Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
CRITICAL FACTORS IN THE TEACHING OF JAPANESE IN NEW ZEALAND AT YEARS 7 AND 8

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Second Language Teaching

at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Adèle Jeannette Lilly
2001
ABSTRACT

Current literature about the teaching of Japanese in New Zealand has raised a number of issues. However, there has been no attempt made to rank these issues either in terms of priority or in terms of how they may be addressed. In addition, in the existing literature, the writers have not provided any solutions or recommendations themselves.

This research identifies and ranks issues in Japanese language teaching programmes at Years 7 and 8 in the New Zealand school setting. Two professional groups (teachers and principals) were approached to provide the data. Discussions were held in focus groups with teachers of Japanese from around New Zealand. Issues which either constrain or facilitate the implementation of a Japanese language teaching programme were elicited from participating teachers. These issues have been termed “factors” to avoid any negative connotations. Professional responses to the most critical factors were also sought from the teachers. The critical factors generated by teachers were grouped into four broad categories and the focus groups then contributed professional responses to these. Initial results showed that teachers identified “commitment from principal”, “pressure and time” and “availability of resources” as being important. Questionnaires were then developed and sent to principals in schools offering Japanese at these levels. Principals identified “commitment from principal”, “availability of resources” and “confidence of teachers” as being important.

The results of this study are discussed with reference to the current literature and a number of implications for teaching programmes are proposed. These suggestions are intended to guide schools contemplating the introduction of Japanese or another international language at these levels.

The model developed for group discussions could be used in further research when trying to determine critical factors in the teaching of either other languages or indeed other curriculum areas.
PERSONAL STATEMENT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my parents for exposing me to Japanese from the age of five. Amongst my peers I am indeed very fortunate. Credit for my passion for learning languages must also go to my Nana, Una Scott, who later enthused my learning of French. I wish she had been given the same level of support for her studies. More recently, my teaching of international languages has been inspired by the dedication and efforts of my colleagues and students.

My sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Cynthia White for her guidance throughout this research. Her constant encouragement and understanding of my needs have been much appreciated. The assistance received through financial grants and study leave from Massey University’s School of Language Studies and College of Education has been much appreciated.

I am also extremely grateful to the following people and organisations.

- The management committee of the Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education (Massey University) who approved the participation in this research of the facilitators and teachers involved in the Professional Development for Primary/Intermediate Teachers of Japanese Contract.
- Gail Spence for her mentorship and willingness to share her vision.
- The facilitators and teachers themselves who so generously gave of their time to explore the critical factors in their Japanese teaching programmes.
- The principals and staff at schools teaching Japanese at Years 7 and 8 who took the time to complete the questionnaire.
- The staff at the Language Teaching Research Centre (Melbourne University) for lending me a machine to transcribe my tapes, distracting me with part time work, and providing a support network away from home.
- Duncan Hedderley for his guidance throughout the analysis of the data and Mark Bebbington for his expertise in displaying and interpreting the data.
My thanks also go to Mike who encouraged me to embark on this study and to his family who have been the best in-laws anyone could want.

To my own family, Mum and Dad, Joy, Julian, Alexander (and most recently Zachariah) who have kept me going through the tough times and also helped ensure the questionnaires were “enveloped”, licked, posted and returns collected.

I would also like to acknowledge the gentle support (and sometimes less gentle bullying) of my many colleagues and friends. A huge thank you in particular to Colin, Lone, Sally, Nan, Yevette, Robyn, Mark, Susan, Janet, Karen, Naomi, Maree, Prue, Santi and Bryce.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT** .................................................................................................................... ii  
**PERSONAL STATEMENT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ........................................ iii  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS** ............................................................................................ v  
**LIST OF TABLES** ......................................................................................................... ix  
**LIST OF FIGURES** ....................................................................................................... x  
**ABBREVIATIONS** ........................................................................................................ x  

## 1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 1  
1.1 Terminology ......................................................................................................... 1  
1.2 Research Aims ..................................................................................................... 2  
1.3 Research Setting ................................................................................................ 3  
1.4 Research Participants ....................................................................................... 3  
1.5 Research Questions ........................................................................................... 4  
1.6 Organisation of the Thesis ................................................................................. 4  

## 2 THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE TEACHING CONTEXT ............................................. 5  
2.1 Teaching International Languages in New Zealand:  
The political context .................................................................................................. 5  
2.2 Teaching International Languages at Years 7 and 8 ......................................... 9  
2.3 Japanese Language Teaching in New Zealand .................................................. 11  
2.4 Issues for Second Language Teaching Programmes ....................................... 15  
2.4.1 Issues for New Zealand programmes ......................................................... 15  
2.4.2 Issues for overseas programmes ................................................................. 17  
2.5 Summary ............................................................................................................ 20  

