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FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A WELFARE LINGUISTICS FRAMEWORK

The Case of Japanese

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Introduction

If we make statements such as learning a new language enriches your life, we presume a connection between language and well-being. The latter is usually studied along scales. One can be more or less well, and it is reasonable to consider that learning a foreign language can affect well-being positively or negatively (see, Kubota 2003; Oxford 2016; Walsh 2018). This chapter explores this issue from the perspective of the nascent discipline of welfare linguistics, which has an analytical prowess that allows us to study language learning, teaching, and intercultural communication from a new perspective. It also has applicative aspects and provides insights on various issues such as language pedagogy, course and curriculum design, textbook writing, and language and language-in-education policies. Welfare linguistics has the aptitude to improve society by making it more just, egalitarian, and inclusive. Welfare linguistics has been discussed in Japan for a quarter of a century now (Otsuji, Kumagai and Satō 2021), but it is virtually unknown elsewhere.

The term ‘welfare linguistics’ was coined by the Japanese sociolinguist Tokugawa (1999), who stated to have been inspired by the work of Amartya Sen on welfare economics. Sen, to recall, received the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science in 1998, mainly for his contributions to expanding the paradigm of welfare economy to balance benefits in society (Atkinson 1999). Tokugawa (1999: 89) explained that Sen’s award led him to consider that the study of language and society could be similarly engaged henceforth, stating that ‘I believe that the days when researchers only had to engage in academic work, regardless of what goes on in the world, have come to an end’. Tokugawa explicitly mentioned that welfare linguistics could study language problems in fields such as language barriers, minority languages, dialects, identity, elderly speech, discrimination, gendered language, orthography, electronic information devices, and language education. However, since he passed away immediately after this call for a socially more engaged sociolinguistics, Tokugawa’s idea of welfare linguistics became an intellectual orphan. Even though the term welfare linguistics is widely known in Japanese sociolinguistics, it remained primarily employed as a metaphor to stress that the study of language in society needed to be in service of weaker individuals or groups (Heinrich 2017).

Foreign Language Learning in a Welfare Linguistics Framework

In this chapter, welfare linguistics will first be defined as a macro approach to studying language and society. This requires a discussion of some fundamentals of welfare economy before the guiding principles of welfare economics are applied to the context of foreign language learning.

In the following, learners refer to individuals who learn Japanese as a second or foreign language in an institutional and guided setting. The chapter concludes with an example of designing a foreign language course for university students in a welfare linguistics framework.

Let us begin, however, with a brief recapitulation of how dominant ideologies of language and foreign language learners can subdue foreign language learners, as it will be argued that (1) such practices can reduce the well-being of language learners and (2) that welfare linguistics can help to address this problem.

Dominant Ideologies and Practices in Foreign Language Teaching

Language education has often served interests and agendas other (or larger) than language learning itself (Pennycook 1994). Foreign languages have, for example, been taught and learned to study religious thought (Ferguson 1982), have been in service of post-WWII area studies to establish Western hegemony across the world (Miyoshi and Harootunian 2002), or have been promoted to foster European integration (McLelland and Smith 2018). These larger agendas in language learning and teaching have led to critical examinations of teaching and learning practices and ideologies (e.g., Byram 1997; Kramsch 2009; Kubota and Lin 2009). This chapter aims to detach language learning and teaching from other agendas to focus on what language learning does to its students. The welfare framework is thereby meant to give such reflection a solid epistemological base.

When focusing on language teaching and learning outside larger agendas, one of the first things to note is that foreign language instruction routinely involves a hidden curriculum. This hidden curriculum diffuses dominant ideologies about the target language, society, culture, and the students' place in this context. Most of these ideas are detrimental to students' objectives and interests, as they often prepare students to assume a subordinated role in the target language society (Peng 2015). In a study of the hidden curriculum in Japanese education textbooks, Heinrich (2005) found, for example, that the fictional Japanese characters appearing in the textbooks were exclusively middle class, urban, and monolingual, that these characters engaged in activities that carry high cultural capital, and that encounters between Japanese nationals and foreign language learners were asymmetrical. In addition, Japanese nationals dominated the interactions with foreign language learners. Foreign language learners were portrayed as passive and needing benevolent instruction by first language speakers. The foreign nationals appearing in the teaching materials studies possessed no skills valued, and there was no sign of interest in their specific cultural and linguistic knowledge or their communicative practices. In this way, such teaching materials instruct foreign language learners not only on language but also on activities and attitudes that carry high cultural prestige in Japan, and they prepare foreign language learners to accept their positions as cultural and linguistic outsiders whose own values, activities, and knowledge are rarely acknowledged (see also, Otsuji, Kumagai and Satō 2021). Finally, such teaching materials reduce Japanese society to the social fields where cultural and economic capital intersect (Kataoka 2017). Such a reductionist perspective on language, society, and culture gives preferential treatment mostly to members of the Japanese middle class, and it is detrimental to everybody else. Teaching and learning Japanese in such ways excludes and marginalizes language learners. In this context, welfare linguistics provides new perspectives on how to change this or alleviate such effects.

