



Learning Japanese as a Foreign Language in New Zealand: Questioning the Basic Assumptions

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Introduction

Japanese is listed as a Category IV language by the School of Language Studies site of the US Department of State, that is, a language that is “exceptionally difficult for native English speakers” (U.S. Department of State [n.d.](#)). The difficulties can be attributed to its complicated writing system and highly elaborate honorific speech patterns (see, e.g., McLauchlan [2007](#), pp. 54–56 and pp. 81–85; Oshima [2012](#), p. 55). Despite these difficulties, the study of Japanese as an additional language (L2) is popular, and New Zealand maintains its place as having the eleventh largest number of Japanese learners in the world. Per 10,000

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population, Japanese is ranked as seventh in the world and second among Anglophone countries (The Japan Foundation 2015).¹

Despite New Zealand's high ranking internationally with regard to learning Japanese as L2, the number of learners of Japanese has been declining since 2005, in line with the decrease of all foreign language learners in New Zealand at both secondary and tertiary levels (Corder et al. 2018; Ministry of Education 2019a). In response to the decline, the Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education in New Zealand (established in 1995 at Massey University, New Zealand, by endowment from the Nippon Foundation Fund for Japanese Language Education programme) has commissioned investigative reports (McLauchlan 2007; McGee et al. 2013; Corder et al. 2018). The reports have attributed the fall in Japanese learners to multiple factors: the lack of a national language learning policy, a government-led focus on the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), and the fact that languages other than English are not required subjects in New Zealand's high school assessment system, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), for admission into tertiary study. Corder et al. (2018) suggest that another problem is "complacency stemming from the fact that English is a global lingua franca, and the lack of value being placed on language capabilities" (p. 64). They argue that the decline in New Zealand can be attributed to "societal values and attitude" and is "not just the result of a lack of interest on the part of students" (p. 3).

Two nationwide surveys, one of tertiary Japanese students in New Zealand (Minagawa et al. 2019), and the other of secondary students in the Canterbury region of New Zealand's South Island (Ogino et al. 2016), revealed that intrinsic motivations such as love of the language and the desire to communicate are strong reasons for choosing to study Japanese. However, Oshima and Harvey (2017a, b) report that structural impediments at tertiary level, such as timetable clashes and limited time-tabled space for optional subjects, can discourage secondary school leavers from continuing to study Japanese at university level.

The New Zealand government has recognised the strategic importance of the Asian region through initiatives such as prime minister's

¹ The 2015 report is the most recent survey result available at the time of writing this chapter.

scholarships, which fund undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, internships, and research projects completed in Asian countries. A further initiative, the Asian Language Learning in Schools (ALLiS) programme, which ran from 2015 to 2018, focused on increasing the number of students learning Asian languages in schools by providing start-up funding for programmes that ensured participating students developed Asian language communication skills and cultural awareness (see Tolosa et al., this volume, for a presentation of a primary school-level project funded through this initiative). Nonetheless Corder et al. (2018, p. 3) note that, while there is a common awareness of the “economic and social implications of a deficit in language and intercultural capabilities” in other Anglophone countries such as the UK, USA and Australia, the New Zealand government does not appear to share the “same level of concern” and its approach to language policy is “fragmented and uncoordinated” (p. 25).

What we have presented above is what is ‘visible’ regarding Japanese language education in New Zealand. The study presented in this chapter offers insights into the less visible and less discussed realities of the Japanese as Foreign Language (JFL) situation at tertiary level in New Zealand. That is, this chapter questions the basic assumptions that Japanese is taught in an Anglophone context and that the learning of Japanese occurs in a formal educational environment. In this chapter we present another dimension of learning JFL through two perspectives that are not normally adopted: (a) a close-up perspective discussing the particular nature of the JFL teaching and learning community within the monolingual Anglophone context; and (b) a wider perspective discussing JFL learning experiences beyond the confines of formal language education. We will argue that JFL learning occurs in a particular micro-linguistic, culturally diverse environment within the tertiary context of New Zealand, where the status and power of English as the mainstream language do not persist, and where non-native speakers of English with Asian backgrounds are less disadvantaged by their lack of English proficiency. Some, conversely, find that the Asian cultural and linguistic knowledge they bring with them provides an advantage when they learn Japanese. We will also argue that there is a largely invisible population of

informal JFL learners in New Zealand, only some of whom would take up learning Japanese formally if an opportunity arose.

