

THE LANGUAGE TEACHER'S ROLE IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET^{*}

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Abstract

The Internet can have a strong influence on students learning the Japanese language in Slovenia, as well as in other parts of Europe. Almost all freshmen have come into contact with Japanese pop culture via the Internet. The aim of this paper is to discuss the teacher's role in overcoming certain problems associated with learning the Japanese language in the age of the Internet. First, looking at a general survey of the current situation surrounding teaching Japanese language in Slovenia, we identify the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet when learning the language. However, the disadvantages of the Internet that lead to learner problems are, in fact, the problems that we also face in daily communication. So, as a teacher, I propose following three strategies to lead the learner: first, let the learner's interests stimulate him to explore a wider and deeper world; second, lead the learner to reconstruct his world; and third, lead the learner to self expression so that he can be understood by the listener and improve his communication skills. Such are teacher's strategies for interactive communication based on individual standpoint versus a world view, which has emerged in teaching Japanese language when the learner seeks language skills not solely for practical purposes as in Slovenia. Considering this, I additionally propose for Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) ideology that those strategies aim to achieve "an expertise of the relationship with the Other" (Zarate, Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier, & Penz, 2004, p. 11).

Keywords

The Internet, language teaching, teacher's role, socio-cultural proficiency, CEFR

Izveleček

Medmrežje ima lahko močan vpliv na študente, ki se učijo japonskega jezika v Sloveniji kot tudi v drugih evropskih državah. Zadnje čase se vpišejo skoraj vsi novi študentje na univerzo, že oboroženi z znanjem japonske pop kulture, pridobljenim skozi medmrežja. Cilj pričujočega prispevka je, da proučimo učiteljevo vlogo pri premagovanju težave, ki jih povzroča obdobje medmrežja študentom japonskega jezika. Najprej si ogledamo rezultate splošnega vprašalnika o sedanjem položaju učenja japonskega jezika v Sloveniji in identificiramo prednosti in slabosti uporabe medmrežja pri učenju jezika. Slabosti medmrežja, ki povzročajo težave učencem, so pravzaprav težave, s katerimi se soočimo tudi mi v vsakodnevni komunikaciji. Zato kot učitelj

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predlagam strategijo naslednjih treh postopkov, s katerimi lažje in bolj spretno vodimo učence: prvič, pustimo prostor za učenčevu zanimanje, ki ga lahko spodbuja k raziskovanju širšega in globljega sveta okoli sebe; drugič, naj učenec skuša rekonstruirati svoj svet; in tretjič, pustimo učenca k samoizražanju in pri tem mu pomagajmo, da pravilno razvije svoje komunikacijske spretnosti, da se ga razume. Takšna je učiteljeva vloga za medsebojno sporazumevanje na osnovi posameznega stališča in pogleda na svet. Takšno razmišljanje je aktualno tudi v pedagogiki japonskega jezika, ko učenec išče jezikovne spretnosti ne le za praktične namene. Dodatno predlagam, da bodimo pozorni na ideologijo Skupnega evropskega okvirja referenc (CEFR), ki z omenjeno strategijo skuša doseči 'ekspertizo o odnosih z Drugim' (Zarate et al., 2004, str. 11).

Ključne besede

Internet, poučevanje jezika, vloga učitelja, družbeno-kulturna usposobljenost, CEFR

1. Introduction

In Slovenia, just as in the other parts of the world, many languages are spoken in daily life and taught at school. Looking at the current condition of teaching Japanese as a foreign language in Slovenia, the course of Japanese studies – Japanese language is taught as the main subject – is one of the most popular courses at the University of Ljubljana. Since 1995, when the course was founded, more than 200 students have graduated and, at present, approximately 200 students are enrolled in the course. Who might have enough interest in Japanese culture and language to enter the course? In the last several years almost all such freshmen already have some familiarity with, and enjoy, Japanese pop culture, such as anime (cartoon films), manga, and J-pop songs, all of which are available via the Internet. On the other hand, experiences of the students enrolled in the course of Japanese studies are mostly made in a virtual world, for example, artificial situations for exercises in the classroom, homepages and blogs on the Internet, as Japanese language is rarely spoken in Slovene daily life and only a small number of graduates get jobs related to Japan. The question arises, therefore, what the present aim of Japanese language teaching in higher educational institutions in Slovenia is, considering that CEFR (2001) stresses the importance of communicative proficiency.