Language and speakers are subject to ideological constructions. If we stay with the example of Japanese, the language is usually framed as the language spoken by all Japanese, and only by them, and with equal mastery among them – a gross simplification of the sociolinguistic realities in Japan (Heinrich 2012). As a result of such an ideological outlook, the aim for mastery of Japanese as a foreign language is inevitably native-like. This makes learners constant and endless targets of judgment because they can only fail in the objective of speaking a foreign language as if it were their first language. Consider, for example, the various designations for the types of proficiency that exist for Japanese language learners: Japanese speaker (*nihongo washa* 日本語話者), Japanese quasi-native speaker (*nihongo jun-bogo washa* 日本語準母語話者), advanced Japanese learner (*jōkyū nihongo gakushūsha* 上級日本語学習者), super-advanced Japanese language learner (*nihongo chōkyū gakushūsha* 日本語超級学習者), etc. Note that even super-advanced knowledge of Japanese is not the end of the ladder of simply becoming a Japanese speaker. What is more, Japanese as a first language is not Japanese (*nihongo* 日本語) but national language (*kokugo* 国語). Foreign speakers can never become speakers of national language, even if they are born, raised, and educated in Japan. Note also that there exists no terminology such as national language quasi-native speaker (*kokugo jun-bogo washa* 国語準母語話者), or super-advanced national language learner (*kokugo chōkyū gakushūsha* 国語超級学習者). It is assumed that all Japanese speak perfectly Japanese and that foreign language learners do not and never will (Länsisalmi 2018). When subscribing to such ideological constructs of language and speaker, learners have no way out of being linguistically foreign, no matter how much and how well they study and learn to speak Japanese. In real life, and outside ideology, we find in Japan large numbers of Japanese-born foreign nationals who are socialized in Japan, Japanese heritage speakers abroad, Japanese returnee children, Chinese return migrants, Japanese linguistic minorities, and first language speakers undergoing attrition while living overseas – the list is endless (Maher 2022). Any approach to foreign language education that does not critically question dominant ideological notions of speakers or language, is at risk of assigning foreign language speakers (forever) a place at the margin of the target society. I argue that welfare linguistics provides a welcome impetus to deconstruct such beliefs and to take a fundamentally different view on foreign language teaching and learning.

Origins and Theoretical Grounding of Welfare Linguistics

Tokugawa (1999) pointed out that his idea of welfare linguistics had been inspired by the field of welfare economy. Therefore, the first task for providing a theoretical outline for welfare linguistics is to consider what exactly could be incorporated from welfare economics into the largely undefined welfare linguistics framework (Heinrich 2021). In economics, welfare refers to the aggregate producer and consumer surplus. Put most simply, welfare economics is concerned with maximizing profit for society at large. Its basic axioms provide a framework for policy-making that seeks to balance interests between producers and consumers. The objective of welfare economy is to create policies that balance the economy so that maximum well-being can be achieved.

There are three possible scenarios of how producer and consumer surplus can be realized. First, the producer makes more surplus than the consumer, i.e., a given product is more expensive than many consumers are willing or able to pay. Second, the consumer makes more surplus, i.e., a given product is cheaper than many producers are able or willing to sell. Third, there is a situation in which the producer and demand curve meet. In this specific case, the producer and consumer surplus (the social welfare) are the highest. This point, called the general equilibrium, is thus the situation where neither producer nor consumer profits more than the other side. In addition, it is the point at which society (producers and consumers) benefits the most (Johansson 2001). To

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recapitulate, when moving away from the general equilibrium, making somebody better off (either consumer or producer) implies making the other one worse off. What is more, the overall surplus (social welfare) drops. This mechanism is known as the Pareto efficiency. Welfare economics provides a tool to plan the redistribution of benefits so that the Pareto efficiency can be realized.

