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Language Planning or Language Management: Treatment of Problems for the Development of “Japanese in Context”

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This paper aims to discuss how language problems involved in the process of course development are approached and treated by the course designer and developer. Discussion is based on two theoretical frameworks available for the study of language problems, namely, language planning and language management. With the language planning top-down approach, policy-making for course development is crucial. On the other hand, the language management framework characterizes a bottom-up approach. This approach provides a perspective for language users at the discourse level and language course developers at the organization level to view problems as a management process typically starting from the phrase of micro/macro inquiry and followed by the phases of micro/macro design and micro/macro implementation. It is hoped that the attempt here can serve as a model for the development of a context-based language course for short-term overseas students in particular, and to provide insights for foreign language education in general.

Keywords: language problem, language planning, language management, TJFL, Japanese interaction

Introduction

“Japanese in Context” (or *Jissen Nihongo* in Japanese) is one of the core components of study for students who are enrolled in the Japanese Society and Culture Program through the IES Abroad Tokyo Center¹⁾. This intensive Japanese course has been developed and run by the Japanese Language and Culture Program (or *Ryugakusei Bekka* in Japanese) at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) since 2001. Students from various American universities, both with and without previous Japanese learning background, who are recruited

by the IES headquarter in Chicago arrive KUIS every April and September. They will typically gain 6 credits of Japanese language and 9-13 credits of area study courses in one semester before they return to their home university.

Since the Japanese Society and Culture Program is designed to provide students with opportunities to learn about the Japanese society and the language through their experience of living in Japan, Japanese training without considering the Japanese context becomes irrelevant. In view of this, the goal of the Japanese in Context course is set as follows (excerpt from the 2008 course description):

Japanese courses in the program are designed to introduce Japanese necessary in order to interact with native speaker in the Japanese context. More specifically, classes are structured to develop students' competence in the following three aspects:

- a. Linguistic competence: Competence for expressing and understanding the language according to Japanese linguistic rules. e.g. to learn Japanese sentence structures, vocabulary, pronunciation and writing system;
- b. Sociolinguistic competence: Competence for using the language according to Japanese communication norms. e.g. to learn to choose appropriate topics, timing, levels of politeness, channels, strategies for handling expressions and comprehension problems;
- c. Sociocultural competence: Competence for achieving a communication goal by using the language so as to present themselves as a member in the Japanese society. e.g. to learn facts about Japan such as in-group and out-group relationship, cycles in daily life, patterns of entertainment, hierarchy in family and work domain, social organization of contemporary Japanese society.

In order to assist students to achieve this pedagogical goal, I shall demonstrate in this paper how language problems involved are approached and treated by *Bekka* as the course designer and developer. Discussion is based on two theoretical frameworks available for the study of language problems, namely, the language planning theory and the language management theory. It is hoped that the attempt at KUIS will serve as a model for the development of a context-based language course for short-term overseas students in Japan, and to provide insights for foreign language education in general.

1. Top-down treatment of language problems: language planning

Language planning (LP), as the name itself suggests, is a series of deliberate effort which aim to achieve a particular goal (usually for the improvement of the language situation) by imposing language policies within a particular community or society²⁾. With the increase of political and economical changes in the past century, language planning especially for the standardization of language is crucial for newly formed countries and multi-cultural societies.

According to the existing literature on language planning such as Fishman (1974), Cooper (1989), Sanada *et al.* (1992), Neustupný (1995b), Kuwahara *et al.* (2002), Spolsky (2004), Wright (2004), it is not difficult to find the following features:

- a. It is mainly sociopolitical in nature.
- b. Official organizations (e.g. government of a nation or special language regulatory bodies) are responsible for the development of goals and objectives according to the language situation concerned.
- c. Language planning administered at the governmental level takes the form of language policy.
- d. Language policies will change the behavior of language users in the community.
- e. It is presumed that language problems can be removed / solved

through appropriate policies.

- f. In the traditional paradigm of language planning, so-called “status planning” (e.g. selection of a particular language variety as the official language), and “corpus planning” (e.g. promotion or standardization of a particular language) are particularly in focus.
- g. Language education has not received much attention until at a later stage when “acquisition planning” (e.g. multi-language education in Australia) was included in the framework.
- h. The main objective of planning is language itself (i.e. grammar, spelling, writing system etc) rather than language in use (i.e. politeness).

