Applying New Methods to Support Communicative Language Teaching

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The present paper deals with teaching Japanese to teenagers within the framework of secondary education in Austria. Instruction is based on the guidelines of the general curriculum which aims at communicative competence in three dimensions: code competence, knowledge of the target culture and attitudinal values. As these dimensions are to be developed simultaneously, both teaching material and course design have to meet these standards.

Besides cultural information and development of positive attitudes, a communicative approach requires a wide array of structure and vocabulary. As the volume of language material introduced at the same time is generally larger than in grammar-based methods, additional support must be provided. It is most effectively given by recent methods, such as *Total Physical Response, Suggestopedia*, and associative techniques for character learning.

All these approaches aim at providing multi-sensory input through vision, audition and movement to ensure high motivation and long-term recall. A silent initial period helps to build early competence by understanding and acting out commands the teacher gives. Early introduction of the script through NLP visualization techniques also accelerates learning speed. Later, four-phase suggestopedic presentation and a variety of follow-up activities maintain the playful atmosphere which motivates students to put the language to communicative use in the classroom.

Japanese Language Teaching in Austria

Although the first program started ten years ago in a secondary school, Japanese language teaching still has a long way to go in Austria. To date, no more than four institutions scattered over the country give young students the opportunity to acquire

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basic skills.   Designed as extracurricular afternoon activities with a total of 150 minutes of weekly instruction, these courses aim at gifted and motivated students desiring to achieve beyond the scope of traditional secondary education.   As with most other club activities, drop out rates tend to be 30 percent or more in the first year, but very low in the two consecutive years.

In autumn 1991 however, an experimental five-year program started at BHAK Wien 22, a five-year business school from grades nine to thirteen.   Thirty-six out of 126 students, all of them fourteen years old, opted for Japanese as a compulsory third language.   The large number challenges the teacher to maintain student interest since the mandatory curriculum leaves no possibility to drop Japanese without dropping out of school altogether.

Making it possible for a maximum number of students to meet the standard calls for a course design which gives optimal support to students from different educational backgrounds.   Over the years, many methods have been tested and modified to meet the requirements of the Austrian secondary school system.   This paper gives an outline of some recent methods which should help facilitate a task as difficult as learning the basic skills of the Japanese language.

Structure versus Communication?

Brain research conducted in the last two decades has shown that uman learning rarely follows predictable or prescribable patterns.   Acquisition of skills is a complex process which is far beyond the teacher's control.   Well-meant and logically organized teaching material only appeals to a small number of students sitting in the same classroom.   Even with these learners, only a fraction of their resources may be tapped (Hart, 1983: 55).

Every student has his/her own hierarchy of representational systems.   This means that individuals access information through their preferred sensory systems, in Western Cultures, mostly vision or motion (Lewis et al., 1990: 54f).   In addition, evidence from split-brain research suggests that a considerable portion of communication is controlled and processed in the right half of the human brain.   Yet, traditional language classes heavily rely on the auditive sensory system, emphasizing activities meant to stimulate the left hemisphere of the brain.   Input through a single channel in a sterile environment often creates anxiety, a factor counterproductive to language acquisition.

One objection could be that the organization of the Japanese brain is different.   However, Western teachers deal with students born and raised in Western cultures, so there is hardly any influence to be expected from these findings.   Cerebral organization takes place in children when they do not even dream of learning Japanese, so students bring along a set of patterns that cannot possibly be altered by a few hours of weekly instruction.   Like computers whose hardware remains the same, they simply process different software.

The findings of modern science help explain why conditioning a learner to a predictable linguistic behavior is far less efficient than supporters expected.   Almost two decades ago, the communicative approach has swept away audiolingualism and other

grammar-based methods in Western language teaching. With few exceptions, the approach which Japanese textbooks choose is the systematic organization of the grammatical form of the language material.

A frequent objection to the points made above is that the problems associated with learning Japanese may be so confusing that students give up learning entirely. In the present paper, I will not undertake to discuss the pros and cons of teaching communication rather than structure: applied linguistics has produced many field studies that clearly demonstrate its superiority. Having taught English and French for more than twelve and Japanese for ten years, I have come to believe that the basics of teaching are universal, i.e., learners need to acquire four skills to make meaningful use of the foreign language.

A separate problem is the language's degree of difficulty, but again a notional-functional approach does not imply that material cannot be organized with regard to the learners' needs. Contents and grammar center around situations with fewer structural constraints. This means students learn to deal with relevant information, not with often meaningless model sentences. They manipulate and process a greater amount of language without sacrificing accuracy for fluency (Krashen et al., 1983: 15).

A modern language teacher's main concern must be efficiency, which can be defined as optimal support of the individual's learning process. This support should not only ensure long-term recall by tapping all resources, methodological and individual, but also provide maximum motivation to put the language to communicative use inside and outside the classroom. Behaviorist models have no room for individual factors in the acquisition process, such as classroom interaction, language attrition, brain research, etc. Successful teaching, however, needs to take these variables into account.

