

## **Japanese TA Manual**

### **Fall Japanese TA Orientation**

Kyoko Saegusa  
Senior Instructor of Japanese  
Coordinator of the Japanese Undergraduate Language Program  
East Asian Languages & Civilizations  
University of Colorado-Boulder

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### **Your Role as a Japanese TA in EALC**

Teaching Assistants are vital members of the community in the Department of East Asian Languages & Civilizations. In the Japanese section, a language TA is assigned responsibility for a whole section of a basic language course and act as the instructor of record. While you are not asked to compose quizzes, develop teaching materials, and be the ultimate advisor/counselor to your students, you are trusted with your students' general well-being.

TA-ships are also considered a privilege, and, like scholarships, awarded only to the most deserving graduate students. Your academic and pedagogical performances are subject to review.

This section of the TA orientation handout illuminates the expectations, responsibilities, and basic rules surrounding Teaching Assistantships in EALC, as well as providing some basic 'DOs and DON'Ts' to being a TA.

## **Basic Rules**

1. Teaching assistants are appointed to work at 35% of full-time, with an average weekly load of 14 hours. If you are hired at 50%, you are required to work 20 hours per week as a TA. The workload of the TA naturally fluctuates from week to week, so the hours the TA works each semester is based on a calculation of the total semester hours.
2. With your TA-ship, you are also given a tuition remission for specific course hours. You must register for at least 5 credit hours each semester to maintain your appointment.
3. Be advised that TAs must maintain an average of 3.0 or higher on all course work to keep their appointment.
4. All TAs are required to attend and participate in all departmental orientation meetings at the beginning of each semester. Your pay period begins one week prior to Day One of Instruction, and ends on Commencement Day each semester.
5. TAs are expected to teach the class(es) they are assigned. The department faculty decides what classes and section the TA will teach each semester, based upon the needs of the Japanese program.
6. Each semester TAs will be evaluated based on their performance as a TA in all her/his responsibilities. These evaluations as well as a TA's academic performance are considered when selecting TAs for subsequent assignments. The TA is evaluated for her/his class management skills, language-specific pedagogical expertise, and work ethic as a member of the Japanese and CU community.
7. TAs must also be able to communicate effectively with their students in spoken English.
8. Under no circumstances are classes and office hours to be cancelled by the TA. Should an emergency or illness arise that prevents the TA from working during their scheduled times, the TA must inform the Head Instructor and make arrangements to have their classes covered by another teacher.
9. The TA office is for conducting official business.

## **The Importance of Professional Behavior**

1. TAs are not to engage in any romantic relations with their students. It is the law in the CU community.
2. TAs should be familiar with CU policies on sexual harassment, diversity and tolerance, students with disability, religious observances, Honor Code, and disruptive behavior.  
<http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/>  
[www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices.](http://www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices)  
<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/index.html>  
<http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>  
<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>
3. TAs should maintain a professional distance from students.

4. TAs should treat all students equally and without discrimination or prejudice.
5. TAs should become familiar with the entire Japanese program and support the program.
6. TAs should not talk with students inappropriately about other TAs, instructors, or professors. Such a conduct may undermine your and the entire Japanese program's credibility. If you have concerns, communicate them with your Head Instructor first.
7. TAs should not speak inappropriately with other TAs, faculty or staff members about any other TA, faculty or staff member for the same reason stated in 6.

### **Expectations of the Teaching Assistant**

1. Begin and end class and office hours on time.
2. Be well prepared to teach your class daily.
3. Follow the lesson plans. Much thought and work have gone into the lesson plans. Read them carefully and try to understand why certain things are included. Please discuss any questions you have with the Head Instructor before you conduct the class.
4. PLEASE inform your Head Instructor in advance if you wish to make modifications to the plan. We understand your urge to improve on the prescribed lesson plan, or your urge to want to "help" students. We are not discouraging you from making changes. Ultimately, our responsibility is with our students. Since all students in all sections of the course will be tested by the same tests, it is only fair to the students that consistency is maintained in all sections.
5. Maintain accurate and up-to-date grades for all your students.
6. Be aware of and sensitive to individual students' background, special needs, learning styles and behavior patterns. Always think of prevention of problems by knowing your students.
7. When in doubt, communicate any concerns, major and minor, to your Head Instructor in a timely manner, and we really mean it. The Head Instructor is likely to have encountered similar situations before, and chances are that s/he has a better idea of what to do.
8. Participate actively in all coordination meetings. Your input is very important for the maintenance of the program.