It is clear that language planning aims for a top-down technical solution of possible language problems. In the case of language planning regarding to the use of Chinese characters in Japan, for instance, politicians or sociologists will analyze the needs of standardizing the writing system. Language policy makers will then define the scope and contents of Chinese characters (e.g. renewing the so-called “*kyoiku kanji*” of 1006 characters in 1989 to be taught in primary schools) with the help of linguists who can contribute by investigating the actual use and characteristics of different writing scripts in Japan. School educators will put in force teaching the characters according to the guidelines provided by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

2. Policy-making for the development of “Japanese in Context”

Unlike language planning of Japanese language education for native Japanese people (*kokugo kyoiku*), language planning of foreign language education (*gaikokugo kyoiku*) and language planning of teaching Japanese as a foreign language (TJFL) appear to be less developed in the Japanese society. As a matter of fact, official guidelines regarding to how to teach Japanese to foreigners are not necessary available and as a result language program developers are left with full responsibility

from goal-setting to the administration of policies.

In the case of the Japanese in Context course, *Bekka* at KUIS is the main body responsible for its development. Working together with other decision makers (e.g. the KUIS administration and the client IES administration), *Bekka* attempts to build up a workable system with clear rules and instructions for achieving the pedagogical goal. All these rules and instructions are announced to the students before the classes start. Let me introduce some of the main policies here.

2-1. Small class policy

In order to ensure that each student has sufficient opportunity to participate in class, *Bekka* follows the KUIS small class policy, which limits the maximum number of students in a language training course to 15. For instance, in 2002 Spring semester, 19 students were tested out to be in Level 1 and as a result the class was split into 2 sessions and were taught by two instructors.

2-2. Attendance policy

Bekka places a special emphasis on regular attendance. Students are required to attend all classes unless they have legitimate reasons such as sickness. A “Fail” may be resulted if a student is absent for 3 consecutive sessions without notice. Students are given instructions at the orientation about what *chikoku* (arriving class late), *sotai* (leaving class early) and *kesseki* (absence) mean and how they will affect their grades. Special consideration is given if a student is absent for more than one week with written supporting documents.

2-3. Grading policy

An information handout about the grading policy of the Japanese in context course is distributed to all students during the orientation. Students are clearly informed how they are assessed on the basis of attendance, homework/assignments, quizzes, final test, participation in

class activities, and class performance. All take home assignments are required to be submitted by the due date. For late assignments with no approved excuse, 20% of the grade will be deducted.

Students are also required to sit for all the quizzes and tests given during the semester. As a rule in the university, participation in a test will not be permitted if a student is late for more than 20 minutes. Also, in principle, no make-up quizzes or tests will be given in the case of deliberate absence. Students who foresee any problems in participating in quizzes and tests should consult their class teacher or the IES coordinator in advance.

Cheating (or *kanningu* in Japanese) will be punished severely. It will result in a "Fail" in ALL the Japanese courses which the student is taking in the semester. In the *Bekka* program, *kanningu* refers to giving or obtaining information by using unfair or deceitful methods such as overlooking textbooks, dictionaries or other classmates' answer sheets.

As for a course which aims to teach Japanese for interaction, the administration of performance activities (PAs) is considered as a crucial component in the course. For this reason, students' attendance and active participation is of most importance and no make-up PAs will be given. Students who foresee any problems in participating in quizzes and tests should consult their class teacher or the IES coordinator in advance.

2-4. Class placement policy

The aim of class placement test is twofold. One is to place each student in the most appropriate class for maximum language learning effect. Another one is to help each student to secure a stable and satisfactory learning environment. Students will be placed in one of the five Japanese in Context classes on the basis of the results of the placement test administered prior to the start of the program, with consideration of students' personal situation such as a) background of

Japanese study; b) major subject in college; c) aim of study in Japan.

In view of the fact that some of the students may not be able to fully demonstrate their Japanese ability in the placement test which is held right after their arrival in Japan for reasons such as jetlag, culture shock or sudden change of weather, students are given a chance to take a second placement test on request before the deadline for course add-drop. If a student receives higher mark in the second placement test and recommendation from the class teacher, he/she will be allowed to change to an upper or lower level.

2-5. Direct method policy

Direct method, also known as natural method or oral method, is one type of method established for teaching foreign languages by German and France linguists in the early 20th century (cf. Ito 1984). It is based on the belief that human beings can master a language without relying on another language (e.g. babies learning their first language), and that spoken language is naturally acquired before written language. Unlike the traditional grammar-translation method which was used to be the main stream of teaching foreign languages, direct method emphasizes the immersion of learners in the target language environment.

