

Teaching Japanese at Jagiellonian University – Prospects for Philology?

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In the present paper, I would like to discuss some important aspects of the status of Japanese studies at the Jagiellonian University, the main topic of discussion being the present state and future prospects of this field, i.e. of both language teaching and academic research in a region which has recently been labeled “EU new member countries”.

As far as it concerns Poland, the academic status of Japanese studies has become a subject of intensive debates, which were stimulated by the current reform of the higher education system and the revision of the existing university law enforced three years ago and nevertheless to be replaced later this year by a new law of higher education. In the new situation, we are facing now a serious debate concerning not only the structure and qualifications of the teaching staff required by the newly introduced academic accreditation standards, but also concerning the content and size of the curriculum, i.e. the number of compulsory subjects, language teaching programme, its objectives and methods, the profile and structure of BA, MA and PhD courses in Japanese studies in general.

The Japanese language programme at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow exists since the academic year 1987/1988 (preceded, however, by a lectorate established in 1979 and intended for students of other oriental courses, mainly Indology and Turkology, as a second oriental language). Since that year the programme has been included in the curriculum of oriental philology as an independent 5-year MA course of Japanese studies. During the 18 years of the history of our Japanese philology there were over 120 graduates who received their MA degrees in Japanese, majoring mostly in literature, language and various fields of culture and anthropology.

According to the latest trends in our higher education reform, the level of three-year BA course for any university field of study must be treated as a basic course followed by a two-year MA course, and these regulations are being introduced now in most institutions of higher education in Poland. The programme of Japanese studies has been

divided in the same way into BA. and MA courses. Within the Japanese studies curriculum, however, due to the very nature of teaching the language from the beginners' level, the BA course must be regarded as introductory, followed by the advanced level of language teaching at the MA course, since the language education must be continued and cannot be replaced by subjects related only to some culture or area studies.

At the Jagiellonian University, where we have currently 78 students enrolled, the present 1st grade students are attending the BA course while the other grades, students have been still enrolled into a traditional 5-year MA course. In the past, our Department of Japanology and Sinology (the Chinese studies since the academic year 2000/2001 are included as an additional part of the Japanese curriculum) had only one full professor (M. Melanowicz) who for a long time had been responsible for the whole programme. There were no assistant professors with a PhD degree, and the younger staff members were teaching assistants and native lecturers who helped to maintain the programme of practical language teaching, script classes and the other compulsory subjects.

It took a long time till the first doctorates were completed. The first one, written by Dr Krzysztof Olszewski, was on "The Role of Ki no Tsurayuki in the Development of Language Norm and the Literary Style of the Heian Period" (the PhD degree was awarded in June 2002); the second one was submitted by Dr Joanna Marszewska on "The Dialect of Ikema in Comparison with the Other Dialects of the Ryukyu Archipelago" (the PhD degree was awarded in February 2004); the third dissertation was written by Dr Tomasz Majczak on "Old Japanese Verb Classes and Their Formation" (the PhD was awarded in June 2004). The fourth doctorate was written by Dr Monika Szyszka on "Murasaki Shikibu and Her influence on the Development of the Japanese Diary and Novel in the 11th century" (the degree awarded in February 2005). The most recent doctorate has been prepared by Ms Aleksandra Szczehla on "The Question of Identity – Women in the Prosaic Works by Tsushima Yuko" (the PhD procedure to be completed later this year). All four theses on literature have been written under the guidance of Prof. Mikołaj Melanowicz; the supervisor of the thesis on historical linguistics was Prof. Wojciech Smoczyński, while the thesis on dialectology has been prepared under my supervision. For us, this was the only way for a substantial enlargement of the staff and gradual enrichment of the curriculum. In the old five-year MA course curriculum there were the following subjects:

1st year

No.	Subject	Hours per week	
		Lectures	Exercises
1.	Practical Japanese		10
2.	Japanese Script		4
3.	Japanese Grammar	2	2
4.	Introduction to Japanese Studies	2	
5.	Geography of Japan	2 (1 st semester only)	
6.	East Asian Civilizations	2	
Other subjects:			
7.	Introduction to Linguistics	2	
8.	English Lectorate		2
9.	Latin Lectorate		2
10.	History of Philosophy	2	
11.	Physical Education		2

2nd year

No.	Subject	Hours per week	
		Lectures	Exercises
1.	Practical Japanese		10
2.	Japanese Script		4
3.	Japanese Grammar		4 (1 st semester only)
4.	Classical Japanese Grammar	2	2 (2 nd semester only)
5.	Classical Japanese Literature	2	
6.	East Asian Civilizations	2	
7.	Proseminar on Japanese Studies		2
Other subjects:			
8.	Theory of Literature	2	
9.	English		2
10.	Latin		2
11.	History of Philosophy	2	

3rd year

No.	Subject	Hours per week	
		Lectures	Exercises
1.	Practical Japanese		10
2.	Japanese Script		4
3.	Japanese Text Translation		2
4.	Modern Japanese Literature	2	
5.	Chinese Literature	2	
6.	Chinese Lectorate		4
7.	MA Seminar on Japanese Studies [i.e. on literature or linguistics]		2
Other subjects:			
8.	Methodology of Literary / Linguistic or Culture Studies		2
9.	English		2
10.	Introductory Course to Social Studies	2	
11.	Monographic Lecture	2	

