

The Use of Teaching Assistants in Japanese Language Teaching

J. V. Neustupný*

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This paper deals with the category of teaching assistants within the framework of Japanese language teaching. The author claims that the use of teaching assistants represents a most progressive trend that should further be emphasized, both in classroom teaching and in course components that take place outside the classroom. The category of teaching assistant is defined, and variation among teaching assistants and various aspects of their use are given attention. Teaching assistants should act under the guidance and supervision of qualified teachers. Suitable forms of training of both teaching assistants and the teachers who make use of them should be developed. The paper provides a list of activities in which teaching assistants can be used.

Japanese language teaching must liberate itself from the traditional classroom. The aim is not simply to introduce more natural locations for language teaching. Abandoning the traditional classroom provides the opportunity to expose students to socio-cultural and sociolinguistic rules of interaction which are difficult to introduce in the classroom setting. It also helps us to proceed from teaching through explanation and exercises to teaching through the student's participation in authentic situations of interaction. Neustupný (1989, 1991a) and Strevens (1987) have emphasized two further aspects of out-of-classroom teaching: creating interest and variety and contributing to *productive* rather than simply *receptive* learning. Activities in all non-traditional settings should not be considered as marginal to Japanese language teaching. They must be incorporated into the overall structure of Japanese language teaching programs.

Out-of-classroom forms of instruction include various forms of guided travel, study, or work in Japan, and extramural home country situations, such as contact with Japanese residents or visits to Japanese restaurants. Also included are non-classroom situations within the school/university precincts, for example, showing visitors around

* J. V. ネウストプニー: Professor of Japanese Studies, Monash University, Australia.

the campus, library visits when a native Japanese librarian is available, or buying sandwiches in a school confectionery where a Japanese parent is on duty.

However, the process of liberation from the traditional classroom does not necessarily involve abandoning the classroom setting altogether. Firstly, there are some new forms of teaching for which the classroom setting is quite appropriate. This includes immersion courses (Ozaki and Neustupný, 1986; Miyazaki, 1991) or visitor sessions (Neustupný, 1982; Spence-Brown, 1991; Muraoka, 1992).¹ Secondly, before participating in the out-of-classroom and non-traditional classrooms mentioned above, students will always have to spend some time in classrooms to prepare. It is essential that on these occasions, too, classrooms are varied in order to provide students with the best conditions for fulfilling their functions.

In this paper I shall discuss one particular form of the adaptation of traditional classroom networks, the use of Japanese Teaching Assistants (JTA).² A JTA is a classroom participant, normally a native speaker of Japanese, who has a zero or a low level of teacher training and assists a qualified teacher rather than replaces her or him. A JTA acts according to a plan established by a qualified teacher.

The system of JTA is one of the major developments in contemporary Japanese language teaching. It is of great importance to commence systematic discussion on the ways in which assistants can be used and trained. An international search³ has revealed virtually no literature relevant to this topic. It is interesting that several respondents in the search pointed to the use of "teaching assistants" in Japanese ESL programs, particularly within the framework of the JET program. It will be important for teachers of Japanese outside Japan, to whom English teaching journals published in Japan are normally not available, to have access to a summary of the theoretical and practical work of English teachers in Japan on this issue.

The Use of Japanese Teaching Assistants at Secondary Level

In the Melbourne area teaching assistants have been used in language teaching at the secondary (high school) level since 1968, and the first Japanese teaching assistant was appointed in 1976. Asaoka (1981, 1987) has reported in detail on the system. She established that the following activities were performed by the assistants:

Work in classrooms:

¹ Immersion courses at Monash provide partial immersion for a period of two or four weeks, during which normal classroom activities are suspended and outside class personnel are used to introduce the students, through the medium of Japanese, to an area of Japanese society or culture or Australian-Japanese contact situations. Visitor sessions are authentic (performance) activities in which students meet, in small groups, a Japanese speaker visiting the department.

² The term *teaching assistant* has been used widely in Japan. Although in some countries it denotes the lowest level of teachers (who in other countries are called tutors, teaching fellows, instructors, or lecturers), I believe that its use is justified.

³ I am grateful to Björn H. Jernudd for his assistance in this bibliographical search.

