoting the learning of Japanese as an international language is seen as a way to foster mutual understanding and therefore peace in the Asia-Pacific region. Aimed at realizing these ideals, the present proposal for Japanese-language education based on mutual understanding could have a significant impact on future efforts to formulate learning standards for other international languages as well.

Current interpretations of the idea of language education based on mutual understanding

tend to focus on mutual understanding at the linguistic level. This purview should be expanded so that cross-cultural mutual understanding is seen to encompass understanding at the cultural as well as at the linguistic level. To that end, international cooperation is needed in the formulation of standards for language education.

“A Policy Perspective on Standards and Testing for Overseas Japanese Language Education”

Richard D. Brecht

A national language education policy for countries like the United States should target the development of four distinct constituencies: an educated citizenry aware of the role of language and culture in the world and in human cognition; a broad base of school graduates with some functional language skills; and a cadre of advanced language specialists capable of the highest level of linguistic performance. In addition, autochthonous and immigrant language communities constitute a fourth constituency, as they pursue their heritage identity and language rights. In addition, these populations often are the greatest natural resource and a major contributor to the other three constituencies.

As a rule, students reflect these goals by taking a language to satisfy general education requirements to learn to use the language for professional and personal reasons, and to become experts in the language.¹ Brecht & Walton 1994 subsumed these under what they called the missions of a language program in the U.S.:

1. Educational, where language learning is part of the general education of the student;
2. Applied, where language is learned as a tool for personal or professional advantage;
3. Specialist, where language professions (teachers, translators, linguists, etc.) and professionals with near native ability are produced; and
4. Heritage, where language learning is a means for preserving or recapturing one’s cultural heritage or for asserting one’s language rights.

Traditionally, language programs respond to these four missions with one general program, distinguished between merely by the length of time a student resides in the program. However, these distinct missions call for very different kinds of courses, materials, assessment, and teaching. Accordingly, national standards for foreign language learning should address them explicitly, which has not been done even in the most recent national efforts. While existing standards can easily be seen to address the Applied and Specialist missions, the same cannot be said for the General Education and Heritage missions. Fortunately, though, there is a growing body of literature on heritage learners and learning, which can be brought to bear in the new standards. In addition, the new work on “linguaculture” and the “third place” can go a long way towards enabling the inclusion of the General Education mission in the standards as well as improving the focus on culture in the Applied and Specialist areas. In sum, the principal point to be made here is that standards for language teaching and learning can support a national language policy involving the national goals above by accommodating all four language missions.

The Way Forward

Existing national standards initiatives around the world provide good models to build on, but

there are improvements to be made. Let me first underline some points made by Crozet & Liddycoat 1999:

- “Culture is not acquired through osmosis. It must be taught.... Conceptual and experiential learning is required to acquire intercultural competence.” The deep conceptual teaching of culture has to be part of a curriculum and of the standards.
- “The bilingual/multilingual speaker is the norm.” Moving away from the “educated native speaker” has many implications for advanced level descriptors.
- “New approaches to language testing are needed to assess intercultural competence.” For example, valid assessment of cultural performance is difficult to reconcile with standardized multiple choice tests.

Other issues:

- The ACTFL K-12 approach (5 Cs), while more orientations than goals, is fresh in its approach and relevance for younger learners, and it is comprehensible to teachers (with a little instruction).
- While in-country study is implied in these and other standards, the experience of living, working, studying, touring in the target culture has not assumed its due and explicit place in standards work. Exposure to another culture should be programmed in the learner’s career in at least three modes: exposure to domestic heritage communities in elementary school; short study or touring trips at the secondary level; and a year abroad at the university level.
- True depth of cultural knowledge requires much more research and analysis in order to move from Hammerly’s achievement, informational, and behavioral modes to a contrastive understanding of the basic concepts of a target culture.
- National standards must reflect this much deeper understanding of culture and its relation to language (linguaculture), and they most certainly should stress the general educational advantages of Intercultural Competence.
- The assumption that culture can be learned without language has to be explicitly challenged in the standards, with the disadvantages clearly stated (as they are in Crozet, Liddycoat, and Lo Bianco 1999: 12ff.).
- Standards must make clear that language alone permits culture to be experienced, not just observed; and the effect of experiential learning and “episodic memory” should likewise be stressed and tied to in-country learning and living.

