

SOME ASPECTS OF THE TEACHING OF THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE IN HAWAII

Yukuo Uyehara

The first teaching of the Japanese language in Hawaii in an organized institution is usually dated as 1896 when a Japanese language school was established in Honolulu. In 1920, Japanese was added to the foreign language department at the University of Hawaii, followed by the offering of Chinese in 1922. Japanese has also been included in the curricula of a very limited number of public and private schools other than the Japanese language schools, either somewhat intermittently or without thorough organization.

The current picture of the various facilities of instructing the Japanese language in Hawaii may be divided into the following four major categories: the Department of Public Instruction, the Japanese language schools, the University of Hawaii, and the private schools and groups other than the Japanese schools.

Japanese in the Public Schools

The teaching of Japanese in the public schools in Hawaii at the elementary level was officially started in February, 1960. The revitalized foreign language program of the Department of Public Instruction was made possible by the Legislature with the financial assistance from the United States government under the National Defense Act of 1958, with Japanese as one of the Asian languages which has been selected for instruction. Approximately 1,500 fourth grade children in fourteen schools (Oahu 6, Hawaii 4, Kauai 4) are now studying Japanese for a period of about half an hour per day five times a week, under the so-called traveling teacher specialists. The classroom teachers of the children who are studying the language sit in with the children for the first four classes of the week, and they in turn take over the instruction on the fifth day. These classroom teachers naturally have been selected from those who are well-versed in the language.

This language program of the Department of Public Instruction is being conducted under a projection plan. That is, the traveling teacher specialists will follow through with the present classes and handle the fifth graders during the next school year, while the presently participating classroom teachers themselves will take over the new fourth grade children in September of this year. This projection will continue so that with each new school year there will be more children, more grades, and more teachers participating in the program. According to Dr. Erwin E. Gordon, who directs this project, several senior high schools will also become pilot schools for the instruction of Japanese in September of 1960.

The Japanese Language Schools

Discussion of the history of the Japanese language schools in Hawaii will not be attempted here except to present some pertinent statistical figures.¹ According to the annual report of the Hawai Kyōkai (The Japanese Language School Association of Hawaii) made in May, 1940, the total enrollment of children in the schools belonging to the association

¹See *Hawai Kyōkai*; Koichi Harada; Katsumi Onishi and Madorah Smith; Ernest Wakukawa.

during the 1939-40 school year was 38,515 of whom 19,600 were male and 18,915 female. There were 166 member schools of this association with a total of 631 teachers.

The Japanese language schools reopened in 1948 after being closed during and after the war. The following statistics concerning the present status of these schools do not include a very few which are non-members of the Japanese Language School Association of Hawaii.²

	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total Enrollment</u>
Honolulu	22	113	2,729	3,671	6,400
Oahu (other than Honolulu)	14	46	1,363	1,576	2,939
Kauai	6	13	175	215	390
Maui (includes Molokai and Lanai)	14	30	398	582	980
Hawaii	22	46	771	974	1,745
Total	78	248	5,436	7,018	12,454

The Japanese language school classes are conducted one hour per day, five times a week. Lower grade children meet between three and four in the afternoon and the older ones begin their study a little after four. This two-shift system is used by the schools to adjust their class schedule to the dismissal hours of the public and private English schools. The highest grade levels of these schools range from eighth to twelfth.

The foregoing figures show that the total enrollment during the 1958-59 school year was only 32 per cent of that of pre-war 1939-40. An interesting fact revealed in the comparative study of data for these two dates is the change in the ratio of male and female students. For the year 1939-40, the boys constituted 51 per cent of the enrollment while the 1958-59 figure shows that they are outnumbered by the girls, 44 to 56 per cent.

Since accurate figures are not available to show the trend of enrollments in the Japanese schools of all the islands in all of the recent years, an attempt has been made here to limit the survey to Honolulu schools whose registration is estimated at slightly over 50 per cent of the total number in the Islands. According to a very recent report of the Honolulu Japanese Language School Association, the following changes have occurred in the number of children and teachers during the past several years.³

²This is based on the report made by the Hawai Kyōikkai as of May 1, 1959, the latest available for this study. If the enrollment in the non-member schools is added, the total number of language school children in Hawaii could very well be close to 13,000.

³Material gathered from the files of the Honolulu Japanese Language School Association dated February 20, 1960. The enrollment would be slightly higher if the registration in the non-member schools were added.

	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>
1953-54	109	2839	3884	6723
1954-55	111	2910	3794	6704
1955-56	121	3050	3945	6995
1956-57	121	3040	3982	7022
1957-58	117	2843	3663	6506
1958-59	109	2666	3502	6168
1959-60	112	2708	3769	6477

The post-war peak in enrollment up to the current year was 1956-57, and then it gradually declined until the fall of 1959 when it showed a rise of about five per cent over the previous school year. This increase, though slight, was a mild surprise to the administrators of the language schools. Some of them had feared a further drop in the enrollment of their schools because of the impending Japanese program in the public schools.

