

# Japanese in New Zealand Universities - Things to think about

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*I am a secondary school teacher of Japanese who has taught a number of secondary students L2 Japanese in the last ten years. In these years, I found that some of these students have made excellent progress in mastering the language and I was convinced that they had potential to be very fluent in Japanese. However, many of these good students decided not to take Japanese at the tertiary level, even though some of them told me that their learning experiences have been brilliant and they wanted to reach fluency in the language. Their attitudes and diligent work in secondary Japanese classes made me think they were motivated to learn and master Japanese. After learning that these excellent ex-students had not taken tertiary Japanese courses I started wondering what the reasons for them not taking Japanese in university were. This was because I believed that a few years of additional study of Japanese at tertiary level would have given these students who had studied Japanese to Yr 13 a very good chance to develop more communicative and therefore marketable fluency, thus, beneficial for them as well as for New Zealand. Consequently I felt that identifying reasons for their discontinuance of Japanese at the transition stage from secondary school to tertiary education might help us to learn how to address problems and increase the number of Yr 13 students of Japanese who continue learning Japanese at the tertiary level (Oshima, 2012, p2).*

# Congratulations!

The aims of JSANZ (Japanese Studies Aotearoa/NZ) are:

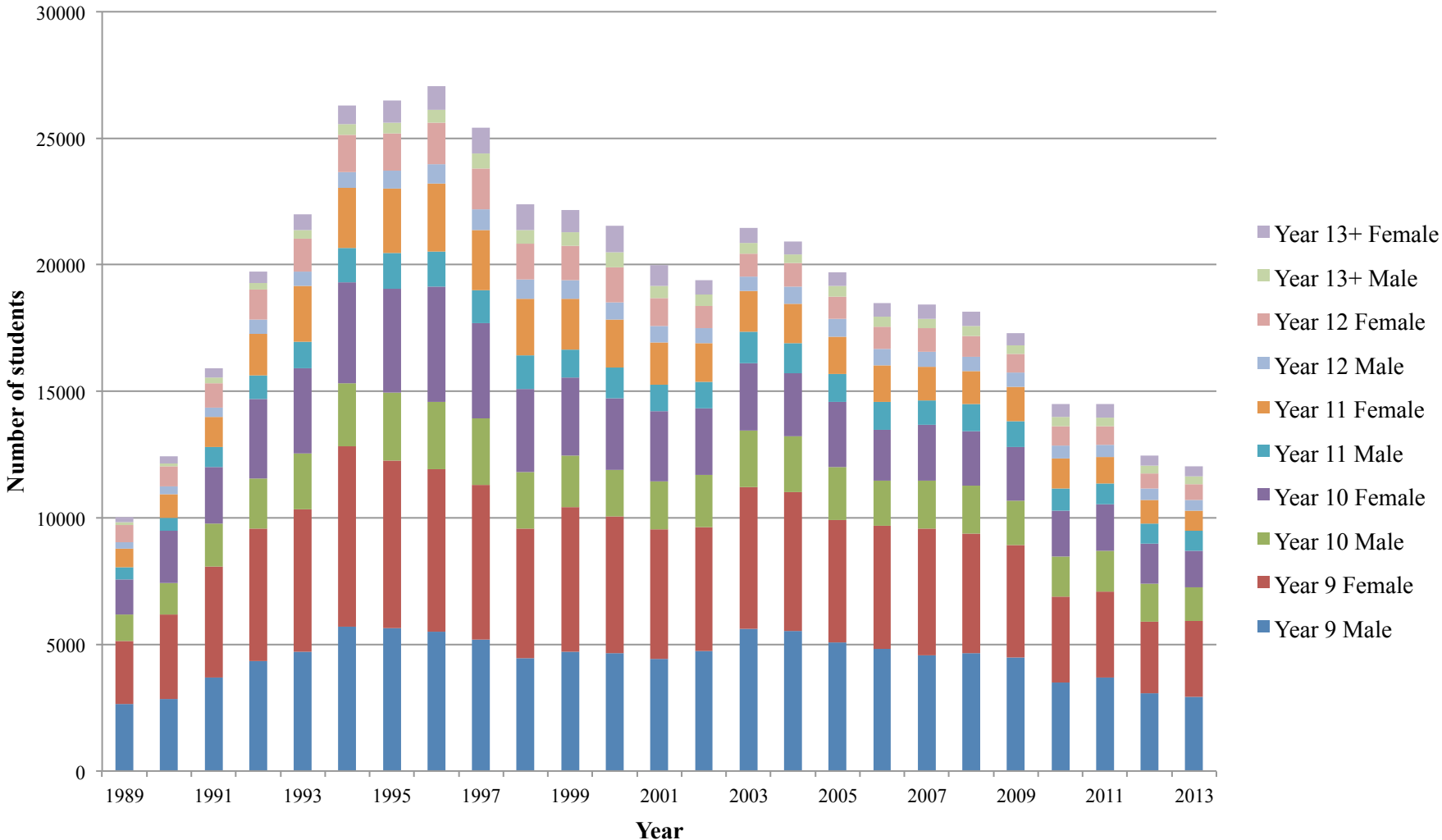
- Increased communication and collaboration between tertiary institutes.
- Advocacy for renewed awareness of Japan and Japanese language education.
- Improved understanding of career opportunities among parents and stakeholders.
- Action to improve articulation throughout the educational sector in New Zealand.

