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Humanistic dimensions in Japanese language education in Australia

Abstract

Drawing on Kramsch’s (2006) call for new objectives of second/foreign language curriculum which go beyond communicative efficiency, this contribution explores new roles of Japanese language education in Australian tertiary education by illustrating examples from two institutions, one from the higher education and the other from the TAFE sector. Communicative competence has been an ultimate goal for many language teaching institutions in Australia for over the last two decades. Competence represents the learner’s ability to communicate with people accurately in a manner appropriate in a given situation. However, such competence alone does not equip young Australian and international students to challenge issues which are brought by globalization such as widening social/economic inequalities and the tension between cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism. This study identifies the significant and distinct nature of LOTE education in facilitating students’ inner growth, and illustrates how these issues are being addressed through initiatives among Japanese language education in tertiary institutions in Australia.
1. Communicative competence and beyond

Communicative competence gives hypothetical accounts of the nature of the skills involved in effective language use, and it has been used as a goal of second/foreign language teaching and learning in many institutions. Therefore, the models of communicative competence often guide what might be taught and learnt in second language pedagogy. However, the models which have been supported by different researchers differ in which components constitute communicative competence. They also differ in both the assumed relationship between each component and how they interact with one another. Canale and Swain (1980) elaborated on Hymes's (1972) model of communicative competence, which consisted of two key components: linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. Ever since Canale and Swain introduced the new concept of strategic competence, this has been recognized and included in various models by researchers (Bachman and Palmer 1982; Johnson 1989; Tarone and Yule 1989; Bachman 1990). Bachman’s (1990) model of communicative competence encompasses linguistic (grammar), discourse (textual), pragmatic, and sociolinguistic components. Various researchers have theorized a number of models of communicative competence over the years in an attempt to make sense of the nature of language use and to inform language teachers and language policy makers of what might be targeted. However, communicative language teaching which often targets communicative competence as an ultimate goal, in fact, is rarely linked tightly to such research-led conceptualizations of communicative competence. Savignon (2007), in response to wide-spread confusion about what communicative language teaching is, advocates a mind-resetting of all the stakeholders of language teaching. She urges us to look ‘beyond method’, reject any ‘one size fit all’ approach, and to look primarily into the diversity which characterises language learning in local contexts. Kramsch (2006) argues that learners’ abilities should extend beyond communicative competence as this ability is often interpreted as merely a learners ability to exchange information efficiently in their second/foreign languages. Communicative competence alone falls short of bridging the widening gaps between people from different socio-cultural and historical background and expectations.

The exacerbation of global social and economic inequalities and of ethnic identity issues, as well as the rise in importance of religion and ideology around the world have created historical and cultural gaps that a communicative approach to language teaching cannot bridge in itself. (Kramsch 2006: 251).

Much cited, Giddens’s concern about the tension between fundamentalists and cosmopolitans in a rapidly globalizing world seems to become more and more visible after the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

The battleground of the twenty-first century will pit fundamentalism against cosmopolitan tolerance. In a globalizing world, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe, we are all regularly in contact with others who think differently, and live differently from ourselves. Cosmopolitans welcome and embrace this cultural complexity. Fundamentalists find it
disturbing and dangerous. Whether in the areas of religion, ethnic identity or nationalism, they take refuge in a renewed and purified tradition — and, quite often, violence. (Giddens 1999: 4–5).

As a result of this greater contact between cultures, the purposes of second/foreign language education may need to extend beyond mere communicative efficiency and appropriateness. Specifically, it is important to explore what language education can potentially achieve in decreasing the tension in the globalizing world. In the following section we will revisit and reinterpret the discussion led by Kramsch et al. (2007) about Bildung vs Ausbildung, changing values in the German education scene, as we find it relevant in advocating humanistic values in language learning processes.

2. Bildung vs Ausbildung

Kramsch et al. (2007) introduce the German notions of Bildung and Ausbildung, which have been changing since the eighteenth century. They argue that the interrelationship between these two values are relevant to an understanding of the current higher education scene. According to Kramsch et al. (2007), Germany’s traditional educational value of Bildung (the ongoing processes of self-formation and inner growth by interacting with outer world) came under attack when societies demanded a development of practical and efficient skill-based competence (Ausbildung). They also illustrate the situation of the teaching of German in American Universities, and argue that this tension between the two competing values as reflected in a divide between “culture and language, knowledge and skills in FL [foreign language] education in the United States” (Kramsch et al. 2007: 171).