¹ Under culture, I include literature. Cf. Lo Bianco 1987.

² The “heritage mission” is distinct in not mapping directory onto the three national capability goals outlined above.

³ Kano and Japanese heritage learners

“Profile deutsch”—Developing a Multipurpose Tool

Paul Rusch

Where did we set off? The underlying background

What do learners and users of a foreign language do in and with the foreign language? What started in the 1970s with the communicative approach towards language teaching consequently led to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR):

- Can-do statements describe, what learners and users do, which activities they are involved in, which domains they use their competence in.
- Competence (what they can do) is in most fields of language much more important than knowledge (what they know).

How do we assess a learner’s performance on the basis of the aspects of communicative language competence?

- Different qualitative aspects of language use have to be considered (e.g. CEFR table 3: Common Reference Levels: qualitative aspects of spoken language use).
- For different purposes, different levels of competence are necessary or sufficient.
- Different profiles for specific groups of language users need to be developed.

Who manages the language competence? Who acquires competence? Who uses it? Who loses it? Can there be any reasonable answer but “the learner”?

- The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is the means by which learners and users manage their language competence:

All competence is valued, regardless of whether it is gained inside or outside of formal education. The ELP is the property of the learner.

The ELP has a pedagogic function: to enhance the motivation, to incite and help learners to reflect their objectives, to plan their learning, to provide grids of self-assessment, to encourage learners to gain plurilingual and intercultural experience.

The ELP has a documentary and reporting function.

- The European Language Portfolio consists therefore of three parts: the Language Passport, the Language Biography, and the Dossier.

When learners acquire language competence they often do so to meet the demands of institutions or employers. Most institutions rely on standardised tests for gate-keeper functions (e.g. TOEFL).

- The Language Passport of the ELP shows documents and certificates.
- Tests, to a certain extent, determine the classroom activities (backwash-effect).
- Whoever agrees on communicative competence as the main aim of language teaching has to

agree on methods of testing focusing on communicative competence.

How do learners acquire competence? The CEFR has adopted an action-oriented approach.

- Learners draw on the competences at their disposal to engage in language activities, such as receiving and/or producing texts in relation to themes in specific domains. Hereby learners activate strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished.
- Tasks are the key to develop competences in class.
- Tasks are a constituent part when testing competences.

Can-do statements can be put into action by tasks.

- In developing textbooks which adopt the aims of CEFR, tasks play an important role.
- Tasks are linked to can-do statements in the grids for self-evaluation as found in ELP.

Where did we want to go to? What did/do we provide in ‘Profile deutsch’ to meet these targets?

As shown above “Profile deutsch” is one part of the triangle of language policies of the Council of Europe: The CEFR offers the main guideline, the ELP empowers the learner, and “Profile deutsch” is a tool to bring the CEFR into practice for the German language.

- “Profile deutsch” consists of a CD-ROM and a handbook. “Profile deutsch” is not a textbook; it is neither a curriculum nor is it a standardised test.
- “Profile deutsch” can be helpful in designing textbooks, planning curricula, developing tests or describing learner profiles.

The main aspects of the CEFR are reflected in “Profile deutsch”:

- Chapter “**Profile Deutsch auf einen Blick**” (“Profile deutsch” at a glance) gives a short overview of the components included, a short guideline for the program, information on the background (the relevant chapters of the CEFR) and assorted links.
- Chapter “**Die 6 Niveaus**” (the Six Levels) provides an overview of the Common Reference Levels, the Global Scale (CEFR Table 1), a grid for self evaluation and—most challenging—learners’ examples of spoken production, the examples of every level, with a commentary why these examples are calibrated to the assigned levels.
- Chapter “**Kannbeschreibungen**” (can-do statements) are provided for the following activities: interaction oral and written, reception oral and written, production oral and written and mediating between languages. All activities comprise:
 - “**Detaillierte Kannbeschreibungen**” (detailed can-do statements), which state “What can learners do on a given level of reference?” To tie these can-do statements closer to practice in class and testing at least three examples, located in different domains, show in which roles learners perform tasks that contain the can-do statement concerned.
 - “**Globale Kannbeschreibungen**” (global can-do statements) describe the quality: “How well can learners fulfil their tasks, and which aspects of quality can or must be considered?”