In spite of some shortcomings about the direct method such as time consuming and teacher-centered, both teachers and students in the Japanese in Context course are advised to respect the use Japanese in class as much as possible for several reasons. First of all, students who are enrolled in the Japanese in Context course include not only American students from the IES program, but also overseas students from various countries through other Japanese programs in *Bekka*. Therefore, practically there is no common language for instruction other than the target language Japanese. Secondly, the teacher also takes the role as a native speaker so as to create a natural situation for interaction which links to the goal of the course. Lastly, the small

class policy theoretically makes it possible.

In order to conduct the class basically in Japanese, common classroom expressions are taught at the beginning of the course in all levels. For important notices and instructions, handouts written in English are distributed to students for references. Also, English and other languages which the instructors are able to cope with can be used after class for consultation.

2-6. Overseas student support system

A fully organized overseas student support system called "*tabunka koryu netto*" (intercultural exchange network) has been established in *Bekka* since the program started in 2000. The Japanese in Context course is run with the backup of this system in the following ways:

- a. All new students enrolled in the course are eligible to get a Japanese learning tutor who is registered in the support network as a volunteer.
- b. Japanese visitors, either voluntary undergraduate students in the campus or residents in the neighborhood, will be invited as native participants in the performance activities.
- c. Students who appear to be behind the learning schedule will be introduced to a study partner who can help learning Japanese outside class time.

In order to get the best benefit from the support system, a coordinator is designated for the administration regarding to tutors and visitors. Also, special allowances for running the performance activities in the Japanese in Context course are allocated (cf. Fan *et al.* 2005).

2-7. LD and ADHD students support

Officially reported LD (Learning Disabilities), ADHD (Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder) students and students who need extra care are given special consideration for their Japanese study. Measures taken in the past include extension of test / quiz time, indi-

vidual test / quiz and after class instructions. Class teachers who are responsible to looking after students with special needs will be provided with allowances according to the amount of extra work.

In the previous sections I have outlined the characteristics of top-down treatment of language problems from the viewpoint of language planning. Some major policies enforced by *Bekka* for the development of the Japanese in Context course are also introduced.

3. Bottom-up treatment of language problems: language management

Through the discussion so far, it is not difficult to find out that the ultimate goal of language planning is the establishment of a system in order to solve possible language problems. Since policies made under the guidelines of the system are necessarily to be put in action by agents empowered politically or economically, a top-down direction for the treatment of language problems becomes significant.

Other linguists on the other hand provide another viewpoint for the treatment of language problems existing especially in the so-called "contact situations" where a foreign language is normally used. Neustupný, for example, queries if language problems can be measured without looking at how the language concerned is actually used for interaction. In his 1995 paper, Neustupný pointed out clearly about the relationship between language problems and language behavior.

「われわれはマクロなレベルで導きだされたコミュニティ言語についての抽象的な議論から始めるべきではなく、実際の接触談話の中での参加者がどのように評価しているかを捕らえるところから始めるべき」

"Rather than to start from arguments based on abstract concepts regarding to how a particular community language should be planned at the macro level, we should start by examining how individual participant approaches the language when using it at the discourse level." (Neustupný 1995b, translated by Fan)

The theory now referred to as “language management theory” (LMT) was first introduced with the name “language correction” in the 70s by Neustupný (1978) and then further developed since then (Neustupný 1985a, 1985b; Jernudd and Neustupný 1987; Jernudd 1993, Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003; Nekvapil 2006; Fan 2008)³⁾. The basic philosophy of this theory lies on 1) language problems cannot be taken for granted and thus treatment of language problems is unrealistic without looking at actual language behavior of individual users, and 2) not all language problems in real interaction can be solved but they need to be managed. For instance, the inability of reading and writing Chinese characters among foreigners who live in Japan may not necessarily be a “problem” if he /she is an English speaker. Also, the apparent incompetence in Japanese may in fact help the foreigners to make friends with local Japanese through language exchange and other sociocultural activities.

According to Neustupný (1995b), the treatment of language problems within the language management framework is different from that in the traditional language planning paradigm in many ways. For example:

- a. While LP focuses more on status planning and corpus planning, LMT covers a wider scope of language problems including those related to language education.
- b. LMT emphasizes that problems which cannot be solved (temporarily or permanently) should also be attended.
- c. The objectives of LMT are not limited to language in the narrow sense. Sociolinguistic problems and socio-cultural problems which affect language use should also be attended.
- d. Language problems are to be treated at multiple levels, e.g. national level, community level, discourse level among individual language users.
- e. LMT suggests that not all language problems will surface in discourse but they may remain significant at various stages of adjustment in the process of treatment.