# Where have we come from and how important is Japanese in NZ today?

- Over time it has proved to be one of our most successful languages of education.
- Japanese language teaching in secondary schools goes back more than 50 years to the late 1960s.
- Japan is still vital to New Zealand in many ways!

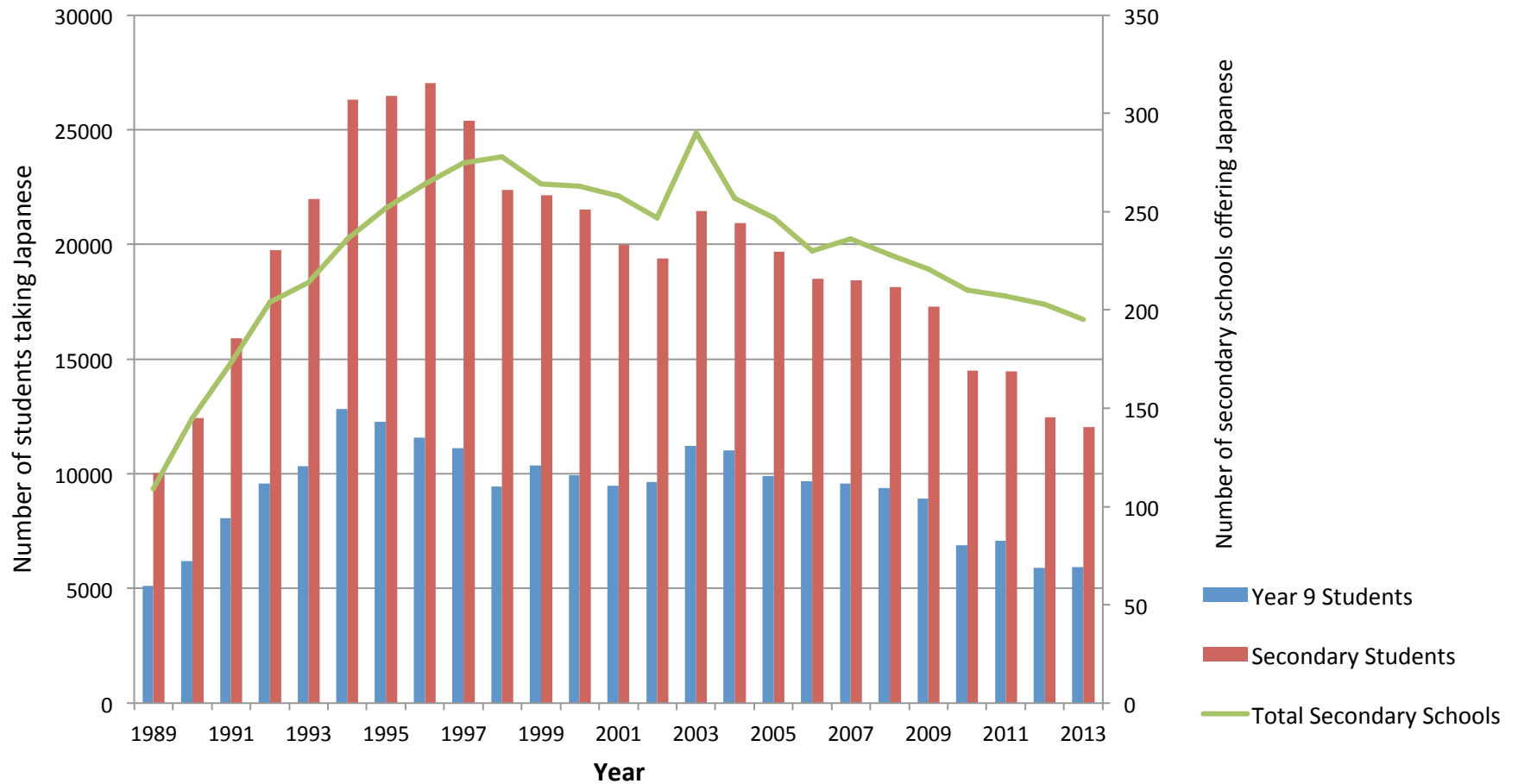
# Number of students taking Japanese at secondary level in New Zealand 1989-2013

