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Japanese as a Second Language Newsletter

JALT JAPANESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
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Mission Statement

The mission of the Japanese as a Second Language Special Interest Group (JSL SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) is to serve as a resource for promoting JSL teaching, learning and research. We welcome JSL teachers, learners, and researchers to join and take an active role in our SIG.

Message from the Coordinator

Dear Colleagues, hope this finds you all well. We are happy to tell you that we now have 74 members. The JSL forum entitled "Teaching & Learning JFL in the World" has been scheduled from 17:00 to 18:30 on November 19 (Saturday), 2011, at the annual conference of JALT held in Yoyogi, Tokyo. We look forward to meeting you all at the Forum. Please contact Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska at <megumik@temple.edu> for details.

Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska
(Coordinator)

Message from the Newsletter Editor

The summer heat has left, and now there are signs of fall around us. In Japan, we say that fall is the best season for study. How is your "Teaching, Learning, Growing" developing? In this issue, there are many hints to teach, learn, and grow!

At first, the presenters of the last Pan-SIG in Nagano contributed their presentation reports. The conference theme was "Fluency." You will find variety of interesting studies of fluency in their reports. Following this, two JSL learners (Anna and Sinha sensei) contributed their article, how they improve their fluency level in Japanese. The next article is from Hino sensei about why Kanji is necessary to become fluent in Japanese. At the last, Yamaguchi sensei explains about the particle "MO" in her Teaching Idea section. All of them are very insightful and inspiring, and help you to be prepared for the JALT annual conference in November. Looking forward to learn and grow there together.

Nozomi Takano
(Newsletter Editor)

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The JSL SIG program chair, Dr. Sayoko Yamashita, has donated more than 250 JSL/JFL related books to JSL teaching groups in Fukushima prefecture that has been affected by the tragic earthquake and subsequent tsunami that devastated the northern coastal areas of Japan on March 11, 2011.



At the 10th Pan-SIG conference in May at the Shinsyu University, we had a table to advertize the JSL Special Interest Group.



Takano explains at the JSL SIG table.



The JALT 2011 Conference "Teaching, Learning, Growing" will be held during November 18-21th at the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center Yoyogi

in Tokyo. The JSL SIG forum will be held on Saturday November 19th, 2011, 6:45 PM – 7:45 PM (60 minutes) in the Room 415. Please join!!!



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Here are the contents of the JSL Forum “How to become a fluent speaker in Japanese as a second language” at the 10th PAN-Sig Conference.

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**What is fluency to you?
From the students' point of view
Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska
(Temple University Japan Campus)**

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This paper investigates what “fluency” is to undergraduate students and the relationship between the fluency and error correction strategies. Twenty-four participants (12 native speakers of American English speaking Japanese, and 12 native speakers of Japanese speaking English) were asked three questions: (a) What is fluency to you? (b) How can you be a fluent speaker of Japanese or English? and (c) What do you think about error corrections? All the responses were divided into several categories and examined.

It has been found that (a) there are a variety of students' definitions of *fluency*, e.g., having grammatical knowledge, acquiring pragmatic features, controlling emotion and personality in foreign/second language (L2), creating no-misunderstandings, dreaming in L2, having unconscious or effortless communication in L2 and so on, (b) having native-speaker-friends and living in the target language community would be the best ways to be fluent, and (c) many students believe that error corrections do not interfere with their fluency and will improve students' performance; however, some people like immediate corrections all the time while others do not. Moreover, it appears some students like direct corrections, while others prefer indirect corrections.

As shown, there are variety of definitions and preferences to error corrections. Thus, it may be necessary to reconsider the concept of “fluency” and respond to individual need in teaching.



Kawate presents her research.

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**Linguistic relativity in personal pronouns: analysis of a Rakugo script
Rieko Matsuoka
(National College of Nursing, Japan)**

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Being aware of differences of positioning yourself in conversation should enhance fluency in speaking Japanese. In the JSL forum, first and second pronouns from a modern Rakugo script 'Himaraya no hokutoshichisei: Septentrion over the Himalaya', the original Rakugo script written by Sanyutei Kyoraku, were presented, focusing on the parts where no uttered pronouns are required, in order to decipher the nature of linguistic relativity between English and Japanese.