My purely pragmatic standpoint calls for the examination of all elements that help lower the cognitive and perceptive difficulties of the Japanese language. Appropriate elements, no matter where they come from, should subsequently blend into a strategy aimed at providing high motivation and yielding good results with average students. I have always tried to avoid dogma in course design and teaching material, so let me say that this paper does not claim to describe the only valid approach to teaching a foreign language as difficult as Japanese. It is rather meant to convey ideas which might encourage some people to leave the beaten paths. The methods and their applications discussed below have been selected for their practical advantages in daily teaching. Should there be more efficient approaches that I am not aware of, please let me know. I will lose no time in applying them to my classes.

Communicative Methods for the Classroom

As we have seen from early experience, it is not enough to organize language material by functions and notions in order to put a communicative approach to good use in the classroom. As the learners are confronted with a much greater amount of language than in grammar-based approaches, individual support is necessary on the way to communicative competence. Thus it seems appropriate to briefly discuss a few approaches

which go beyond the traditional scope by establishing principles meant to enhance the general learning process. The following synopsis is far from complete, but it should help in understanding my approach to course design.

The Natural Approach

Developed by psycholinguist S. D. Krashen and language teacher T. D. Terrell, *The Natural Approach* provides a practical syllabus for modern language teaching backed by psycholinguistic theory. Although Krashen is sometimes criticized for his bold assumptions, his merit is in a theory of language acquisition which gives deeper insight on several aspects of classroom management.

Input is the single most important factor in Krashen's theory: students build up early competence by listening and understanding what the teacher says, not by hastily reproducing a chain of strange sounds. Language is acquired by grabbing the message of utterances a bit beyond the current level of competence. Contrary to the behaviorist approach, the teacher will have to tune his language to a level not too high above the students' grasp.

Production is allowed to emerge in stages while learners are never forced to speak before they are ready, nor does the teacher correct speech errors which do not interfere with communication. These strategies and the selection of interesting topics aim at creating a classroom atmosphere which helps lower the affective filter, an attitudinal instance of considerable importance. A low anxiety level and good rapport with the teacher are prerequisites to successful teaching (Krashen et al., 1983: 21).

Total Physical Response

Asher's method relies on three key principles which have also been adopted by the *Natural Approach*. First, comprehension is developed before speaking, second most structural items of a language can be taught through the skillful use of invitations and third, the students are not forced to speak. Having now been tested for nearly three decades in many languages including Japanese, *Total Physical Response* has produced results mostly superior to traditional classroom strategies.

A first explanation for long-term recall can be found in muscle learning which activates a sensory system hardly ever used in traditional classes. Second, simple understanding by translation is not likely to give the word as high a credibility as the physical action accompanying it. Third, acquisition requires input to both the left and the right hemispheres (Asher, 1977: 31f).

Variants of Suggestopedia

Bulgarian psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov's work on hypermnesia, an abnormal state allowing the brain to irreversibly absorb immense amounts of information, could not stand thorough scientific testing, but serious work has produced teaching models that take into account classroom reality in Western countries. Two of these models seem particularly well-suited for institutionalized language teaching.

ACT—An American Model

ACT, which stands for *Acquisition through Creative Teaching*, was developed by Lynn Dhority, professor for German language and literature at the University of Massachusetts, and one of Lozanov's first Western students. Besides suggestopedia, elements taken from other disciplines, such as psychotherapy and applied linguistics, lend scientific profundity and practical relevance to this approach.

Desuggestion, the starting point of suggestopedia, is a process meant to " liberate the individual from historically individually built up suggestion of the limited capacities of memory " (Lozanov, 1977: 165). A vital step in desuggestion is a new identity for the language class. Chosen freely, it liberates from the constraints of real existence in a playful environment which provides optimal affective conditions. Like in other models, *Total Physical Response* activities help develop a first understanding.

Later, regular three-phase suggestopedia techniques are employed to present new language material. A global prelude acted out by the teacher using gestures, facial expressions and pantomime, provides the gist of the lesson. During the following active concert with preromantic background music, the text is recited in an especially dramatic tone while the students read along. During the final phase, always at the end of a session, students close their eyes, relax and listen once again to the text, this time recited in a mellow voice accompanied by baroque music. This final concert reinforces and consolidates learning, simultaneously offering physical and mental rest. Empirical studies have shown that recall is significantly better than without music, especially after a period of sixteen hours up to one week (Baur, 1990: 100).

This psychologically strange phenomenon accounts for the arrangement of the phases in suggestopedia. The following session starts with tasks meant to activate the previously acquired language material, by initially reading the text in chorus, subsequently in individual roles and finally putting comprehension to test. Motor skills in the forms of pantomime and role play, are incorporated at each stage of primary activation. Follow-up activities include games, songs, drama and many other transfer tasks allowing the students to make creative use of their newly acquired knowledge.

Psychopedia—A German Model

Most elements of classic suggestopedia can also be found in the version developed by German linguists Baur, Grzybek, and Eichhoff. Major divergences are the absence of a silent period and the arrangement of four clearly distinct phases of presentation. While the global prelude and the final concert are identical, other considerable internal changes have been made.

After the prelude, students actively reproduce the text in chorus including all resources of the kinesthetic system. This is supposed to help overcome feelings of inhibition at a very early stage and runs contrary to the belief that a silent period is indispensable to create optimal affective conditions. The following phase provides a cognitive analysis which is meant to develop code competence by focusing on various linguistic features.