1. Acting as models of correct pronunciation
2. Correcting students' pronunciation
3. Conducting oral exercises
4. Taking part in conversation in small groups
5. Conducting comprehension exercises for final examinations
6. Playing games with students
7. Presenting new kana and kanji
8. Telling students traditional Japanese stories
9. Teaching Japanese songs, dances, and origami
10. Showing students Japanese films, commenting on them, and answering students' questions
11. Demonstrating Japanese cooking, tea ceremony, and calligraphy
12. Maintaining discipline in the classroom (which is normally the duty of Australian teachers, but Japanese teaching assistants sometimes participate in this task).

Work outside the classroom:

1. Recording tapes for comprehension exercises
2. Producing various types of handouts for classes
3. Producing questions for exercises, tests, etc.
4. Marking compositions and assignments
5. Guiding students who participate in speech contests
6. Preparing games
7. Accompanying students to a Japanese restaurant.
8. Planning with Australian teachers Japanese exhibits for the school festival and supervising students
9. Attending language camps with advanced students
10. Training Australian teachers in Japanese conversation
11. Responding to inquiries by Australian teachers concerning Japanese language, culture, and society
12. Participating in teachers' meetings, etc.
13. Participating in teachers' seminars.

Asaoka found that the system was popular with students, who evaluated highly the games, traditional Japanese stories, songs, and origami at junior level but switched their interest to more serious Japanese language activities after they reached the senior level. Asaoka also noted a number of problems perceived by the assistants. One of them was the fact that the assistants were left in the dark about their future duties until they arrived in Melbourne, that they had to work in several different schools upon their arrival, and that they were not allowed to teach as full-fledged independent teachers. The last point is connected with the fact that most of them were trained and worked as teachers in Japan (some as Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language [TJFL] teachers) and felt that as teaching assistants they were degraded. As I shall note below, the last point is connected with the issue of the difference between teachers and JTAs, and I will argue that it should be maintained rather than removed.

Teaching Assistants within Japanese Courses at the Tertiary Level

The tertiary (university) level of teaching is of necessity different from the secondary one. The following survey of the relevant issues principally concerns only the former. The order of discussion follows the Hymesian model of communicative competence (Hymes, 1962; Neustupný, 1979), which is applicable to an analysis of courses (Neustupný, 1991c).

1. Teaching Assistants as a Type of Participant in Japanese Language Teaching

The time when the only participants in Japanese language courses were the teacher and students has passed. Today, we use a considerable variety of personnel: hosts in Japan or in Australia, members of the Japanese community,⁴ outside "tutors" (Okazaki, 1990), immersion course lecturers, classroom visitors, and many others. Japanese teaching assistants are one of the types of such personnel.

At the Monash seminar (see Acknowledgments at the end of this paper), Robyn Spence-Brown correctly pointed out that there will always be a considerable variation among Japanese teaching assistants and that the boundary between this category and other categories of course personnel will not be clearcut. Some of the teaching assistants may be volunteers recruited from the Japanese community with no pre-service training at all. I believe that a considerable untapped reservoir of course personnel can be drawn from this source. Some teaching assistants may possess experience of informal language teaching. Still others may be English teachers from Japan. Cameron-Bacon (1974, quoted in Asaoka, 1987) used some of her senior students as teaching assistants. The possibility of engaging Japanese exchange students has certainly remained unexplored both at the secondary and tertiary level. Some may be unsuitable because of their primary aim of practicing English and others because they experience continuing difficulties in switching to Japanese in the presence of a foreigner. However, most of them can successfully be used. Some JTAs may stay at an institution for a longer period of time, but the character of the job, which is not a career position, makes it likely that they are relatively short-term participants.