- f. LMT believes that language problems are socio-cultural specific and thus different speech community needs different treatments.

With the shift of the agent from decision makers to actual language users, and the shift of the objective from conceptual arguments to concrete language use, it is obvious that the language management takes a bottom-up approach towards language problems. Neustupný suggests that language problems typically occur when different norms are applied. Language problems will also occur before they surface in discourse as a “mistake” or an “error”. For instance,

- a. Deviation stage: deviations often occur if different norms for interaction are applied.
- b. Noting stage: some deviations are noted by the language user and some are not.
- c. Evaluation stage: noted deviations may be evaluated by the language user in various ways, positively, negatively or they will be neglected.
- d. Planning stage: language user may try to take action for adjustment in response to some obviously evaluated deviations.
- e. Implementation stage: adjustment plans may be implemented and some may be avoided.

In Section 4 and 5 below, I shall explain the procedures (i.e. behavior) undertaken by *Bekka* for the management of problems at the discourse level and at the organization level⁴⁾ for the development of the Japanese in Context course.

4. Procedures for the management of problems at the discourse level

As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, the goal of the Japanese in Context course is to provide students training in order to interact with the Japanese through the Japanese language. Needless to

say, the course is meaningless if this goal is not shared by other participants, especially the learners, who are involved in the course. By applying the language management bottom-up approach, the treatment of language problems opted to be taken for the development of the course is, besides making policies and enforcing policies in order to achieve the goal set up by the decision makers, how to ensure learners (and other agents involved) to make sense of the goal and how to enable learners to build up ability in order to achieve the goal by themselves accordingly.

Do the learners all think that not being able to interact with the Japanese through the target language is a problem? Previous work on migrant studies and intercultural communication indicate that foreigners do not necessarily possess skills for building up social networks with the local residents and avoidance of communication is noticeable (Clyne 1991; Maher and Yashiro 1991; Kagami 2004). Findings in the joint research projects about the Japanese learners studying at KUIS conducted by *Bekka* also support the view that it is difficult for learners of Japanese to participate in contact situations without support by the environment (Fan *et al.* 2003, 2005). To demonstrate how language problems may arise in different stages for interaction at the discourse level, I shall analyze an excerpt of conversation recorded in a visitor session held in 2006 when an IES student (M) was invited to participate in a group discussion with Japanese undergraduate students. The visitor session was organized for the promotion of intercultural communication. All participants were advised to talk freely on any topic and in any language they like for about 20 minutes.

Example:

- 1 J: 「っえ、何か帰る時に、お土産——……かうじゃないですか。何か、決めました？ 何買うか。」
2 M: 「アメリカから？」

- 3 J: 「あ、日本から」
4 M: 「日本から——」
「Ah ——、key holder とか……fan、せんす？ とか……色々買いました。ふふふ」
5 J: 「もう既に、買ったんですか？」
6 M: 「……あ——……mask？」
7 J: 「どんな顔のを買ったんですか？」
8 M: 「あ——、ちょっと恐い(笑)」
9 J: 「え、ということは、もう買ったんですよね？ もう。」
10 M: 「ア——……？ うん？」
11 J: 「英語でも大丈夫ですよ」
12 M: 「I have a……(聞き取れない) lots of clothing, um……lots of interesting things I see. 例えば——、100 円で——、面白いもの——」
13 J: 「あ——！」
14 M: 「う——、ウフフ」

English translation:

- 1 J: well, when you go back home, you will buy some souvenirs, won't you? What, have you decided what to buy?
2 M: from America?
3 J: from Japan.
4 M: from Japan? Ah, something like key holder, or fan, "*sensu*" in Japanese? I bought many different things, uhm.
5 J: you mean you have already bought?
6 M: ... ah... mask?
7 J: what kind of faces did you buy?
8 M: oh, it is a bit scary (laugh)
9 J: oh, so you mean you have already bought them, is it correct? Already.
10 M: ahah, ...? What?
11 J: you can say in English.
12 M: I have a... (unclear utterance), lots of clothing, um lots of

interesting things I see. For example, 100 yen, interesting things

13 J: aa!

14 M: uh, uhm um.

As we can find from the content of the conversation, the Japanese learner M would have faced much less, or even no language problems if the conversation were conducted in English. Moreover, M would have been more satisfied with her Japanese did she not participate in such interaction as she did acquire a certain proficiency in Japanese for expression (e.g. Turn 4: *sensu toka iroiro kaimashita*) and comprehension (e.g. Turn 11: *eigo demo daijobu desu yo*) in less than 2 months after she started her Japanese study in the program.