The study presented in this chapter draws on publicly available statistical data and information obtained from six major universities in New Zealand which offer relatively large programmes which include a major in Japanese. It also uses data from projects in which both of the authors were and are currently involved: (a) the nationwide survey we have already referred to that investigated tertiary students' reasons for studying Japanese in New Zealand, which included an online questionnaire of 348 participants and 25 further sets of written comments; and (b) a study of the linguistic identity of Japanese as first language (L1) JFL teachers at universities in New Zealand and Australia, which included an online survey with 51 participants and 12 follow-up interviews. The major findings of the first project were reported in Minagawa et al. (2019). The present study uses some data which were not presented in that publication. Out of the data collected for the second project, this study uses some interview data concerning the teachers' perceptions about non-native English-speaking students in their courses, limiting the reference only to New Zealand participants.

Micro-communities of JFL Learners in New Zealand Universities

A multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic educational environment is now assumed in Anglophone countries. As Wei, Yuan, and Zhao (2019) put it, "English-speaking countries are among the largest hosts of international students ... approximately 37.67 percent of all international students enroll in four Anglophone countries (Australia, Canada, the UK and the US)" (pp. 28–29). New Zealand is no exception. The broader setting of the New Zealand university system is a Western Anglophone environment where English is the medium of study. Japanese, however, is not only taught in an environment where, in reality, there is ethnic diversity among learners; it is also taught in a micro-linguistic and cultural environment where English is only a second language for a substantial

proportion of the students. Tertiary Japanese language programmes also have a strong presence of students with an East Asian cultural and linguistic background.

We look firstly at the broader context of student composition in New Zealand universities in light of the domestic/international student divide, ethnic composition and the reported linguistic identity of students.² According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education, data on the total number of Equivalent Full Time Students (EFTS) in New Zealand indicate that international EFTS increased from 21,310 in 2016 to 24,760 in 2018 (Ministry of Education 2019b). The increase in the ratio of international students at the six major universities under consideration is summarised in Table 1. (The figures are based on information provided in the 2018 annual reports or an equivalent document from each university. The URL for each report is listed in the references.) While the University of Canterbury and the University of Otago have a relatively low ratio, in the other four universities 17–19% of the student population is now international students.

From the data available from the annual report of each institution, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the region from which most international students come. For example, the Asian region comprises 71% at the University of Auckland, and PRC is predominant: PRC (48%), India (7%), Malaysia (6%), Republic of Korea (3%), followed by Indonesia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and Japan. Similarly, at the Auckland University

Table 1 Ratio of international students at six major universities in New Zealand

	2016	2017	2018	Notes
The University of Auckland (2018)	15.5%	17.6%	18.8%	Headcount
Auckland University of Technology (2018)	17.3%	17.3%	17.8%	EFTS based
Massey University (2018)	15.6%	16.7%	17.6%	EFTS based
Victoria University of Wellington (2018)	Not available	Not available	16.8%	Headcount
The University of Canterbury (2018)	9.1%	11%	12%	EFTS based
The University of Otago (2018)	7.8%	8.1%	9.1%	EFTS based

² 'International students' in this study refers to those who are categorised as international fee-paying students.

of Technology (AUT) in 2018, PRC comprised 48%, followed by India (14%). However, the University of Otago, in New Zealand's South Island, shows a different composition. International students from the United States rank at the top (27%), followed by China (17%), Malaysia (10%) and India (5%).

Some of the reports provide ethnic composition as well. At the University of Auckland, inclusive of international students, students with an Asian background represent the most dominant (44%), followed by European (35%), Pacific Island (9%) and Māori (7%) (based on head-count). Exclusive of international students, the ethnic distribution of students at AUT is New Zealand European/Pākehā³ (41%), Asian (25%), followed by Māori (11%). Exclusive of international students, the University of Otago has a high rate of "European/Pākehā" (71%), then Asian (21%), followed by Māori (10%).⁴ The composition of students at Massey University, inclusive of international students by citizenship, is New Zealand (71%), then China (12%), followed by UK (2.5%).