Most language teaching assistants used so far at Monash University were young Japanese who had received various degrees in Japanese language teacher training in Japan and who came to Australia to gain experience in the teaching of Japanese in non-Japanese settings. Some of them spent only several weeks in Melbourne, while others stayed for a whole year. As Japanese teacher training is developing in Japan, considerable numbers of these young people are currently going overseas for shorter or longer periods of time, and it can be expected that they will become an important source of teaching assistants in the immediate future. Participants in the Monash seminar on the use of teaching assistants repeatedly emphasized that if these trainee teachers are used, it is essential that the host institution does not exploit them as teaching assistants without offering, at the same time, adequate teaching experience necessary for

⁴ This category includes "bilingual aids," the use of which for Greek and Italian courses in Australia is discussed by Foster and Stockley (1983).

their future careers. Equally important is attending to the problem of the status of the assistants. Both Asaoka (1981, 1987) and Foster and Stockley (1983) show that assistants can be unhappy if they are considered inferior to teachers. In fact, although they work under the direction of teachers, their work is of great importance. Especially if partly trained for their job and senior by age, they can possess competence in individual areas that surpasses that of the teacher.⁵

Some teaching assistants will speak the language of the students (English or other), but it is not a condition for them to be fluent speakers. Yoko Pinkerton referred to her experience in semiadvanced interpreting classes, where normally interpreting by students into Japanese was difficult because the Japanese speaker for whom interpretation was conducted obviously understood English. This problem was removed when a teaching assistant with minimal competence in English was used. Here and in many other instances the lack of competence in English can positively contribute to the success of an activity.

It should be noted that students often are more active in networks with a JTA than in other situations. Yoko Pinkerton has described a case of interaction with a visiting young Japanese acting as a JTA in which the Australian students showed slides of the city and explained the location to the newly arrived teaching assistant. Had the explanation been aimed at the teacher, who lives in Melbourne, the interaction would have been simpler, because negotiation of the meaning would have been easily concluded due to the mutual knowledge of the city. With the JTA the students had to explain in detail, rephrase, and correct until full understanding was reached.

Teaching assistants thus possess characteristics that make them different from many other categories of course personnel. They are not teachers, classroom visitors, or simply friends. They can act in some of these roles, depending on the length of stay and qualifications, but the most appropriate way of using them is as teaching assistants. This implies activities which are planned and directed by qualified teachers and incorporated into existing courses.

2. Teaching Situations in Which JTAs Participate

Teaching assistants can be used in a number of situations. Firstly, *out-of-classroom situations* such as sojourns in Japan provide an opportunity for assigning, under the supervision of a course teacher, a JTA to each student to help with his/her interaction problems.⁶ Members of host families or friends, too, can function as JTAs. However, it must be emphasized that such participants do not automatically become JTAs if they occasionally help the foreign student. They can be classified as such only if they are engaged by and work systematically under the guidance of the student's teacher. Most of them are completely untrained, and it seems essential that the Japanese language teaching profession in Japan design short courses suitable to assist in perform-

⁵ This paper does not touch on the issues of the social system, budgets, etc., necessary to support the use of JTAs. Conditions can be expected to greatly differ in different countries.

⁶ Okazaki's "tutors" (1990) obviously fit this description.

ing these tasks. In his work on “tutors”, Okazaki (1990) has already gone a long way towards establishing general strategies for such courses. The same is true of hosts in home country stays of students with Japanese families (such as arranged in the past by the staff of the National University of Singapore) or in the case of assigning Japanese language students as helpers to newly arrived Japanese families. Reiko Neustupný reported about a visit to a restaurant in which a JTA from Japan accompanied the students and a teacher. This enabled splitting the group of students into smaller networks, and the students also had the opportunity to listen to Japanese conversation between the teacher, the JTA, and a Japanese waitress. Satoshi Miyazaki particularly emphasized at the Monash seminar the possibility, rendered by the use of teaching assistants, of providing students with glimpses into the communication of native speakers in “native situations”, that is, in situations in which foreign participants are not central.

However, it could legitimately be objected that if friends and host family members act in the role of teaching assistants they may cease being real friends or family members. It is certainly important that we do not turn all Japanese speakers around our students into teachers or teaching assistants. Learners also need authentic models and interaction partners, who take them for genuine interactants, not merely for learners of Japanese. For example, the behavior of a waitress is likely to be different if she acts as a trained teaching assistant and as a waitress. In the latter case she may still use foreigner talk but will aim at the execution of a substantive transaction, without undue concern for the customer's problems in Japanese language acquisition.