Follow-up activities, lasting at least twice as long as the presentation, include role

play and other tasks taking account of cultural differences between Germans and Americans. While the former generally act creatively when it comes to using language, the latter often show anxiety, which results in little creativity. Thus, tasks in psychopedia are after all better adapted to classroom reality in German-speaking countries.

Imagery, Mnemonics and Visualization

In spite of all efforts to seriously examine the underlying principles, no convincing theory has yet been brought forth, but it is a truism to say that imagery and mnemonics are very efficient techniques that include the functions of the right hemisphere of the brain. The more bizarre the associations the better they seem to work. Mnemonics developed especially for learning kana and Chinese characters are rather recent teaching aids.

What I understand by the term imagery is both the reconstruction of original images of kanji as well as pictures whose first sounds represent the reading of kana, whereas mnemonics are jingles going with the pictures. At first, imagery and mnemonics developed unsystematically in the classroom when I or students tried to find suitable recall strategies. When their efficiency became clear, a set was put together following general rules. By 1985 students had come up with dozens of suggestions, and the most efficient ones were chosen to be standards for future learners. All kana characters and approximately three hundred kanji have so far been developed, with kanji mnemonics also incorporating important readings.

Another technique going very well with the presentation of script is visualization. According to NLP findings, this technique helps to store images in the very place where they are often accessed by eye movements. The kinesthetic system can also be activated during the presentation by methods which have been used for a long time in elementary schools. Detailed information will be found in the respective chapter.

Additional Requirements

Besides a repertoire of speech functions and adequate nonverbal accessories to express notions, communicative competence also requires knowledge of sociolinguistic usage. This in turn necessitates control of different speech levels and moreover, knowledge of the Japanese civilization at a very early stage. There is one fine Australian textbook based on a communicative approach which at a first glance appeared almost ideal—perfect color print, interesting and relevant contexts, nice transfer tasks. At a second glance however, I realized that Australian individuals were almost the only characters in this Japanese language textbook. A fair-haired high school student by the name of Terry speaking Japanese with his parents, friends and strangers, obviously non-Japanese, lacks credibility.

Even though it is admittedly true that their own environment is more relevant and interesting to beginners, I keep asking myself why it should be less interesting to set the same funny scenes in a Japanese suburb. Two advantages emerge. First, culture could be conveyed in the background instead of planning separate classes on civilization. Students could easily compare environments and gain insights on Japanese culture without having to divert from the linguistic material. Second, this procedure would leave

more room for transfer: speech production could largely benefit from intercultural comparisons which definitely meet motivational requirements such as immediate relevance and interest.   An alternative which tries to encompass every dimension of communicative competence will be suggested in the following chapter.

Teaching Materials for Austrian High Schools

When the first Japanese program started in 1982, no textbook was available to meet the curriculum standards or the needs of the target group.   One year before, my wife, whom I am deeply indebted to for all her invaluable suggestions and creativity, and I began to develop teaching material.   After careful consideration, we decided to plan a continued story.   Comic strips illustrate the plot, giving visual props when the text is presented for the first time and stimuli for primary activation.   As suggestopedia calls for a bilingual presentation of the text, the comic strips do not contain balloons but text and a German translation on the opposite page.

The Characters of the Story

Its protagonist was to be Fredi, a Vienna-born high school graduate who travels to Tokyo after having taken three years of Japanese.   He visits with his pen friend Yōko's family, staying there for an indefinite period of time.   As he is fluent in Japanese, making progress from lesson to lesson, he communicates exclusively with native speakers in the target language, thereby obtaining both linguistic input and information on Japanese culture which is directly transmitted to the students in the classroom.   He is eager to learn and likes to get in touch with strangers.   Fredi's character is designed to convey at almost any stage a combination of code competence, culture and positive emotional feelings.

   The plot is set at different levels in time and space.   Fredi first appears at Vienna airport waiting for the plane bound for Tokyo.   This linear story, which can be prolonged at will, is sometimes interrupted by quick glances at other simultaneous events or by reminiscences of Fredi's experiences in the Japanese language class.   Fredi is construed as a young man of average talents who simply wanted to learn Japanese because he had a pen pal in Tokyo.   The closeness to real experience in the classroom makes him a peer to the students and therefore a much better and more acceptable vehicle for communicating ideas to the students than the teacher.   Most students believe that he is a real live character happily living somewhere in Japan.

   This role model function is especially valuable when students are confronted with methods such as *Total Physical Response* or relaxation techniques for the first time. Fredi had a positive experience some years ago and demonstrates the competence he effectively acquired by these methods.   So he supports Lozanov's concept of desuggestion in that years ago he also went through the same problems the students are now facing in the language class.   But by heeding the teacher's advice, he managed to overcome all the difficulties.   This helps create a positive attitude toward the teacher, whose authority has made possible what Fredi is up to in the present.

Yōko and her family are designed to match the average Japanese family. Her father works at a bank and her mother takes care of their home. Yōko is an eleventh-grader who likes school much more than her brother Hiroshi who prefers his computer and TV set to schoolbooks. They are nice people who live in a house in Asakusa. A typical family is used to create a positive attitude toward the Japanese in general, while leaving open the possibility for social criticism.