In the follow-up interview, both the foreign student M and her Japanese counterparts expressed that they enjoyed the visitor session very much although they were aware of expression and comprehension difficulties. How can we then measure the language problems involved in situations like this and thus to find out solution for their removal? Let me here explain how M's language problems can be analyzed by using the language management framework.

4-1. Micro-inquiry

Inquiry is a procedure for the identification of language problems. It is consisted of the first 3 stages of the language management process, which is "deviation from norm", "noting of deviation" and "evaluation of deviation".

As emphasized in the language management framework, language problems cannot be taken for granted (i.e. not necessarily those understood by the policy makers) and they will only arise if the user "believes" that it is a problem. As it was confirmed in the follow-up interviews, both of the foreign and the Japanese participants did not face as many problems which surfaced in the discourse. For instance,

- a. Deviation from norm: both M and the Japanese students appeared to share the same norm that Japanese should be used in the situation. M's incompetence in Japanese was expected and conversational rapport is significant (Spencer-Oatey 2000). For this reason, active participation, though with misuses of Japanese, is appreciated and avoidance will likely to be regarded as a deviation.
- b. Noting of deviation: Unlike those in language drills or exercises, not all the deviations such as unclear pronunciation and grammatical errors in discourse with a real interaction goal will be noted. Apparently M was not aware of her misuse of the past tense in Turn 4 (*kaimashita*). Unnoted deviations normally will not become a problem for the user.
- c. Evaluation of deviation: It is easy to understand that errors are dispreferred when the language system is emphasized. However, deviations in discourse do not automatically receive a negative evaluation. Findings in previous studies suggest that, for instance, Japanese learners with a foreign accent can be considered as "*kawaii*" (cute) and their unexpectedly fluency in Japanese will easily become the target of compliments (Fairbrother 2000).

4-2. Micro-design

When a deviation is noted and negatively evaluated by the user, an action may be taken. At this planning stage, users typically look for resources and strategies in order to "do something about it". When we look at the conversation example again, we can find that in Turn 4 after M uttered "fan", she recalled the Japanese term "*sensu*" which she learnt and decided to rephrase "fan" with "*sensu*".

4-3. Micro-implementation

It is important to note that nothing can be done in cases if the user is not capable to implement his / her plans or if he / she abandons the plans at all. The rising intonation of "*sensu*" indicates that M was

not confident about this resource but the implementation of her plan using the strategy of rephrasing appeared to be successful.

Through the discussion of the discourse data above, we can see clearly that although M is far from a competent user of Japanese, her study in the Japanese in Context course did enable her to establish an interaction with local Japanese students basically using the Japanese language and this adds to her experience that her Japanese “worked”. As for the course developer, we can say that a fuller participation of language learners can be expected if they are provided with 1) the opportunity to interact, and 2) the ability for managing language problems which are likely to occur in various stages during interaction.

5. Procedures for the management of problems at the organization level

With the addition of the viewpoint provided by the language management framework, the development of the Japanese in Context course does not stop at the point when policies are made. In this section, I shall introduce how problems at the organization level are treated with the bottom-up approach.

5-1. Macro-inquiry

Departing from the basic idea that problems are not necessarily presumable and they may vary depending on uncontrollable factors such as unstable number of students admitted in the program and periodical change of staff, *Bekka* pays substantial consideration to the current participants directly involved in the course. These participants include the students enrolled in the course, the instructors, the client administration (IES Tokyo Center, IES Chicago headquarter, students' home university) and the host university (KUIS). Let me here introduce some main procedures taken by *Bekka* in order to identify problems needed to be treated for the development of the Japanese in

Context course.

5-1-1. Deviation from norm

Since the Japanese in Context course is offered and run by a Japanese university for students mainly coming from the United States of America, at least two norms are applicable: the Japanese norms and the American norms. For example, which norm should be used in regard to the following aspects of the course?

Academic calendar: Because of the different educational system, the academic year in Japan starts in April and ends in March but that in the US starts in September and ends in August. Semester-wise, classes in the two countries are held in cycles with a one-month gap. Although this situation is known to all participants, students who join the IES program insist to return home before Christmas although classes should be going on until mid-January in order to make up enough contact hours for the course. How can this be done?