According to linguistic relativity, differences in perspectives on reality often manifest themselves as specific features in language use in speech communities, and these differences seem to cause complications in communication. As a more specific method for analyzing the translation process, the notion of high context vs. low context was utilized. By examining the data with the notion of linguistic relativity in mind, the first and second person pronouns are highlighted and the frequency of first-person pronouns uttered or not uttered in Japanese where they are uttered in English, and the frequency of second-person pronouns uttered or not uttered in Japanese where they

are uttered in English were examined, and the ways in which these phenomena are related to linguistic relativity hypothesis, such as in Hall's notion of high-context and low-context societies and Japanese socio-anthropological characteristics were discussed.



Matsuoka analyses the Rakugo script.

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**Instant Japanese
Peter Ross
(Tokyo Keizai University)**

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When planning our curricula, we usually try to figure out how to teach as many words and structures as we can in the limited amount of time allotted for our classes. In this workshop, Prof. Ross proposed an alternative: teach the absolute minimum number of words/morphemes required to carry on a conversation and how to combine them into more than just the sum of the parts. This workshop demonstrated how to create such a list of words/morphemes, and gave participants a taste of using it.



Ross shows how to use words like “Ne.” “Ja.” “Sou.” “Ma.”

Other than the forum, there were two more presentations related to the JSL matters.

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**Analyzing Fluency in the Interview Data from the Immersion Programs
Tamayo Hattori (Waseda University)
Nozomi Takano (Sophia University)**

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Immersion education is a language learning program, where school-aged children can learn both content areas and immersion languages at the same time. The main purpose of our study was to examine how language is learned in the content-based language immersion classrooms, specifically in two Japanese immersion programs in the U.S. Using Center for Applied Linguistics developed oral assessment, called ELLOPA (Early Language Learners' Oral Proficiency Assessment) and SOPA (Student Oral Proficiency Assessment), we analyzed the development of oral fluency and meta-linguistic strategies in student verbal and non-verbal responses to the interview questions.

Because of the limited number of immersion programs and field studies in Japan, not only immersion researchers but also students who were majoring in education came to listen to the presentation.

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**Japanese pop-culture and learning Japanese
Yoko Suzuki
(Musashino University)**

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The Japanese pop-culture is world-widely popular today, and this means many potential Japanese language learners exist. I have surveyed why Japanese pop-culture, especially Japanese MANGA and ANIME, attracts foreign young people since this may be the answer to the question 'how to increase the number of JSL learners.'

My questionnaire and interview surveys found that the stories of MANGA and/or ANIME, which relates to Japanese culture, are very “COOL” for western young people. They are amazed at some scenes or the contents that are very different from their own; therefore, they are willing to know more precisely and deeply. In contrast, the characters in Japanese MANGA and ANIME are “CUTE” or “VIOLENT” for Asian people; therefore, they admire the characters and sometimes wish to imitate. The story-lines are very fascinating for them, too.

The uniqueness of Japanese culture derives from the factors such as Japan is an island country and has never been invaded by other tribes. Also, Japan is originally farming country and mainly relies on agriculture but not on hunting. In addition to these, nowadays Japanese people are generous to accept any human wants.

People usually have the desire to understand MANGA or ANIME in the original form, so some fans of Japanese pop-culture may want to learn Japanese language. It is proved by the fact that many foreign students in Japan started Japanese language learning because of their interest in MANGA and ANIME. The teaching material of Japanese language should be focused to their interest and also the pedagogy of Japanese language should be ingenious.



Suzuki answers questions during her poster presentation.

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My experience at “Mori no Ike” camp
Annalouise Virginia Stone
(The University of Vermont)

I thought I knew exactly what I would be doing this summer. I was studying abroad in Tokyo and would not be coming home until the beginning of August. Then the March 11th earthquake came. Suddenly I needed a summer job. I ended up working at a Japanese language immersion camp for children called “Mori no Ike.”

At Mori no Ike the counselors speak only in Japanese to the campers except for emergencies and a nightly check in time. The campers may speak in English but are encouraged to speak in Japanese as much as they can. Since Japanese is used all the time, learning continues no matter what the activity is. There are many activities at Mori no Ike. These are divided into clubs and classes. Clubs are centered around one activity, such as dance or origami, and continue for a week with the same theme. Classes tend to have a different topic each day. Both classes and clubs make use of games and other activities to teach Japanese. Opportunities for learning are not limited to clubs and classes though. Each day there is song time, a counselor melodrama, and an evening program such as undoukai. Campers learn a lot during mealtime conversation, too.