The notion of Bildung is important in discussing what second/foreign language education can achieve in the rapidly globalizing world. We would like to focus on the special quality of the process of second/foreign language learning; in other words, how it can enable students to contribute to the bridging of gaps in the twenty-first century.

3. Special quality of language education

Language is “a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals” (Richard and Rogers 1982: 156), and the significance of language is its ability to “[shape] human interactions and relations (Lo Bianco, Liddicoat and Crozet 1999: 10). The learning process of second/foreign languages is therefore valuable in that “[t]here are special qualities that language learning contains, (…) they potentially challenge and extend the sense of self of the student” (Lo Bianco and Slaughter 2009: 64). Lo Bianco and Slaughter argue that languages are associated with the ultimate purposes of education because of the nature of languages which “are intimately linked to the essentially humanistic, cultural and intellectual reasons for making education compulsory” (Lo Bianco and
Slaughter 2009: 64). Making a linguistic choice in another language requires an understanding of the sociocultural norms of the target language, and the learners are required to reflect on their first language norms and their presentation of self in their target language in intercultural communication. They are constantly required to think from a perspective of cultures other than their own. Therefore, learning a language other than one’s first language provides the learners with unique opportunities to reflect on their own selfhood as it is defined somewhere between the norms of their first language and the norms of the target language. It is through this process of self-enquiry that language students develop their sensitivity to others’ needs and a sense of empathy. Such attributes of second language learning must by consequence have a positive impact on the learners’ self-formation and inner growth. These changes can be described as the notion of ‘Bildung’, and this value needs to be emphasized in second/foreign language education. This potential which language learning offers is, in fact, emphasized in the ‘Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages’ which was published in January 2011 by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).¹ Lo Bianco and Slaughter’s (2009) rationale for the special quality of language learning is also quoted in the report.

It is important to recognise what language learning can offer and its possible new roles in the rapidly globalising world. In the following sections, examples are drawn from two different tertiary institutions, the first one is from an ab-initio Japanese language subject at the University of Melbourne, and the second from a TAFE intensive Japanese course at RMIT University. In both cases, Japanese is taught not only for language acquisition, but also for the learners’ formation of self and inner growth. Each institution has a specific local context where we make the most of the special quality of the language learning process in order to solve identified issues in respective institutions.

4. Ab initio Japanese at the University of Melbourne

At the University of Melbourne, before the introduction of the ‘Melbourne Model’ in 2008, the number of students who enrolled in Languages Other Than English (LOTE) was a mere 2% of the total student population. The Melbourne Model requires all the students to take up to six subjects (25% of a full load) outside their discipline. From 2008, the number of students taking LOTE subjects has been steadily increasing. The number of international students has also risen substantially. International students at the University of Melbourne make up 28% of the entire student population, and the vast majority (75%) of these students are from the following six countries: China, Malaysia, India, Singapore, Indonesia, and Hong Kong (Australian Universities Quality Agency 2010). Of the 600 students who enrolled in ab initio Japanese at the University in 2011, 63% were international students. This particular context of Japanese as a LOTE creates a space where international and local students meet on a large scale. Ohashi (2009) illustrates that Japanese language classrooms provide educational institutions with a unique space where students are emancipated from
an assumed hierarchy; in other words, this is where international and local students communicate in their common target language and where their English non-native or native status is backgounded.

The popularity of Japanese language subjects results in an increased responsibility to contribute to the improvement of students’ satisfaction with their overall University experience. One of the issues the University of Melbourne faces is a lack of interaction between local and international students on campus (Australian Universities Quality Agency 2010), and the University is determined to improve this situation. Japanese, as one of the most popular LOTE subjects for the last two decades in Australia, and enjoying increasing popularity amongst international students, provides a unique space where both local and international students interact, freeing them from a native–non-native English speaker power inequality.