Graph (a) in Figure 14.1 represents the case where the market price for a given product coincides with demand and supply. Triangle X is the consumer surplus, that is, all the purchases with a lower price than the equilibrium. Triangle Y is the producer surplus. It corresponds to all sales with higher prices than the equilibrium. X and Y are the same size, and their aggregate surplus forms the social welfare (the maximally possible surplus). Graph (b) in Figure 14.1 represents a case where the market price is lower than the equilibrium. For example, this could result from a market intervention by the state. The consumer surplus X is now larger than Y, which is obvious because the lower price benefits the customer and hurts the producer. The main point of welfare economics is that the aggregate sum of X and Y is smaller than in Graph (a) when compared to Graph (a). In other words, social welfare has been reduced in (b). The customer comes off better by making the producer worse off, but society comes off worse, too. Sen (1986) showed that this concept of social welfare can also be applied to issues such as health, morbidity, and longevity. Welfare linguistics argues that this principle can also be extended to language.

Before considering how these mechanisms can be applied to foreign language learning and teaching, let us consider an example from a market of language learning for illustration. If a language teacher offers a course of 20 classes in Japanese for 500 dollars and a learner is willing to pay up to 500 dollars for 20 classes of Japanese, we have an equilibrium. Anyone paying more than 500 dollars for this class will result in a producer surplus, i.e., the teacher will make more profit. On the other hand, any student paying less than 500 dollars will result in a consumer surplus. As can be expected, both the teacher and the learner are interested in cutting the most profitable deal for them, but these objectives are in conflict. If the learner profits, the teacher suffers, and vice versa. In addition, and this is the crucial point of welfare economics, the social welfare is reduced. In other words, any case in which 20 lessons of Japanese cost more or less than the equilibrium price of 500 dollars will result in fewer sales of this language learning course because it is seen as either too expensive for some learners or it is seen as not worth the trouble teaching it for some teachers. In both cases, this means reduced welfare, i.e., a reduced aggregate surplus of consumers and producers. Fewer people learn Japanese. If we want to ensure that as many people as possible can learn and teach Japanese, then we need to ensure that the cost of language courses is at equilibrium.

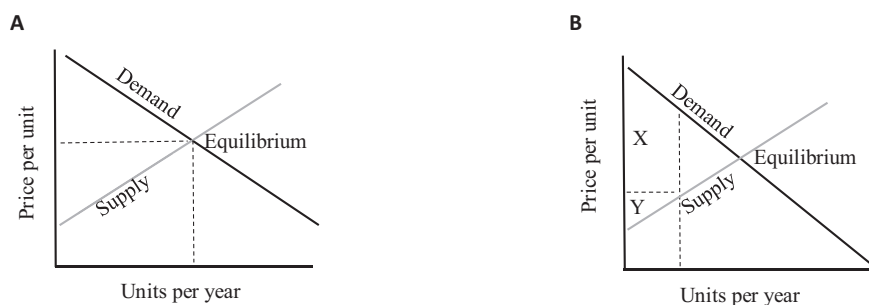


Figure 14.1 Surplus in welfare economics. (A) Maximum social welfare surplus; (B) Consumer surplus.

The lesson of this model is straightforward. Mutual consideration of the other's interest profits society at large, and it is this point that makes social welfare interesting for language learning and teaching. The two basic theorems are the idea of an optimal distribution of resources (the Pareto efficient) and the possibility of arriving at this point through policy interventions in the distribution of resources.¹ There are different interests in language teaching and learning, too. These are, however, not economic but manifest symbolically and in relations of domination. We will discuss this first on the societal level, before turning to an individual level.

Welfare Linguistics on the Societal Level

Welfare linguistics embraces the idea of balancing conflicting (linguistic) interests and resources. The corresponding idea of producer and consumer surplus can be framed around the concepts of dominant speakers and foreign language speakers in the case of language learning and teaching. Therefore, the principal categories to consider in welfare linguistics are dominant speaker and dominated speaker, or first language speaker and foreign language speaker. We have seen above that foreign language speakers are often ideologically constructed as dominated speakers in the hidden curriculum. This perspective on foreign language learners and linguistic dominance is backed by a long tradition of work on language, authority, and dominance in sociolinguistics (e.g., Bernstein 1971; Hymes 1980; Milroy and Milroy 1991). The concepts of price and units of sale in welfare economics can be replaced by linguistic capital and norm expectations. Following Bourdieu (1986), linguistic cultural capital functions like prize in economics in that it attains its value in a system of exchanges in a linguistic market. The surplus of linguistic capital relates to the degrees to which linguistic capital fulfills norm expectations. In this way, linguistic capital can be below or above norm expectations, and a surplus or deficit can be conceptualized. By adopting sociolinguistic categories to the model of welfare economy, we thus arrive at the following scenario (Figure 14.2).