In this paper I focus on the problems of teaching Japanese in Slovenia and on possible solutions, which could be shared with other educational institutions in other countries where Japanese language is not typically spoken as a foreign language. First, in chapter 2, I present a general survey of the Slovene situation, focusing mostly on the course of Japanese studies at the University of Ljubljana. After that, I address advantages and disadvantages that we face and clarify the problems in chapter 3. Then, in chapter 4, I propose three strategies for the teacher to solve these problems. It is not to let language learners pacify themselves with the situation of “virtual” life, but to lead them to a wider, deeper, and more substantial world where they can think for themselves and interact with each other. Finally, in chapter 5, I conclude with the proposition of redefining the role of language learning in Europe. How can learners

benefit from Japanese instruction even if they do not use the language later in their daily life? This is my proposal for CEFR, from the classroom of a minor and therefore “powerless” foreign language in Europe.

2. The Slovene environment surrounding Japanese language teaching

Slovenia is a small country located on “the sunny side of the Alps” in central Europe with a population of approximately two million people, 96% of them Slovene (Eurostat, European Commission, 2010). The official language is Slovene. English, German and other languages are studied as foreign languages in elementary and secondary school. A tourist can communicate in those languages in Ljubljana, the capital city, or several big cities in Slovenia without any problem. Moreover, because Slovenia is surrounded by Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia, those languages – Italian, German, Hungarian and Croatian – are familiar to residents near the border, and words and expressions are loaned from these languages in daily conversation. People over 40 years old learned the Serbo-Croatian language during compulsory education. We can say that the Slovene people are efficiently accustomed to using foreign languages.

Due to the geographic distance between Slovenia and Japan, Japanese is not a commonly spoken foreign language for Slovene people. They do not generally hear Japanese spoken on the street, nor hear it on the television. There are now more than 100 Japanese residents in Slovenia, with numbers rising after the Japanese embassy was established in 2006. However, ordinary Slovene people do not have much contact with Japanese people. While two Japanese restaurants are thriving in the fashion of worldwide healthy foods, only a few companies have business trade with Japan. We can say that Slovenia has neither a strong relationship with Japan nor a vivid image of it. I firmly believe that the environment of Japanese language teaching in Slovenia has not adopted the idea that language is a “communicative event” (for example, de Beaugrande, 1996, Hopper, 1998, and so forth), which is the current linguistic main stream in the age of post-structuralism after the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.

3. The learner's access to Japan and related problems

The course of Japanese studies started in 1995 at the University of Ljubljana; its predecessor of more than 10 years was the biannual intensive course of Japanese language organized by the Slovenian Oriental Society (“Slovensko orientalistično društvo”) (Shigemori Bučar & Bekeš, 2005). By 2011 more than 200 students have graduated, and are either in the graduate course of Japanese studies, or working in Slovenia or Japan, translating Japanese literature and so on. Some of them successfully got jobs teaching the Japanese language, in newly established courses in private

language schools. Let us now briefly examine the environment surrounding Japanese learners in Slovenia in order to point out features and problems.

3.1 Growing individual access to Japan by Internet

Europeans' interests in Japan and Japanese culture have changed over time, and so has the paradigm of Japanese language learning (Sasaki 2010). In the 1980s, Japanese culture attracted only a small fraction of the population. If they talked about Japan, it might have been about sports such as jūdō and karate, orientalism such as ikebana and bushidō, or geisha, which most people viewed “from the opposite bank” but with no real personal experience. It was little more than “something different.”