It wasn't just the campers who were learning at Mori no Ike. I learned words that I never would have seen in a textbook, such as dani (tick) and shimirisu (chipmunk). I also learned how to plan and teach lessons. Most of all, I gained self-confidence. At the beginning, I was worried about whether I could come up with a good lesson or teach by myself. By the end of camp I was much more comfortable. In fact, I enjoyed my experience at Mori no Ike so much, I may become a Japanese teacher someday.

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Watching Ghibli movies
to learn Japanese
Geoff Sinha
(Tama University)



Introduction:

Ghibli movies, such as *Spirited Away*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Kiki's Delivery Service*, and *Grave of the Fireflies* are beyond doubt my favorite tool for studying Japanese language and culture. If you haven't done so already, I highly recommend that you watch them. Ghibli movies are great for a number of reasons. First of all, they are aimed at both a Japanese and a worldwide audience, which explains the English and French subtitles. Also, the graphics and animation in Ghibli movies is so amazing. I can honestly say that I have never seen animation like that of a Ghibli movie (and I watched a lot of *Disney* as a child). Furthermore, although these are kid's movies, they strongly appeal to adults. My heart wrenches at the beginning of *Grave of the Fireflies* (a tale of a young boy and girl's struggle for survival at the end of the Second World War), while the scenery and storyline of *Princess Mononoke* holds me spell-bound every time.

Technique for studying Japanese:

The following technique for learning through movies is very simple. It is also enjoyable, relaxing and potentially addictive (popcorn is optional).

1. First of all, rent or buy a Ghibli movie (if it's your first time I recommend the titles above).
2. On your first viewing, watch it in Japanese with English (or French) subtitles.
3. On your second watching, try watching without the subtitles. Of course, at any stage it's completely okay to go back to subtitles for hard to understand parts. (You can also skip any slow-moving parts and re-watch the good parts as often as you like).
4. By the end of your second viewing, I predict that you will be fairly comfortable watching without subtitles for most, if not all, of the movie.

Benefits:

Linguistically, expect your listening comprehension to increase. To work on your spoken fluency and speed try a technique called 'Shadowing'. This involves speaking along with the characters as they speak. Another benefit is an increase in cultural knowledge. Ghibli's creator, Miyazaki Hayao, wants to educate Japanese children about their native culture, history and environment, so Ghibli movies are loaded with such references. This makes them a perfect study tool for learners of Japanese. A final benefit is affective. Ghibli movies are inherently interesting. Watching them time and again is fun and it only increases your deep knowledge. This becomes an interesting talking point with your friends, colleagues and students.

Conclusion:

Ghibli movies are both entertaining and educational for Japanese language learners. They are also an absorbing tool to learn about Japanese culture and history. I hope in using this technique you will increase your language competence, your cultural knowledge and you will enjoy your study more.



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Sensei, why is Kanji necessary in Japanese?

Hiroko Hino (Sophia University)

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I teach kanji every semester mainly to intermediate level international students whom majority comes from countries where kanji is not used. The kanji class is an intermediate course designed for students who have already learned the basic beginner level kanji. On the first day of class, I always pose a question, “who likes kanji?” A very few students usually hesitantly raise their hands. This minority opinion is probably due to their incomplete state of learning despite that they have been taught the basics.

When entering the intermediate level, the number of new kanji and vocabulary increases significantly. As a result, the class is conducted promoting much interest and enthusiasm in kanji and vocabulary learning by using various cognitive approach centering on contextualization developing intra and extra linguistic knowledge, which is called “Communicative Kanji Learning.” To establish a connection between structure, shape, and meaning in a single kanji, one can encourage the use of each students own unique way of memorizing the kanji and practicing recognizing collocation by using the kanji in relation to more natural everyday context to understand the definition. Also, dictation is frequently practiced to use the most of the students’ preexisting or learned knowledge. It helps to develop kanji recognition by hearing rather than just looking. This technique is mentally labor intensive, however, the majority of students end up liking kanji by end of the semester. Students who have experienced success in learning kanji have expressed, “Kanji is fun. Being able to extract the meaning just by visual means is very convenient. I’m able to expand the everyday world around me.”