Although patterns of increase in the ratio of international students in Japanese programmes are not linked to the overall trend at university level in terms of the steady pattern of increase, the ratio of international students in the Japanese programmes offered at the six major universities indicates a much higher proportion compared to the university-level ratio—a distinctly different micro-linguistic community of learning within the universities (see Table 2).

In line with the high proportion of international students in the beginners' Japanese language programmes in these institutions, the background data of the national survey collected by Minagawa et al. (2019) inform us that 36% of respondents said English is *not* their first language. Sixty-six percent of those respondents who said that English is not their first language were speakers of Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese and Korean. These figures confirm that the tertiary environment where Japanese language learning occurs has a particular mix of students where, for many,

³ The Māori word Pākehā is a commonly used term to refer to European New Zealanders.

⁴ Although not specified in the document, students at Otago must have been allowed to list more than one ethnic group as their ethnic identity.

Table 2 Ratio of international students in beginners' Japanese courses at six major universities in New Zealand

	2017	2018	2019	Notes
The University of Auckland	37.7% (40/106) ^a	25.2% (25/99)	40.7% (55/135)	Excluding the General Education cohort ^b
Auckland University of Technology	69.2% (72/104)	34% (28/82)	45% (57/117)	The first of two beginners' courses offered annually (one each semester)
Massey University	68.7% (79/115)	76.6% (82/107)	85.2% (133/156)	Beginners' courses offered in semester 1 at two campuses, excluding distance education students
Victoria University of Wellington	36.8% (45/122)	32% (34/106)	31.9% (30/94)	
The University of Canterbury	60.0% (27/77)	35.1% (27/77)	50.7% (69/136)	
The University of Otago	32.2% 20/62	40.8% 29/71	26.2% 17/65	

^a40/106 means that there were 40 international students out of a total of 106 students enrolled

^bTaking two courses listed under 'General Education' is a requirement for undergraduate students, only offered at the University of Auckland, so that they can expand their learning outside of their specialised field of study. A range of beginners' language courses are listed as General Education courses. We have excluded General Education enrolment numbers from this comparison as this is taken as a one-off course

the first language is not English (the national survey did not ask participants' international/domestic status).

The fact that English is not the first language for many students in the Japanese programmes is confirmed by the teachers as well. Of 22 tertiary-level L1 JFL teachers teaching Japanese at universities in New Zealand, 96% agreed with the statement "there are many non-native (English) speakers among the students".⁵

What factors contribute to the formation of a JFL community with a high proportion of international students and students with an East

⁵In a larger survey, which included teachers from Australia, this proportion persisted: 100% agreed to the statement "there are many non-native speakers among the students".

Asian background? We will discuss this by drawing insights from JFL teachers' accounts. Firstly, it was reported that some teachers feel that the learning of Japanese does not demand as much extensive discussion, reading and writing in academic English as might be the case in other subjects. Therefore, the linguistic dominance of English as the mainstream language is diminished. As one respondent put it:

For international students, the Japanese language learning environment seems to provide them with a platform where they are on equal grounds with students whose native language is English and thus they do not feel so disadvantaged in the local language. (Int. I)⁶

A personal communication from a JFL teacher which we received during the process of writing this chapter echoes a similar sentiment:

I feel that the balance of linguistic power is equalised within the JFL situation. Students stop being either a native English speaker or a non-native English speaker and they simply become learners of Japanese. I think such a situation is giving non-native speakers of English quite a strong motivation to learn.

Secondly, Asian ethnic background students, in general, have an advantage in the Japanese classroom due to their geographical closeness to, and thus familiarity with, the language and culture of Japan (Matsumoto 2009, p. 10.3). For example, Japanese written language predominantly consists of logographic script for most of the lexical words, which was borrowed from Chinese. (The native syllabic scripts are used for grammatical word inflection.) As one interviewee put it, "in the JFL situation, monolingual New Zealand students are less advantaged because students with the knowledge of Chinese characters are more advantaged" (Int. Q). There is a high degree of similarity in grammar to Korean, and the highly elaborate honorific language in Japanese, as well as the social system that is reflected in such expressions, is shared

⁶The quotes used in this study are from the larger data source collected for a study on JFL teachers' linguistic identity. "Int I" means that the quote was extracted from an interview with a person using the pseudonym I.

by Korean speakers—“although we don’t have many Korean students in recent years, the similarity of grammar makes it easier for them to learn Japanese” (Int. B). Furthermore, aspects of Asian educational practice such as strong reliance on rote memorisation can also be advantageous in language learning (Nesbitt 2009)—“although we give instructions and explain grammar in English in our Japanese course, I think language learning is suited to Asian students who are so used to rote memory” (Int. E).