(Data compiled from Ministry of Education 2004; 2010b; 2011; 2013)

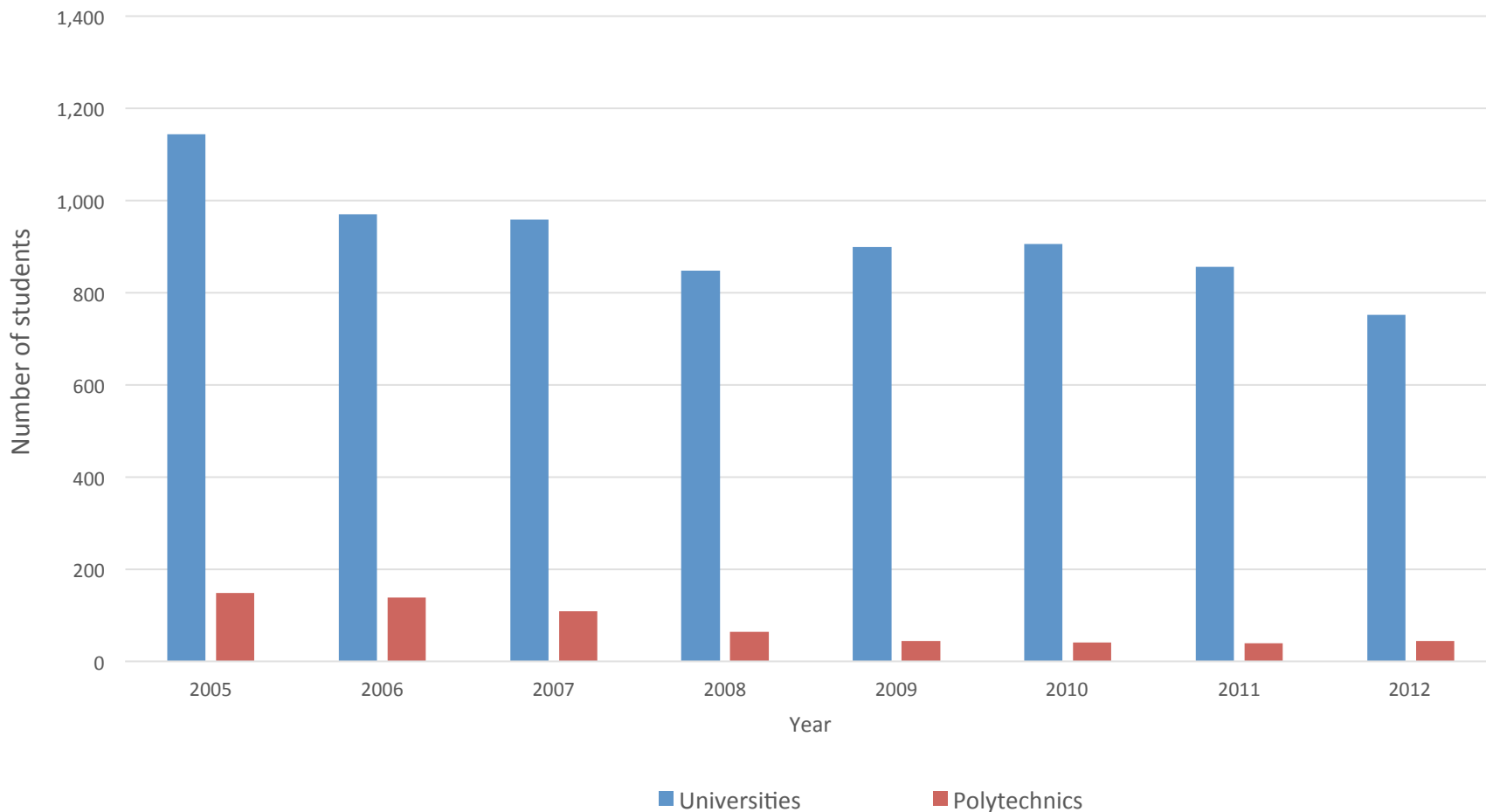


# Numbers of secondary students taking Japanese and secondary schools offering Japanese in New Zealand 1989-2013

(Data compiled from Ministry of Education 2004; 2010b; 2011; 2013)