4.1 Shifting focus in humanism in language teaching

Humanism in language teaching (defined in section 4.2 below) is often associated with such language teaching approaches as ‘Silent Way’ and ‘Counselling learning’ which appeared in the 1970s. Silent Way (Gattegno 1972) encourages learners’ self-development and independence by challenging them. Counselling learning (Curran 1976) encourages learner autonomy and allows learners to design their own curriculum based on individual learners’ weaknesses and areas of difficulty. While in practice they are humanistic in that they empower learners to exert more control over the structure of their learning; they have little to do with exposing the learners to the humanistic content of texts. More recently, Okazaki Nishiguchi and Yamada (2003), in their book entitled Humanistic Approach to Japanese Language Education, promote processes of learning where teachers and learners participate in, and grow through, the classes. Contributors to the book offer their interpretations of the humanistic approach, and the present study also contributes to this area by presenting examples in the context of Australian tertiary education.

4.2 Humanistic content in cultural artefacts

What we mean by the humanistic approach here is a guiding principle of selecting texts and language activities through which empathy and critical thinking are promoted. It aims to connect learners of various backgrounds with universal human values, such as love, truthfulness, fairness, freedom, unity, tolerance, responsibility, and respect for life (Rushworth 1994).

None of the contributors of the humanistic approach referred to in Section 4.1 specifically discussed the content of the texts. However, the meaning and messages of chosen texts situated in a specific time and place are important, because they are the reason why the learners are deeply engaged and emotionally involved. They are the key ingredients which activate the learners’ inner growth. In this section, we illustrate some examples of an assessable task which was designed in accordance
with the guiding principal. The task was implemented as a pilot in a group of 18 students who enrolled in a late beginners’ subject where 50% of the group were local students, of which 30% were born overseas. The students had received 144 hours of face to face language training before commencing this subject. Students were given two texts from which they could choose one as their assessment task. The assessment constituted 15% of all the assessable components.

4.2.1 Recitation using historical cultural artefacts: Kenji Miyazawa

Cultural artefact 1: Discovered diary notes in 1931. *Ameni mo makezu* by Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933).

Kenji Miyazawa is perhaps one of the most popular authors in Japan although his literary works were produced almost one hundred years ago. Students are asked to research the author and the poem he wrote in 1931 when his health was deteriorating. After his death the poem was discovered by one of his family members. This task has two components, one is a written report and the other is an oral recitation. The students were required to include the following in the written report: (1) interpretation of the poem and (2) discussion concerning the relevance and irrelevance of the message of the poem in the 21st century. For the oral component, students were asked to (3) memorise and recite the poem in class. Miyazawa, in his poem, expresses his strong desire for health and strength while accepting his fast approaching death, and he quietly and helplessly wishes to pursue what he describes as an ideal person. The English translation of the poem is provided below (see Appendix 1 for the original Japanese text).

Title: Be not defeated by the rain
English translation³ (Translated by the author of the paper)

Be not defeated by the rain, Nor let the wind prove your better.  
Succumb not to the snows of winter. Nor be bested by the heat of summer.  
Be strong in body. Unfettered by desire. Not enticed to anger. Cultivate a quiet joy.  
Count yourself last in everything. Put others before you.  
Watch well and listen closely. Hold the learned lessons dear.  
A thatch-roof house, in a meadow, nestled in a pine grove’s shade.  
A handful of rice, some *miso*, and a few vegetables to suffice for the day.  
If, to the East, a child lies sick: Go forth and nurse him to health.  
If, to the West, an old lady stands exhausted: Go forth, and relieve her of burden.  
If, to the South, a man lies dying: Go forth with words of courage to dispel his fear.  
If, to the North, an argument or fight ensues:  
Go forth and beg them stop such a waste of effort and of spirit.  
In times of drought, shed tears of sympathy.  
In summers cold, walk in concern and empathy.  
Stand aloof of the unknowing masses:
Better dismissed as useless than flattered as a “Great Man”.
This is my goal, the person I strive to become.

Asked for their feedback, some students expressed that they disliked the poem because of its preaching tone. It is not until the last line that students fully understand Miyazawa’s selfless wish, サウイフモノニ ワタシハナリタイ (Such a person I want to become).

“I first thought that he was preaching us, but in the end I realised that he was talking to himself.”

“There is no way that I can be such an ideal person although I think showing empathy to those who suffer is important.”

In response, all 18 students found the message of the poem to be relevant to the current globalising world. The fact that many people inside and outside Japan recited the poem thinking about the victims of the 3.11 tsunami disaster in Japan, reminded us that the message of the poem continues to influence society today. One of the students circulated a web address which linked to a Youtube video of Hong Kong celebrities singing the poem for the victims in Japan. All of the students memorised and recited the poem in class with a full understanding of the meaning and also knowing how it is interpreted and used in modern society.