Yōko's father is rarely ever available for his family. His schedule is very tight with frequent business trips and meetings as well as Sunday golf with his colleagues and business partners. He has to work hard to pay for his children's education and the mortgage loans on his small house. Yōko is very busy studying for the admission to university next year and her brother, a ninth-grader, also has to work hard to be admitted to the senior high school of his mother's choice. Mother and some neighbors are mostly the persons Fredi deals with when he is at home. When he is out, he always gets to know friendly people who like to talk with him for a while because his Japanese is very good. Another character to mention is Yōko's cranky and somewhat forgetful uncle whose personality is well-suited for all kinds of comprehension exercises because he hardly ever gets things right.

Structure

An extensive introductory section covers Fredi's fifteen-hour flight from Vienna to Tokyo. While he is on the plane too excited to sleep, he is leafing through his old Japanese textbook remembering the first few afternoons when some thirty young people got together to learn Japanese. These flashbacks help to incorporate relevant language material for classroom management and teaching techniques that would have been out of place in a linear plot. Through this design, all material and suggestions come from a peer in form of a tale, creating a surrealistic playful atmosphere when the teacher suggests to try out what Fredi experienced some years ago.

Language in the first flashback contains functions relevant for a first social intercourse. As each student is invited to assume a new identity, not only a name, but also an occupation and an address of his choice, students can act more freely at a cocktail party which is at the end of this section. At this moment, students also learn that Fredi is not his real name, but that he, like his classmates, took a new identity for the Japanese class. Another flashback carries functions for *Total Physical Response* techniques and vocabulary relevant to the students' environment, such as hobbies, clothing and things in the classroom. Writing is also part of the introduction, because in the first activity following the identity swap, the teacher helps to make a big poster carrying the names of the students. As Japanese names generally do not appeal to students, a katakana table is enough to help them write down their names.

The introduction closes with Fredi's arrival at Narita airport where his Japanese is put to a first test in a conversation with an immigration officer. He is then asked by a fellow passenger on transit to Osaka to help him at the information desk. A final conversation with a customs official shows how well he has learned Japanese at school.

Each of the following lessons is designed in a similar structure. A short introduction

in German sets the scene and gives additional information for a better understanding of the circumstances. The introduction is followed by a list of the most important words and phrases coming up. A suggestopedic text typically consists of a wider column containing the text itself and a smaller one giving a translation of the text. With the problems of Japanese script, a few amendments need to be made. The result is a double-page design with a comic strip and readings of newly introduced kanji on the left page and the text plus translation on the facing page. In order to give students a larger amount of input than most other Japanese textbooks, one section contains an introductory narrative and the second one a situational dialogue. When turning the page, students will find an extensive grammar explanation which is followed by comprehension tests, transfer exercises, model sentences, suggestions for role plays, etc. A final section is devoted to supplementary activities and/or information, summaries and the like.

Practical Classwork

Above I tried to outline that it is possible to convey culture and attitudinal values within material primarily designed for linguistic purposes. Communicative competence calls for not only an integral build-up of code competence, culture and positive emotion, but daily classroom work usually concentrating on the development of linguistic abilities. This is why the following sections primarily deal with the development of code competence.

Getting Started

As students are particularly receptive to impressions in the beginning, preparation of the first few classes has a decisive influence on their attitudes toward the teacher and the subject. Careful orchestration includes background music, plants, colorful posters and a map of Japan, items mostly supplied by the Japanese Embassy. When students enter the classroom, they hear music from Kitarō's album, *Ten Years*, and they are invited to browse for some time. After having taken their seats, they are given a cordial welcome and short information on the objects along with some geographical data.

Next, some overhead transparencies shortly illustrate the story of the book's main character. The tale is told as if it had happened in real life, and many students do believe Fredi is a live character. At this point, most students want to hear what the language sounds like. So they are invited to go on a travel, covering the eight-hour time lag within some minutes. They relax as if they were on a superfast aircraft while they listen to music especially adapted for suggestopedia. A few minutes later, the students arrive in Japan and overhear a conversation among the members of Fredi's host family. The first encounter usually raises questions and comments as to the language and the forthcoming experience.

This is the ideal time to give a few samples of techniques which will be part of the classroom work in the following years. It is also of great use to briefly explain the classroom techniques so that the students can appreciate the teacher's role in helping them overcome obstacles. According to my observations, most students are willing to com-

ply with unusual procedures if they know why.　It helps establish good rapport as the students see for themselves that such techniques produce good results.　To this end, nine katakana characters describing Fredi's first and last names and his native city are presented the way the students will be learning kana and kanji in the course of the next years.

The following session is generally devoted to social activities.　Students are invited to swap identities by freely choosing new names, occupations and addresses.　Once done, the students practice functions to inquire and to answer questions as to their new identities.　Since they play the roles of strangers, very polite speech is the appropriate level.　First, the students form two concentric circles moving against each other so they can easily watch and speak to each other.　The speech functions displayed on posters are first practiced in chorus, gradually expanded to dialogues which can be acted out in pairs.　Happy music accompanies the students as they move, and when the music stops, they practice with their partners in the other circle.　Although the principle of a silent period is broken, there is little anxiety as there is no way for the teacher to control production.