Conversely, while English-speaking background students have the advantage that grammar explanations in textbooks (and in class) are in English, they are disadvantaged when learning Japanese in New Zealand for the reasons stated above, as well as their perception (in light of the disadvantages) that it is challenging for them to achieve high grades when learning Japanese alongside students from East-Asian backgrounds. The number of Asian students in the Japanese courses and the apparent ease with which they can learn Japanese (a language that initially can be overwhelmingly difficult for English background learners) acts as a “deterrent for students concerned about the ability to achieve good grades, particularly at NCEA level in New Zealand” (McGee et al. 2013).

The ‘non-nativeness’ in English of the L1 JFL *teachers* at New Zealand universities further contributes to the distinct micro-linguistic environment where for many members English is not their first language. JFL teachers do not feel under pressure about the fact that English is L2 because many of their students are also non-native speakers of English. One interview respondent brought out these points:

There are many students for whom English is a second language in our course. So at times, they say that my English is easier for them to comprehend. ... So there it benefits both the students and myself [to be non-native speakers of English to each other]. (Int. B)

The perceived benefits of being a Japanese as L1 teacher of JFL were also underscored in responses to our questionnaire:

The ratio of English native speakers at the university that I currently work at is low so that weakness [as a non-native speaker of English] is less prominent. (Quest. 29)⁷

I think I could give more accurate and effective explanations of Japanese if I had stronger English proficiency. But if the students themselves do not have a very good command of English, my lack of English shouldn't affect my teaching so much. (Quest. 17)

The atypical linguistic environment for JFL within the Anglophone university seems to be helping to build confidence for learning among non-native English-speaking students, as one interviewee put it: "I think that it is a community reflecting a global world, in a way, where students who come from non-Anglophone countries can study without feeling disadvantaged and where they can flourish" (Int. E). Another commented, "in the Japanese class English is the second language for us teachers and there are many other international students. So it may be providing international students a place where they feel less threatened and can learn with ease" (Int. I).

The interviews also revealed that some teachers feel that international students in the Japanese programmes are motivated by more than just learning Japanese:

I hear that international students have difficulty expressing themselves in other subject courses at university but many come to the Japanese classes not only to learn the language but [also] to satisfy their needs that cannot be met elsewhere in the university learning situation. (Int. I)

It is important to note that not only international students but also some domestic students with an Asian ethnic origin lack confidence in English and the JFL environment appears to give them an opportunity to do well at university despite their perceived poor English:

⁷"Quest. 29" refers to Questionnaire Participant number 29, collected for the linguistic identity of the native JFL teacher research project.

Especially in Japanese where we don't progress fast to a level where we can discuss complex issues in the target language, Asian students, not necessarily international students, who may not be able to do well in other subject areas where a high level of English is required, have a chance to do well and even achieve an A. (Int. G)

In summary, the assumption that English is the dominant language that defines the learning context within an Anglophone country needs to be reconsidered when we acknowledge the micro-linguistic community in the New Zealand JFL learning situation at tertiary level.

An Invisible Population of JFL Learners

While the number of students formally studying Japanese at university is in decline, the amount of interest in the Japanese language and the number of actual users of JFL cannot simply be measured by student enrolments at schools or universities. The preamble of the 2015 Japan Foundation's triennial survey acknowledges the existence of learners who are studying Japanese *informally*:

Learners who are studying Japanese personally through television, radio, books and magazines, and the internet are not included in the total count of Japanese language learners. If we include these figures, it is speculated that people who are learning Japanese well exceed the total number of learners reported in this survey. (The Japan Foundation 2015, p. 7)

The acknowledgement of a below-the-surface population of informal learners or users of Japanese is the second focus of our discussion. It is well documented that interest in popular culture such as *anime*, *manga* and computer games can be a motivation for many to take up Japanese formally (Armour and Iida 2016, Minagawa et al. 2019; Northwood and Thomson 2012; The Japan Foundation 2015; William-Prince 2009). Armour and Iida (2016) investigated whether there was any correlation between consumers of pop culture and learning of the Japanese language. They report that among the 446 *anime* and/or *manga* fans between the

ages 17 and 32, 45% have not studied Japanese formally and only indicated that they are “intending to learn Japanese sometime in the future”. Their study did not answer “why some get involved in Japanese language study, while others do not” (p. 39). The exact size and spread of this invisible population are difficult to capture. However, evidence for the existence of the below-the-surface population is available from what can be observed to be happening in classrooms.

