

Report on the 3rd National Symposium of Tertiary Japanese Language Education in New Zealand

8 - 9 December 2018

The School of Humanities Massey University in collaboration with Japanese Studies Aotearoa New Zealand (ニューージーランド日本研究学会) convened the 3rd National Symposium of Tertiary Japanese Language Education in New Zealand on 8 - 9 December 2018 at the Auckland campus of Massey University: 日本語教育の最前線：

ニューージーランドの大学レベルの日本語教育者のための全国シンポジウム ('The front line of Japanese language education: a national symposium for Japanese language educators at university-level in New Zealand').

The Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education generously contributed \$520 towards catering costs.

Mr Minoru Kikuchi, Consul General of Japan in Auckland, opened the symposium.

The national symposium is held biennially, hosted alternately by Massey University and Canterbury University in their capacity as members of the Japan Foundation's Sakura Network, with the cooperation of Japanese Studies Aotearoa New Zealand. The symposium targets educators and researchers in the field of Japanese language education and arises from the acknowledged need to formally bring together this community on a regular basis to foster an environment for collaborative research and to discuss future directions Japanese language education might take in New Zealand.

New and emerging researchers as well as established scholars are encouraged to attend; the December symposium attracted several postgraduate students. It is also an opportunity to meet new colleagues and catch up with changes in university staffing and specialisations. This year 24 delegates attended, in addition to special guests at the opening ceremony (and one retired guide dog).

We were honoured to welcome as keynote speakers Professor Eri Banno 坂野永理先生 and Associate Professor Tomoko Watanabe 渡部倫子先生. Professor Banno, from Okayama University, is the lead author of the highly acclaimed Genki textbook series. Associate Professor Watanabe, from Hiroshima University, is a board member of the Japanese Language Education Association 日本語教育学会 and former chairman of the journal of the Association of Second Language Acquisition Research 第二言語習得研究会. Both academics are specialists in Japanese language pedagogy and language testing and members of the Japanese government funded Kaken (Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research) project: 'Construction of a support system of language proficiency assessment practice which guarantees articulation programme.'

Professor Banno gave her keynote on 日本語教材の開発と使用 ('Development of Japanese teaching materials and their use'), while Professor Watanabe's keynote was 読みの流暢さ測

定ツールの開発プロセス — 初級修了・中級レベルの日本語テキストと内容理解問題の検討
(‘Development of reading fluency measurement tools: Examining upper-elementary and intermediate Japanese texts and comprehension questions’).

In addition several double blind peer reviewed academic papers on topics relating to Japanese language education in New Zealand were presented, and two reports, including an overview of preliminary findings relevant to the tertiary sector, from the Japan Foundation survey 2017, by Naomi Collins, Co-ordinator, Sasakawa Programmes.

One highlight of the programme was the launch of the report ‘The need to build capacity in international language and intercultural capabilities in New Zealand: The role of tertiary education (Japanese as an illustration)’, by Debbie Corder, Junji Kawai and Annelies Roskvist (Auckland University of Technology). The report had received significant Sasakawa funding. The report was further discussed, with some exciting ideas about how its findings could be given further leverage, at the Annual General Meeting of Japanese Studies Aotearoa New Zealand which was convened as part of the weekend’s format.

One pervasive theme throughout the symposium, explicitly and implicitly, was the need to reconceptualise our role and self-perceptions as Japanese language teachers: teaching Japanese is so much more than simply teaching Japanese: it is about teaching life skills of cooperation, active listening, respect and empathy; it is about acknowledging and celebrating diversity and difference (not only for Japanese but for any language and culture). One major outcome of the symposium therefore, alongside the sense of solidarity and common purpose it achieved, was a sense of validation and affirmation of the role of Japanese language teacher.

On behalf of the School of Humanities Massey University, I wish to record sincere thanks for the generosity shown by Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education. Some of the most important conversations take part over coffee breaks and meals, and these were fuelled and energised by Sasakawa’s kind contribution.