After that, in the 1990s, with Japan's economic growth, Japanese pop culture started generating more interest worldwide. Animated films, movies by the filmmaker Kitano Takeshi and the literature of Murakami Haruki were launched on the international stage and became popular among ordinary people.¹ Successful Japanese companies established branches in chief cities in Europe and throughout the world and Japanese tourists thronged abroad. This is a drastic change in support of the point that Japanese culture has become more familiar to the general public of Slovenia. Japan is no longer interesting only for a small group of people, but for us “on the same bank.” In this decade Japan has become widely known in the world and the number of Japanese language learners has risen rapidly. The establishment of the course of Japanese studies at the University of Ljubljana was also a part of this age.

One more dramatic change for the reception of Japanese culture abroad happened due to the rapid spread of the Internet into standard homes (Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2010). The Internet delivers various fields of information: in addition to Japanese traditional culture, sports, popular literature and films, there are the Japanese subcultures of J-pop songs, anime and manga, which are now available through mass production and accessible on the Internet. The questionnaire that I carried out on the freshmen in the autumn of 2005 and 2010 showed that almost all of the respondents had experienced Japanese subculture via the Internet before entering the university.

¹ For instance, modern literature works by Murakami Haruki began to be translated into European languages in 1990s. These are the first translations published in each of the following languages: English in 1985 (Pinball, 1973, Kōdansha), French in 1990 (La Course au Mouton Sauvage, Seuil), Italian in 1992 (Sotto il segno della pecora, La Gaja scienza), Spanish in 1992 (La caza del carnero salvaje, Anagrama) and German in 1997 (Wilde Schafsjagd, Suhrkamp). The first Slovene translations were published in 2004: “Divja jaga za ovco” (Založba Blodnjak) and “Ljubi moj sputnik” (Založba Mladinska knjiga), both translated from the English version. The first direct translation from Japanese was first published in 2005: “Norveški gozd” (Založba Sanje), translated by Nika Cejan, a graduate of the course of Japanese studies at the University of Ljubljana. In the field of modern films, Kitano Takeshi received “the Golden Lion” at the Venice Film Festival for “Hana-bi” in 1997.

3.2 Advantages of the Internet for Japanese learners

For Japanese language learners, Internet exposure brings with it its pros and cons. In this section we will look at two advantages the Internet brings to Japanese learners in Slovenia.

First I must point out that the Internet has removed barriers that previously blocked a person's access to information. Thanks to the Internet, information is now equally available to anyone with Internet access. Thus, the traditionally spatial, temporal and financial barriers have been removed.

There are a few libraries in Europe that are proud of the quality of their book collections on Japanese studies. They are based on well-organised library plans for synchronic and diachronic views and, of course, they depend on enough finance to fulfill the plans. However, just because there are good libraries, this does not mean that one can freely get one's target document. Even if a person knows that the document is in the library, several problems still lie in front of him: geographic distance between him and the library, and time and money required to reach there. For instance, not every European scholar who is researching the history of Japanese teaching in 18th century Russia can go to St. Petersburg to search through the rich abundance of documents. Only a few lucky scholars can go to St. Petersburg and devote themselves to research at the library with such a rich collection. However, the availability of Internet access has brought St. Petersburg closer to the researcher. Now, one can freely access the desired document as long as the document is digitalized and made available over the Internet and the researcher knows how to use the Internet or at least find the information, where the document can be found. The time and money required to get from Slovenia to St. Petersburg no longer poses an obstacle. In the world of Internet, there are significantly less conventional limitations for the person who is eager to obtain information.²

The second advantage of the Internet is that we can access to a great amount of information in the digital world, from government papers, to private blogs or twitter, to other media such as texts or movies. One can download a digital book of Japanese classical literature at home. An enormous amount of information is ready to be accessed on the Internet.