Secondly, JTAs are suitable for use in *school/university situations outside the classroom*. Teaching assistants may be employed to explain to students how to use the Japanese library and for similar purposes. Students can be given the task of familiarizing a new JTA with the campus. Miyazaki has reported that students were asked to take two JTAs to a weekend outing to show them the city and its environs. Different groups of students can escort the same teaching assistant to different locations, and in this case coordination by a teacher is necessary.

In all such cases, the context of these activities can be governed in such a way that for the students they are authentic performances, that is “real, not only realistic, communication” (Neustupný, 1989, 1991a). This is important because in these situations teaching assistants obviously enable us to move away from exercises and simulation activities to authentic situations.

Thirdly, in *non-traditional classroom situations*, such as immersion courses or visitor sessions—at the secondary level, classes in other subjects, such as geography or music (Neustupný, 1982)—the possibility for the use of JTAs is very wide.

In connection with the use of teaching assistants in these categories of situations it is perhaps in place to note a warning. The effectiveness of immersion courses or visitor sessions is related to the degree in which they are, for the students, authentic situations. The students should understand that an immersion course about Japanese in Australia is necessary because the students must know about the people they are going to meet both as students and in their future work, and that it is given in Japanese because the lecturers happen to be Japanese who are not prepared to deliver the lectures in the

students' mother tongue. A visitor session should present visitors who really want to meet the students, rather than any Japanese speaker who is available to meet them. In practice it is often difficult to arrange for a sufficient number of visitors, in particular in the case of large programs and in some locations with a limited Japanese community. We must accept that the authenticity of immersion courses and visitor sessions is sometimes restricted, but this does not mean that we should forget the general principle or neglect it when conditions for its fulfilment are present. Teaching assistants can be used in all these cases for exercises, to help students, but should not replace qualified lecturers or genuine visitors.

Fourthly, almost any *traditional classroom situation* can take advantage of using JTAs. This point will be discussed in detail below. For a summary, see Table 1.

3. Variety of Teaching Methods and JTAs

In some areas Japanese language teaching is still using methods developed in the grammar-translation or audio-lingual paradigms of language teaching. Since the full range of teaching situations discussed above only becomes available when post-audiolingual methods (listed in Richards and Rogers, 1986, in their chapter on communicative language teaching or in a later chapter) are applied, it might appear that the JTA system is not applicable to previous paradigms of language teaching. This is not true. We can imagine grammar-translation classes in which teaching assistants are used for model reading in the class, as helpers with the deciphering of difficult passages in texts, or for the correction of students' translation assignments.

In the orthodox audio-lingual method, teaching assistants can be used as drill masters, if not for other purposes. As a matter of fact, both in grammar-translation and in audiolingual classes untrained or minimally trained native speakers have been used in these roles.

4. Functions of Japanese Language Teaching: The Role of JTAs

Japanese language courses may fulfil a number of functions (Neustupný, 1982), and for most, if not all, of these functions course designers should consider the use of the JTA system.

The basic function of language teaching in general is the *interactive function*, i.e., when we learn the language in order to interact with the Japanese, either immediately or in the future. Most of the uses of teaching assistants will be to satisfy the interactive function.

However, there are other functions of Japanese language teaching which are of great importance. One of them is the *understanding of Japanese culture and society*, and the fulfilment of this function can be greatly aided by the use of JTAs. Teaching assistants can serve as sources of information for students' projects. They can demonstrate native cultural skills such as various art forms or sports. More than that, they represent for the students Japanese persons, people who are close to them and who must be understood. Students are provided here with the possibility of observing target culture speakers and given the possibility to penetrate through the wall created by cultural and communicative differences.

The use of teaching assistants is invaluable for the *diversion function* of Japanese language teaching. Many students study the language because they like languages or foreign cultures. Since this function often occurs with the interactive function and supports it, it can assist in the production of competent users of Japanese. Teaching assistants can make language teaching more enjoyable and personalized and thus contribute to student retention rates and the motivation of the students.

5. Content of Courses and JTAs

What categories of the content of Japanese language courses can be successfully handled by a teaching assistant?