This rise, which no doubt is partially the result of the sudden increase in the participation of non-Japanese children during the last several years, seems to be a reflection of the present language-conscious local community. With rare exceptions, it was uncommon to find non-Japanese children in the language schools prior to the war. Although the size of the school, the racial composition of the district in respect to its location, and other factors are to be considered, the following instances may give some idea of this phenomenon. The Manoa Japanese School with a total enrollment of 494, includes in its registration a total of twenty-three non-Japanese children--ten Caucasians, two Caucasian-Japanese, six Filipino-Japanese, three Chinese, one Hawaiian, and one Korean. The Palama Gakuen, the largest of all the Japanese schools in the Islands, with a total enrollment of 1,407 currently has a total of thirty-two non-Japanese or part-Japanese pupils, including ten Chinese-Japanese, nine Filipino-Japanese, five Caucasians, four Hawaiian-Japanese, three Caucasian-Japanese, and one Cosmopolitan. Koko Head Japanese School has one Caucasian among its twenty-seven children.

Instruction in Japanese at the University of Hawaii

Ever since the establishment of the Japanese language department at the University of Hawaii in 1920, the number of students of Japanese has grown steadily along with the over-all growth of the campus population, until the fall of 1959 when the enrollment suddenly increased to 454, or 68 per cent above the 270 of the previous year. This figure is greater than the total number of students registered in Japanese classes in all other institutions of higher learning of the U. S. combined.⁴ This is understandable in view of the ethnic distribution of the students at the University of Hawaii, where 57.5 per cent of the freshmen students enrolled in September of 1959 were of Japanese ancestry. (See Arthur Dole and Iwakami, p.3)

Among the factors which obviously contribute to this increase are the over-all increase in enrollment on the campus, the offering of new advanced Japanese courses, and the division of elementary Japanese into conversational and reading classes thereby facilitating freedom of choice between the

⁴Reported by Professor Joseph Yamagiwa to the Conference on Developing Teaching Materials in Chinese and Japanese, Modern Language Association, New York, 1960. Moreover, this figure does not include enrollment in courses offered by the College of General Studies and the Hilo Branch of the University of Hawaii.

two, and also making it possible for those who so desire to register in both classes concurrently. Although no research has been conducted on the subject, there is no doubt that some students have been stimulated to study Japanese because of the current interest in Asian studies, particularly in Japan and on "things Japanese." Moreover, students of Japanese ancestry have begun to realize that they need no longer apologize for studying the language which was once "an enemy tongue," but that rather the study is now endorsed and encouraged by the government and by public opinion. There are in addition some students who are interested in becoming potential teachers of Japanese with the Department of Public Instruction or to seek employment in other occupations in which their language training could be utilized.

The following summary of the students at various levels in the Japanese classes at the University of Hawaii in September, 1959, may be of interest, particularly in comparison with the number of non-Japanese in the language schools, mentioned earlier. It is especially interesting to note that the ratio of non-Japanese students in classes beyond the Third-Year level is 53 per cent, although the over-all percentage in all classes is only 14.

	<u>Non-Japanese</u>	<u>Total Enrollment</u>
First-Year Conversational	38*	260
First-Year Reading	13	70
Second-Year	2	80
Third-Year	2	22
Literary Style	5	6
Contemporary Literature	2	9
Directed Reading for Graduate Students	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
*includes 3 part-Japanese	64	449

Japanese Language Instruction in Private Schools and Other Groups

A few private schools have initiated Japanese instruction as a part of their regular curricula. For example, the senior high division at Punahou School in Honolulu inaugurated a class in elementary Japanese in September 1959. The course is conducted five days a week, each period lasting forty-five minutes, and out of the total enrollment of 20, seven are students of non-Japanese ancestry. The school plans to add a second-year class in September, 1960.

St. Anthony Girls' School at Wailuku, Maui, has added Japanese to its regular school program in September, 1959, although it has for years had a well-established after-school-hour program of lessons in the language from grades one through high school. The University of Hawaii Pre-School and the kindergarten at St. Paul's Lutheran Day School in Honolulu are experimenting with some Japanese lessons for fifteen minutes each two days a week. There are other private schools and community organizations which carry on Japanese classes, but no further listing will be attempted here.

The teaching of Japanese in Hawaii's schools is definitely in a state of transition under the impact of new forces in a community which has become highly language-conscious. Although by no means a thorough survey, this report does indicate that the study of the Japanese language in Hawaii is no longer a monopoly of those of Japanese ancestry, but is pursued increasingly by all racial groups.

While it is not possible to foresee the exact extent of the future language program in the public schools of Hawaii, an extensive projection plan seems to be on its way, and there is reason to believe that a similar trend is also in the making for the private schools. In the case of the traditional Japanese language schools, whether the language program in the public and private schools will curtail that of the language schools, or whether they will supplement each other, is at present beyond conjecture.

The enrollment in Japanese courses at the University of Hawaii is expected to rise, not only because of the anticipated over-all increase in the campus population, but also owing to the newly established and pending programs within the University which focus their attention on Asian studies, and other influencing factors mentioned elsewhere in this paper. Not only is the Japanese language program expected to grow in size, but also in the complexity of problems such as are found at practically no other American institution of higher learning because of the varied background of the students in Japanese. But this situation should be a new challenge to all participants in the program. To meet this challenge, some definite steps have already been taken such as the increase in instructional staff, the reorganization of the lower-division courses, and the addition of new advanced courses. The preparation of new textbooks, with financial aid from the Office of Education, will begin this summer (1960).