Considering the advantages of the Internet, we can fairly say that knowledge is equally available to everyone who wishes to know. Japanese language learners are no exception. On this point, we are one step closer to opinions such as of Mey (1993/1996)³ that "education is for the rich", using Brecht's words.

² The barrier free information that I mention above is for the person who actively pursues this knowledge. The untouchable enclosure on the Internet, of course, exists, as people have information that they do not want to disclose.

³ The citation is from the Japanese edition (Mey, 1996, p. 313).

3.3 Disadvantages of the Internet for Japanese language learning

The advantages of the Internet, as discussed above, could, however, simultaneously lead to disadvantages for the Japanese learner.

First, the Internet allows every person to access to a great amount of information online, but it also poses the hazard that a learner might be drowned in the vast ocean of information. The flow of the information via the Internet often causes a person to get lost in front of the screen or be at a loss when deciding how reliable different documents are. On the other hand, library users can feel confident that the research material has been manually selected and is worth consulting. There are no such selection processes, nor quality control sensors on the Internet. As a result, it is often difficult to distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones, and the qualified one from the unqualified one. It is difficult to judge what is suitable, especially in a foreign language, where one is not a proficient speaker. Why? Because it is difficult for a language learner to understand written texts, especially when he does not have enough social and cultural background in the target language to support his understanding of the content. For example, a learner can understand the sentence, “It was pointed out to me that I had slippers for the toilet and I was laughed at by my friends,” but cannot understand why the person was laughed at if he does not know Japanese people have a custom of changing their slippers when they go to the toilet at home. This understanding is something more than linguistic comprehension. Haruhara mentions that language proficiency is embedded organically in socio-cultural proficiency (Haruhara, 2009, p. 17)⁴. His mention can be acknowledged when considering the relationship between language and socio-culture. So, it is necessary for a learner to cultivate socio-cultural proficiency, as well as language proficiency. Here we can address the language teacher’s first role: to cultivate both linguistic and socio-cultural proficiency, which helps the learner to correctly understand the speaker’s intention of the sentences and also evaluate the appropriateness of information when selecting from an ocean of information.

The second disadvantage of the Internet is that everything is done by the user’s click. In chapter 3.2 we considered the advantage of the Internet as a means of access to the information on demand, however, it is to the user’s disadvantage that he may never come across information that is of no interest to him. He can see what he wants; but he does not see what he does not want. And he might be completely satisfied with what he finds. The matter is different in the library. A library user is very likely to pick up a book that he has not looked for, and so the book exists substantially even if he is not consciously aware of it. Thus, a role of the teacher is to inform the learner of the

⁴ I will discuss in another paper about the differences between ‘language proficiency and socio-cultural proficiency’ (Haruhara, 2009) and ‘plurilingualism as a competence and plurilingualism as a value’ (Beacco & Byram, 2003), considering the arguments of ‘Nihon jijō’ and ‘cultural literacies’ in the Japanese language learning.

amount of information behind him and, therefore, stimulate his curiosity in the right direction.

The third disadvantage of the Internet is that the amount of extra-linguistic information needed to help communication is extremely limited. One advantage of the Internet is that everyone can retrieve information anytime and from anywhere, but it also means that the receiver of the information does not necessarily share the same time and place as the sender of the information. In everyday communication, we usually share the same location and time zone, even in the case of talking over the telephone we share the time. To understand the speaker, we rely heavily on that what is not easily written down: linguistic intonation, pause, speed or visual information, such as the speaker's⁵ gestures, expressions on his face, and eye movements. After considering the sum of these linguistic and extra-linguistic cues, we understand the speaker's intention and judge his veracity and what he feels. On the other hand, those elements that are difficult to write down are left out on the Internet, so one has to infer a writer's intention only from what is written, sometimes with the help of emoticons and the layout of the page. So there is a higher risk of misunderstanding. The writer takes a gamble, as well. He does not know whether the reader understands his intention of the sentence correctly or not, because of the dyschronism of the Internet. Because of this same reason, the writer might forget whom he is sending the message to when he writes, failing to effectively communicate through one-way utterances. As we have seen above, communication on the Internet is not two-way interaction as in "usual" conversation.