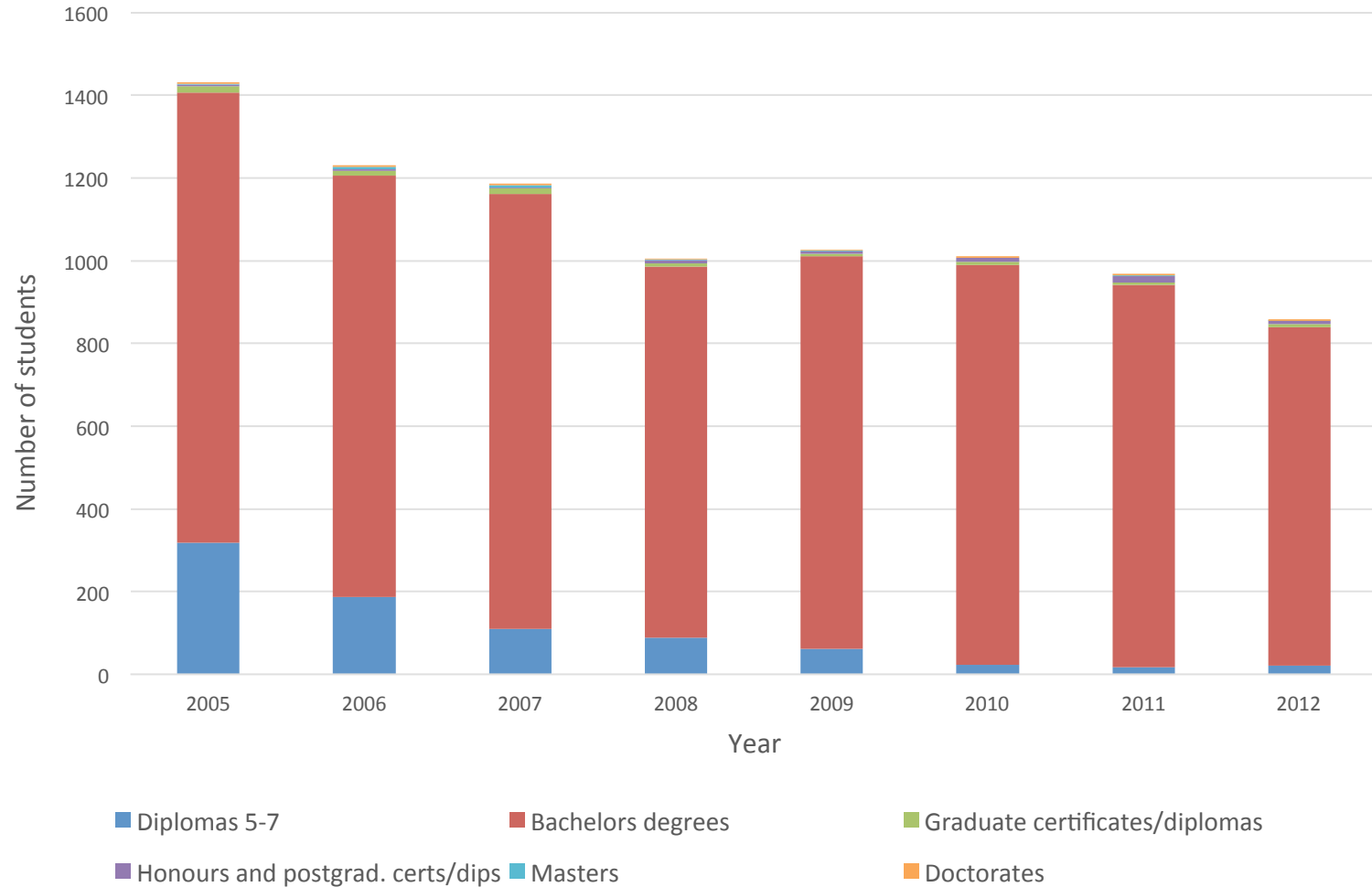


# Number of tertiary students enrolled in Japanese by sub-sector 2005-2012



Ministry of Education. 2013. *Language Enrolment - Education Counts*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.  
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# What are the issues for Japanese? (Oshima, 2012)

- High student attrition rates at an early stage of learning, both at secondary and tertiary levels (Holt 2006; McLauchlan 2007; Nuibe, Kano, & Ito 1995);
- An inadequate level of proficiency reached by students in Japanese (Harvey, 1988; Haugh 1997; Kaplan & Baldauf 2003);
- A lack of curriculum continuity between secondary and tertiary institutions (East, Shackelford, & Spence 2007; Haugh 1997; Shearn 2003), and between secondary schools (Barrowman 1995, as cited in Haugh 1997) due to differences between course curricula at each school;
- A lack of advanced Japanese teaching (Harvey 1988; Trotter 1994);
- A shortage of suitably qualified teachers in secondary level (Aschoff 1991; Barnard 2004; Guthrie 2005; Haugh 1997; Nuibe & Okuno 1999);
- The presence of native Japanese speakers in senior Japanese classes at secondary level, which has made it difficult for other students to achieve high grades (Haugh 1997; McLauchlan 2007);
- Combined classes for different levels due to the insufficient/uneconomical number of students in one level (McLauchlan 2007; Shearn 2003).

Transitioning from school to uni – why they didn't take Japanese if they weren't taking Japanese as a major? (Oshima, 2012).

**Two** key themes:

- The concept of learning Japanese (mainly affective factors as to why students drop Japanese)
- Japanese and the major are incompatible (institutional factors)
- Grounded theory approach

# 'The concept of learning Japanese'

Core category	Sub-categories	Properties
The concept of learning Japanese	The value of learning Japanese further	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expected incentives</li><li>• Current proficiency</li><li>• Relevance</li><li>• Necessity</li><li>• Perceived availability of options</li></ul>
