

Introduction

The papers in this volume were originally presented at the third National Symposium for Japanese Language Education 2016, held in Melbourne, Australia.¹ They represent a selection of the most interesting presentations, re-worked for publication, and submitted to peer review. The Symposium is a unique opportunity to bring together teachers, researchers and policy makers involved in Japanese Language Education nationally, and even internationally, from all levels of education. The theme of the Symposium was ‘Making Japanese Visible and Valuable’, with an emphasis on both increasing the value and effectiveness of what is done in the classroom, and also promoting the value of learning Japanese to students, school communities and society more broadly by making it more visible. The volume commences with a paper addressing the theme directly, and is followed by five papers relating to innovations in primary and lower secondary level programs, four relating to secondary programs and a final paper addressing a key theme of the conference on the importance of collaboration for advocacy. Also included are abstracts from the much wider range of papers that were presented orally at the Symposium.

The first paper is based on a Keynote paper for the Symposium *Addressing the challenge of languages education in Australian Schools: using promotion and popular culture to make Japanese visible and valuable* by Professor **John Hajek**. He points out that many of the difficulties for language education have their origin in views of language that are shaped by the ‘Anglobubble’ and the associated ‘monolingual mindset’ of those who live in English-speaking societies like Australia. His suggestions for breaking through this mindset include finding and promoting ‘local heroes’ who use Japanese to do interesting things, as well as using Japanese popular culture, food and other engaging features of Japanese society and culture to promote the value of learning Japanese to students, parents, and school authorities.

All of the papers focussing on primary level programs acknowledge the challenges of delivering meaningful programs in limited time, and most also explicitly respond to the challenges and opportunities inherent in the Australian Curriculum Languages (ACL), which was newly released at the time of the Symposium. They provide practical and detailed advice, firmly based on both current theories of language learning and extensive classroom experience. Two papers examine the use of stories and literature as a foundation for achieving a new and engaging curriculum. In her paper *Using picture story books to enact the Australian Curriculum Languages*, **Andrea Truckenbrodt** first discusses the ACL framework and the theory of language education on which it is based – intercultural language teaching. She then argues that the use of picture storybooks provides an ideal frame for enacting the ACL because of the opportunities they provide for linguistic, literacy and (inter)cultural learning. Picture books are also an accessible, much-loved text type for both learners and teachers, which makes them relatively easy for teachers to use. **Natalie Pearce**’s paper entitled *Using creative and imaginative texts to teach Japanese* was also inspired by the inclusion of the *Creating* substrand in the ACL. She describes how she re-developed her curriculum using a variety of creative and imaginative texts as the basis, giving detailed examples which should provide inspiration for other teachers.

¹ Susan Palmer’s paper, then titled ‘Achieving Success in the Primary Classroom’, was presented at the 2014 Symposium.

In her paper *45 minutes per week: how the Australian Curriculum is working in a government primary school*, **Kathleen Duquemin** elaborates a program that acknowledges the realities of programming constraints by using a combination of long and short units of work, to vary content and to tailor modules to the available time at different points in the academic year. The Scope and Sequence which she outlines is firmly based in the ACL and includes a mix of both authentic Japanese texts and synthetic texts to achieve a curriculum which is both ambitious and practical. **Susan Palmer**'s paper *Integrating the learning of language and culture across the primary curriculum* shares her experiences based on a philosophy which she summarises under the four key elements: Communication, Connection, Purpose and Experience. Her approach values experiences that connect and integrate learning across the curriculum, as well as a flexible and collaborative approach to program design and implementation, working closely with students, parents and classroom teachers to ensure the learning has purpose, is relevant, and is meaningful and fun.

The following two papers move beyond standard language programs to embrace approaches in which other elements of the curriculum are taught through Japanese. **Taku Hashimoto and John Webster** discuss an innovative bilingual program at the Primary level in their paper ウェラーズヒル小学校における日本語バイリンガルプログラム実施とその成果について (*The Wellers Hill State School Japanese Bilingual Program: implementation and results*). The program includes extensive attention to Japanese culture, and adopts a whole school approach, that also involves parents and the wider community. In a second paper reporting on a content and language integrated approach, this time at secondary level, **Kelly Harrison** describes her experiences in a paper entitled *Japanese media studies: a Year 10 CLIL program*. She discusses the theories and other works that inspired her, the way in which she implemented CLIL within her own program and the positive results for her students and for herself.

The next three papers tackle different aspects of secondary level programs and all include smart uses of technology to achieve greater efficiency and value. In *Social media tools to enhance collaboration with students and colleagues*, **Shingo Gibson-Suzuki** outlines the ways in which he uses various forms of social media both in class and in out of class activities. He also discusses the development of extensive networks for Japanese teachers through social media sites that he has established.

Nathan Lane's paper *Improving assessment in Japanese through the use of digital tools* also leverages technology to implement an effective program of formative assessment that gives timely feedback to students, in addition to efficient summative assessment. He outlines the wide range of applications that can be used to provide assessment in ways that both benefit students, and save time for teachers.

In her paper on *Targeted differentiation in a Japanese language course context*, **Liberty Campbell** discusses her experience with implementing a student-centred program in which students chose and worked through a range of self-determined tasks, and received individual feedback. This resulted in teachers spending more time connecting and communicating with individuals in the class and provided more opportunities for the students to make decisions about their learning and how they would demonstrate their progress. The results were very positively evaluated by the students, particularly those from the academically weaker group.

The final paper in the volume tackles one of the underlying themes of the conference, advocacy, in *Towards effective advocacy – evaluation of the Nihongo Roadshow and the School Leader Fellowship Program*. **Mayumi Mitsuya** and **Cathy Jonak**, of the Japan Foundation, provide evaluations of two programs designed to address advocacy for JLE, one aimed at students and communities and one at school leaders. They found that the Nihongo Roadshow was highly effective in remote areas in boosting students' engagement, and providing opportunities to connect to Japanese language and culture. The School Leader Fellowship Program had a significant impact on principals and administrators in leading them to recognise the importance of intercultural understanding and Japanese language programs in their own schools/ states. A supplementary survey revealed that materials and resources alone are not enough for advocacy, that advocacy skills and networking are also crucial; and this is clearly an area in which more work is required in future.

In summary, the papers in this volume demonstrate the innovativeness and vitality of Japanese language education in Australia. The key to the success of Japanese is its well-informed, creative and passionate teachers, and the strength of the organisations that support them. We hope that the papers in this volume, which introduce real innovations across a wide range of schools and levels, inspire other teachers to drive change in their own schools and across their own communities in order to ensure that Japanese language education is increasingly effective and valued, and achieves the visibility that it deserves.

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