4.2.2 Recitation using historical cultural artefacts: Ryoutarou Shiba

Cultural artefact 2: To you who will live in the 21st century by Ryoutarou Shiba (1923-1996).

Ryoutarou Shiba is undoubtedly Japan’s best known historical novelist. He was a war veteran who witnessed the deteriorating moral discipline of the imperial Japanese army when its defeat was fast approaching at the end of World War II. When he was about 35, he started studying Japanese history by investigating a vast collection of historical documents, searching for moral values that seemed to have been lost during the war and in postwar Japan. Through this study he rediscovered Bushido (see below) and the moral virtues that Japanese society used to observe. His wish was that Japan would once again adopt these virtues as mainstream. Through his writings he sought to symbolically pass the baton of restoring the values of Bushido to the children of Japan. The following excerpt holds significant and universal values in the twenty-first century, and echoes the core sense of Bushido: “[l]ove, magnanimity, affection for others, sympathy and pity, were ever recognized to be supreme virtues, the highest of all the attributes of the human soul” (Nitobe 1900).

Title: To you who will live in the 21st century
English translation (see Appendix II for the Japanese text)

The motive of the feeling and action of helping one another comes from a human emotion called ‘itawari’ [empathy/compassion]. You may call it ‘feeling the pain of others’, or kindness.
Empathy/compassion.
Feeling the pain of others.
Kindness.
Those three words are similar and come from the same root.
This root is not instinctively ‘given’. Therefore, we have to train ourselves to acquire it. It is simple. Imagine, your friend falling down. All you need to do is to try to feel the pain of others - “Oh, it hurts.” If this feeling takes root within you, empathy to others and other races should gush forth. The 21st century should be an era where all mankind live peacefully, if you make an effort to form such self. (Translated by the author of the paper)

Here is the reaction of one of the students to this text:

“I translate it as, if the root of this feeling takes root within you, then empathy for other cultures will gush forth. I particularly enjoy the words he uses in Japanese, but the message itself is inspiring: in this way, understanding our fellow human beings will become a simple thing, and this notion of empathy will cross nations and cultures. I feel that this is a powerful message, particularly the way in which it can be applied to our daily lives. Living in Melbourne gives us exposure to a variety of cultures and ethnicities. In a city as tolerant and progressive as this one, it is easy to forget that cultural and racial issues are still incredibly problematic. (---) At a more basic level [this] encourages us to use our humanity. I would suggest this humanity is indeed the English equivalent for the ‘nekko’ (root) to which Shiba refers to in his message.”

By the time the students recited their chosen piece in class, all of the students were familiar with both texts. The knowledge and experience obtained through this task naturally generated discussion about various aspects of the texts and the authors in English. One of the comments made by a local student was that empathy is a key to reducing tensions between various socially and politically categorised and stereotyped groups, but that a lot of effort is required to challenge these stereotypes. All of the students, regardless of their backgrounds, shared this view and recognised the fact that empathy is not intuitively given.

The process of engaging with these cultural texts of humanistic contents facilitates the development of students’ attributes which are necessary for the globalising world. This is a world where people more often than ever before move across boundaries of many kinds, and the competitive in-group and out-group dynamics produce social categorisations, most notably ‘fundamentalists’ and ‘cosmopolitans’. The special qualities of second/foreign language learning which Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2009) emphasize, have significant educational implications for those who lead in the 21st century and beyond.
5. TAFE Certificate I-IV in Japanese at RMIT University

5.1 Japanese language courses in a TAFE context

The second example of Japanese language education aiming at not only the learners’ acquisition of the language but also their formation of self and inner growth is a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Japanese program at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University. It is a full-time intensive program with 18 contact hours per week over 30 weeks. TAFE is vocationally orientated and offers subjects which generally focus on particular vocational skills required for specific careers, complying with the VET (Vocational Education and Training) Quality Framework. Yet the program is also academically oriented, distinguishing itself from other TAFE courses. Therefore, the TAFE Japanese programs at RMIT University had a need for a new approach in delivery to improve learning pathways and to incorporate workplace skills in the full-time Certificate IV program. However, students choose to study at TAFE not only to prepare for their first job or to improve their existing skills but also to prepare for a higher degree course. Interviews with students at the beginning of the program revealed that many either had not been able to get a place in the universities and were preparing for a second chance in the following year, or wished to be employable in the workplace. As a result, the program needed to be designed to better prepare its graduates for further study or for the workplace, at the same time equipping them with a positive outlook through their Japanese language learning experience.