	Perceptions of learning Japanese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sense of competence</li><li>• Perceived level of difficulty</li><li>• Perceived workload</li><li>• Past learning experience</li></ul>

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Combination patterns of ‘the concept of learning Japanese’ (Exemplary comments and likely actions were reconstructed by amalgamating data from interviews)

The concept of learning Japanese		Perceptions of learning Japanese	
		Positive (+)	Negative (-)
The value of learning Japanese further	High (H)	Concept: + H [I really enjoyed. I think it will be good for me.]  Likely to consider continuing Japanese	Concept: - H [I think it is good for me, but I am afraid that...]  May consider continuing, but reluctant due to fear of failure, difficulty, etc.
	Low (L)	Concept: + L [It has been good and enjoyable, but not for now.]  Likely to discontinue unless taking it as a pastime activity (hobby)	Concept: - L [I have done it! No more.]  Most likely to discontinue Japanese

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# 'Considering Japanese and the major incompatible'

Sub-categories	Conditions	Inter/actions, emotions	Consequences
Considering Japanese and the major academically incompatible	Having a low sense of competence Perceiving Japanese as a time-consuming subject Having strong desire for good academic results Perceiving the level of Japanese course high Being uncertain of the major courses' workload Perceiving personal resources insufficient	Fearing academic failure Wanting to avoid risks	Judging Japanese and the major incompatible
Considering the Japanese courses inaccessible	Having a physical distance to the Japanese classroom Not having credits from Japanese counted towards the qualification/degree Not meeting the Japanese course requirements Having a timetable clash	Accepting the situation	

# Improving secondary to tertiary transition

- Getting more students into Japanese majors????
- Supply comprehensive course information (level of L6 courses, availability as an elective, visible at open days)
- Increase ‘the value of learning Japanese further’
- Increase accessibility to Japanese courses (reducing tt clashes, relax restrictions on non-fac courses, institutions in close proximity, flexible options)
- Bonus scheme?