The content of contemporary courses can be divided into three categories: socio-cultural competence ("culture"), sociolinguistic competence, and linguistic competence (Neustupný, 1989, 1991a). For each of these categories the attention of students must be directed, before they meet teaching assistants, to the fact of variation within Japanese society, culture, communication, and language (Neustupný, 1980; Mouer and Sugimoto, 1986). Unless students understand that the JTA is not a prototype of a Japanese but a very individual specimen, wrong conclusions about the object of study can be made. Students must be told who the teaching assistant is and where he or she fits within the structure of Japanese society. They should realize right from the beginning of their course that nothing like "a Japanese" exists (Neustupný, 1987). Teaching assistants can thus serve as examples of variation in Japanese society, culture, and language.

In the first category (*sociocultural competence*), a JTA provides an excellent opportunity to be used as an interviewee for students who work on projects, for simple factual knowledge (how to buy a ticket, etc.), and sometimes for demonstration of traditional art forms or traditional sports. In the Monash immersion courses teaching assistants are asked to take part in panel discussions in which average native speakers (not specialists) are appropriate. This was the case, for instance, in panel discussions on education, cars, and employment of graduates in Japan (Satoshi Miyazaki and Jun Yano-James). Care should be taken not to assume that the JTA is qualified to provide specialized information on Japanese society and culture (unless, of course, he or she is actually a specialist). If unprofessional summaries are made and wrong or stereotypic information is transmitted, the teacher must be prepared to find a way to correct them.

In the area of *sociolinguistic knowledge* (Neustupný, 1987, Ch. 3), much the same is true. JTAs can be used as informants for projects on kinship terminology and other topics, but should not be expected to summarize their experience or to produce explanations about various aspects of Japanese communication. They do normally possess unconscious knowledge of rules such as linguistic variation (for example, they can mark individuals as speakers from Kansai, Tohoku, or Kyushu), politeness, or non-verbal behavior, and these rules can be elicited. However, teaching assistants should be directed not to make statements—in particular not sweeping stereotypic statements—which could be ad hoc and sometimes utterly wrong.

The JTAs also normally possess only unconscious (procedural, cf. Faerch and Kasper, 1983) knowledge of *linguistic rules* and should not be encouraged to explain or in any

other way produce their own theories of language. If directed correctly in actual activities, there should be no problems in this respect.

6. Frames and JTAs

The minimal unit of frames (syntagmatic structure) in which content is arranged in courses can be called an "activity." Some activities are "tasks" (Prabhu, 1987; Okazaki and Okazaki, 1990), but normally an activity consists of several tasks.

From what I have said above it follows that only some activities are suitable for teaching assistants. They cannot, for example, be used for activities which require declarative knowledge (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). Since explanation (or "interpretation") activities in which declarative knowledge is transmitted to the students are inappropriate for teaching assistants, they should never replace the teacher. However, assistants can be guided, as Elise Foxworth emphasized, on individual points of usage, which they subsequently can communicate to their students. In Yumiko Utsumi's class they successfully corrected learners if they overused the pronoun *watashi* and provided alternatives for the correct selection of expressions of disagreement. However, it was the teacher who explained in the class why particular expressions were unsuitable.

The place of assistants in *explanation* ("interpretation") activities (Neustupný, 1991a) can be seen in pronouncing the sentences a teacher uses and possibly in providing additional examples. In the "presentation stage" (Tanaka, 1988) or particularly in a lecture, where the monotony of a dialogue is difficult to overcome, this procedure may provide an important element for enriching the class, even if the lecturer is a native speaker and could present the examples himself. As already mentioned above, teaching assistants are singularly suitable to act as informants for students' projects on issues of sociocultural and sociolinguistic competence.

In the case of *exercise* activities (Neustupný, 1991a) the teaching assistant can take over one of the student groups after the pattern of the exercise has been firmly established by the teacher. Robyn Spence-Brown has emphasized that splitting the class into two groups doubles the length of exposure of the students to Japanese language input (Krashen, 1985). This, certainly, is one of the principal benefits of the use of JTAs.

Hidehiro Muraoka explained how assistants can be used in classes, the aim of which is preparation for a visitor session. A role play, in which the JTA becomes a visitor, is superior to role play in which the visitor is played by the teacher or one of the students. Another form reported from Monash classes is paraphrase of a reading passage by a teaching assistant with personal experience added.

