

1.30 Japanese Language Studies in Sri Lanka: A Critical Analysis

Udara I. de Silva

Department of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya.

ABSTRACT

Study of foreign languages has become the newest interest in the Sri Lankan education field during the past few decades. There is a common perception that the learning of a foreign language will widen the scope of future career and employment opportunities.

Relations between Japan and Sri Lanka has a long history. Since the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the 7th Century B.C.: in the Nara Period, relations between the two countries existed in various forms leading to the establishment of Diplomatic relations. The Japanese language was introduced to the Sri Lankan education field as long as the 1960's. Presently Japanese is being taught at various levels: primary, secondary and tertiary and also is offered for the GCE Ordinary Level and Advanced Level examinations. Statistical data show the number of students who offers the language at these examinations is on the increase every year. It is also included in the university curriculum, enabling the students to further enhance their language skills.

Students start learning Japanese as a foreign language at the GCE Ordinary Level or at the GCE Advanced Level. The successful candidates at the GCE A/L are allowed to enter university for their further studies. Even though the selection criterion is a common examination, the level of language knowledge of the students who enter the university is different.

Although Japanese is taught at various levels in various institutions, it is questionable whether a proper standard is maintained in both the teaching and learning processes. Thus it is extremely essential to analyse the current situation of Japanese language education in Sri Lanka. Hence, this study will focus on analysing the current situation of Japanese language education in Sri Lanka, but this will not be limited to a mere survey of Japanese language teaching institutions, schools etc. An analysis of teaching methodology, curricula, content and the knowledge of Japanese among the teachers at GCE Ordinary Level and GCE Advanced Level classes in schools will be carried out. Furthermore, the standards, strengths and weaknesses of the students who enter the university will be carried out. The standards students have gained when they enter the university after the completion of their secondary education along with the analysis of the student performance after the entrance to the university and to compare and evaluate their progress at graduation will be carried out. In this process the student strengths and weaknesses will be identified. The drawbacks in the teaching and learning processes will be taken into consideration in order to suggest means of improvement. Ultimately, it is expected to find out whether the students have the required potential to cater to the demands of the job market. Through the analysis of the findings, possible remedial issues for the problematic areas will be suggested.

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning, Japanese Language, Teaching Methodology, Curricula