Following the two basic theorems of welfare economy, i.e., (1) a maximum aggregate benefit can be achieved (Pareto efficiency) by (2) balancing interests through redistribution, it is in the logic of welfare linguistics that the maximum linguistic welfare can only be achieved by balancing the linguistic capital of foreign language learners with the norm expectations of the host society. We can see in Graph (a) of Figure 14.2 that the most extensive linguistic welfare is achieved when the linguistic capital of foreign language speakers meets the norm expectations of the first

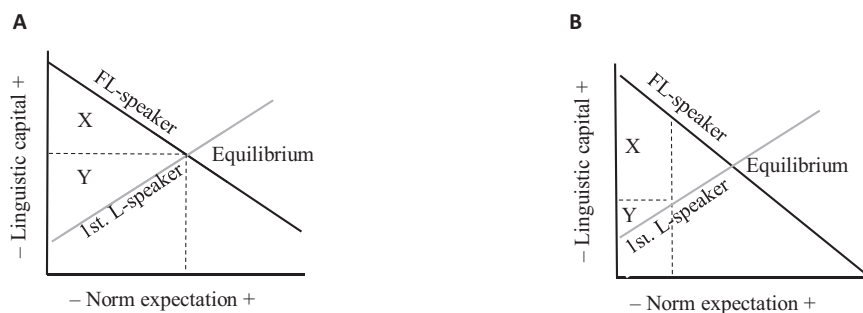


Figure 14.2 Surplus in welfare linguistics. (A) Maximum linguistic welfare surplus; (B) First language speaker surplus.

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language speaker. This constitutes the equilibrium that results in the biggest combined surplus of linguistic capital between first language speakers and foreign language speakers. In other words, Graph (a) depicts a situation where the aggregate benefit for society is highest. Arriving at this point where linguistic capital and norm expectations meet constitutes, I would argue, a valid policy objective for foreign language learning policy. However, we can assume that the situation in most societies resembles that of Graph (b) in Figure 14.2. The maximum surplus, in this case, is not social, but it rests solely with the first language speakers. In other words, first language speakers maximize gain from the current sociolinguistic setting at the expense of the foreign language speakers, but also at the expense of society at large. This implies that there are two basic ways available to improve this situation for society at large, i.e. two ways how to maximize linguistic welfare. The first is to augment the linguistic capital of the foreign language speakers. This can, for example, be achieved by higher proficiencies in the foreign language. The second is to relax norm expectations by acknowledging that not everybody participating in society is a first language speaker. The first insight is arguably already on the agenda of most foreign language policies, but the second is probably not.

Let us take a closer look at how first and foreign language speakers relate in such a welfare linguistics model. Let's consider the two curves of the first language speaker and the foreign language speaker in Figure 14.2 separately. We understand that speakers have a specific linguistic capital, and that this linguistic capital relates to norm expectations. In concrete intercultural communication, the equilibrium point is achieved when communication between first language speakers and foreign language speakers is seen as minimally unproblematic for society. For the case of foreign language speakers, this implies that any lower linguistic capital on their side requires added efforts on the side of the first language speakers in intercultural communication. Seen the other way around, any higher linguistic capital on the side of the foreign language speakers constitutes a surplus for the first language speakers. They must invest less effort or resources into intercultural communication. The surplus for foreign language speakers rests in higher-than-average intercultural competence on the side of the first language speakers. They can successfully communicate with them with less linguistic capital or resources.

On a societal level, the aggregate surplus created by first language speakers and foreign language speakers constitutes sociolinguistic welfare. It is constituted by the aggregate value of (a) higher than expected language proficiency by foreign language learners and (b) higher than expected intercultural competence on the side of the first language speakers of the host society. In other words, foreign language speakers with more linguistic capital than is required for minimally effortless communication contribute to sociolinguistic welfare, and so do all those first language speakers who can engage in minimally effortless communication with a linguistic capital lower than the point of equilibrium. In traditional terminology, the first are advanced speakers of the foreign language in question, and the latter are first language speakers with high intercultural proficiency.