In summary, the three disadvantages of the Internet are: too much information; targeted information retrieval without serendipitous encounters; and the dyschronism of the writer and the reader. We find these problems with the Internet, yet we find that they are problems that are not entirely specific to the Internet. They also appear in a slightly different form in daily conversation when we get lost in an ocean of too much information and fail with one-way expression, which can easily lead to misunderstanding. We might say that the above disadvantages of the Internet are reflections of the problems we have in daily conversation.

4. Three strategies to lead a learner towards successful communication

Although it is true that the Internet which most of the university students are using everyday is not the best tool for teaching Japanese language, it is worth discussing the disadvantages of the Internet, including the problems of communication that I pointed out above. It is because usual communication shares these problems and teaching the Japanese language must provide for not only linguistic proficiency but also socio-

⁵ A writer or speaker is the one who sends information, while a reader or hearer receives that information. In the main text, I distinguish between those words depending on how the communication is carried out – if it is written or spoken.

cultural proficiency for interactive communication. In this section I propose three strategies with which a teacher should lead learners, so that the learners will be able to acquire both proficiencies to successfully communicate in daily life.

4.1 Widening and deepening the learners' background knowledge

As already discussed, a learner's active actions – clicks on the Internet – are promoted by his interests. These interests must hold his attention, if he is to be stimulated, and most importantly, in order to achieve a high level of linguistic competence to communicate effectively in Japanese, the learner needs a well-balanced and sufficiently comprehensive amount of knowledge about the society and culture in which the language is used. I consider here two paths through which his interests should be led in order to effectively construct such a world.

Examining these two directions of interest, let us review one example from the class of Modern Japanese Culture in the academic year 2010/11 at the University of Ljubljana. The participants, mostly university students in their third year in the course of Japanese studies, made a Web journal for the students in their second year⁶, so that the second-year students could review what they learned so far and could learn about a part of Japanese life that is not mentioned in their school textbooks. One of the participants, who had stayed in Japan for four weeks on a short visit program, reported in her article that the Japanese put their slippers on when they enter a house. This is true, but is this anything more than the information that can be found in any travel guide?

What can a teacher do for the students in the classroom? What we did together was to try and recall any related information, and to consider, what other information could help us to a better understanding, and think about how and where such information could be found. The first step was to visually interpret the theme by observation, for example, where in their house the Japanese take their shoes off; where they put them back on; where the border is between taking slippers off and putting shoes on; how the Japanese use their slippers in some other places and so on. The next step was to consider causal relationships within this topic by consideration, for example, why they take their shoes off at home; what they would do and think if someone did not take off their shoes upon entering the house; what the historical background is; whether there are other influences from Europe and so on. Here, I call the first method of observation the “horizontal” direction and the second one of consideration the “vertical” direction. Both directions of thinking are needed, because without them one would have “the frog in the well” scenario where the learner would be stimulated only by his own interests. Furthermore, both directions are important: observation without consideration does not lead the learner to understand. Without consideration of causal relations, the learner cannot understand and appreciate the significance of similar cases. Consideration

⁶ The journals are on the Web site: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kulturologija2010/sets/>.

without observation leads to impractical arguments. Though the example of the slippers was a tiny and simple one, I emphasize that the teacher can lead the learner to acquire wider and deeper extent of knowledge even with such a simple beginning.

4.2 Giving learners cues to reconstruct their world

Here is another example of a certain Japanese student, who had been to Slovenia several times. She once told the class about her disappointing experience at a Japanese restaurant in the center of Ljubljana because it was too expensive. She continued to complain that it was a tourist trap and she would never go there again. It is true that the restaurant is expensive. However, it is no excuse to stop thinking. Her unpleasant experience gave us an opportunity to examine the matter and its background once again. A complaint based on a person's conflict or misunderstanding often gives us to understanding the matter from a new standpoint if the misunderstanding is cleared.

