

Consul-General of Japan in Sydney's Newsletter

No. 31 Raising children using the Japanese language in Australia

18 December 2020

There are 103,638 Japanese nationals living in Australia. Among them, there are 44,712 long-term residents and 58,926 permanent residents (as of 1 October 2019, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan survey of Japanese nationals residing overseas). This is the third largest number of Japanese nationals living in any country outside Japan, after the United States (1st), which has 444,063 Japanese nationals, and China (2nd), which has 116,484 Japanese nationals.

Many of the children of these Japanese nationals attend a local Australian school Monday to Friday and attend a Japanese language community school (supplementary school) on the weekend. There are Japanese children whose parents are both Japanese and others who have one Japanese parent in an international marriage. In addition, there are children who have no plans to return to Japan, and as they progress in their education here in Australia, it becomes more difficult for them to continue to learn Japanese to the same level as their counterparts in Japan. Basically, even if both their parents are Japanese, children attending local Australian schools do not have many opportunities to use Japanese.

What role does Japanese language education have in the lives of these children who have no plans to return to Japan and what sort of Japanese language education should be offered to them?

In this issue of my newsletter, as I introduce some of the latest efforts regarding Japanese language education being made by this consulate, the Japan Foundation, Japanese language community schools and Japanese language education researchers, I invite you to consider with me what type of Japanese language education we should have for the benefit of these children and their futures.



Meeting of stakeholders engaged in Japanese language education for
Japanese nationals in NSW
(26 November 2020)

● Meeting of stakeholders engaged in Japanese language education for
Japanese nationals in NSW

In June last year, the “Law for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education” was enacted. Article 19 of the law states: “In order that Japanese language education is enhanced *for the children of Japanese nationals residing overseas and for the descendants of Japanese nationals who have migrated to foreign countries*, the Government shall *take necessary measures including the improvement of the system to support Japanese language education* for these children.”

The basic policy to realise the promotion of Japanese language education (contained in a Cabinet decision of the same month) outlined the reasoning. The policy included the following statement: “Japanese language education for children of Japanese nationals residing overseas is important as *preparation for*

the children to study and to work etc. when they return to Japan in the future. Furthermore, the descendants of Japanese who migrated overseas can be expected to play a role in expanding exchange between Japan and their country of residence and to create a group of people with positive feelings towards Japan, and in addition to this, they can be expected to be active as members of a global pool of talent with diverse language and cultural backgrounds. We will take the necessary measures to support Japanese language education for these people so that they recognise their own Japanese roots and deepen their understanding of Japan.” (Note: my italics)

With the enactment of last year’s law and basic policy, the Government of Japan has clarified its positive position regarding Japanese language education for the children of Japanese nationals living overseas, including those who are permanent residents of other countries. In addition, following up on this development, international online fora are also being conducted from October this year through to March next year.

This was the impetus for this consulate to hold a meeting of stakeholders engaged in Japanese language education in NSW on 26 November. Seventeen people participated including representatives from Japanese language community schools in NSW, the Sydney Japanese International School (SJIS), the Japan Foundation Sydney, Japanese language education researchers and this consulate. We discussed various issues facing Japanese language education on the ground and ways to address them.

Among the specific issues raised were the need for easy-to-use teaching materials (other than the Japanese Ministry of Education textbooks), securing the number and quality of teachers, the improvement of the management of Japanese language community schools and promoting the desire among students to study Japanese. To work towards solutions for these issues, we confirmed that, utilising the platform of this recent meeting, stakeholders would keep actively communicating with one another and continue our respective efforts. The next meeting is planned to be held in half a year’s time.



日本語を、
「正しい」日本語を話さなくても
怒られない

日本語を話すと褒められる

まずはポジティブなことば体験



Material from the “Raising Japanese language speakers: report from a study of Japanese learners as a heritage language in NSW” – a seminar jointly organised by the University of NSW and the Japan Foundation Sydney (24 October 2020)

● Seminar co-organised by the University of NSW and the Japan Foundation Sydney

Prior to this, the Japan Foundation Sydney, working in cooperation with the University of NSW (UNSW), started a seminar series regarding Japanese language education for Japanese living in Australia.

On 24 October, an online seminar was held on the topic “Raising Japanese language speakers: report from a study of Japanese learners as a heritage language in NSW”. Approximately 50 people joined the seminar, including me, and we heard a lecture by UNSW Professor Chihiro Kinoshita Thomson and participated in a workshop and exchanged views.

Professor Kinoshita Thomson explained the local environment in which children learn Japanese, mentioning the following points: Australia is a society with many languages as part of its national policy of multiculturalism; it is a society in which multilingualism is normal (30% of the population is born overseas and 27% of households speak a language other than English); relations between Japan and

Australia are friendly and the attitude among Australians towards Japan is positive; many people in Australia are well acquainted with Japan; and among English-speaking countries, Japanese language education is particularly popular in Australia.

Professor Thomson also emphasised that rather than aiming for “correct” Japanese as spoken by native speakers brought up in Japan, children should be brought up being aware that everyone’s language is different and acquire their own language - their “my language”. To this end, she explained, it is important that learners ① appreciate what they can do, ② value what they are good at, and ③ acquire the skills to continue learning by themselves.