- Chapter “**Sprachliche Mittel**” (linguistic means) contains:
 - “**Thematischer Wortschatz**” (vocabulary assorted to topics) assigned to one of the levels A1-B2. Furthermore, as German is a pluricentric language, this vocabulary of course gives regional variations of German.
 - “**Allgemeine Begriffe**” (concepts) assigned to one of the levels A1-B2.
 - “**Sprachhandlungen**” (speech acts) assigned to one of the levels A1-B2.
 - “**Wörterbuch**” (dictionary) gives 33,000 lexical items of the “e-Großwörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache, Langenscheidt” (publishers 2003).
This enables users of “Profile deutsch” to put together their own lists (according to their actual needs) and save them in the “Sammelmappe” (collecting point), from where everything can be exported to either Word or Excel.
- Chapter “**Grammatik A1-B2**” (grammar) has been derived from the linguistic means: Which structures of German grammar help users of German to solve their tasks according to a certain level? In the part “functional grammar,” the means of grammar are assigned to notional aspects.
- There are some more chapters, only listed here: “**Texte**” (texts), “**Strategien**” (strategies), “**Gruppenprofile**” (profiles of users’ groups) and the aforementioned “**Sammelmappe**” (collecting point).

In practice “Profile deutsch” has been shown to be a tool for various purposes. For example, it has been used for:

- Planning and designing textbooks (distributing the can-do statements of a given level to chapters and add strategies and techniques to tasks).
- Validating set tests by checking the vocabulary required by students.
- Designing a curriculum for special courses, e.g. training non-German speaking salespersons of a bakery chain in Munich.

How did we manage to come to terms with it?

Developing a multipurpose tool such as “Profile deutsch” does need the willingness of any person involved (carriers of the project, board of experts, authors and program developers) to find new ways.

- The targets of CEFR are specified to very differing extents.
We tried, for instance, to come to terms with the concept of strategies by illustrating each strategy with one or more techniques.
- The contents of CEFR are rather abstract and have to be tied closer to practice in education, classroom and testing. That is why we decided to give at least three examples of any can-do statement.

We—both the authors and the board of experts as well—were aware of some risks in the perception of the outcome.

- Providing lists of linguistic means is necessary to facilitate putting the targets agreed on into

practice. We understand these lists to be an offer, and to be a proposition. At the same time they were understood to be mandatory, albeit our suggestions.

- There are frequent questions—not to say demands—for lists of linguistic means for the C-levels. However, there are hardly any criteria to be met which are not arbitrary. There is no such thing as an agreed common core. The use of a foreign language at the C-level is to a large extent specified: the needs for communication in the field of business differ widely from the needs in a field such as studying German to become a teacher of the German language.
- Textbooks and standardised tests will be the main means to put the targets of the CEFR into action. However, the same contents have been rapidly transferred into new a shape: within a short space of time the textbook “German for beginners” emerged as “German level A1.” The action-based approach towards teaching and testing requires more than a change in labelling.

Reform of the French Ministry of Education DELF and DALF Examinations

Bruno Mègre

Since 1987, the Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques (CIEP) has been a government institution whose parent ministry is the French Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research. The CIEP works in two main areas: language teaching, learning and assessment (French as a foreign language and modern languages for French people) and promoting French teaching expertise outside France (educational engineering).

The assessment and certification section, at the CIEP, manages two qualifications in French as a foreign language on behalf of a number of French ministries: two diplomas (DELF, Diploma in French language studies and DALF, Advanced diploma in French language) and one test (TCF, French competency test). This section is also involved in the work of the language division of the Council of Europe. Finally, thanks to its qualifications, the CIEP is a member of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), along with prestigious European institutions (such as the University of Cambridge, Goethe Institut and Instituto Cervantes) specialising in assessing learners' competency in foreign languages.