A linguistic welfare perspective on foreign language learning provides for more than a call for more tolerance towards or support for foreign language speakers. It helps identify the tasks to be realized by learners, educators, policymakers, and society at large to arrive at the best societal linguistic configuration of a diversifying society. The task is twofold (reflecting the consumer and producer binary in welfare economics). On the one hand, language learners are invited and supported to learn the foreign language up to a level where intercultural communication becomes effortless for both sides involved. On the other hand, first language speakers are invited and assisted in developing the necessary intercultural competence that allows for effortless communication with

foreign speakers. Ideally, norm expectations need to be fulfilled by foreign language speakers. However, norms must also be renegotiated, and this crucially involves a relaxation of expectations by first language speakers. Higher-than-required skills by language learners are appreciated as they contribute to welfare, and the same applies to higher-than-required intercultural skills on the side of first language speakers. Both types of individuals do good for themselves, and they do good for society.

In this chapter, we focus solely on language educators and learners. The message for them is as follows: Foreign language education needs to be concerned with language learning in multilingual societies. It must consider the proficiency and cultural capital of all members of society (not only those of first language speakers). Such an approach to language education needs to affect everybody who is part of society, as it seeks to negotiate and balance expectations, practices, norms, and cultural capital in a way that society at large profits. Applying the welfare framework marks a departure from educational practices that seek to adjust or prepare learners to native language norms. Next, let us consider how these insights can be related to the individual level.

Welfare Linguistics on the Individual Level

If we turn to individuals, we cannot apply the societal concept of welfare, which is social, nor the related economic concept of surplus. A term related to individuals that can be applied is well-being (Nettle 2005). There exists by now a small but rapidly growing body of work addressing the interrelation of language and well-being, especially in its consequences on physical and mental health among endangered language communities. Such research has revealed, for example, a relationship between endangered language maintenance and physical and psychological health. Concretely speaking, it has been found that the higher the proficiency in the endangered language of a community, the less prone members were to suffer, for example, from diabetes, obesity, or depression (for a summary, see Heinrich 2023). Regarding immigrants, Wang (2022) finds significant correlations between speaking the host community language well and the well-being of Chinese and Japanese immigrants in Germany. Among immigrants to Australia, Lee, Niu and Yang (2022) find a correlation between English proficiency, on the one hand, and improved mental health and life satisfaction, on the other hand. English contributed to socioeconomic status, physical health, healthy lifestyles, and a strong social network, which positively affected mental life and life satisfaction. Also, the language learning process is related to improved or decreased well-being. Language learning can be enriching, and it can be frustrating. A foreign language, according to Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998: 65), can be ‘alien, unknown and difficult to learn. It can be a constant reminder of a deficiency and a nagging threat to one’s image of cultural competence’. At the same time, we also know that language learning is not only a burden and a challenge but that it serves as a means of personal development, enrichment, and empowerment. We can thus state that language learning may promote well-being or constitute an obstacle to well-being.

The task of welfare linguistics is to contribute through education to individual language learners’ physical, psychological, and social well-being. Or, seen the other way around, it should seek to reduce the consequences or mitigate the negative impact of learning a new language on well-being. If we follow Tokugawa’s (1999: 89) idea that welfare linguistics is ‘about what goes on in the world’ then we can think of how welfare linguistics can actively contribute to social welfare and individual well-being. Hirataka (2013), for example, provides for three mutually interconnected issues that can define language education in a welfare linguistics framework. First, focusing on welfare should collapse the distinction between L1, L2, and heritage language

education, because all fields should emphasize the well-being of the speakers. Second, a welfare perspective shifts attention to the fact that foreign language learners occupy a weak position in the Japanese language community – an issue to be addressed in language pedagogy, teaching material development, or curriculum design. Third, welfare linguistics should acknowledge that language learning constitutes a pathway to participate in Japanese society and that Japanese society needs to be conceptualized as multilingual and multicultural. The epistemological shift proposed by Hirataka has important implications. Language education needs to foster support networks for foreign language learners, and it also needs to promote intercultural tolerance and skills among first language speakers. This requires fostering specific attitudes among all involved, language learners, heritage language speakers and learners, and first language speakers.