### **Philosophy and Principles of Teaching (Japanese): Teacher vs. Student**

Caleb Gattegno, Originator of the Silent Way, says:

- Students must relate to the new language and practice it to make it their own; to relate to anything else is a distraction and distractions interfere

with learning.

- Teachers must be concerned with what the students are doing with themselves rather than with the language, which is the students' concern. Teachers and students work on different subjects.

(C. Gattegno, the common sense of teaching foreign languages, p. vii. 1976)

The teacher is, of course, the resource person in the specifics of the language s/he is teaching, but, her/his primary responsibility is to make sure that learning takes place inside each learner.

Learning is an individual thing. No one can learn for someone else. The learner has to assume full responsibility for her/his own learning. Here, the teacher's job is to help the learner develop autonomy in learning. Learners must be shown clearly what their responsibilities are. The major pre-requisite work students are responsible for includes:

- Mastering the form (e.g., the sound system of the Japanese language, verb conjugations, correct spelling of words, grammar patterns and expressions).
- Applying the knowledge in real-life situations.
- Looking for error patterns, idiosyncrasies, hard to learn areas.

The teacher must help each learner identify her/his learning style and advise on the appropriate learning strategies. It will be essential that the teacher knows what her/his own learning style and most effective learning strategies are.

The learner must be made aware of general requirements for learning and specific requirements for language learning. For most college students, who are accustomed to analytical learning, learning a foreign language is very different from anything they have done.

Many students come to our classes assuming that language learning entails memorizing verb forms and fixed expressions, and knowing some grammar rules that they can regurgitate. Though limited, we strive in our classes to help student acquire the language, that is, use the language in their lives outside the classroom. The students are expected to build a bridge between what they know and what they can produce. To that end, our class time is spent using the language, not talking about the language.

While learning is a very private, individual process, language learning must be practiced communally and interactively.

In the classroom environment, which is a very artificial one, students come not because they know each other and want to be together. Therefore, the first

thing the teacher has to do is to establish a sense of community, a sense that they are all in this together.

It is of utmost importance that students understand that every learner has to actively and cooperatively participate in all the activities in the class. They must be present then and there at all time. All activities are designed and conducted with that principle in mind.

Since learning is the learner's job, the teacher must take the back seat when students are learning. One effective activity/modality is to let students teach, or let students decide what they want to learn. Students may introduce a new grammar point or new vocabulary to the class, or they may review the unit. Chapter teaching projects are designed to maximize this principle.

Studies show that learners do not learn or acquire the language in the order in which specific grammar points or vocabulary areas are introduced in a particular textbook. It is suspected that there are some universals in the sequence in which a learner learns another language, but the research is at its infant stage in this regard. Teachers empirically are aware of difficulties students have with certain grammar and notions. Be attentive. When you let students teach or decide what they want or need to learn, such difficulties and how they try to overcome them become clear.

Studies show that people learn better when they work together. However, cooperation does not mean they learn as a group. Learning still is an individual process. Students must be clear that the modality of learning together is simply to maximize individual learning capacities.

Gattegno says:

- Since all learning is in time and is progressive, we need not request perfection (which in any case is unattainable) but only be concerned with steady improvement.

This does not mean students must not strive for accuracy at all levels. In fact, students must strive to acquire the sounds, grammar forms, and orthography accurately; they form the building blocks at the very base. What they are not asked to do is to sound like a native speaker after repeating after the teacher for 1 minute.

Learning another language is a psychological thing. It involves profound transformation of the self. It is a very organic sort of process. Some learners may feel they are being invaded by an alien system. Some learners may feel their identity is no longer stable. The teacher must be aware that such feelings are a normal part of learning another language, and that it is

happening at all times inside every learner. Ultimately, the learner has to decide who s/he wants to be as her/his self grows and changes according to how far s/he is involved in another system of thought-formation and self expression.