## 3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA ................................................................................. 21  
3.1 Aim ...................................................................................................................... 22  
3.2 Research Design ................................................................................................ 22
3.3 Subjects ........................................................................................................ 23
  3.3.1 Selection and characteristics of facilitators (group one) .................. 23
  3.3.2 Selection and characteristics of teachers (group two) ................. 24
  3.3.3 Selection and characteristics of schools (group three) ............... 24
3.4 Ethical Considerations ............................................................................. 24
3.5 Choice of Instruments ............................................................................ 25
  3.5.1 Part A: Focus groups .................................................................. 25
  3.5.2 Part B: The questionnaire ......................................................... 26
3.6 Focus Group Discussions ....................................................................... 29
  3.6.1 Focus groups: Stage one ......................................................... 29
  3.6.2 Focus groups: Stage two ......................................................... 35
3.7 Strengths and Limitations of the Instruments ...................................... 42
  3.7.1 Focus groups .......................................................................... 42
  3.7.2 The questionnaire .................................................................. 45
3.8 Summary .................................................................................................. 47

4 RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE............................................................. 48
  4.1 Demographic Characteristics ............................................................. 48
    4.1.1 School types and year levels taught ........................................ 49
    4.1.2 Teachers .............................................................................. 50
    4.1.3 Programmes ....................................................................... 51
    4.1.4 Time allocation .................................................................. 52
  4.2 Critical Factors Ranked by Principals ................................................. 54
    4.2.1 Summary of critical factors ................................................. 57
  4.3 Professional Responses Matched with Critical Factors by Principals ... 59
    4.3.1 Collecting professional responses ...................................... 59
    4.3.2 Collating and analysing professional responses .................. 60
    4.3.3 Summary of professional responses .................................... 64
  4.4 Summary ........................................................................................... 67
5 DISCUSSION........................................................................................................ 68
  5.1 What are the Most Critical Factors?............................................................... 68
    5.1.1 Teacher background................................................................................. 68
    5.1.2 Learner behaviour................................................................................. 69
    5.1.3 School context......................................................................................... 69
    5.1.4 Professional commitment and support.................................................... 70
  5.2 What are the Most Effective Responses to the Critical Factors?.................. 70
  5.3 Implications and Recommendations: How Should the Critical Factors be Addressed?........................................................................................................... 71
    5.3.1 Leadership............................................................................................... 71
    5.3.2 Teacher background and support............................................................ 72
    5.3.3 Programme structure............................................................................... 74

6 CONCLUSION..................................................................................................... 76
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDICES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1: Part A, Focus Groups Stage One</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Information Sheet and Consent Form for Facilitators</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Information Sheet and Consent Form for Teachers</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Instructions and Procedures for Facilitators</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2: Part A, Focus Groups Stage Two</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Instructions and Procedures for Facilitators</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Trial Questionnaire for Focus Group Teachers</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Response Cards for Teachers</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3: Part B, Questionnaire to Principals</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Letter to Principals</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Information Sheet for Schools</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Questionnaire for Principals in Schools</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

2.1 Number of students of Japanese Language at Years 7 and 8:
   1996-1999 ............................................................................................ 14

3.1 Critical Factors Categorised .......................................................... 34
3.2 Critical Factors Ranked by Teachers .............................................. 35
3.3 Stage Two: Steps One, Two and Three ......................................... 38
3.4 Strengths and Limitations of Focus Groups ..................................... 43
4.1 Responses by School Type .............................................................. 49
4.2 Responses by Year Levels ............................................................... 50
4.3 Role of the Teacher of Japanese ..................................................... 51
4.4 Principal Response to Critical Factors Relating to Teacher Background ................................................. 54
4.5 Principal Response to Critical Factors Relating to Learner Behaviour 55
4.6 Principal Response to Critical Factors Relating to School Context ...... 56
4.7 Principal Response to Critical Factors Relating to Professional Support and Commitment ................................................ 57
4.8 Comparison of Principal and Teacher Rankings of Critical Factors ...... 58
4.9 Replies to Professional Responses .................................................. 60
4.10 Principal Selection of Professional Responses Relating to Teacher Background ......................................................... 61
4.11 Principal Selection of Professional Responses Relating to Learner Behaviour .......................................................... 62
4.12 Principal Selection of Professional Responses Relating to School Context ........................................................................ 62
4.13 Principal Selection of Professional Responses Relating to Professional Support and Commitment ............................................... 63
4.14 Top Professional Responses Chosen by Principals ......................... 64
4.15 Top Ten Critical Factors Matched with Professional Responses by Principals ................................................................. 65
LIST OF FIGURES

3.1 Research Process .................................................................................. 21
4.1 Questionnaire Returns .......................................................................... 48
4.2 Year Seven Programmes ....................................................................... 53
4.3 Year Eight Programmes ........................................................................ 53

ABBREVIATIONS

FLES Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools
FLEX Foreign Language Experience
LOTE Languages Other Than English
NZAJLT New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers
NZALT New Zealand Association of Language Teachers
SFFJLE Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education
SLLP Second Language Learning Project