The DELF and DALF diplomas were created in 1985 at the request of the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education. Since then, over 3 million candidates have taken these examinations. The 1,000 examination centres are distributed over 156 countries. Every year, 350 examination sessions are organised throughout the world. As a result, the CIEP has awarded more than 70,000 diplomas each year.

Previously, DELF and DALF were structured as three separate diplomas: DELF level 1, DELF level 2 and DALF. Each diploma was originally composed of convertible units (unit credit scheme), and candidates had to pass a certain number of units in order to be awarded one of the diplomas. Each of the diplomas corresponded to a certain competency level in French as a foreign language, and each unit had specific communicative and linguistic content.

Since their creation, DELF and DALF have been based on the work of the Council of Europe (see COE threshold level). With the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the Council of Europe in 2001, the various units were graded in approximate terms.

In 2003, the CIEP began a major reform of these examinations to ensure that they corresponded precisely and reliably to the six levels defined in the Common European Framework of Reference descriptors. These reforms were necessary for a number of reasons: to make the diploma levels clearer; to define progress levels more precisely; and to bring the diplomas into line with foreign-language qualifications awarded by other European institutions, in particular other members of ALTE.

The CIEP therefore abandoned this structure of three diplomas composed of convertible units in favour of a clearer, more flexible structure with six diplomas corresponding to the six levels of the European Framework of Reference:

European Framework of Reference levels	New DELF-DALF system
A1	DELF A1
A2	DELF A2
B1	DELF B1
B2	DELF B2
C1	DALF C1
C2	DALF C2

In September 2005, these six new diplomas replaced the previous diplomas. The system has been simplified considerably with the disappearance of the convertible-units system (unit credit scheme) and the introduction of independent diplomas, each of which systematically assesses the full range of skills. In addition to the skills that were generally assessed previously (reading comprehension, listening comprehension, written production, spoken production), with the new DELF and DALF examinations written and spoken interaction are systematically assessed at each level.

This reform of the DELF and DALF examinations required extensive analysis of the previous examinations (on the basis of the Council of Europe Manual used to link the examinations with the European Framework); the creation of new examinations in line with the competency levels defined by the European Framework; having a large number of candidates (who were first assessed by way of the TCF) take these examinations at pilot centres across the world; psychometric analysis of the results; and, finally, definitive approval of the experimental examinations with reference to the psychometric and educational analyses supplied.

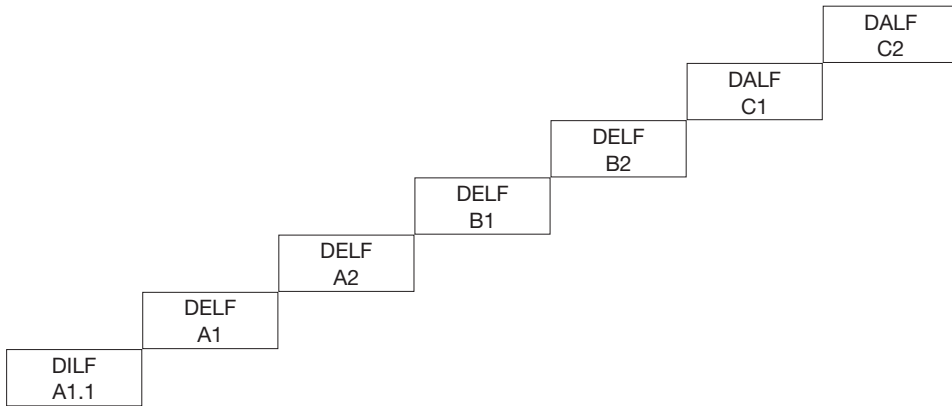
This realignment, performed over a period of months, also provided very useful information on the former DELF and DALF diplomas. It was found that, we had not been assessing the most extreme levels in the six levels of the CEFR (level A1 and a part of the level C2 of the European Framework). With the new examinations, these extreme levels can be assessed and certified, which also means that the time it takes candidates to get the diploma is reduced. The previous system assessed and certified the competency level of candidates from level A2 to level C2 partially.