Timetabling: The length of a class period (referred to as *koma*) in Japanese universities is 90 minutes. The first period at KUIS starts at 9:20 in the morning and the last period finishes at 6:20 in the evening. In order to make credit transfer possible, however, the total number of contact hours has to be adjusted, e.g. a 2 credit course for a class meeting of two and a half hours weekly. How can classrooms be allocated and students made available?

Level of classes: Since the majority of Japanese learners studying in Japan are of Chinese character background and they aim for the entrance of a Japanese university, the standard of courses bearing the name such as elementary, intermediate and advanced can be very different from that appears in Japanese programs offered overseas. What should be done if a student who is enrolled in the IES program has officially completed the elementary level in his / her home university but is tested out to be insufficient to get into the intermediate level?

Assessment methods: Items for assessment, strictness and leni-

ency regarding to the marking of tests and assignments, the use of grading system (e.g. "A" means 80% and above in most Japanese universities) can vary a lot in Japan and in the US.

Others: It is obvious that concepts such as the correct amount of homework, manners in class, non-verbal behavior are also based on different norms. How should the students and the instructors be advised?

The procedure for the identification of problems commences with research about what is happening on the spot. Efforts have been constantly made to establish communication networks with participants (agents) in order to secure up-to-date information.

Communication network with *Bekka* staff: A weekly general meeting is held with the participation of the director and all teaching staff in the *Bekka* program during the semester for updating information about all academic matters, including the situation about the Japanese in Context course.

Communication network with instructors teaching the Japanese in Context course: In order to avoid complication of information flow, one instructor, rather than multiple instructors, is appointed as the home teacher responsible for each level in the Japanese in Context course (4 class meetings weekly). Furthermore, one of the instructors is designated as the course coordinator, who will be responsible for making contact with other instructors, other *Bekka* staff and the IES staff. Other than regular updates through emails and individual contacts, three formal meetings with instructors teaching the Japanese in Context course are held during a semester.

Communication network with IES Tokyo Center staff: IES staff is invited to attend all course meetings, and occasionally academic conferences⁵⁾. Daily information exchange is done through the course coordinator and one staff member at the KUIS administration. Directors of *Bekka* and IES Tokyo Center also meet regularly for

information exchange.

Communication network with students: Students are advised to talk to their class teacher, the IES Japanese program coordinator, or the *Bekka* director freely after class or during office hours.

5-1-2. Noting of deviations

As mentioned previously, some deviations are noted while some are not. For instance, avoidance of interaction with local Japanese may not be obvious among students in the program if they possess a social network with native speakers of English in Japan (e.g. in the office of the IES Tokyo Center, or in the dormitory). Students who are enthusiastic in establishing new social networks with local Japanese may also be ignorant about the existence of various deviations because of their use of American norms in the Japanese context. How to ensure that participants involved in the Japanese in Context course are aware of hidden deviations? The actions below are taken in order to raise awareness about deviations which is considered to be important in the Japanese in Context course.

Program guidance: Detailed program guidance is held during the orientation week to introduce features of the host university (KUIS), the *Bekka* department and the IES Japanese program. Important announcements including details of different policies, and systems are also made.

Course guidance: Separate course guidance is also held during the orientation week. The aim of this guidance is to explain to students about the basic ideas and structures of the Japanese in Context course. By going through the syllabus of the course in each level, students are provided information about what to expect through their study in Japan.

Learning strategy workshop: According to a survey conducted by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) within the U.S. Department of State, Japanese has been reported as one of the most difficult lan-

guages for Americans to learn.⁶⁾ Since many students who joined the IES program have no Japanese study background and some have not studied any foreign languages before, a workshop on how to study Japanese is conducted during the orientation period in order to help the students to get more oriented for learning the language.

Placement test: Apart from the practical purpose of placing students in the appropriate level, the placement test administered during the orientation period functions also as an indicator for students to re-evaluate their ability in Japanese outside their home institution.

Visitor session: By conducting visitor sessions and other performance activities with the participation of Japanese native speakers other than the instructors in the course can help students to be more conscious and sensitive about deviations existing in the course of interaction when using Japanese as the media.