One particular form of use of teaching assistants in exercise activities is asking them to produce model answers before students attempt them. In the 1991 Monash immersion course, students were asked to work on a project in groups, each group working on a different topic, and subsequently report to the class.⁷ The aim of this activity was to teach how to use data presented in Japanese and how to report the results. A

⁷ The course was held at level B, after the students completed approximately two hundred hours of classroom work.

teaching assistant was used with great success to make a model presentation (report by Satoshi Miyazaki).

Teaching assistants are highly suitable for authentic *performance* activities (Neustupný, 1991a). They can commence with the assistant's and the students' introductions or self-introductions, continue with guiding the assistant around the campus, having a cup of tea, and conducting other social activities outside the campus. One activity which has the character of authentic performance if conducted by personnel other than teachers is helping the students with their study. This activity can be conducted in Japanese if simple help, such as explanation of the vocabulary, is involved. In Yumiko Utsumi's class students were preparing for discussion on a specialized topic. Even should they use a dictionary to find suitable expressions, the questions of stylistic appropriateness of their choice would remain. It was therefore natural for them to ask native speakers (teaching assistants) for help. Several members of the Monash seminar (Hiroko Hashimoto and others) reported about successfully using teaching assistants for informal lunch-time conversation with the students. Students were delighted to speak with someone of approximately their age with whom they could easily find common topics. Exactly because the JTA is not a teacher, belongs to the category of a temporary resident, and is often younger than permanent teachers, he or she is in a good position to establish a warm personal relation with the learners. This possibility should be explored and encouraged by the teacher.

7. Channels and JTAs

Some JTAs may possess experience in theater, singing, calligraphy, or the use of word processors. These abilities are individual but can be utilized by the department concerned for club activities and special classes.

8. The Use of JTAs for Management

Management means monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of learners' performance in and out of the classroom. Monitoring and feedback to students is a very sensitive process, and professional teachers normally give careful consideration to the amount and kind of such feedback. However, as Satoshi Miyazaki (1990) has shown, the presence of a third person ("mediator") in a Japanese language class can have a positive effect on communication, and a number of interaction problems in such communication can be solved. Miyazaki has directly connected his theoretical considerations with the issue of assistants in Japanese language teaching.

There is much scope for teaching assistants in the area of course management. They can also be used to mark some questions in tests where the marking is quite mechanical (Hidehiro Muraoka), correct weekly assignments when instructed (Jun Yano-James), and supervise tests.

9. JTAs and Production of Teaching Materials

Apart from participation in courses as such I can see considerable potential for the participation of teaching assistants in designing and production of courses. Asaoka (1987) has reported on this point from the perspective of secondary education. Jun

Yano-James has also used teaching assistants for demonstrating variation in hand-writing needed in Monash advanced courses.

Training of Japanese Teaching Assistants and Training of Teachers for Use of Teaching Assistants

On a different occasion (Neustupný, 1991b) I suggested that the current process of training Japanese language teachers should be more differentiated, taking into account the different functions teachers are likely to perform. The same principle applies to JTAs. The training which they undertake should be simple and specific. There is no need for training in grammar or linguistics. A teaching assistant does not need to know what is the difference between *mizenkei* and *izenkei*. He can function perfectly without having studied the types of passives in Japanese or understanding the nature of linguistic transformations. Such knowledge is not harmful but it is not mandatory. However, the following points should be included in their training:

1. The nature of human interaction, with particular attention to communication.
2. The difference between native and contact situations.
3. The nature of foreigner talk.
4. Language, communication and interaction problems.
5. The society and culture, including the education system of the country in which they will be active.
6. How to behave as JTA (refraining from general statements, etc.).

Teaching assistants should also be trained in how to overcome the shyness of their students and assume leadership. One problem mentioned at the Monash seminar was that some teaching assistants, when asked questions by learners, answered simply yes or no and did not attempt to develop the conversation further.

As mentioned above, I believe that trainee teachers who do not possess much experience in teaching are suitable as JTAs. However, as they reach maturity, they become teachers and lose their ability to act as teaching assistants.