The contributions of Tokugawa (1999) and Hirataka (2013) to welfare linguistics pave the way to research manifestations of dominance and discrimination and to study the basis and reproductive mechanisms of dominance and discrimination. By shifting attention from the individual experiencing language problems to the society in which specific individuals experience problems, we come to understand that diversity in language is not simply about being different but that diversity in contemporary society often involves inequality. Those who differ bear the consequences of their difference. In concrete terms, welfare linguistics for language learning and education (1) identifies structures and institutions of oppression and exclusion about linguistic interaction, (2) proposes dominated and excluded speakers strategies for how to deal with such situations, (3) empowers dominated speakers and their ways of communicating, and (4) practices alternatives to the structures and institutions identified as oppressive (Heinrich 2017). Seeing foreign language learners as lacking something perpetuates negative views and valuations, and by doing so, does little to combat processes of marginalization and exclusion. If welfare linguistics were simply an effort to help the weak, it would inevitably reproduce structures of domination and accordingly do little to interrupt the marginalization processes. In welfare linguistics, problems do not rest with those seen to be problematic but with those who perceive it as problematic.

Before moving on to a discussion of welfare linguistics on an individual level, let us quickly consider how the problem of deviance does not simply rest on those who deviate. This is an important point in welfare linguistics, because traditional perspectives tend to frame the language learner as lacking something. Such a perspective perpetuates negative views and valuations, and by doing so does too little to combat processes of marginalization and exclusion. If welfare linguistics were simply an effort to “help weaker members” of society, then it would inevitably reproduce structures of domination, and in so doing would do little to interrupt the marginalization processes. In welfare linguistics, problems do not rest with those “seen to be problematic”, but with those who perceive an issue, a practice, a skill, etc. as problematic. Research on disability studies and language rights in Japan has shown how such a minus-epistemology can be avoided (e.g., Masiko 2012). It has promoted the social model to analyze language problems. Put simply, the social model points out that a problem only comes into existence when it is made to be one by society. In other words, not the problem as such is an issue that needs to be resolved but the social creation of the problem. The most basic principle in which society creates problems for those who differ is that the presence of those who differ is not acknowledged. Stairs, for example, become a problem for motorically disabled persons because their presence has been ignored in the planning process. The presence of those who are not acknowledged may include linguistic minorities, the blind and deaf, binational individuals, non-binary persons, or foreign language learners. Such individuals or groups feel weakened, marginalized, or excluded because institutional practices and the ideologies that inform them do not take their presence into account, and it is this which

results in problems. In case their presence is considered, then usually as a deviation from the dominant part of society, and this calls for an intervention on the level of those who differ. The social model, however, addresses the problem of the societal level. For example, linguistic minorities (indigenous or migrant) feel marginalized because their language and cultural practices are not acknowledged, and if they are, it is acknowledged as something additional that requires special attention. Also, literacy may constitute a problem for a considerable part of any society because it remains a singular form (literacy), despite all evidence to the contrary, that is, the existence of various and differing types of literacies (Nakashima 2018). Such socially created problems share the fact that all those who experience them are seen to lack something, and the only impulse that emerges from such an ontological and epistemological perspective is to address and diminish this perceived lack. Let us next consider what welfare linguistics can contribute to changing this regarding foreign language education.

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Language learners learn the target language to acquire specific knowledge about language and to participate with, communicate, and interact with members of a new society (Kramsch 2009; Savignon 2000). Just like acquiring the linguistic system itself, learning to participate, communicate, and interact involves symbolic and real-life difficulties. Since welfare linguistics is applied and supports emancipation, it seeks to be actively and purposefully involved in solving or managing problems that stand in the way of communication, participation, and interaction. The best way to engage in this is to depart from occurring real-life problems and to actively involve the students and teachers in this. For example, students can be encouraged to analyze their problems in participation, communication, and interaction to reflect how these problems have been created by society in the first place. Language learners can also learn more about the real-life consequences of learning and using a new language. Real-life and micro-level analysis reveals that not all deviations from norms necessarily draw negative evaluations from the side of the host community (Nekula, Sherman and Zawiszová 2022). Language learners' creative solutions to getting things done in a new language can also result in positive evaluations and admiration for their creativity and flexibility. This kind of analysis will unveil that language learning is not a binary pass-fail activity. Moreover, it will show that the static native-non-native confrontation is merely a matter of language ideology. Welfare linguistics helps students acquire new knowledge and practices without devaluing their life experiences before they start learning the new language. Students of language embody languages and cultures in contact. Learners are valued for what they are and encouraged in their new developments.