5-1-3. Evaluation of deviations

In spite of the large amount of deviations noted by the participants involved in the Japanese in Context course, it should be correct to say that not all the deviations will receive a reaction, emotionally and / or substantially. For instance, for some students who have never been studying abroad, studying with a tutor after class is a totally new experience (a noted deviation). It may be appreciated (positive evaluation), or annoyed (negative evaluation), or just left as it is (no evaluation). Similarly, a student taking the course may ask questions such as why participating in performance activities with native Japanese visitors; why not studying Japanese with the traditional grammar-based syllabus; why learning Japanese without a media language etc. In this sense, being the course developer, *Bekka* is given the task not only to investigate possible deviations but also to check if everything is going on smoothly and to reveal possible "problem" (i.e. negative evaluation) before it is too late.

Second guidance: In view of the fact that the Japanese in Context

course is not taught in the traditional grammar based method, an attempt is made in the past few semesters to run a second guidance after the start of the classes. The purpose of this guidance is to confirm with the students with the goal of the course and to collect feedback from them after they have attended a few classes.

Mid-term meeting (*chukan kaigi*): A mid-term meeting is held after 2 months with all the teaching and administration staff related to the Japanese in Context course. Discussion is based on the reports each student's performance prepared by the class teachers. Students of poor academic performance will be identified and remedies such as consultation with the director, after class tutoring with volunteers will be arranged.

Course evaluation: A questionnaire about the Japanese in Context course is administered at the end of the semester in order to get feedback and suggestions from students.

Review meetings (*hansei kaigi*): A review meeting with the participation of all the related members is held after the course in the semester has completed. This is to collect feedback from the teaching staff in order to make further improvements.

5-2. Macro-design

Noted deviations, in spite of whether negatively or positively evaluated, will evoke plans of adjustment if they are considered to be significant for the development of the Japanese in Context course. At this stage, it is important for *Bekka* to get hold of possible resources and strategies and try to work out a realistic plan which can be implemented. In addition, other than planning for what should be done with individual issues, a macro-design including long-term and short-term plans, primary and secondary plans is crucial in order to maintain stability of the course. Let me here introduce some attempts which are in progress.

5-2-1. How to deal with negatively evaluated deviations

In the language management framework, deviations which are noted and negatively evaluated are regarded as inadequacies. Although inadequacies are basically unfavorable and easily become the objectives for removal, priorities are given according to urgency and the availability of resources. For example,

Regard as a problem which has to be solved immediately: e.g. students with poor academic performance due to uncontrollable factors, change of level, promotion to an upper level for students staying for a second semester, transfer of credits etc.

Regard as a problem which can be solved through negotiation at a later stage: e.g. academic calendar, timetabling, change of textbooks and references, use of classrooms and other facilities etc.

Regard as a problem which should be solved with the help of other participants: e.g. recruitment of students, design for the prerequisites of the course, budgets etc.

5-2-2. How to deal with positively evaluated deviations

Regard as a prerequisite of the course which should be followed: As indicated clearly on the course description, the knowledge of reading and writing hiragana / katakana is considered important for required for all students enrolled in the program, including those who will be entering the elementary level. Although students are prepared to learn as much as they can prior to the start of classes, many of them are far less competent. How can *Bekka* promote teaching and learning of kana which is outside the budget for running the regular course?

Regard as a feature of the course which should be urged: Although most of the students are not confident in using Japanese for communication, they are interested in making friends with local Japanese and participating in events organized by the university and the neighborhood. In order to teach Japanese interaction, how to in-

tegrate those elements into the course becomes importance for its development.

5-3. Macro-implementation

Needless to say, not all plans can be implemented. Factors such as readiness of the agents and resources, and the constantly changing environment are crucial for the implementation of plans. As for the development of the Japanese in Context course, some adjustments have been made as planned, some are made partly as planned, some are avoided and again some are made without initial plans. Here are some examples.

5-3-1. Implementation of adjustments as planned

Performance activities: In a recent joint research project (KUIS *Ryugakusei Bekka* 2007), *Bekka* has demonstrated how Japanese classes can be designed and conducted on the basis of the theoretical framework on teaching Japanese interaction through activities (cf. Neustupný 1995a). In order to accelerate learning cycles through activities, *Bekka* is determined to support the administration of various performance activities although they require extra budget and the participation of native speakers other than the instructor in class. So far, performance activities such as interview sessions, speech contests, debates, visits to local primary schools and community centers have been made possible.

Weekend interaction assignments: In addition to regular exercises based on drills and memorization, students are encouraged to interact with local Japanese (e.g. their host family and friends) through completing surveys by making use of the weekend.