In the case of the Japanese restaurant, the student seemed not to have enough information to judge why the price was so expensive. So our class first examined the price of Japanese dishes in various Japanese restaurants in Europe. Then we discussed economy and management; how strong the economic relationship is between Slovenia and Japan; importing the materials needed to create Japanese cuisine in Slovenia where there is no direct flight from Japan; and the location of the restaurant. We talked about the image of Japan in Slovenia too. They are all horizontal observations and vertical considerations of the world based on the price of Japanese food. After the discussion, we reached the conclusion that the Japanese restaurant in Ljubljana is really expensive, but it should be reasonable, considering the current situation surrounding to restaurant.

The discussion was not intended to force the Japanese student to consent to the idea that the restaurant was not expensive, but instead to give her and other students another perspective of the world. At first, her experience was only that she ate Japanese food in the restaurant and unexpectedly paid a lot. Through the classroom discussion, she and her classmates could effectively realize the circumstances surrounding the restaurant. What must be pointed out is that the participants in the class could relate to each other the circumstances they knew and successfully create another picture of the Japanese restaurant.

According to Sunakawa (2007), language learning has the following four aspects: 1. elevation of language ability; 2. expansion of the world inhabited; 3. ego formation as a subject; and, 4. reinforcement and elevation of literacy as practical reception ability (p. 150). I support his idea in principle, but what is more important, as I found in the case of the Japanese restaurant, is not only the expansion of the world inhabited, but also the "reconstruction" of it. The students already knew that there is no direct flight from Japan to Slovenia or were aware that the owner wants to attract a certain type of clientele to the restaurant, but until the discussion they had not considered those matters in relation to the price of the food. Only after they had found new correlations among those matters were their thoughts were perceived and new phase of their

conscious world emerged in front of them. A teacher never needs to show his new view, but needs instead to help a learner find a standpoint in which the learner can have his own new view of the world.

4.3 Making a substantial relationship with the world

We have hitherto considered two strategies in section 4.1. (the horizontal and vertical paths of observation and consideration) and 4.2. (reconstruction of the learner's conscious world). When a learner gets a newly reconstructed world that is based on a wider and deeper understanding, the third strategy of the teacher is to lead the learner to express his ideas and thoughts out loud. It can be said that a small but substantial contribution of the learner's perspective adds to this world too. The learner's idea does not exist for other people until it is expressed, just as the information on the Internet, which does not exist until he clicks on the desired links.

The learner has made a relationship with the world because the first two strategies were concluded only within the learner's mind. But it is not enough to make a relationship with the conscious world if the relationship is only one of two ways. There really is no relationship if it is only one-way. The ideas and thoughts of the speaker need to be understood when they are expressed, or at least a speaker has to try to be understood, in order to make a relationship with others. Talking to oneself is not communication, since communication is an interactive event. As Mey (2001) explained, "the reader is party to the textual discourse as much as is the author" (p. 793), therefore, there is no communication without a reader or listener who understands.

Here again is another example from the class of Modern Japanese Culture when the participating students made Web journals for second-year students and during this process learned to understand the role of the reader. Third-year students selected topics for the second-year students and then individually wrote articles in Japanese at home. However, it often went wrong. The most frequent failure of the writer, even Japanese students who participated in the project, was to write long lists resembling a catalogue on some topic. It must have been hard work for them to make such a long list in a foreign language, and this should be applauded. However, they needed to write in an article format for second-year students. Who can read such long lists?

What a second-year university student might be interested in is not a long list of information but what a friend sitting next to us does and thinks, and "a big frame that helps us interpret the purpose of other's acts or communication" (FitzGerald, 2002/2010, p. 26). As for slippers in the Japanese house, an interesting article is not an encyclopedic description (FitzGerald, 2002/2010, p. 26) that the Japanese take their shoes off and put their slippers on when they enter the house, but it is, for example, the individual episode of a student who forgot to change her slippers when she came out from the toilet. The first mistake a learner is inclined to make is to forget the listener

and express inorganic contents. A learner, as a writer or a speaker, should always be aware of the existence of the reader or listener.

