

**Learning in Tandem:
Integrating Learning Tasks and
Online Resources in Collaborative
Japanese-Finnish E-learning**

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Outline of the presentation

1. Learning & teaching Japanese (and Finnish)
2. ‘Sociolinguistic competence’?
3. Language learning & sociolinguistics
 (“breaking down the silos”) - Learning in tandem: Sociolinguistic tasks in collaborative Japanese-Finnish e-learning
4. ‘Sociolinguistic competence 3.0’? Modes of learning & repertoires

1. What do you learn when you learn Japanese?

Learning & instruction of L2 Japanese: (Mori & Mori 2011)

- Vocabulary & *kanji* (漢字), *interlanguage* grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening
→ Language 'skills'; language as a 'system'
- *Interlanguage* pragmatics, language socialization, conceptualization of 'culture' in language learning: "unique features of Japanese language and social contexts" (Mori & Mori 2011: 447) → Language users/Language & society?

1. What do we teach when we teach Japanese?

- The Japan Foundation: *Japanese-Language Teaching Methods Series*, 14 vols (2006-2008)
[/国際交流基金 日本語教授法シリーズ](#)
- instructor's role, course design, sounds, characters, vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing, beginner's Japanese, intermediate & advanced Japanese, assessment, didactics, teaching material production, **“topics on Japan” (日本事情) & Japanese culture**

1. “Topics on Japan” (日本事情) & Japanese culture (日本文化)/JF

- Information on social life & aspects: human relationships, life (style), social infrastructure, customs
- Information on Japan: traditions, arts, sports, humanities (e.g. history, religion, education, economy), nature
- Basic level examples: cultural columns, Japan-related vocabulary (e.g. *Fuji-san* mountain, *shinkansen* bullet train), authentic materials
- **Variety & variation** vs. stereotypes →

1. “Male & female speech in Japanese”

- E.g. conversational dialogues in textbooks
 - female Japanese course assistant: “Well, actually I never speak like this and neither do any my friends.”
 - gender & language variation → language consciousness & attitudes → prescriptivism & language planning → ‘role language’/役割語 *yakuwarigo* (fictionalized orality in Japanese literature & popular culture)

1. “Japan’s weirdest dialect”

- Weather forecast in Akita dialect/秋田弁で
気象予報 (0:40-1:05) →
“Japan’s weirdest dialect, Tohoku-ben”
 - Perceptual dialect maps of Japan/Daniel Long:
“Least pleasant” speech areas
- geographic variation → perceptual
dialectology (non-linguists’ perceptions of
language variety) → language attitudes →
language contact → language change →
language vitality...

1. “Funny dialectal Finnish”

- [“The best of dialects](#) – Do you recognize these funny words”?

e.g. *völöjätä* ‘carry, lift’, *hulluna polokia* ‘pedal quickly’, *emmiekehtaa* ‘I can’t be bothered’

- [Can you hear the difference between 2 extreme Finnish dialects?](#) Western Finnish Turku area vs. Eastern Finnish Savo area ->
- [Dialect distribution map](#) (Finnish) -> South West & Savo dialects

2. What is 'sociolinguistic competence'?

- “... the ability to interpret the social meaning of the choice of linguistic varieties and to use language with the **appropriate** social meaning for the communication situation.” (SIL International 1999, emphasis added)
- “To be able to speak **appropriately** in the right company.” (Wikispaces SLAEncyclopedia 2014, emphasis added)
- “Differences in communicative styles” (LINCS 2013)
→ sociolinguistic vs. strategic/discourse/
communicative competence?

2. 'Communicative competence'

- Grammatical, **sociolinguistic**, strategic & discourse competence = knowledge of:
the language code; **the sociocultural rules of use in a particular context**; how to use verbal & nonverbal communication strategies to handle breakdowns in communication;
achieving coherence & cohesion (Canale & Swain 1980 & Savignon 1983 in Usó Juan & Martinez Flor 2008: 11)

2. Sociolinguistic → *sociocultural* → *intercultural*

- **Sociolinguistic** competence = knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions **appropriately** in a given context (included in pragmatic competence)
(Bachman 1987 & 1990 in Usó Juan & Martinez Flor 2008: 12)
- → **Sociocultural** competence = knowledge of how to express **appropriate** messages within the social & cultural context of communication in which they are produced (Celce-Murcia et al. 1995 & Savignon 2001 in Usó Juan & Martinez Flor 2008: 13)

2. 'Intercultural (communicative) competence'

- = “the ability of a person to behave **adequately** in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (Meyer 1991 in Usó Juan & Martinez Flor 2008: 14)
- → Cultural & non-verbal communicative factors: **sociocultural knowledge of the target language community, knowledge of dialects & cross-cultural awareness**, non-verbal signals
→ “cultural **differences/similarities**” (Usó Juan & Martinez

2. 'Sociocultural knowledge' & 'cross-cultural awareness'?