4th year

<i>No.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Hours per week</i>	
		<i>Lectures</i>	<i>Exercises</i>
1.	Practical Japanese		8
2.	Monographic Seminar [on Japanese or Chinese Literature / language or culture]		2
3.	Japanese Text Translation		2
4.	MA Seminar on Japanese Studies [i.e. on literature or linguistics]		2
Other subjects:			
5.	English		2
6.	Chinese Lectorate		4
7.	Theory of Translation	2	
8.	Monographic Lecture	2	

5th year

<i>No.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Hours per week</i>	
		<i>Lectures</i>	<i>Exercises</i>
1.	Practical Japanese		4 (1st semester only)
2.	Monographic Seminar [on Japanese or Chinese Literature / language or culture]		2
3.	MA Seminar on Japanese Studies [i.e. on literature or linguistics]		2

Starting from the academic year 2004/2005, our Japanese studies have been divided into a three-year BA course and a two-year MA course with the latter yet to be established after the full programme of Japanese studies is accepted by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education. At present, there is no sufficient number of professors to be accredited, but we hope that all the necessary conditions can be met in the nearest future.

The new BA curriculum of Japanese studies has been rearranged; as a result, the number of practical Japanese hours has been slightly reduced:

1st year

<i>No.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Hours per week</i>	
		<i>Lectures</i>	<i>Exercises</i>
1.	Practical Japanese		8
2.	Japanese Script		4
3.	Japanese Grammar	2	2
4.	Japanese Culture	2 (1 st semester only)	
5.	Geography of Japan	2 (1 st semester only)	
6.	East Asian Civilizations	2	
Other subjects:			
7.	Introduction to Linguistics	2	

Continue

8.	English		2
9.	Latin Lectorate		2
10.	History of Philosophy	2	
11.	Physical Education		2

2nd year

No.	Subject	Hours per week	
		Lectures	Exercises
1.	Practical Japanese		8
2.	Japanese Script		4
3.	Japanese Grammar		4 (1 st semester only)
4.	Japanese Literature	2	
5.	East Asian Civilizations	2	
6.	Proseminar on Japanese Studies		2
Other subjects:			
7.	Theory of Literature	2	
8.	English		2
9.	Latin Lectorate		2
10.	Additional subject to be chosen [a lecture or seminar]	2	

3rd year

No.	Subject	Hours per week	
		Lectures	Exercises
1.	Practical Japanese		6
2.	Japanese Script		2
3.	Classical Japanese Grammar		2
4.	Japanese Text Translation		2
5.	Japanese Literature	2	2
6.	Chinese Literature	2	
7.	Chinese Lectorate		4
8.	BA Seminar on Japanese Studies [i.e. on literature or linguistics]		2
Other subjects:			
9.	English		2
10.	History of Philosophy	2	
11.	Monographic Lecture	2	
12.	Additional subject on social studies to be chosen [a lecture or seminar]	2	

The new curriculum is now being re-evaluated after one year of its implementation and the most necessary improvements to be introduced from the next academic year are: the increased number of hours of the Japanese grammar which would be taught also in the 2nd semester of the 2nd year, and this will give 120 hrs yearly. The Classical Japanese Grammar will be placed in the 3rd year curriculum with 4 hours weekly (a lecture and an exercise course – 2 hours each) and will be adjusted to the literature lecture course. The Japanese script classes will be increased in the 2nd and 3rd year

curriculum to 4 hours, since the present number proved insufficient for completing the objective of the instruction, i.e. a full set of jooyoo kanji.

The programme at present has still an experimental character, and the main difficulty we are facing now is its adjustment to the requirements of the philological curriculum which must form the basis of its content. There are, however, some new trends in Poland, which in some universities are strongly supported, to re-organize the curriculum of Japanese studies as a culture studies curriculum. The new curriculum is to be non-philological, with numerous teaching subjects covering the area of cultural anthropology, aesthetics, theory of culture, religion, philosophical and social thought, substantially extended old and modern history, and some other subjects. This frame reduces the earlier concentration on the language teaching, grammar, linguistics and literary knowledge and is an attempt to modernize the curriculum of traditional Oriental studies.

Philology is now regarded as too limited in the scope of both research and teaching, and the new curriculum would meet the growing interest of students toward these numerous fields. However, the philological foundation of Japanese studies cannot be totally abandoned, since the students come here with the aim of learning practical Japanese which must be the core of the future qualifications they acquire during their three-year BA course.

The first course must be then concentrated on the language teaching together with the other elements of this curriculum, such as grammar and script which is still regarded as a separate subject and is not included formally in the practical Japanese hours. The grammar course is based both on the Japanese school grammar with some knowledge of the traditional categories of morphology and syntax (based on the so-called kana grammar), but the main characterization of the language structure and grammatical categories is introduced in the modernized shape (i.e. "roomaji" grammar) with the morphological segmentation based on the Latin alphabet (Hepburn) and IPA transliteration.