It is, therefore, oftentimes counterproductive that teacher becomes the model when the learner is not ready to copy the model, to become someone else. When the teacher is a native speaker, s/he has to develop an awareness to monitor what s/he projects onto the learner. A beginning learner does not have means with which to interpret the new language in its intended context.

Acquisition of the sounds of a new language forms the basis for everything else. It is important that the learner is given opportunities to hear her/his own voice pronouncing new sounds, without repeating after a model. Repeating does not guarantee in any way the acquisition of the uttered sound.

- Each of us is equipped with a facility to utter what we hear. Hence we should not be surprised that students can easily repeat but not retain what a native speaker says. The exercise of repetition only tells us that we are equipped to repeat, not that repetition is our way of learning a language. Babies show us that they do not use repetition for a good two or three years. Every baby is aware that he must consciously utter what he wills, and only then does he listen to it and use what he knows as an utterer and hearer to identify what is being said by others. (C. Gattegno, *ibid.* p.5)

The teacher must attend to what students do with themselves. The teacher must spend her/his time in class observing students while students are working with the language, so that s/he understands students' personalities, personal concerns, their beliefs and state of mind. The teacher effectively guides the student only when s/he understands how the student's mind works.

## **Class Procedure and Management**

### **Time Allocation**

We perceive that there are two components to a TA-ship. Component I is the official, immediate task of classroom teaching. Everything that comes with being a "junior" teacher in a multi-section course is included in this component. As a 35% time hire, you are required to put in 14 hours a week on the average and a 50% time hire is expected to work 20 hours/week. In beginning language classes, you have

- 5 contact hours per week
- 5 hours observing the Head Instructor's section

- 1 office hour
- 1 hour to grade/inspect turn-in homework
- 1 hour of coordination with fellow TAs and the Head Instructor

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to

- Group-grade exams
- Compile chapter exam error analysis
- Proctor each exam for one other section
- Coordinate extra curricular activities
- Communicate your concerns via e-mail, office visits, and by phone

You are not required to develop exercises, teaching materials, quizzes and exams. If you feel you need to use a different lesson plan or teaching aids, PLEASE inform the Head Instructor IN ADVANCE.

Component I of the TA-ship will be assessed by the Head Instructor through class observation and discussion if needed.

Component II of the TA-ship is professional development. There is no upward limit as to how many hours a TA may want to spend on working on her/his professional development. We hope and recommend that a TA participate in various opportunities in this category. They include:

- Participating and organizing in mini-workshops on teaching methods, teaching materials development, and instructional technology
- Attending and reporting on GPT seminars and workshops
- Attending and presenting at local, regional, and national language teachers' conferences
- Participating in formal and informal mentoring
- Participating in language professional organizations
- Last but not least, observing classes taught by peer TAs and instructors, not only of Japanese but other languages

There is really no mechanism with which to assess the TA's participation in Component II.

## **Class Procedure**

### Group Work

Encourage students to develop skills in conducting effective group work. Working effectively in groups requires problem-solving skills, social and interactive skills as well as specific and general language skills. Try grouping students according to language abilities, personality compatibility, etc., to see what works well. Students are often reluctant to move from "their seats."

Once the class sit down in groups, it usually takes one or two minutes before students settle down psychologically and are ready to work on language activities. You must train students so that students form groups quickly and are ready for activities. Once things get going, float about and monitor students. Unless asked, try not to interfere or correct. If you stay with one group for an extended period of time (more than a minute), always be watchful of the other groups. Your presence must be felt by everyone at all times.

### Teacher Talk

Try to speak in Japanese whenever possible. Do not over-simplify your speech. Monitor your language so that 90% of your talk is comprehensible by half of the class. Do not slow down to the degree your speech is unnatural. Always be aware if the class is following, but without saying, WAKARIMASU KA. The teacher talk must have actual communicative value and carry real and new information to the students; it shouldn't be just another language drill. Many students resist to your talking in Japanese exclusively at the beginning. Train students (and yourself) so that you can gradually carry on real conversation with the students in Japanese. It is helpful to explicitly practice classroom expressions and to set class rules regarding the language of instruction. It is important that students begin developing discourse strategies early on. Teacher talk can be effectively used to that end.

