

University of Tsukuba – Center for Education of Global Communication
The Ninth Faculty Development Event
Reflecting on Elementary and Intermediate Japanese Language Courses
and Teaching Material Development
(The Role of Foreign Language Education in Higher Education)

Yoshiro Hanai

Monday July 10, 2017 15:15-17:15 CA310

During this event, methods to use a contents-based approach from an early stage in second language learning were discussed. This event was also the first CEGLOC FD event to be co-organized with the Japanese Language Education Division.

Part I: Lecture and Q&A session

Prof. H. Iwasaki, the Head of CEGLOC, welcomed Assoc. Prof. Yoshiro Hanai who was then introduced by Assoc. Prof. M. Kido. Assoc. Prof. Hanai is affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh where he coordinates the Japanese Program.

He talked the audience through the different roles of foreign language education in higher education by first introducing the style of language education in the US, where beginner courses are mainly content indifferent and the advanced ones language indifferent, i.e. with a focus on more than language only. His research question was whether beginner courses can also focus on content such as culture and history, rather than language only. Currently, administrators tend to think that foreign language teaching is unnecessary or that it can be outsourced. In addition, Assoc. Prof. Hanai notices a lack of exposure to texts because of the emphasis on communication, although reading might be the skill to be learned the fastest among the four skills. He pointed at the need for a curriculum reform where FL courses are an intellectual challenge, where the connection between beginner and intermediate course is smoother, and where a new balance between the four skills is found with more weight for reading skills. With universities aiming for global competency, reading skills can help learners to deepen their knowledge and understanding in a wide range of topics.

To that purpose, Assoc. Prof. Hanai developed new course materials for learners of Japanese at a beginner level (130-150 hours of study completed) with topics that were selected based on the fact they are being taught and researched on in the field of Japan Studies. Reading texts are a major part of the textbook he developed. However, reading is not the goal, it is a tool to encourage the learner to absorb the read information as knowledge. Several tasks are provided in order to learn a mix of reading strategies. The book also aims at increasing the learner's vocabulary level. As the textbook is meant for beginners, learners are not required to reproduce all sentence patterns they encounter, but they should understand them passively. A website linked to the textbook can be used extensively for listening exercises etc. In general, each lesson in the book follows a four-step production process of reading/doing/writing/presenting.

Finally, the textbook was introduced in detail to the audience, followed by a lively Q&A session.

Part II: Survey results

This event was attended by 36 persons of whom 31 filled out a survey, with more than half (58%) being first time attendees. A good balance of teaching and research staff (21) and graduate students (15) was

attained.

Most participants expressed overall satisfaction with the event, one participant was undecided. The majority (29/31) would likely recommend this type of FD event to their friends or/ and colleagues. Most participants (77.4%) felt the length of the event was about right, while seven participants wrote it was too long.

Most participants found the topic interesting and useful at the same time. Regarding applying the information in their own teaching practice, 48.4% answered they will extremely likely do so, while 32.3% will likely do so. Five participants were undecided, while one participant is likely not to do so.

Suggested topics for future events are: pragmatics and SLA, culture-related topics, educational activities in foreign countries, teaching methods for beginners, effective use of IT, interests and needs of Japanese language learners abroad, assessment in Japanese language classes, games and language acquisition, Japanese Language Proficiency Test, material development for Japanese language listening. Suggestions for improvement of future events included more publicity, more frequent events, and more Q&A time.

Part III: Lecturer and Participants



Assoc. Professor Yoshiro Hanai surrounded by the participants

Part V: Acknowledgments

The CEGLOC FD Events Committee would like to thank the Head of CEGLOC, Prof. H. Iwasaki for his support. The practical assistance of the CEGLOC staff is also highly appreciated.

For the CEGLOC FD Committee:

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