In case of beginner students, they often inevitably encounter great learning curves or hurdles, though there’s a slight difference in level of struggles in each of the students. They often express “I can’t remember the kanji”, “I forget it even after memorizing the kanji”, and “studying kanji is such a burden”. In an extreme case, they say, “I hate kanji”. The reasons for these impediments can be attributed to lack of understanding and recognition of the correlation between the shape and meaning of the word, inability to memorize the varieties of pronunciations and meanings of the word, and countless vocabulary derived from the newly established kanji.

Overcoming the obstacle of difficulties in learning kanji can only be conquered by amount of effort studying put in by the students. Teachers can only aid the troubled students by giving encouragement verbally, “It’s impossible to memorize and understand all kanji at once but persistent studying effort will pay off at the end” or “The world will expand once obtaining kanji knowledge”, and introducing different learning strategies.

A student experiencing challenges in learning kanji once questioned, “Why is kanji necessary in Japanese language?” At that time, I answered without too much thought, “Without kanji and only with hiragana, not only would it be difficult to read but also confusing to comprehend the definition if the words shared a same phonetics but different meanings.” However, I began to contemplate as to why exactly Japanese language needs kanji.

The answer to the question lies in the sound structures of Japanese language and semantic structures of 和語 or words of Japanese origin. Takao Suzuki writes in his book “Japanese and Foreign Language” (1990) that Japanese language only consists of 32 sounds to convey a meaning. Japanese words are assembled in pairs of vowel with consonant which limits the possible sound combinations.

This increases the number of words sharing the same sounds but having varieties of definition. This makes deciphering the meaning of each word difficult. Kanji is indeed needed to solve this problem. For example, the sound of the word, ‘toru’, does not convey a clear message due to the abstractness semantically, but if written in kanji, ‘取る, 採る, 撮る, 捕る’ the true definition can be extrapolated visually. In other words, since ‘toru’ functions only as abstract meanings such as “making something one’s own, doing something manually, holding something in hand”, it is necessary to use kanji for effective communication in Japanese.

Suzuki also explains the necessity of kanji by comparison of the use of academic vocabularies between Japanese and English. For example, just hearing the word, *hoshokusei*, in Japanese (‘apivorous’ in English), it conveys no clear meaning in Japanese language. However, if the word is written as ‘蜂食性’, the definition can be identified instantaneously by recognition of the meaning of the basic kanji ‘蜂’ and ‘食’ which any Japanese person would know. In Japanese language, when the sound itself does not clearly communicate the information, additional written expression in kanji perfects the message. In English language, understanding Latin aids in comprehending the meaning, however, Latin itself having high degree of difficulty to learn, it is not the easiest or most popular method.

Suzuki explains that if the basic 2000 kanji is learned, most of the academic vocabularies can be understood. The example given is very clear and precise and could be a very helpful and supportive material to explain why kanji is necessary in Japanese language to students.

Reference: Suzuki, Takao. 1990. *Nihongo to gaikokugo*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten

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A Clue for Teaching Japanese ②

「も (too)」

Asako Yamaguchi
(Temple University Japan)

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This is the second volume of “A Clue for Teaching Japanese.” I will present “も” this time.

“も” appears very early stage of elementary level. In English it is translated as “too” or “also,” however, its usages are sometimes different. Let’s look at examples.

The simple example is :

“I am a student of Temple University. Mary is also a student of Temple University.”

These will be translated as

わたし だいがく がくせい
“私 は テンプル大学の 学生 です。メアリー

だいがく がくせい
ーさん も テンプル大学の 学生 です”

If we want to say “Item A (私) is this, item B (メアリー) is this too,” we can just attach も to the second item.

Then, how about the next example?

“I will go to China. I will go to Korea, too”.

わたし ちゅうごく い わたし かんこく
“私 は 中国 に行きます。私 も 韓国に

い
行きます”!?!—NG (The correct sentence is

わたし ちゅうごく い かんこく い
“私 は 中国 に行きます。韓国にも 行きます”)

Even intermediate learners of Japanese do these mistakes often. One Japanese textbook explains as “も is used in reference to the second item which shares a common attribute with the first” (*Genki 1* p.81), however, students do have difficulty in understanding. Especially for double particles, it is better to present examples one by one and let students think by themselves. I recommend you to provide students worksheet like the following.

① は+も→も

メアリーさんは^{がくせい}学生です。[subject]
Mary is a student.

たけしさん () ^{がくせい}学生です。
Takeshi is also a student

② が+も→も

ねこがいます。[subject for the place of description]
There is a cat.