5.2 Employability and community skills

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, students are guided towards gaining key skills of the Employability Skills Framework (Commonwealth of Australia 2006) through language learning. These workplace skills are, without a doubt, crucial to forming not only a work-ready person but also a responsible member of a community or society. In addition, the personal attributes listed by the Department of Education, Victoria (2006), which are considered to contribute to overall employability, are also highlighted in the program. This is significant in differentiating the competences to be achieved in the TAFE sector from those in the higher education sector.
5.3 Social activities in the course

Conventional knowledge-based delivery of language material is not suited for achieving the objectives listed on the left of Figure 1. Therefore and in addition to the day-to-day language acquisition training using a prescribed textbook, the students are provided with opportunities where they can develop those skills as they engage in task-based activities in the classroom and beyond. Some of these activities are:

- In-country study tours and internship programs
- Off-campus language immersion camps with native speakers
- Language exchange sessions with native speaker students
- Hosting study tours from Japan
- Leading/mentoring secondary school students on their visit to RMIT

We will look at one of these activities below.

5.4 Example activity: Off-campus language immersion camp

Annual off-campus language immersion camps are held for the TAFE students with the participation of Japanese students from a sister university in Japan. They spend two nights and three days in the historic seaside village of Queenscliff, located 120km southwest of Melbourne. There they engage in social and cultural activities as a way of putting their language into practice. In 2011, 16 TAFE students from RMIT and 6 Japanese students from Muroran Institute of Technology participated in this camp. The former group is expected to use Japanese and the latter to use English as much
as possible. Throughout the camp, teaching staff give the students cues to switch languages. Sometimes they have to change from English to Japanese (or vice versa) in the middle of an activity. The first camp in 2009 was planned to create a Japanese-speaking environment in Australia to which the students were exposed, thus focusing on the improvement of their language skills in a real life setting. However, as all activities are student-led and student-centered, it has turned out to be an environment where students can put into practice the above-mentioned community skills in their target languages. Therefore, from 2010 onwards, we adjusted the nature of the camp activities to facilitate the above-mentioned employability skills. While teachers make the initial arrangements such as setting up dates, booking accommodation and liaising with teachers from the sister university, the TAFE students from RMIT pass through three stages (Preparation, Action, and Reflection) to establish and demonstrate the key skills.

5.4.1 Preparation

Prior to the camp the two groups of students meet for two preparation sessions, where they discuss and decide how they will run the camp. The discussion is initially in English and guided by the teachers, with handouts (Figure 2) to clarify the goals and objectives of the camp. The handouts also help make students aware of the role of language and other important factors, and remind them of the fact that language is not learnt for its own sake. This is followed by a student-led discussion in Japanese to:

- decide on responsibilities, necessary jobs and rosters throughout the camp
- decide on what activities will need to be done, who will lead each activity, and what needs to be prepared for each activity
- schedule the timetable
- decide on what to eat, who will cook and when
- decide on how they will travel to the venue and so on.
Broader Goals:

- To take and/or share responsibility for all aspects of the camp, from planning to completion with your fellow students from RMIT, Muroran Institute of Technology and teachers.
- To develop life skills through active involvement with the organizational process and responsibility sharing.
- Make this valuable experience both worthwhile and fun.

Targeted skills:

- Linguistic skills: Communication strategies, appropriate use of the language.
- Personal skills: Leadership, organization, cooperation, responsibility, and well-being.