Engaging in welfare linguistics requires more than making a few terminological changes. It invites practitioners to go back to the drawing board, so to speak, to reflect on how to organize language education that puts social welfare and learner well-being front and center. Such activities can, for example, be mapped on the conceptual field that is given in Figure 14.3. Doing so can assist in identifying new elements and activities for foreign language education.

Figure 14.3 encourages teachers to cross two continua when reflecting on teaching activities. On the vertical axis, we find language, which stretches from the linguistic system itself (pronunciation, lexicon, grammar, etc.) to interaction (getting something done by language, e.g., obtaining a credit card). On the horizontal axis, we find participation and a feeling of empowerment that we equate with well-being here. On the opposite end of this continuum, we find exclusion and a sense of disqualification, which we equate with the absence of well-being. Teachers and students can

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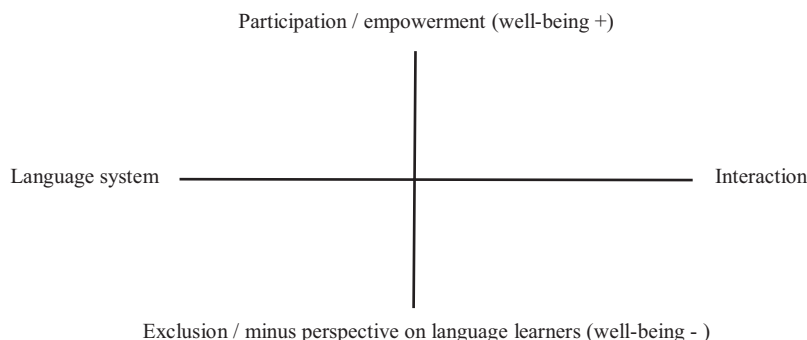


Figure 14.3 Planning teaching activities for foreign language education.

now think about what problems undermine well-being and what solutions or interactional knowledge can be acquired to address this. In a workshop I taught to 45 Japanese language teachers in Germany in 2019, I proposed that they distinguish between three components that can contribute to or undermine foreign language learners' well-being and place them in the figure depicted above (Figure 14.3). These components were the desire to feel autonomous, competent, and related.

While there is no need to discuss in detail all the ideas and problems identified by the teachers of Japanese in this workshop, it is worthy of note to point out that autonomy was often associated with the language system and that teachers had many ideas on how to empower students in this respect. A feeling of competence was mostly an issue that was located between the language system and interaction, thus involving mainly sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge. Relatedness was most salient on the level of interaction. The Japanese teachers identified many concrete issues that students would face. For example, difficulties in interacting via messaging can result in exclusion from interactions, thereby negatively affecting relatedness. Hence, they placed a sticker at the bottom right side of the field with a note saying “messaging”, and they started discussing how to empower students to work on this, e.g., how students could move upwards in this field towards inclusion. Difficulties in producing handwriting were seen to undermine students' autonomy in getting specific things done in Japan. Also, more traditional issues, such as pronunciation, were framed within the proposed grid and labels. The teachers agreed that not practicing pronunciation would undermine the students' own sense of competence. Note in this context that pronunciation is usually treated very lightly in Japanese foreign language education in Europe and that many students are not aware that Japanese has pitch and not stress accent. Thinking about well-being helped the teachers to put new issues on the teaching agenda.

Based on this guided brainstorming on Japanese language education in a welfare linguistics framework, I then asked the Japanese language teachers to plan new Japanese language courses – courses that credibly and purposefully aimed at increasing individual well-being and, through this, also improved social welfare. I concretely asked them to develop a curriculum for a one-semester course titled Japanese for well-being. Let us consider the result of one of these groups. They titled their course *パワー留学：激励のための日本語* (Power Study Abroad: Japanese for Encouragement) and presented their idea on a poster to other participants. The poster had the following structure.