いぬ () います。
There is a dog, too.

③ を+も→も

ビールをのみます。[object]
I drink beer.

ワイン () のみます。
I drink wine, too.

④ に (へ) +も→にも (へも)

しんじゅくにいきます。[destination]
I go to Shinkuku.

しぶや () いきます。
I go to Shibuya, too.

⑤ で+も→でも

としょかんで^{べんきょう}します。
[place of location]

I study at library.

うち () ^{べんきょう}します。
I study at home, too.

⑥ と+も→とも

スーさんとえいがにいきます。[“with”]
I go to movie with Sue.

たけしさん () えいがにいきます。

I go to movie with Takeshi, too.

<Answer: ①も ②も ③も ④にも (へも) ⑤でも ⑥とも>

If students understand basic rules, let's do conversation practice. The following format is translation, but it is ok to present own sentence if students can.

[Example]

A: Do you drink Coffee?

B: Yes, I drink. I drink green tea, too.

コーヒーをのみますか。

はい、のみます。おちゃものみます。

⑦ A: Do you study at school?

B: Yes, I study. I study at home, too.

^{がっこう} ^{べんきょう}学校で勉強しますか。

はい、勉強します。うちでも勉強します。

⑧ A: Will you meet Mary?

B: Yes, I will meet. I will meet Sue, too.

メアリーさん^あに会いますか。

はい、会います。スーさんにも会います。

⑨ A: Do you speak Japanese with a teacher?

B: Yes, I speak. I speak with friends, too.

^{せんせい} ^{にほんご} ^{はな}先生と日本語を話しますか。

はい、話します。友達とも話します。

By repeating these mechanical exercises, my students make less mistakes in homework. In order to avoid critical mistakes in intermediate level, we need to have students understand the usage of “も” properly at elementary level.

* If you have questions or opinions, please feel free to contact me at yamagu@temple.edu.

Reference: Genki I: An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese (The Japan Times, 1999)

JSL Newsletter

Would you like to make a contribution to our SIG newsletter, sending your article to us? We are accepting articles, book reviews, conference announcements, conference reports, conference review, interviews, lesson plans, essays from your students, etc. from both JALT JSL members and your colleagues.

It would be appreciated if the author of the article could send his or her contribution both in Japanese and English. When you cannot find a translator for your contribution, please feel free to contact us.

The deadline for the next issue is November 30, 2011. We look forward to receiving your contribution.

JSL Newsletter Editor

Nozomi Takano

Email: nozomitakano@yahoo.com

Fall for Art & Culture

How about a traditional Japanese culture, tea ceremony? A group called “松風会 Syohukai” will hold one in Yokohama, Sankeien garden on November 6, Sunday from 10:00 to 15:00. Ticket in advance is 3500yen including the garden entrance fee, three tea & sweets, and obento lunch. For more info. nozomitakano@yahoo.com



JSL Members

The JSL-SIG currently has around 74 members. To expand our network and share JSL information more dynamically, please invite your colleagues and friends to join us!

Benefits to be a member; Be able to:

1. Contribute a paper submission to the peer-reviewed JALT JSL-SIG journal, which is published biannually.
2. Receive three SIG newsletters per year.
3. Contribute articles, conference reports, lesson plans, teaching ideas, students' essays, call for papers, etc. to the SIG newsletter.
4. Present at the Pan-SIG conference (apply through the Pan-SIG official Web page).
5. Participate in the JSL forums as a presenter at JALT and/or Pan-SIG conferences (contact megumik@temple.edu for details).
6. Attend JSL-SIG meetings and workshops.
7. Request information about Japanese teaching materials, methods, cultural exchanges, culture and society, pragmatics, etc. (contact megumik@temple.edu)
8. Obtain the updated information about academic conferences and call for papers.
9. Receive a the member's discount for the JALT related conferences.

How to join (if you haven't joined)

1. Become a JALT member. The easiest way is going through the JALT website, <https://jalt.org/joining/>
2. On this application page, find Special Interest Group (SIG) section and choose JSL. You may join as many SIGs as you want. There is a charge of 1500 yen for each SIG you join. There is also an option to become a JSL-SIG newsletter reader for 2500 yen per year without the JALT membership.
* Please refer to the JALT membership categories and fees on <http://jalt.org/main/membership>