Camp Responsibilities:

Expected Challenges

- Understand what is going on
- Understand what is spoken/heard
- Manage time
- Manage 自分 (self)
- Find your role/job to improve situations you are in
- Manage activities in limited time
- Be prepared for the unexpected
- Participate actively - Have a go; get out of your comfort zone

Figure 2: Preparation: Excerpt from Camp hand

5.4.2 Action

During the camp, students follow the program they have designed and take responsibility for their own activities and duties. Figure 3, taken from the roster of the 2011 Camp, provides an example of these.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer:</td>
<td>Eric, Mary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel arrangement:</td>
<td>Sarah, Angela</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen/Cooking preparation:</td>
<td>Eric, Mary, Ryu, Tim</td>
<td>Ken, Savan, Yoshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning supervisors:</td>
<td>Alex, Tim</td>
<td>Anna, Maya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo/video recording:</td>
<td>Kim, Alisha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping:</td>
<td>Heidi, Kim, Yuichi, Yukiko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity coordinator:</td>
<td>Akane, Moe, Melanie</td>
<td>Alan, Craig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarm clock:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid</td>
<td>Sara, Angela</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Camp 2011 roster*

The students take responsibility for all aspects of the camp and share it with their peers and teachers. There were times when things went unexpectedly wrong and students faced challenges they needed to overcome in order to accomplish their task. These challenges were not limited to language but extended to community skills. However, students are not always aware of the fact that these skills are also important for success in their social life. Therefore, the students are asked to take time to reflect on themselves and to write down their reflections in a writing task at the third stage (Figure 4).
5.4.3 Reflection

<Post- Camp Reflection>

1. List three best aspects of the camp.

2. List three challenges you experienced in the camp and what did you do to overcome the challenge.

3. What things did you learn by attending the camp in terms of personal development?

<Writing Task>

Write about the camp: where you went, who you met, what you did, what you had to do in preparation for the trip and so on. You need to include the followings:

- 一番楽しかったこと　一番たいへんだったこと
- 後悔していること
- 来年キャンプに行く学生にアドバイス

Please use vocabulary and expressions you have learned so far such as volitional＋と思う/〜ておく/〜たり〜たりする/〜てみたい/〜ばよかった/たら/〜てあげる・くれる・もらう etc.

Figure 4: Reflection - Excerpt from post-camp writing task

The following lists some of the students’ comments in response to question 3) of the post-camp reflection.

“I’m also grateful I was given an opportunity to discover within myself qualities I was not aware I had or was capable of.”

“I faced many challenges including overcoming language barriers and resolving/avoiding conflict.”

“I’ve learnt many valuable skills in communication, leadership and teamwork.”

“Immersing one’s self (sic) in leader-based activities, especially in a cross-cultural context, enabled me to gain confidence as well as insight into the qualities a leader should possess.”

The students develop not only their knowledge of the Japanese language but also their social and community skills through active involvement in organizing activities and taking on responsibilities. This leads to a sense of achievement and improved confidence in speaking Japanese and beyond.

“I learnt that both groups (RMIT students and Japanese students from Muroran Institute of Technology) were struggling together at the camp. Therefore I did
not have to be self-conscious about my mistakes. I became more confident after
the camp.”

“I became confident in trying to say things in both English and Japanese.”

“I have the motivation and now the confidence to study even harder.”

5.5 A role in language learning for students’ self-esteem

Many researchers claim that there is a very strong connection between what happens
inside the learner (psychological and cognitive state) and how much s/he learns in
a language classroom (Gardner and Clement 1990; Brown 1994; de Andrés 1999).
Self-esteem, for example, plays a key role in language learning. Conversely, the
special qualities of language learning can play an important role in the learners’ inner
growth, mental development and boosting their self-esteem (see Figure 5 below).
The learners are able to ‘update themselves’ through a target language towards their
objectives. As TAFE students are often under-privileged in various ways (Powles and
Anderson 1996) and regard themselves as ‘underperformers’, they often use TAFE
programs as a transition process to access mainstream opportunities in education
or careers.

Figure 5: Self-esteem in Language Learning

While studying and growing as a person, students can be expected to develop much
needed workplace skills and form strong bonds and friendships with their classmates.
As the example of the off-campus language immersion camp illustrates, the students
gain confidence and develop their self-esteem through social activities, as shown in
their comments at the end of the course:

“Confidence in myself and development of skills to multitask and keep
commitment”
"I used to feel immensely disappointed with myself, if I got the smallest thing wrong, but now I don’t."

"This year’s achievements have made me think I am worthwhile."

"I feel more confident having a real skill to feel good about."

"During the immersion camp I faced many challenges including overcoming language barriers and resolving/avoiding conflict. I’ve learnt many valuable skills in communication, leadership and teamwork. The time I spent with the students was an amazing experience and I’ve definitely changed as a person (for the better)."