It is interesting to see that the training of teaching assistants is similar to what Okazaki (1990) has proposed for the category of tutors, assistants who possess the ability to be friends of Japanese language students but act (if I understand correctly) always outside the classroom.

A task of equal importance to the training of teaching assistants themselves is the training of teachers who will be directing their work. Experience shows that when someone eligible for the assistant position is allocated to a teacher, the first thought of the teacher is to assign the assistant to some of the existing classes, in other words, to make the assistant a teacher. This is unfortunate not only because the assistants may completely lack the competence to act as a teacher, but also because the possibility to use them as teaching assistants—in activities that cannot be effectively conducted by teachers—is lost. Since training of this kind is not available in normal teacher training courses, it will be necessary to establish special in-service classes in which the matter will be dealt with. Gradually such training should become a standard component of the education of any language teacher.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Japanese teaching assistants can be expected to play an important role in the development of Japanese language teaching away from traditional classrooms. They belong to a large number of non-traditional course participants.

The boundary between this category and other categories of course personnel is not always sharp, but we can say that JTAs are characterized by a low level of training, age close to the students (although this is not a condition), temporary status, and the fact that they work under the supervision of a qualified teacher to achieve the goals of the Japanese language course into which their activities are incorporated.

JTAs are not teachers (although trainee teachers can be used as teaching assistants), and the Japanese language teaching profession should take care that they are not used as teachers. Neither should we aim at turning all Japanese speakers with whom learners come in contact into teaching assistants.

It is desirable to develop training for JTAs, but such training will necessarily differ from the training of teachers. Also urgent is the establishment of training programs for teachers who direct the teaching assistants' work within Japanese courses.

The possibilities for the use of teaching assistants are wide ranging. Table 1 gives a summary of suitable activities for JTAs discussed in this paper. It also incorporates some further suggestions which could not be discussed here. One of the principal benefits of the JTA system is the fact that we can multiply the length of exposure of the students to Japanese language input.

Table 1 Some Typical Situations in Which Japanese Teaching Assistants Can Be Used

(All of the following activities are planned and supervised by teachers.)

Classroom

Model of native language, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural behaviour

Drills and exercises in small groups

Acting in role-playing and simulations

Reading and writing help to students (including selection of suitable passages for research students)

Vocabulary and expression help to students

Preparing and presenting model solutions for tasks

Comments on course components (supplementing reading and other passages with own experience)

Addressees of self-introductions and introductions (soon after arrival)

Help to students participating in speech and other contests

Acting as persons for whom interpreting is performed

Tea, lunch, dinner time conversations with students

Assistance with course materials (variation in handwriting, tapes, production, etc.)

Correction of students' simple errors (detailed guidance is needed)

Correction of weekly assignments

Help with marking

Test supervision

- Informants for project work
 - Demonstration of traditional arts and sport, baseball, etc.
 - Acting as examples of variation in Japanese culture and society
 - Non-Traditional Classroom
 - Immersion course panel discussants
 - Acting as visitors (soon after arrival)
 - Theater, singing, traditional art form, or sports classes
 - Out-of-Classroom Situations at School/University
 - Acting as new arrivals who are conducted around the campus
 - Providing library guidance for the students
 - Playing games with students
 - Organizing Japan-related circles and clubs
 - Out-of-School Situations
 - Outings with students
 - Accompanying student groups to Japanese restaurants
 - Participation in language camps
 - Acting as "tutors" for senior students
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The question of language competence of secondary teachers has often been discussed. Cross-cultural contacts in today's world require that teachers possess a working competence in the language they teach. The teacher acts, among other things, as a model of Japanese for his/her students. However, in contemporary teaching methods we have proceeded far beyond the stage when the teacher is the only model and source of language and other information required by the students. The need for a teacher to possess nearly native competence in Japanese should not be exaggerated. Anyway, the social system of Japanese-language teaching, with thousands of teachers of Japanese active outside Japan, renders such an aim totally impossible to reach. In this situation, it is much more realistic to think of teaching assistants as the more appropriate remedy for the problem. At the tertiary level, some teachers will always be Japanese native speakers. However, the advantages of the JTA system are so great that it will, no doubt, further develop in the near future.

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