

This feature should not be considered as a weakness of the Australian study of Japan. On the contrary, this feature gave enormous scope to the future expansion of Japanese studies in the country. In terms of cultivating Japan literacy, mixtures of paradigms proved to be certainly beneficial. They allowed Australian scholars to approach the study of Japan from a wide spectrum of disciplines. This, in turn, allowed students of many different disciplines an opportunity to enter into Japan-related studies, and equip themselves with specialised knowledge of Japan, as well as broadly based Japan literacy.

3.3 The Language Teaching

In the cultivation of Japan skills and literacy, language skill is a vital component. Furthermore, to be functional with the language, the proficiency has to be acquired through skill-based training. In an academic discipline, particularly in humanities, however, a skill-based training is often placed in an ambiguous position. In orthodox academia, it tends to be considered merely a tool to reach 'higher' academic purposes and therefore fails to gain respectability. In Australia, the expansion in the 1960s and 1970s gave a momentum to change this traditional concept. It took, however, the whole of the 1960s and 1970s for the language teaching to gain the respectability it deserved in the mainstream of Japanese academia.

In the very beginning, Australia's Japanese education began with full emphasis on language training. The curriculum created by Murdoch, although aimed not for ordinary students but for the training of military personnel and diplomatic corps, placed emphasis on language acquisition for practical purposes.

In the years following the war, however, 'Japanology'-style academic pursuit prevailed. In this environment, the purpose of language training seemed to have been somewhat obscured. Language acquisition was considered necessary only for specific purposes, such as reading and

translating classic script and literature. Language for communication purposes did not receive much attention. When Ackroyd began teaching at Canberra University College in 1958, the curriculum did not even include training in conversation or listening to spoken Japanese (Botsman 1991).

During the expansion period of the 1960s and 1970s, however, language acquisition for more practical purposes began to be taken seriously again. The growing trade and strengthening link with Japan was the motivation behind the expansion. Interaction between Australia and Japan was increasing at many levels, in public as well as private sectors. Australia needed more graduates who could contribute to this interaction. In other words, the country needed graduates who could effectively communicate with their Japanese counterparts and obtain information from direct sources. Language skills, which were now demanded, were of a functional and communicative kind.

Newer Japanese programs established in the 1960s and 1970s responded to these demands. The Japanese programs at the University of Queensland, introduced in 1965 and at Monash University in 1967, both made it clear from the outset that they placed particular emphasis on students' acquisition of practical language competence.

Australia was extremely fortunate at this crucial time to have two outstanding applied linguists, Alfonso and Neustupny. The two, in a separate but not conflicting way, guided the country's Japanese language teaching. Also significant was that, under the leadership of Alfonso and Neustupny, Japanese language teaching methodology was established as a new field of research in the Japanese discipline. The research activities in this field grew extensively in the 1980s and 1990s. As Low comments, 'the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a change in thinking about language teaching' (Low 1997a).

Amongst the traditional thinkers in academia, however, recognition of the language training as a vital component spread at a surprisingly slow pace. The 'Japanology' style approach lingered on and hampered the recognition of the importance of functional language skills. Another reason for the

slow recognition may have been the absence of language specialists amongst early leaders of Australia's Japanese academia. For a long time, Japanese language competency was not an essential skill required of Japan scholars in Australia. For example, it was only since the Fourth National Conference of JSAA in 1985 that the Japanese language was recognised, along with English, as an official language of the conference.

The recognition, however, was quickly spreading amongst the younger generation of Japan specialists. The year before the Fourth National Conference, the JSAA in 1984 organised a day-long colloquia for the members of each branch of the JSAA – Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane (ibid.). In three of the sessions, the main focus of the discussion was on language teaching. The Brisbane session focused on 'language teaching and the schools' and aimed at bringing together university academics and school teachers of Japanese. The Melbourne session focused on language in contact situations. This theme was developed further at the JSAA Conference in the following year. Canberra also chose language teaching as one of the major topics for the colloquia.

From the 1980s onward, the importance of language teaching for functional purposes was never in dispute amongst the university academia. The community's demand for graduates with Japanese language competence grew even more rapidly from the late 1980s and on to the 1990s. The universities' need to respond to community demand, as well as academia's recognition of the importance of language competence, spurred on Japanese language specialists in the research and development of more effective Japanese teaching methodologies. This is the background which has brought Australia's Japanese language teaching today to the position of one of the strongest in the world.

3.4 Vocational Relevance

In 1988, a national committee was set up in Australia to inquire into the teaching of Asian Studies and languages in higher education. The Committee, with John Ingleson as the Research Director, produced a report titled *Asia In Australian Higher Education*. The Report, which was