The first piece of evidence that this population exists lies in the popularity of short university Japanese courses taken as electives or optional subjects, separate from a major within a degree. These students may represent a portion of what Armour and Iida (2016) describe as those who “get involved in Japanese study” (p. 39). We have noted that, rather than the lack of interest in Japanese itself, both timetable constraints and STEM-oriented choices of study at university keep potential learners of Japanese at bay. However, some of those learners seem to be seizing opportunities. Ashton and Shino (2016) and Ogino and Kawai (2017) argue that there is a general tendency at New Zealand tertiary institutions for fewer students to be majoring in Japanese; however, more are taking the language as a minor or as an elective. Minagawa et al. (2019, p. 5) also report that, in the nationwide survey, 30% of enrolled students were studying Japanese as an elective of some kind. For example, AUT made an institutional decision to ease timetable constraints by timetabling the course outside of the hours normally dedicated to the study of the major as well as by splitting the beginners’ course into two less demanding courses. This was done so that students who may not choose to take Japanese as a major could experience the beginners’ courses at times and in ways that might be more accessible for them. This initiative resulted in a substantial increase in student numbers.⁸ A further example of interest in Japanese, by those who may not choose to study it formally, is the overwhelming numbers taking one-off General Education beginners’ Japanese courses at the University of Auckland.⁹ These courses attract

⁸Since these initiatives were implemented as a trial in Semester 1 2018 with an enrolment of 82, the numbers increased to 101 (Semester 2 2018), 117 (Semester 1 2019), 107 (Semester 2 2019) and 139 (Semester 1 2020).

⁹General Education beginners’ Japanese courses are offered twice a year in both summer school and Semester 1. The total number of General Education enrolments from 2017 to 2019 was 200, 198

students from other faculties such as Engineering, Science, Business and Law, disciplines that represent or reflect STEM-focused study.

Recent initiatives such as the introduction of a new Global Studies degree at the University of Auckland and the International Business major in the Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of Canterbury have also had an impact. Both these degrees have languages as a compulsory component, and are providing opportunities that did not exist hitherto. For example, at the University of Canterbury, the enrolments in a Japanese beginners' course dramatically increased from 77 (2018) to 136 (2019). Out of 69 international students of the total enrolment of 136 in 2019, 49 (68.1%) are from Commerce, suggesting that the increase is the result of the Commerce initiative. The influence of Japanese modern culture and, as pointed out in the previous section, the perceived advantage of linguistic proximity to the Japanese language may be factors in the students' choice of a Japanese language paper.

Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the students discussed above represent an invisible cohort of learners, surfacing through pockets of formal language learning opportunities outside of a dedicated major. This group would include many who have opted to study STEM subjects while having an *interest* in Japanese (Corder et al. 2018) and who would not have been able to take Japanese as a major because of structural constraints at university (Oshima and Harvey 2017a, b). Courses that do not demand a full-scale commitment to language learning such as a one-off General Education course and other elective courses appear to be providing opportunities for the potentially invisible cohort to take up learning Japanese formally.

Further evidence of a below-the-surface population of JFL learners or users is the casual or informal way of learning Japanese being widely adopted. Armour and Iida (2016) report that 27% of their 446 participants said that they were 'self-taught'. The background data of the national survey of tertiary Japanese students echoes this. It informs us that there is a group of students who elected "self-taught" as a way of learning Japanese before taking up study formally at university. Of the

and 220. These numbers compare with the number of students in the non-General Education course which is only offered in Semester 1 in these years, that is, 106, 99, 135. Please see Table 2.