Meeting for class placement (*hantei kaigi*): As mentioned in Section 2.4, students are required to sit for the placement test held before the semester starts. For students who want to change level, they may sit for a second test held in the second week. In either case,

Bekka has a strict policy for class placement and a meeting for class placement following each test is held with the presence and consent of all members related to the course.

Meeting for confirmation of grades (*seiseki kaigi*): Class teacher in each level will need to submit the final marks in percentage to the coordinator according to the assessment methods noted on the syllabus in completion of the semester. A meeting for the confirmation of grades is held with the participation of all *Bekka* instructors and administration staff before they are sent to the IES Tokyo Center.

5-3-2. Implementation of adjustments partly as planned

Kana class: Due to the immediate need among students in each semester, a kana class run for three 1-hour sessions during the orientation week is organized by the course coordinator with the help of voluntary postgraduate and undergraduate Japanese students. Timing, length, and content to be included in this special class are not fixed because of the unstable number of students and helpers in each semester.

Use of teaching assistants: Teaching assistants sent through the postgraduate school are arranged to help in the Japanese in Context course (e.g. acting as a conversation partner in class, or visitor in performance activities). According to the number and background of the teaching assistants, type and amount of work are made flexible.

Use of local voluntary visitors: Other than students in the campus, businessmen or housewives living in the neighborhood are sometimes invited to participate in performance activities through a non-profit organization run by the local government. Since the system of cooperation is yet to be strengthened, the way of participation among these volunteers is adjusted every time depending on the situation.

5-3-3. Avoidance of adjustment plans

As a matter of fact, some of the plans made for the adjustment of negatively evaluated deviations cannot be implemented. For instance, instructors of the Japanese in Context course have been concerned about students who have to leave the class early or to be absent for the whole class due to field placements for which students are required to attend in the first and second week of the semester. Another case is when students have to change their enrolment of program from the "Japanese Society and Culture Program" to the "Japanese Language Intensive Program" and vice versa. Although *Bekka* is prepared to cope with these situations, a concrete solution is yet to be made.

5-3-4. Unplanned adjustments

Due to the nature of Japanese in Context being a course administered by *Bekka* for students sent through another organization (i.e. the IES Center in Chicago), many unexpected problems are inevitable. For example, although the course is designed for students with up to 3 years of college level Japanese language studies, students who have studied for more than 10 semesters and occasionally students with Japanese parents or other special background have been admitted in the program before. For all cases, *Bekka* has to work for a special plan in order to accommodate the students.

As explained in Section 3, 4, and 5 above, problems confronted by *Bekka* for the development of the Japanese in Context course are also approached by placing the starting line on deviation of norms regarding to actual language behavior. This bottom-up treatment enables *Bekka* to get a fuller realistic picture of problems so as to establish a more realistic and stable environment for all the agents who are participating in the course.

Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have demonstrated how problems are treated in the case for the development a Japanese course which aims for teaching interaction. By applying the top-down approach provided by the language planning framework and the bottom-up approach provided by the language management framework, treatment of problem is necessarily put in a cycle and this means the development will not stop as long as the course is going on.

How should the Japanese in Context course be positioned among other courses within the *Bekka* program? How to define the directions for policy making? Is it possible to work out a model for the management of problems in each stage when processing deviations? A super framework seems to be essential in order to support the ongoing system theoretically. Along with course development, *Bekka* has devoted extra effort to secure funding for study workshops and joint research projects. Although conclusions have yet to be made, these workshops and projects have certainly brought together both the teaching and administration staff ready for further personal and institutional development.

Notes

- 1) Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) is a not-for-profit organization based in Chicago providing students opportunities to study abroad. It was founded in 1950 and now has more than 80 programs in 31 cities in the world.
- 2) Cf. Discussions in academic journals such as "Current issues in Language Planning" (Kaplan *et al.* ed.) and "Language Problems and Language Planning" (Dasgupta *et al.* ed.).
- 3) The following website shows a bibliography of research using the language management framework: <http://www.hmuraoka.com/slm/LMpapers.html>
- 4) A recent discussion on language management at the organization level can be found in Nekvapil (2008).
- 5) Previous directors of the IES Abroad Tokyo Center have been invited

as guest speakers for TJFL workshops organized by KUIS. They have also contributed academic papers (e.g. Hirose 2006).

- 6) FSI is the federal government's training institute for American diplomats. Languages offered in the training program are categorized into four groups, from Category 1 (easiest to learn) to Category 4 (most difficult to learn). Japanese is a Category 4. Another 3 languages in the same category are Arabic, Chinese, and Korean.

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