# An additional important strategy? Become part of the bigger languages debate

Arguments for studying an additional language in a globalised world where English dominates

- Cognitive benefits of multilingualism
- Monolingualism in English not an acceptable outcome for the NZ education system
- ICC benefits of learning an additional language
- Economic benefits
- Look at RSNZ *Languages in Aotearoa/NZ* paper (RSNZ, 2012)

# Languages in Aotearoa New Zealand

the ROYAL  
SOCIETY of  
NEW ZEALAND  
TE APARANGI

## Summary

This paper outlines the major issues facing language practices in New Zealand. Important factors are:

- The position of the statutory languages of New Zealand, te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language.
- Access to English for the whole community.
- Consideration of the many languages used by the people of New Zealand.
- Language capability in a highly diverse society.
- The importance of language capacity in international trade connections.
- The ability for contemporary research to aid examination into language practice in society.
- The fragmented nature of language policy within New Zealand society and the opportunities for a national, unified approach.

## Introduction

The past few decades have seen large increases in the ethnic, cultural, social and linguistic diversity of the New Zealand population, which is expected to increase even further in the foreseeable future (Statistics New Zealand 2011). Internationally, we are not unique in this, but this increasing diversity will develop at a faster rate than most nations, within New Zealand's unique bicultural setting. Languages play a central role in all areas of this development, such as: education, social and economic mobility, access to public services, identity building and cultural maintenance, engagement with an increasingly globalised trade and diplomatic environment, to name a few.

Understanding the role of language in our society requires a high-level, cross-sector, multi-disciplinary approach. Research in diverse areas such as socio-cultural studies in immigrant integration, cognitive neuroscience, and international trade can all help in such an approach.

As such, language practice at a national level is a complex issue to evaluate. This paper provides an overview which can be utilised to help understand the impacts of language practice, provision, and policy in New Zealand. In order to inform this developing framework, the evidence base is examined; from the effects on cognition derived from language learning, to the importance of language use in the development of identity. Whilst further evidence will always facilitate increasingly nuanced analyses, especially in the case of evidence gathered in new contexts such as

increased diversity, there is already a robust research base from which to begin the development of language policy in a national context.

## Language in a superdiverse New Zealand

While language forms the basis for human communication it is also central to human identity. Language provides the means to express experience, culture and personal individuality as described well in the 1987 Australian National Language Policy (see box on page 2).

Over the last two decades New Zealand has become one of a small number of culturally and linguistically superdiverse countries (Spoonley & Bedford 2012). Superdiversity indicates a level of cultural complexity surpassing anything previously experienced. New Zealand is now home to 160 languages, with multiethnic depth forecasted to deepen even further (Statistics New Zealand 2011).

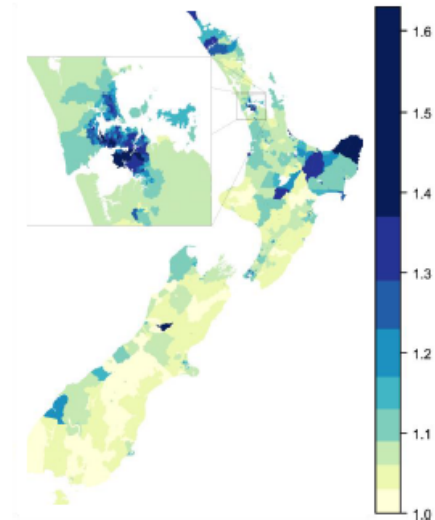


Figure 1. Linguistic diversity in New Zealand as a distribution of the average number of languages spoken per person. For example, if a region has an average number of languages spoken per person of 1.5 or greater, one out of two people will be bilingual or multilingual (Area unit data from Statistics NZ, Census 2006).



# What can we do in universities?

- Should we work towards university languages policies?
- Should languages be compulsory in an Arts degree/all ug degrees?
- Making the culture/language connections explicit for students....
- A way back to making languages critical for operating effectively in diverse NZ and a globalised world?

# National language policies and language in education policies

- What are the differences?
- Components of a national languages policy
- Languages in education policy

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