The reforms were also an opportunity to improve the process by which the work of candidates is assessed at our various examination centres around the world. Scorers and examiners must now obtain accreditation from the CIEP to perform this work, by attending a training course on familiarisation with the European Framework of Reference and the assessment of the speaking and writing examinations of the new diplomas.

There are two versions of the new DELF (but not DALF) diplomas, as there were for the old diplomas: a version for adults and a version for teenagers (between 12 and 18 years old), called DELF for schools (4 independent diplomas from level A1 to level B2). The content of the DELF

for schools is adapted to the specific interests and needs of young people, but it assesses the skills required for the standard DELF in the same way and according to the same criteria and scales.

Finally, in a separate project, the CIEP is developing a new diploma called the DILF, which stands for Diplôme Initial en Langue Française [Initial diploma in French language]. DILF assesses candidates' skills at level A1.1, which is the level below level A1 as defined in the European Framework. This new qualification is intended for candidates who are not able to read and/or write, among others. The new system as a whole can be illustrated as follows:



National Standards

Isoyama Watanabe Maki

In a report titled *A Nation at Risk*, America's National Commission on Excellence in Education declared in 1983 that the United States was facing a crisis in education. The report prompted a federal government-led movement toward established standards for education, through which advances were made in standardizing curriculum content for required K-12 subjects. Development of national standards for foreign language education in the United States began in 1993 as part of that movement.

In order to establish content standards for what K-12 students should learn and master in foreign language education, the federal government provided funding for a coalition of four associations of foreign language teachers—the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the American Association of Teachers of French, the American Association of Teachers of German, and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese—to form a task force on standards for foreign language learning. In formulating the standards, the task force first investigated what skills learners should acquire in foreign language education. From the findings of the investigations it identified specific goal areas, and for each goal area set standards for language knowledge and proficiency required by the time of high school graduation. The resulting document, *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, published in 1996, stipulates two or three standards in each of five target areas (communication, culture, connections, comparisons, communities), and collectively these standards comprise the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (known as the General Standards). Each standard is accompanied by concrete “sample progress indicators” describing the knowledge and skills students should acquire in grades 4, 8, and 12.

Although these standards were intended to be generally applicable whatever the foreign language being learned, doubts were raised as to their suitability for learning certain languages, including Asian languages. Accordingly, the standards formulation process was later expanded to include seven more organizations representing five additional languages—the American Association of Teachers of Italian, the American Classical League, the American Council of Teachers of Russian, the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools, the Chinese Language Teachers Association, the National Council of Secondary Teachers of Japanese (NCSTJ; now the National Council of Japanese Language Teachers), and the Association of Teachers of Japanese (ATJ). Learning standards were then formulated for each language, and this process led to the publication of a revised edition of *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* in 1999.

The standards for Japanese language learning were devised by a task force formed by the NCSTJ and the ATJ and made up of teachers representing the K-16 spectrum. According to Kataoka Hiroko, formerly a member of this task force, its investigations and deliberations

revealed that the General Standards applied surprisingly well to Japanese language learning. As a result, the only aspects that had to be revised specifically for Japanese language learning were the sample progress indicators, which vary from one language to another depending on how difficult each is to learn. The General Standards indicate what students should know and be able to do in order to communicate in a foreign language, so the efforts to refine the standards for each of the other languages (except Latin) had similar results.

Since the General Standards were announced, various kinds of activities have been conducted to promote awareness and understanding of these standards, notably through ACTFL publications and workshops and papers presented at ACTFL annual meetings. Related conferences and workshops have also been held by local foreign language teacher associations in each state. Efforts to promote the standards for Japanese language learning have been carried out mainly through workshops held and materials distributed by the ATJ, the NCSTJ, local teacher associations, and the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles. Furthermore, institutions involved in teacher credential programs and other professional development are providing opportunities for curriculum development in accordance with the standards.