- Focus on categorical processes and forms? E.g. “rules” & differences → critical incidents, cross-cultural misunderstandings?
- L2 Japanese instruction & research: strong tradition in interlanguage *pragmatics* – to the detriment of **sociolinguistic knowledge of the target language community/communities?**
- L2 speaker as a multi-dimensional language user? → awareness & acquisition of native speaker patterns of variability?

2. ‘Sociolinguistic competence 3.0’

- NB! “Sociolinguistics is a very broad discipline and the term *sociolinguistic competence* could be used much more broadly than it is here, where we have restricted its use to refer to the recognition and use of **appropriate** varieties of language.” (SIL International 1999, emphasis added)
- Towards a “... more connected, open & intelligent” language learner? (Spivack 2014)

3. Finnish Learners of Japanese



Finland 2013

3. Japanese Learners of Finnish



Japan 2013

3. Language learning ⇔ linguistics

- Domains of sociolinguistic research in Japan: language varieties, language behaviour, ‘language life’, language contact, language change, language consciousness, language acquisition, language planning (Sanada et al. 2010)
 - “Language as Saying, Doing & Being” (Gee 2011a) while sharing (well-designed) experiences
- Collaborative learning tasks as bridges to more ‘academic’ approaches to sociolinguistics and discourse analysis (“silos”)

3. Example tasks (1)

- Naming practices: given & family names in Japan & Finland:
 - (1) Inquire about your language partner's given & family name(s)/email (or facebook) → report in class
 - (2) Statistical & related information/*Moodle* open-source learning platform:
 - [日本人の名字](#) (Japanese surnames)
 - [日本の姓の全国順位データベース](#) (ranking of Japanese surnames)
 - [日本全国名字ランキング](#) (ranking of Japanese surnames)
 - [宝塚歌劇スターファイル](#) (Takarazuka Revue “Star Files”)
 - [Nimipalvelu](#) (“name service”)
 - [Sukunimet sukututkimuksessa](#) (surnames in genealogy)
 - [Mistä saa tietää sukunimensä alkuperän ja sen merkityksen?](#) (where can you find the origin & meaning of your surname?)

3. Connecting to sociolinguistics

- ‘language life’ (言語生活): (Sanada et al. 2010: 68-71)
- suffixes *-o* (お) & *-ko* (こ) in Japanese male & female given names: dramatic increase of *-o* (お) in male names until 1940’s followed by a decline; domination of *-ko* (こ) in female names (e.g. *Reiko*) until 1940’s; increase of (female) names without suffixes (e.g. *Kirara*)
 - suffix *-ko* (こ) in artistic ‘stage names’ (Takarazuka revue): *-ko* (こ) popular & ‘exotic’ until 1920’s when still rare in real names; later lost its exotic appeal

3. Example tasks (2)

- **Unconventional scripts:** Tranter (2008) discusses ギャル文字/*gyarumoji* ‘gal characters’ (好きだヨ★ → 女子(†+ニ” ⇒ ★), but what kind of chat/email slang or acronyms do you generally use in Finnish or Japanese? Provide 5-10 representative examples with a brief analysis (= explanation of how they were formed/constructed). Include a note on the targeted recipients/readers.
- → functions of substandard forms (e.g. age-preferential expressions)

4. Rising to the challenge? 'Late-Modern subjectivities' ...

- “... mobile subjects engage with a broad variety of groups, networks and communities, and their language resources are consequently learned through a wide variety of trajectories, tactics and technologies, ranging from fully formal language learning to entirely informal ‘encounters’ with language.” (Blommaert & Backus 2012: 1)
- “... sociolinguistics of **mobile resources** and not of immobile languages” → “unfinished, truncated repertoires” (Blommaert 2010: 180)

4. ... and 'super-diversity'

- “These different learning modes lead to very different degrees of knowledge of language, from very elaborate structural and pragmatic knowledge to elementary ‘recognizing’ languages, whereby **all of these resources in a repertoire are functionally distributed in a patchwork of competences and skills...**”
- “...‘speech communities’ can be big and small, enduring as well as extremely ephemeral, since they emerge as soon as people establish *in practice* a pattern of shared indexicalities”

4. Modes of learning & repertoires

- **Polycentric** learning environments & **embedded** learning: “encounters” with language (slang, temporary, single word, recognizing language) ⇔ “specialized” language learning (e.g. “SDL lect”) ⇔ “comprehensive” language learning (Blommaert & Backus 2012: 10-16)
- Piloting polycentricity in practice: **Learning in tandem: Sociolinguistic tasks in collaborative Japanese-Finnish e-learning**

Kiitos!

ご清聴どうもありがとうございました。

Thank you for your attention!

Grazie!

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