We can see in Table 14.1 how a welfare approach to teaching a foreign language seeks to equip learners with skills to deal with problems and conflicts consciously. The idea of welfare is

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Table 14.1 Proposed Japanese language course for German students

パワー留学: Japanisch zum Ermutigen	Power study abroad: Japanese for Encouragement [in German]
レベル: 中級	Level: Intermediate
対象: ドイツ大学日本学専攻 4 学期 (留学予定)	Target: 4th-semester Japanese Studies majors at a German university (planning to study abroad)
目標: 留学出発の準備 (エンパワーメント)	Goal: Preparation for departure to study abroad (empowerment)
秘密の目標: 日本社会の規範に爆弾を投げ込む	Hidden goal/curriculum: Throwing a bomb into the norms of Japanese society
骨子:	Essentials:
1. 自己+ドイツ紹介を面白くする	1. Make introductions of yourself and Germany funny/interesting
2. 留学する地域のリサーチ (自分でできること)	2. Research the area where you will study abroad (what you can do on your own)
3. 留学先の知り合い作り (メールやSNSで)	3. Making friends at your study abroad destination (via email and SNS)
※ 異文化摩擦のケーススタディ	*Case study of cross-cultural frictions
※ 違和感の種ひろい	* How seeds of discomfort spread

manifested in the concept of this course, and it has a new hidden curriculum: Throwing a bomb into the norm of Japanese society. Rather than uncritically reproducing the application of monolingual norms in the context of foreign language learning, the hidden curriculum aims to work against such expectations (throwing a bomb). Specific skills were identified which would help students achieve this. For example, this syllabus seeks to develop abilities to create fun self-introductions, a skill widely appreciated and possessed in Japanese society, where self-introductions need to be frequently performed. Having a good start to entering a new circle of friends or fellow students would help students feel relaxed and competent about themselves. This curriculum also put self-reflection on possible frictions on the agenda to highlight from the start that a sense of unease is often inevitable when participating in a new social and linguistic environment. Students were thought to be best able to handle this if they had meta-linguistic knowledge about such matters so that they could independently and confidently deal with them.

The concrete examples above neatly illustrate the main points this chapter sought to stress. These included that welfare linguistics should not be an ad-hoc label attached to any effort to support foreign language learners. Welfare linguistics is more comprehensive than that. It can encourage and guide both macro-approaches and micro-approaches to foreign language learning and teaching. Welfare linguistics can add new objectives to the agenda, too. It can actively contribute to fostering and strengthening a feeling of ability to get things done, to feel related, and to have confidence in one's autonomy while using a foreign language. Finally, entirely new activities, courses, and curricula can be developed by departing from these principles.

Discussion and Outlook

This chapter has shown the analytical prowess of a welfare framework for foreign language education and learning. Welfare linguistics acknowledges the existence of foreign language speakers in society as a constitutive part of society, not as some divergence that needs to be adjusted.

Foreign Language Learning in a Welfare Linguistics Framework

Language education aimed at welfare can help prepare students to deal with the symbolic dominance that works against their interests and well-being. Students can learn to make their existence, values, and culture meaningful in their foreign language encounters. The point is to break free from the social reproduction of cultural dominance via language and to affirm some continuity of personal identity in the new speech community.

By shifting attention to an analysis of society that includes all and not only the dominant part, welfare linguistics provides an opportunity to undo ideologies and epistemologies that produce domination. Teaching foreign languages means engaging in social change. Balancing interests between dominant and dominated speakers, or between first language speakers and foreign language speakers, becomes the prime objective. The ongoing diversification of societies is a task for all to confront, not only for foreign language learners. Society benefits most if foreign language learning is successful, when norms of interactions are adjusted to reflect the diverse composition of contemporary societies, and when intercultural communicative skills are enhanced. Welfare linguistics contributes to improving equality in diversifying societies and helps undo structures of authority in everyday language life. Welfare language education empowers the weakest persons in language learning, the learners, and departs from their well-being in all its considerations and practices. Such an approach to language teaching results in a new sense of solidarity, where all engaged in language learning and teaching acknowledge the differences of the others and support these differences even if they are not part of one's own life. I argue that this is no small contribution to promoting thoughtful, respectful, and peaceful human intercourse in multilingual and multicultural societies and that welfare linguistics, therefore, can make a meaningful contribution to the topic of this handbook. What, in a nutshell, is welfare linguistics about? It is dominant speakers (and teachers) ceasing to reproduce their dominance because refraining to do so profits dominated speakers and society at large.

Acknowledgments

The ideas presented in this chapter have profited from discussions with Shinji Sato, Emi Otsuji, Yuri Kumagai, Yuko Sugita, and Yuka Ando. I am also indebted to two anonymous reviewers for many useful suggestions and the editors of this handbook for their patience and support. All remaining shortcomings in this chapter are mine.

Note

- 1 Note that this scenario includes the government, which can be accountable for the policy interventions by subsidizing one market player.

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