The highlight of the second session is a cocktail party at which students are offered snacks and soft drinks.　Before the party, students find a first partner by grabbing one end of a bundle of strings.　It is fun for them to disentangle the bundle without letting the string go.　When they are done, they formally introduce themselves by handing out calling cards which were produced with the teacher's help.　At any time, they can take recourse to the posters supplying the appropriate speech functions.

Working with Total Physical Response

If Krashen's hypotheses and Asher's findings on the efficiency of a silent period in early language teaching are taken seriously, *Total Physical Response* is the method of choice for the first few weeks.　Not only does this approach have a positive effect on later development, but it also does away with another problem: most traditional textbooks introduce the copula first and try to build sentences around this structure without regard to actual communicative needs.

Kore wa hon desu has been a favorite starter for generations, but what real message does it convey to the students?　When seeing a book everybody knows it is a book. Does the teacher want to tell the student that book is *hon* in Japanese?　How can the student then tell whether *kore* or *wa* or *hon* or *desu* is the word designating a book? What conclusion can a student draw from being told a book is a book?　Even if we examine more recent versions like *watashi wa Tanaka desu* we very soon reach a point where interesting conversation dies of lack of structure.　The stative verbs *iru* and *aru*, which usually follow a couple of lessons later, do not contribute very much to actual communication either.

Let me return to the example of the book.　Would it not be better to point to the book and say *hon* instead?　This would be input that could be extended by requests like *hon o dashite, akete, yonde* or *tojite kudasai*.　Once such communicatively relevant utterances are understood, efficient classroom management need not take recourse to

the learners' first language. Studies in foreign language classes have shown that most real communication in a classroom, such as requests to open the window, leaving the room, etc., is held in the students' native language as they do not have the tools to handle these situations in the target language.

Having students handle such situations in the target language means more than just giving them a list of useful phrases which can be found in some textbooks. It requires practice which can be only be given by the teacher's careful guidance. My *Total Physical Response* classes start with movements like *tatsu, suwaru, aruku, hashiru, tobu, tomaru* introduced in plain and polite forms first, then negative and in a further step expanded by *–te kudasai*. (Asher and Kunihira used plain imperative in their 1965 experiments which is too harsh in my opinion.) At each step the teacher gives the model a few times, then the students move as a group and once they confidently perform the requests, single students are asked to act. Games like *Simon Says* are also possible at an early stage by using positive or negative requests or by leaving out *kudasai*. Later students can see the verbs on an overhead transparency in their original Japanese characters accompanied by *rōmaji*.

Vocabulary introduced in the first few classes is taken from the immediate environment, mostly items found in the classroom. To make understanding easier, the first words taught are loanwords like *pen, nōto*, etc. which help the students to bridge the lexical gap and give them a feeling for Japanese phonology. They are not introduced by *kore wa pen desu*, but by actions like *pen o dasu, toru*, etc. This way the students concentrate on the action, not on the word which they understand almost naturally.

Some units later, students are mostly eager to try for themselves. They can take down requests on pieces of paper, read or pass them on to a classmate who then acts accordingly. This procedure is fun and gives the students the feeling they can operate within their recently acquired language. To this end, simple grammar explanations are often illustrated by models (Fig. 1).

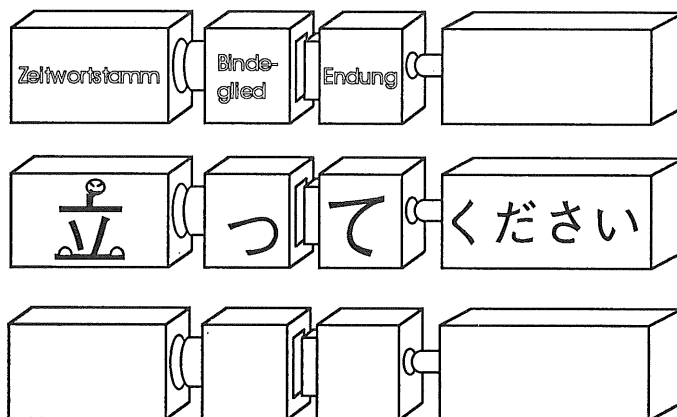Switchboards in the textbook also support cognitive control which is a must for stu-

Fig. 1

dents who have gone through extensive grammar work in other foreign languages.   One
of the last activities in the TPR period is pantomiming or performing the conversations
the protagonist of the book had at his arrival in Narita.

   Total Physical Response does not only support comprehension of actual language, but
also lends itself very well to phonetic discrimination.   Due to the absence of quantita-
tive distinction in their native tongue, many students initially have a hard time telling
short from long vowels as well as single consonants from geminates.   Students stand
in a circle when the teacher says a syllable or a word.   If the word contains a short
vowel or single consonant, they move one step inward, two if it is long or geminated.
Instead of moving, they could just as well raise one or both hands or perform any other
kind of motion.   Experience has shown that inclusion of the kinesthetic system has a
positive effect on students who are otherwise hardly able to discriminate sounds of a
foreign language.