70% of total respondents who had studied Japanese either formally or informally before enrolling in Japanese courses at university, 63% said that they studied Japanese at high school formally. Fifty-three percent also said that they “self-taught” Japanese, and 19% chose “other”. “Other” included opportunities such as “a gap year in Japan”, “Japanese friends in New Zealand”, “through books and internet”, “*anime*”, “family”, “night/community classes” and “a short trip in Japan”. Self-teaching and other informal language experiences continue for some students who are also formally enrolled in university courses. Tertiary students commented that they autonomously seek opportunities for real communication outside the classroom and do not expect a university to be their only source of learning (Minagawa et al. 2019, p. 11).

Receptive virtual entertainment such as *anime and manga* is not the only medium for youth to access the language. We cannot underestimate the popularity of easily available authentic experiences, such as engaging with Japanese friends, and being tourists in Japan, as informal opportunities for language learning and use. Minagawa et al. (2019) report that half of their total respondents had already been to Japan before studying Japanese at university. Indeed, “travel to Japan for sightseeing” ranked highly in the reasons for studying Japanese in their study. We expect that many others learn Japanese in such informal ways and do not end up enrolling in a formal course at any stage. This phenomenon seems to support the views expressed in the Japan Foundation Survey as well as by Armour and Iida’s (2016) assessment of the population of informal learners of Japanese as potential learners who may take up formal study if given the opportunity.

While many students may not end up enrolling in a formal language learning situation, those who choose to study Japanese do mention the clear benefits of formal language learning. Minagawa et al. (2019, p. 12) report that formal learning encourages commitment to continue studying and helps systematic understanding through a structured course. There are peers with whom they can study and interact, and feedback can be received from teachers.

It is worth mentioning that, while interest in pop culture may motivate some to take up Japanese formally, many students want to keep their consumption of pop culture separate from formal learning (Minagawa

et al. 2019, p. 11) such that it should be an incentive but not be included in the course. This finding contradicts suggestions made in previous studies (Matsumoto 2007; Ushioda 2011) that it is beneficial to incorporate elements of pop culture into formal language teaching.

Foreign language teaching has conventionally relied on formal instruction with limited input from outside the classroom. However, even in a place where the target language is not spoken outside of the class, learners can now access multiple types of input and engage in multiple types of interaction that might suit their preferences at a particular time and be at a pace they prefer. Learners themselves seem to have widened the scope of language learning beyond effort and initiatives introduced by their teachers, and, in many cases, there is now a distinct divergence between content and methodology offered by formal language courses, and content and methodologies selected, and shared, by a large group of people learning informally.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented dimensions of the realities of the JFL learning situation at tertiary level in New Zealand from two perspectives which are not normally adopted. First, the chapter has presented a focused view of the particular micro-linguistic environment where the teaching and learning of JFL is taking place within the larger linguistic context of an Anglophone university system. We have argued that, within the context of the JFL learning situation, the power balance of English as the mainstream language is diminished when its role as the medium of study becomes less relevant. In this linguistic environment, the usually less advantaged L2 speakers of English, either international or domestic, without a good command of English, feel less threatened and seem to participate in the learning with more confidence. Furthermore, while Japanese is a difficult language to learn for monolingual English speakers (see Thompson, this volume, for examples of students who are motivated by challenging languages), students with Asian backgrounds can benefit from their Asian linguistic knowledge.

The chapter then examined JFL learning outside formal language education. We argued that, if we expand our understanding of ‘JFL learners’ beyond the concept of ‘receivers of formal language teaching’, the interest in Japanese and the number of informal learners may be much healthier than the ‘visible reality’ represented in the count of students enrolled at institutions.

It is important to acknowledge the serious situation of a decline in the number of *enrolled* students in Japanese and the need to advocate for policymakers to place more importance on foreign language learning. However, it is hoped that the discussion presented here will help JFL teachers to look at the visible reality from fresh perspectives. Firstly we hope that these teachers can recognise and embrace the special role that Japanese courses, and classrooms can play in making the university a less challenging space for international (especially Asian) students. Secondly, we hope that those with an interest in the teaching and learning of JFL will recognise that the ‘formal’ numbers of Japanese enrolments do not take account of the greater numbers of informal learners which represent a much bigger and nebulous population of people who, similarly to the students in formal classes, are interested in Japanese and Japanese culture.

The above assertions turn the assumption that Japanese is in decline on its head. It is hoped that the two illustrations of the JFL learning situation in New Zealand will contribute to the broader discussion of ‘foreign language learning’ beyond the commonly accepted concepts of formal language instruction in Anglophone countries.

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