The learner then has to be aware of his own role and how he might better understand the speaker. In daily conversation, where the speaker transfers ideas or thoughts to the listener, sharing the same place and the same time, we usually choose words, phrases and strategies, even contents while paying attention to the listener and his understanding. If the speaker assumes that the listener does not understand what he has said, the speaker would explain in a different way to help him understand. This reminds me again of Mey's statement, "the reader is party to the textual discourse as much as is the author" (Mey, 2001, p. 793). However, it is difficult for a speaker to be aware of the listener when they do not share the same place, and time. The language teacher needs to teach a learner to be conscious of the listener.

In the class of Modern Japanese Culture a few years ago, one project required students to prepare a presentation about Japan for a Slovene elementary school. I expected university students to find different ways of expression for a different audience. During the preparation phase, topics that might interest the pupils were decided on by common consent. However, some students could not prepare suitable expressions that could be understood by elementary school children who knew Japan only through anime cartoons. I am convinced that their failure did not stem from their lack of Japanese language skills, as they also prepared presentations in Slovene language, but whether they could identify and successfully communicate with their target audience. For example, they introduced the following geographic features of Japan: "the land of Japan is approximately 37,800 square kilometers and its population is 130 million." The pupils had no concept of such big numbers. After the main discussion, extra explanations were added, comparing Slovenia's size to that of Shikoku island. The university students showed pupils maps of both Slovenia and Shikoku island, and they reported that the population of Japan is 60 times larger than that of Slovenia, so that their young subjects could make direct correlations. This is one example where the third-year students tried to make themselves understood, and succeeded.

Learners sometimes forget who they are talking to, particularly when they have to express themselves in a foreign language, because they are preoccupied in trying to remember words and phrases and they forget how to express themselves effectively. It is not a rhetorical effort, but a strategy to make oneself correctly understood by the listener, as intended. Furthermore, the tendency for the speaker to forget the listener would be high when the listener does not sit in front of the speaker, such as in report writing or on the Internet. Where there is no listener, there is no interaction. Even when they do not share time and space, the listener exists. With that said, expression must be delivered so that the listener understands the speaker correctly and the speaker knows how to reach his audience.

5. Conclusion – A contribution to language learning

In this paper, we discussed what a teacher can do for a learner in the age when more than 95% of freshmen in Slovenia have Internet access. In chapter 3, we saw advantages and disadvantages of the Internet and I pointed out that they are not only features seen with Internet usage but also problems found in every day communication. I proposed in chapter 4, a language teacher's three strategies: 1. leading the learner's interests to a wider and deeper conscious world; 2. leading the learner to reconstruct his world; and 3. leading the learner to make substantial relationships with the world – for better interaction. Why should a language teacher follow these strategies? Because learning a foreign language gives us an opportunity to think about communication not only in the target language but also in any language universally.

One might think that teaching Japanese language in Europe, especially where the relationship to Japan is as remote as in Slovenia, could lead to an impractical theory. Furthermore, it could be problematic in an age when CEFR seems to set practical communicative proficiency as the main learning goal. This learning goal is sometimes mistakenly presented as the only learning goal of language education in any institution, including university courses of Japanese studies. However, I would like to disagree. Regardless of whether or not a learner will use Japanese after his graduation, the language learner should enlighten himself with regard to many important questions and their possible solutions. Especially when the language, like Japanese, is rarely spoken in the country. Perhaps this gives the learner less practical language proficiency, but a deeper understanding of the significance of communication and of the ways of communication which are for “an expertise of the relationship with the Other” (Zarate, Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier, & Penz, 2004, p. 11) is achieved. Such an understanding helps the learner live substantially in our modern world.

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