Suggestopedic Presentation of Language Material

The human brain takes a lot of input to process a foreign language which in turn fosters
acquisition.   This is why a suggestopedic text gives the students a lot of rather difficult
language to work with.   Its length and difficulty is counterbalanced by a translation
which takes away the feelings of insecurity often found in conventional readers.   The
accompanying translation also helps the students concentrate on the foreign text as there
is no problem with the message conveyed.   The example is taken from Lesson Four,
when Fredi has arrived at his host family's home (Figs. 2 and 3):

   In a first phase, colored pictures of the comic strip can be seen on the overhead screen
while the contents of the text is explained and acted out by the teacher.   Students are
free to have their books open so they can quickly look up words they could not under-
stand during the presentation.   After this global prelude, the entire text is read to the
students and some comprehension tests, mostly true/false statements or yes/no questions,
can be done on a voluntary basis.   Grammar and word analysis mostly ensues from the
comprehension tests when students are not able to understand.   Next they listen to the
tape giving them an authentic presentation by native speakers.

   Finally, the students are asked to close their eyes and relax for some minutes, listening
to peaceful modern music.   They are invited to imagine walking around their favorite
places, looking at, touching and smelling objects they like.   After some four minutes,
the music changes to baroque, mostly Pachelbel's *Canon* in D major.   Baroque music
seems particularly well-suited because of its relaxing effects through bright monotony
which stimulates the right hemisphere of the brain.   The text is read in a mellow, low
voice, usually cut into single utterances.   The students hear the utterances twice in
Japanese with their translations in between.

   Positive effects of such learning concerts on achievements in language tests as well
as physical and mental well-being have been documented in several field studies (Baur,
1990).   In a field study on teaching methods which I conducted during 1990–91, the
overwhelming majority of students felt that the final concert was the part they had en-
joyed most although some stated that its effect on long-time recall was not very strong.

Two others reported however that they had been able to reproduce the texts almost completely even after some weeks. In general, there is a positive effect in that students process about half to twice the amount of language material of traditional classes while feeling more relaxed and better motivated. Even if it were only for the well-being of students (and teachers!) suggestopedic learning should find its place in regular classes.

Follow-up Activities

At the beginning of the next class, the students gather in a semi-circle in front of a flip chart poster. New kanji and words are highlighted in red and are briefly explicated by the teacher before reading the text. The students may then ask short questions about vocabulary or grammar before repeating in chorus with appropriate gestures and panto-mime. Next they form groups to act out the dialogs two or three times, each time changing parts.

To switch activities, the students are requested to sit down and fill in comprehension tests which vary frequently, comprising yes-no questions, wh-questions, closed texts, multiple choice tests, true/false statements, assigning pictures to statements, etc. Some comprehension tests are done individually, others in pair or group work. Although there is no fixed pattern as to how they have to be done, there is usually a time limit in order to solve all the problems in class. In the next step, students produce free texts whose forms range from simple summaries to letters, interviews and short reports on how another person did things similar to the activities of the lessons. Texts are mainly produced at home and handed in for correction.

Structure exercises hardly ever take the form of single-sentence drills focusing on a single phenomenon. They are rather embedded in a meaningful context to make them both more attractive and more useful to acquire. Typically, an exercise has some introductory explanation or a dialogue setting the scene for the activity. The items thereafter always center around the situation in order to make tasks more relevant. According to my own experience, exercises focusing on information through practical language motivate students better for grammar work than monotonous and often meaningless pattern drills.

Presentation of Japanese Script

As I briefly mentioned in previous chapters, the syllabary introduced initially is kata-kana for practical reasons. The first time I tried to follow suggestopedic principles, my wife and I prepared a long list of Japanese names to make choices easier. Alas, the overwhelming majority was not at all happy and soon adopted other names, mostly first names of pop stars and famous actors. One of the first desires was of course to write their own names and the cities they had chosen for their new life. At this point, I was forced to introduce katakana.

In retrospect, this was a lucky incident as I soon realized that katakana bridges the wide gap between Western and Japanese scripts in that its syllables have no more strokes than letters and are of comparable abstraction. Also, almost half of the classroom items are designated by loanwords. This is another useful bridge for basic understanding
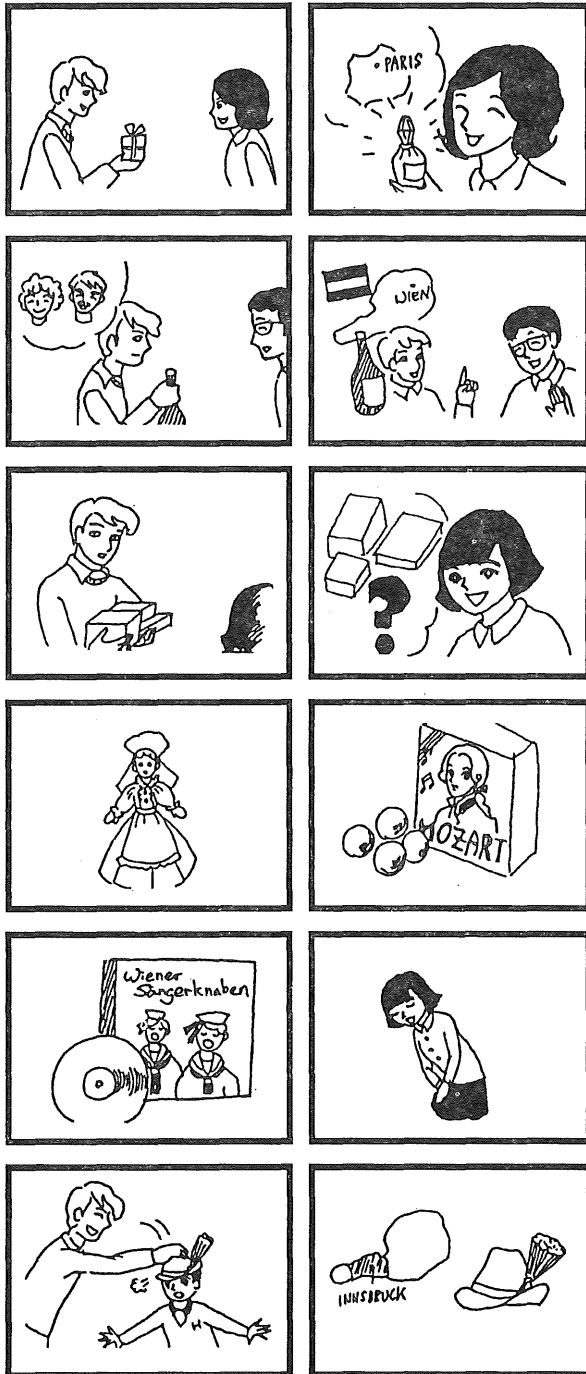
玄関	げんかん
応接間	おうせつま
お茶	おちゃ
飲んで	のんで
話	はなし
一度	いちど
香水	こうすい
両親	りょうしん
今晩	こんばん
人形	にんぎょう
少年	しょうねん
合唱	がっしょう
団	だん