"I have gained more confidence within myself and the language that I am learning and I have come out of my shell a bit more, daring to do more things that I wouldn’t normally do. Since I am a very shy person, the camp has helped a lot."

In the comments of the 16 RMIT students, ‘confident/confidence’ appears eight times and is the most frequently used expression to describe their achievements. Although some students do not use the exact term ‘confident/confidence’ (as apparent in the underlined phrases above), the majority highlight their improved confidence as a significant achievement together with language acquisition. One of the students comments that, through the camp activities, she gained sensitivity to others’ needs and a sense of empathy:

“It [the camp] made me really aware of when people who were quiet/shy/younger weren’t comfortable speaking (either lang.) were being left out of activities, and I know I will try to make things inclusive for everyone in a similar situation in the future.”

This is also evidence of the significant benefits of learning beyond communicative competence.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented examples from two different tertiary institutions where Japanese is taught not only for the purpose of language acquisition but also for the learners’ formation of self and inner growth. In the first example, the special qualities of language learning are called upon to connect learners of various backgrounds with universal human values. In the second example, the special qualities are used to provide students with opportunities to gain self-esteem. Communicative competence is no longer the single most important goal for the language learners in the 21st century, and the educational value of Bildung which underlines the students’ self-formation and inner growth becomes more important. The examples presented have demonstrated the great potential of second/foreign language subjects for promoting the learners’ Bildung. Although they only provide a partial picture of the curriculum in the respective institutions, we hope that these
examples serve the purpose of identifying the special qualities of language learning processes beyond language acquisition.

Notes

1. The draft was made available for comments between 31 January and 7 April, 2011.
4. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WS79WiY4Sg
6. Vocationally orientated and requiring students to undertake practical placements in the workplace. This aspect of TAFE courses provides potential employers with the knowledge that TAFE graduates have practical experience in applying their skills. Most TAFE courses are developed in consultation with industry.
8. All names are pseudonyms.
9. Dinner time was significantly delayed on day 1, as the cooker was not fully functioning. The students acted spontaneously and used an outdoor BBQ to cook dinner. The kitchen was chaotic and overcrowded with eager helpers and dinner was delayed until after 9:00 pm. However, the incident led to a strong sense of community.

References


Appendices

Appendix I

雨ニモマケズ
雨ニモマケズ
風ニモマケズ
雪ニモ夏ノ暑サニモマケヌ
丈夫ナカラダヲモチ
慾ハナク
決シテ臆ラズ
イツモノソカニワラッテキル
一日ニ玄米四合ト
味噌ト少シノ野菜ヲタベ
アラユルコトヲ
ジブンヲカンジョウニ入レズニ
ヨクミキキヲラカリ
ソシテワスレズ
野原ノ松ノ林ノ蔭ノ
小サナ萱ブキノ小屋ニキテ
東ニ病気ノコドモアレバ
行ッテ看病シテヤリ
西ニツカラ母アレバ
行ッテソノ稲ノ東ヲ負ヒ
南ニ死ニサウナ人アレバ
行ッテコハガラナクテモイトトイヒ
北ニケンクワヤソショウガアレバ
ツマラナイカラヤメトイヒ
ヒドリトキハナミダガナガシ
サムサノハオロオロアルキ
ミンナニデクノポートヨバレ

ホメラレモセズ
クニモサレズ
サウイフモノニ
ワタシハナリタイ

http://why.kenji.ne.jp/sonota2/a10amenimo.html

Appendix II

助け合うという気持ちや行動のもとのもとは、いたわりという感情である。
他人の痛みを感じることと言ってもよい。
やさしさと言いかえてもいい。
「いたわり」
「他人の痛みを感じること」
「やさしさ」
みな似たような言葉である。この三つの言葉は、もともと一つの根から出て
いるのである。
根といっても、本能ではない。だから、私たちは訓練をしてそれを身につけ
ねばならないのである。その訓練とは、簡単なことである。例えば、友達が
ころぶ。ああ痛かったろうな、と感じる気持ちを、その都度自分の中でつくり
あげていきさえすればいい。この根っこの感情が、自己の中でしっかり
根づいていけば、他民族へのいたわりという気持ちもわき出てくる。
君たちさえ、そういう自己をつくっていければ、二十一世紀は人類が仲よしで
暮らせる時代になるのじゃない。
Shiba (2001:20-22)