Furthermore, Professor Thomson proposed that instead of talking about Japanese as a “heritage language” (something inherited or accepted from parents), we should speak in terms of a “language of connections” (a language that is born from connections with parents, family and friends, and that creates further connections, in turn giving birth to a new meaning, a language which creates ties with the next generation)*. She explained her thinking that children should be brought up to use their own vibrant “my language”, rich in their own “languages of connections”.

* Heritage language: 継承語 is pronounced KEI-SHŌ-GO, translated as “heritage language” and is a term commonly used to describe the language one inherits from one’s parents. Professor Thomson proposes using the word 繫生語 which can be pronounced the same way but the first character 繫 means ties or connections and the second 生 means to be born, to live or simply ‘life’.

オーストラリアで子育てをする時の 5つの観点ーことばの教育学

- ①親子の「やりとり」・・・コミュニケーションの中身、
内容。eg: 絵本の読み聞かせ
- ②楽しい言語活動・・・得意なことを伸ばす。
- ③学習環境を整える・・・調べる／比較する／まとめる。
- ④子どもを人として認める・・・主体的な学びを尊重する。
話/意見を聞く。心を支える。
- ⑤「移動」の経験を大切にする・・・写真、ビデオ、作品、
日記など。

**Material from the UNSW and Japan Foundation seminar,
“Children Crossing Borders (CCB) in Australia”
(4 December 2020)**

On 4 December, an online seminar was held on the topic “Children Crossing Borders (CCB) in Australia”. The seminar consisted of a lecture by Waseda University’s Professor Kawakami Ikuo and approximately 50 people participated in a workshop and exchanged views.

Professor Kawakami conceived the term ‘Children Crossing Borders (CCB)’ (Japanese: 移動する子ども IDŌ SURU KODOMO) to refer to children who experience and remember growing up in a multilingual environment from infancy, and he questioned the traditional approach of pushing such children into bilingual education against their will.

He emphasised that when it comes to ‘Children Crossing Borders (CCB)’, they should not be assessed by how much they can speak Japanese or how many Japanese characters (KANJI) they can read. Rather it is important that these children be encouraged to think of themselves as precious individuals who have

experiences and memories of being ‘Children Crossing Borders (CCB)’ and that they develop a sense of self as a ‘Children Crossing Borders (CCB)’. Professor Kawakami believes identity building is a particularly important matter for these children.



オーストラリアで日本語を使う子どもを育てる

🔒 プライベートグループ · メンバー133人



+ 招待する

情報 ディスカッション アナウンス ルーム メンバー イベント メディア ファイル



“Raising children using the Japanese language in Australia”

Facebook group

(Established October 2020)

● Networking with Facebook

Using this seminar series as a stimulus, a group led by Professor Thomson started up a Facebook group to create a broader network of teachers and parents who are educating and raising Japanese-speaking children in Australia.

I think it is very meaningful to have this space which will enable people raising children locally to consult with and learn from others, sharing examples of success and failure as well as worries about how to teach the Japanese language. I hope that many parents and teachers will join this network and that this will lead to improving Japanese language education for the children of Japanese nationals, here in Australia and living in countries around the world.



**Get-together to celebrate the victory in two Australian national cheer championships by the Sydney Cheerleading Team SPRINGS
(10 December 2020)**

● Enjoying learning and using Japanese – finding happiness through connections with Japan

By participating in such seminars and opportunities to exchange views, I have realised that the commitment of parents and teachers and the creation of a good learning environment are crucial in order to engage the children of Japanese nationals - children attending local Australian schools and having no plans to return to Japan - in the continued learning of the Japanese language.

The other day, I invited members of the Sydney Cheerleading Team SPRINGS, which won 2 Australian national cheer championships, to my residence. The team began as an after-school activity of a Japanese language community school in Sydney. All instruction takes place in Japanese and the only time English is used is when the children themselves need to ensure sufficient communication for safety reasons. For the team members, whose daily life centres around local

schools and offers few opportunities to speak Japanese, this team activity must motivate them to study Japanese.

Isn't it good to see how, by creating a positive learning environment, learning and using Japanese is a joy rather than a chore for children? In this way, I hope that these children will be proud of their Japanese background and go on to deepen mutual understanding and exchange not only between Japan and Australia, but also with countries and cultures around the world.

It is the intention of this consulate to continue to support Japanese language education for the children of Japanese nationals so that such children enjoy learning and using Japanese language, and by creating of ties with Japan add to the happiness of Japan and Australia - and the world.

Regarding the law for the promotion of Japanese language education [Agency for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (Japanese)

https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunka_gyosei/shokan_horei/other/suishin_houritsu/index.html

https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/p_pd/ca_opr/page23_003065.html

International forum on the "law promoting Japanese language education": To promote heritage language education at home and abroad to foster global human resources (Japanese)

<https://www.bmcn-net.com/forum>

Japanese language community (supplementary) schools in NSW [consulate website] (Japanese)

<https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/document/japanese/consul/school.pdf>

Seminar: "Raising Japanese language speakers: report from a study of Japanese learners as a heritage language in NSW" - video and materials

<https://jpf.org.au/events/vod-registration-japanese-language-education-seminar-with-uns-w-oct-2020/>

Seminar: "Children Crossing Borders (CCB) in Australia" - video and materials
<https://jpf.org.au/events/vod-japanese-language-education-seminar-with-unsw-dec-2020/>

"Raising children using the Japanese language in Australia" Facebook group
(Japanese)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/735510927090013>

Sydney Cheerleading Team SPRINGS

<https://sydneycheersprings.wixsite.com/mysite>

(END)