Fig. 2

フレディーさんは玄関でくつをぬいで、応接間に入りました。応接間はとてもきれいです。フレディーさんはソファーに座わりました。お母さんがお茶をいれてくれたので、みんなでお茶を飲んで、話をしました。それから、フレディーさんはもう一度玄関に戻って、バッグを開けて、お土産を出しました。箱がたくさんありましたが、応接間に持ってきて、まずお母さんにお土産をあげました。その会話を聞きましょう。

Fredi zog sich im Vorzimmer die Schuhe aus und ging ins Wohnzimmer. Es ist sehr schön. Er setzte sich auf das Sofa. Mutter schenkte ihm Tee ein, und während alle Tee tranken, sprachen sie ein bißchen miteinander. Dann ging Fredi nochmals ins Vorzimmer, öffnete seinen Koffer und packte die Geschenke aus. Er hatte zwar viele Schachteln, aber er trug sie ins Wohnzimmer und gab zuerst Yokos Mutter sein Gastgeschenk. Hören wir uns diesen Dialog an.

F　お母さん、たいしたものではありませんけど、お土産です。どうぞ。

Mutter, das ist nichts Besonderes, ein kleines Geschenk. Bitte schön.

母　まあ、フランスの香水ですね。どうもありがとうございます。

Jöh, französisches Parfum... Vielen, vielen Dank!

F　お父さん、これは両親からです。オーストリアのブランデーです。どうぞ。

Vater, das ist von meinen Eltern. Schnaps aus Österreich. Bitteschön!

父　やあ、どうも。さっそく今晩飲んでみましょう。

Ah, danke. Den probieren wir gleich heute abend!

F　洋子さん、これをどうぞ。

Yoko, hier bitte nimm das...

Y　箱がたくさんありますね。。。中は何ですか。

So viele Schachteln... Was ist denn da drinnen?

F　ええと。。。これは人形です。

Also... das ist eine Puppe.

この箱はモーツァルトのチョコレートです。

In dieser Schachtel sind Mozartkugeln.

あとはウィーン少年合唱団のCDです。

Und dann ist da noch eine CD der Wiener Sängerknaben.

Y　うれしいわ。。。どうもありがとう。

Ich freu mich riesig! Danke!

F　それから、これは広くんに持ってきました。チロリアンハットです。

Und da ist noch ein Geschenk für Hiroshi. Ein Tirolerhut!

Fig. 3

as the students get a feeling for Japanese phonology and writing through words they already know.

Katakana is introduced in four blocks starting with nine syllables to write Fredi's name and native city, going on individually with the students' identity, cities and countries they have chosen to live in. Classroom items complete the list. In opposition to most other approaches, exceptions are introduced very early as *Furedi* already features three difficulties. So far, simultaneous introduction of such phenomena has shown rather positive effects on progress.

As of the following stage, hiragana and kanji are bundled to avoid misconceptions about how the Japanese writing system functions. After having mastered hiragana, many students do not see any more need to work on kanji as they erroneously consider kanji to be an unnecessary luxury. Another favorable aspect in an early introduction of kanji is their lexical importance which allows a relatively quick expansion of the vocabulary. With the help of imagery and mnemonics, most students very soon realize that even complicated characters can be remembered.

Designing mnemonic pictures for kana was a relatively simple task with quite a few workable suggestions already at hand. What was much more of a challenge was to work on kanji. L. Walsh's *Read Japanese Today* and K. G. Henshall's *A Guide to Remembering Japanese Characters* in a later phase provided innumerable suggestions, but both fell short of incorporating readings which again needed to be learned by rote. After a few tries, I found that the German language, and Austrian dialect in particular, was well suited for including most of the readings. The jingles also refer to the elements which are arranged in the order they have to be written. Following are three examples (Figs. 4–6) taken from my textbook.