Today, 10 years after they were published, the General Standards are being applied in various ways in foreign language education in the United States. They have been adopted and applied in the standards and curriculum frameworks for foreign language learning in numerous states and school districts. According to Paul Sandrock in "ACTFL Professional Issues Report: State Standards: Connecting a National Vision to Local Implementation," 22 American states have formulated standards for foreign language education either closely or partly modeled on the General Standards. And according to Kataoka Hiroko, who is involved in teacher training at the California Japanese language teaching credential program at California State University, Long Beach, as the standards for Japanese language learning become more widely adopted, the number of teachers whose repertoire of classroom activities is limited to grammar teaching is declining, while that of teachers capable of devising personalized and contextualized activities to enhance communication skills is on the rise.

Also notable is the development, with standards-based content, of the AP (Advanced Placement) Japanese Language and Culture Exam, the first round of which is scheduled to be administered in May 2007. The exam is the achievement test for the AP Japanese Language and Culture course set to commence in the latter half of 2006, the curriculum for which is also based on the standards. The launch of the AP Japanese Language and Culture Program is expected to spur the diffusion of the Japanese language learning standards among elementary and secondary schools that teach the language. Furthermore, the College Board, which administers AP programs, actively supports AP Japanese language training for K-16 teachers as a way to maintain the quality of AP Japanese Language and Culture course, which means that from now on the standards are also expected to permeate into higher education as students who take the test advance to college and university after graduating from high school.

The preceding summarizes the background to and current state of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning. From the American experience in the formulation and dissemination of

content standards, the following points can be made in regard to the Japan Foundation's efforts to develop standards for Japanese-language education.

- (1) Teaching something to students is no guarantee that they will learn or master it. What has been standardized in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning is the content that learners should learn, not the content that teachers should teach. It is evident from this that the true goal of foreign language education in the United States is not to teach foreign languages but to help learners learn them. In its efforts to develop standards for Japanese language education, it is important for the Japan Foundation to likewise clarify what its aims are—who it hopes will benefit in what ways from Japanese language education—and on that basis to formulate standards of what to expect of such learners.
- (2) The Standards for Foreign Language Learning are content standards; they define what learners should know and be able to do. They are not standards of skills or skill levels that define how or how well learners can put into practice what they have learned. How and how well teachers teach that content are also matters for a separate area of standardization, and should not be confused or equated with content standards. In the Japan Foundation's efforts to develop standards for Japanese language education, it is likewise necessary to clarify exactly what is to be standardized and for whom.
- (3) The Standards for Foreign Language Learning reflect the diversity of learners in America's highly multiethnic and multicultural society. Devised for learners in a context where various languages are studied, they are therefore expressed in highly abstract terms so as to be applicable to the learning of any language. Such abstractness is essential for ensuring that standards can be applied as broadly as possible, but on the other hand it can obscure their intended meaning and make them more susceptible to misinterpretation. According to Kataoka Hiroko, one of the greatest challenges currently facing Japanese language teacher training is the prevalence of teachers who do not have a proper understanding of the communication or culture standards for Japanese language learning. The Japan Foundation's efforts to formulate standards for Japanese language education must also address the problem of abstractness. The broader the diversity of the Japanese language learning contexts that they are devised for, the more abstract the standards will need to be. On the other hand, the more abstract the standards are, the greater the likelihood of their being misinterpreted by teachers unskilled in adapting them to their own particular circumstances. It is imperative that plans to disseminate and promote the standards be made with due consideration to this dilemma.
- (4) The Standards for Foreign Language Learning are one of the fruits of education policies initiated under the direction of the U.S. federal government. The federal government has no binding or direct authority over teachers or educational institutions, but the fact that

state and school district authorities have used the Standards as a model for the curriculum frameworks that they require public school teachers to follow has certainly contributed to the spread of the Standards at the K-12 level. If we transpose this connection between binding authority and standards diffusion to the present effort to formulate standards for Japanese-language education, there remains the formidable problem of how and to what extent the Japan Foundation, which also has no binding authority, can effect their widespread acceptance, however aptly the standards encapsulate our ideals of Japanese language education.