### Who's In Charge?

You, the instructor, should be in charge of what goes on in the classroom. The instructor is not a disciplinarian but more a class manager who makes sure that the environment is conducive to learning. Our curriculum is rigorous but the objectives are attainable. Take time to explain our philosophy, the theory behind our methodology, the nature of language learning, our expectations, learner responsibilities, and how this course is related to the rest of the program.

## **Assessment of Student Performance**

1. Why of Assessment
2. What of Assessment
3. How of Assessment

### **1. Why?**

The ultimate and only assessment is self-assessment. Each learner must develop a set of inner criteria, which is by no means fixed or static. The instructor's primary job is to help the learner develop these criteria. Class activities include learning strategy building and awareness raising in learning styles, which help the learner to become independent, autonomous learner. Ideally, the assessment should measure individual progress.

- All progress is in time, and the learner is expected to do his best at any given time. (C. Gattegno)

### Classroom Testing and Assessment

Built into a college course are constraints that are totally extrinsic and extraneous to learning itself. One such constraint is the “assigning of the grade” at the end of the semester. The underlying assumption is that the learner acquires certain knowledge or skills that can be assessed in the semesterly cycle. There is, however, no logical or empirical proof that this assumption is valid. To balance the reality of learning and this requirement set by the system, conventionally, the course requirements and evaluation are divided into such categories as “participation and contribution,” “chapter quizzes and exams,” “self-directed projects,” “oral and written reports/presentations.” Some of them measure the learner’s ability to react and respond to on-demand tasks. Others measure the learner’s ability to work individually in her/his own time to obtain a particular objective. As a whole, it’s an effort to reflect the learner’s prochievements\* in the designated period.

\*prochievement = proficiency + achievement

## **2. What?**

The Japanese section is constantly reworking its language curriculum to meet the needs of the students. The language program has identified 5 categories in which our students must be trained:

- a) Topics and Vocabulary
- b) Language Functions (Grammar): This category includes notions, situations, language skills (listening, reading, speaking & writing), discourse strategies, and language learning strategies. Translation skills, explicitly and implicitly taught, are included in this category.
- c) Culture as related to the language
- d) Orthography (somewhat independent of reading skills development)
- e) Research skills

Each category overlaps somewhat with others at times, but the categories are identified (for now) for the purpose of defining learning goals and objectives. They constitute “the warp” of the curriculum.

With these 5 categories, or strands, we write level-by-level, day-to-day curriculum (the “woof”).

The assessment tools must reflect both the warp and woof. We must also make sure that the students must be tested on what they practice, and what they practice must be reflected in the tests. Assessments, thus, must be

designed before the lesson plan is written.

### Articulation

It is important that the language courses at all levels (1-4, with the possibility of 5) are well articulated. There has to be consistency from one level to the next. There also has to be horizontal articulation among various sections of a course. Students work more harmoniously if they know where they are in a larger picture of things. The instructor must therefore be able to explain the entire program to her/his students.

We try to coordinate the language courses with literature courses. There are three stages of literary study:

- 1) Practice language through literature
- 2) Use language skills to comprehend literature
- 3) Read and appreciate literature

The language courses are concerned with the first 2 stages.

### **3. How?**

The learner is typically assessed in the following activities in JPNS1010-2120:

- Daily class participation and contribution (not mere attendance)
- Small group activities
- Individualized in-class and take-home activities
- In-class quizzes and exams
- Peer teaching presentations (formative and summative)
- Term projects (self-directed, self-paced)
- Kanji projects and self-study
- Reading and writing assignments from the textbook
- Reading and writing assignments from the course packet
- Interactive assignments (e-pal exchange, conversation partnership, peer tutorial)

Each activity and assignment must be clearly defined, and the assessment criteria and rubrics must be developed and distributed in advance.