This requires also a solid cooperation and coordination of the teaching content between our native Japanese lecturers and Polish members of the teaching staff. A small part of practical Japanese must be then realized by a Polish lecturer in order to assist the explanation of all grammatical phenomena for the beginners' level of teaching. In this situation, any substantial decrease of teaching the language is not possible; in contrast to other fields of language study such as English or German philology, the Japanese studies cannot be fully reorganized into the curriculum of culture studies.

They will have to preserve a large core of philological curriculum from the very beginning of instruction. There is an idea to apply for a recognition of the Japanese studies curriculum as Oriental studies together with the other fields represented in the Oriental studies institutes. It is interesting, however, that only the Institute of Oriental Philology of the Jagiellonian University has preserved until now the traditional term of philology in its official name. However, the introduction of a new curriculum under a

new name of Oriental studies cannot be easy due to some complex aspects of the oriental studies in general. Oriental studies cannot be a unified scientific discipline since, as we all know, it has no autonomous methodology of its own.

They can be recognized as a separate field only from the point of view of the object or area of research upon applying the criteria of the traditional distinction between the "Orient" and the "Western" world which at present is totally anachronic. All potential disciplines within the proposed Oriental studies are methodologically stemming from a large set of disciplines, such as linguistics, literary science, philosophy, religious studies, culture studies, sociology; practically all humanities and cultural sciences serve as a theoretical source or methodology for each subject geographically and historically distinguished from the West such as the "Orient".

Japanese studies then can be placed within East Asian culture studies or rather within East Asian philology with a modernized (and enlarged toward the culture studies), separate curriculum, but still they will have nothing in common with the other "Oriental" fields with a clearly distinct scientific and cultural tradition forming different circles of civilization. In our region we still remember another, totally political in its nature, distinction between the "first" world of capitalism, the "second" world of socialism and the "third" world placed between the two rival camps. Oriental studies were at the time oriented toward the "third" countries; the term quickly proved extremely anachronistic when "Oriental" countries like Japan, Taiwan and South Korea joined the most advanced countries, both economically and scientifically.

Therefore, the placement of Japan studies or East Asian studies within a traditional Oriental studies curriculum could be an attempt of preserving methodological exoticism from the period of Giacomo Puccini rather than creating a new area of research and teaching. The traditional role of Oriental studies as the main source of knowledge on some exotic languages and the sphere of their equally exotic civilization is no more essential for the existence of this field. For many years an important contribution of the oriental studies was introducing traditional scientific doctrines of non-European origin, but presently, when the above-mentioned East Asian countries have all fields of modern science fully developed and extremely advanced, this task has also nearly lost its meaning. Thus, even the traditionally meant philology, which as an academic field of study has adopted the newest and most advanced methodology of linguistics and many other branches of humanities, cannot be treated as a narrow-minded discipline limited in its scope to a gnosis of texts and languages. The Japanese studies should not be therefore an exception in this respect either.

As for the teaching of two basic categories of Japanese subjects in the curriculum, we have currently practical Japanese or conversation classes which are mostly based on the textbooks "Shokyuu Nihongo" and "Chukyuu Nihongo" published by Sanseido, with substantial improvements and enlargements made by our Japanese colleagues in the teaching staff, but the most difficult problem is that we have no advanced level textbooks as a direct continuation of the basic level teaching. Thus, the 3rd, 4th and 5th

grade students must rely mostly on the material prepared separately for them and intended to present a variety of topics, lexical fields and more advanced grammatical constructions and sentence patterns with some knowledge of stylistic diversification of the language. The earlier mentioned opposition between the kana grammar and the romaji grammar should not be an obstacle in teaching. The grammatical course ends on the 2nd year of study and currently is based on the textbook being now prepared (two volumes have been already published by the Jagiellonian University Publishing House) as a theoretically founded reference grammar of modern Japanese, with a substantial part devoted to phonetic and prosodic phenomena. There is, however, a difference, clearly felt by our students, between the traditional grammatical doctrine taught at Japanese schools and the structural and post-structural descriptions of the Japanese language system which at some points may be difficult to overcome. We have to consider additional means and efforts in order to prevent, at least theoretically, a possible collision of these two different views.

The Japanese script classes are based mostly on the material prepared by our lecturers themselves. Currently we have no regular course textbook on the kanji, but at least some improvements in the teaching content, some collective efforts towards preparing teaching material in the form of a textbook covering all *jooyoo* kanji and kana are urgently needed.

Our department of Japanese studies is also expected to pursue academic research on Japan, mainly its language, literature and culture, and recently we have inaugurated a series of monographs on Japanese studies which are being published by the Jagiellonian University Publishing House. We can publish our PhD dissertations re-edited as books, and collections of articles covering various areas of Japanese philology and prepared by our staff members and invited guests. We hope that in future we shall be able also to publish some literary translations and textbooks necessary for our students.

Japanese studies are presently one of the most popular fields and the enrollment of students is going to increase substantially in the coming years, therefore we must be better prepared for all changes and reforms in the system of higher education in Poland, which are being implemented currently.

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