In addition, visualization techniques borrowed from Neutro-Linguistic Programming and advice from a senior colleague experienced in suggestopedia have brought forth a procedure which has proved much more efficient than rote memorization of stroke order. Experiments which I conducted with students having little or no interest in Japanese showed an amazingly high rate of recall even one month after the original presentation. What was all the more surprising was a very high correlation between recognition and production, which means that students were not only able to recognize the characters but also to take them down in a dictation.

Before starting, students are asked to take out their worksheets which contain examples of handwritten characters and seven boxes to be filled in later. The presentation typically starts with a short period of relaxation whose techniques are chosen according to the students' level of arousal. Thereafter, the students see pictures like the ones above on the overhead screen.

In a first step, the students hear the sound in different volumes, normal, low and loud. Next, the stoke order is explained with reference to the picture elements before students are asked to watch the picture for some five seconds. Then, they are requested to find a blank spot on the wall so they can look up into a corner to visualize both the picture and the character from different angles, freely rotating or distorting it. In a fifth step, the students copy the character at least three times with big swings in the air and then
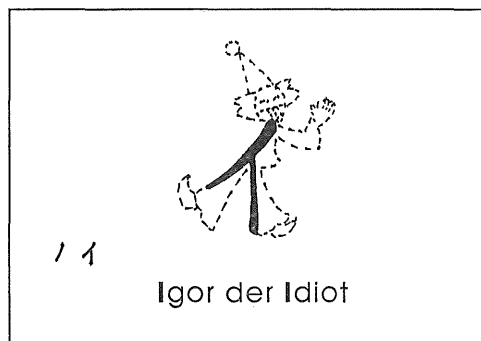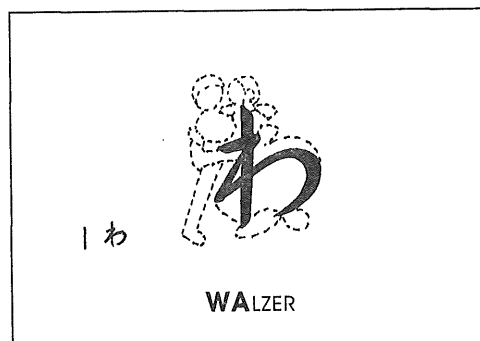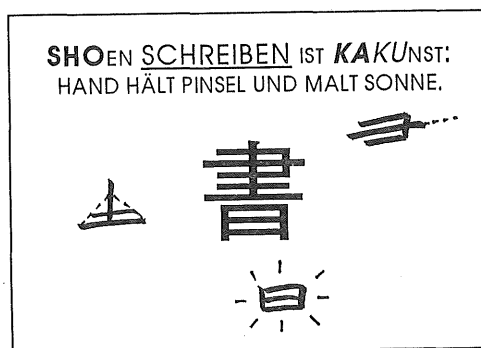
Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

fill in the boxes on their worksheets. When they have finished, they are asked to have another look at the picture and then close their eyes to visualize it once more. This helps to balance the differences in writing speed among the students.

Typically, one character takes about three minutes, so that one half-hour session easily accommodates nine to twelve characters. A presentation always follows the same pattern mostly for practical reasons of habit formation. Once students have recognized its efficiency, additional instruction is dispensable to have them carry out the necessary steps.

Conclusion

Learning a foreign language is a highly individualized process which is in some respects beyond the teacher's control. This is no reason for resignation but rather a challenge to work out strategies aimed at optimizing acquisition in the classroom. Efficiency of instruction always runs parallel to the methods applied. This truism explains why spoonfeeding structured input has failed with the big majority of learners. Advocates of grammar-based teaching sometimes put forward the argument that students learn

structures more thoroughly if there is little input.   This may be true, but psychology has come to believe that rich input activates more resources which again effectively support acquisition.

As initially mentioned, I am far from believing that the methods described above constitute the ultimate truth.   However, the rising demand for Japanese language instruction with its wide variety of learners calls for a thorough examination of all teaching resources.   Methodology offers many possibilities which can be adapted to the specific needs of target groups so that the acquisition process is supported by factors which traditional approaches have failed to take into account.

First and foremost, motivational aspects have to be considered.   Teachers can easily lower the students' anxiety level by creating a friendly classroom atmosphere.   A playful environment provides input through several sensory systems so that students less academically inclined are also offered the opportunity to acquire the basics of a language as difficult as Japanese.

Motivation also stems from relevant language material.   As a result, students are willing at a very early stage to put their knowledge to good use in follow-up tasks filled with meaningful messages, not with structural concerns.   The amount of language material processed in the course of such activities does have a very positive effect on language acquisition by increasing long-term recall and highly motivating students to use the language outside the classroom.

Methods which provide motivation and long-term recall generally make use of several sensory systems and both sides of the brain by including movement and elements of non-verbal communication.   *Total Physical Response, Suggestopedia* and other recent developments are not a miracle cure to the teachers' and students' problems as language merchants often promise, but they have opened new horizons to language teaching. Working with these methods challenges preconceptions and creates the potential for a rewarding experience by helping overcome obstacles formerly believed to be insurmountable.

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