An Investigation into
the Reasons of Discontinuance of Japanese
amongst First Year Tertiary Students
who have Studied Japanese
to Year 13 at Secondary School

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A level	Advanced level (CIE)
ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
AS level	Advanced Subsidiary level (CIE)
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
CIE	Cambridge International Examinations
CILT	The National Centre for Languages
CM	Continuing motivation
CPIT	Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology
CUAP	Committee on University Academic Programmes
ERO	Education Review Office
ETS	Education Testing Service
FL	Foreign language
FLL	Foreign language learning
IB	International Baccalaureate
L2	Second language
LOTE	Languages other than English
MoE	Ministry of Education (New Zealand)
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZCF	New Zealand Curriculum Framework
NZPA	New Zealand Press Association
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
TL	Target language
TPDL	Teacher Professional Development in Languages
UK	United Kingdom
UNSW	University of New South Wales
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Yr	Year (level at school)

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgement), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Abstract

This study has used grounded theory to investigate the reasons New Zealand students cease learning Japanese language at the transition stage from secondary to tertiary education despite their successful learning of Japanese to Yr 13 at secondary school.

The literature suggests that as a foreign language, Japanese is one of the more time-consuming languages to master and in many countries high student attrition rates among Japanese language learners, particularly at an early stage of their learning, have been a serious concern. Therefore, it is important to identify the reasons for discontinuance in order to eliminate problems and encourage students to continue their language learning. However, in New Zealand, major studies on student attrition in language learning were within the secondary sector and there has been little research done among long term language learners at the transition stage.

The data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with sixteen participants from Auckland who studied Japanese to Yr 13 at secondary school but did not study at tertiary level. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using a grounded theory process for coding, comparative analysis and theoretical sampling.

Findings revealed that while some participants considered continuing Japanese at tertiary level, some other participants did not have any intention to continue Japanese. Findings also revealed that the major reasons for discontinuance for those who had some intention to continue Japanese were either: having a concern over academic manageability in taking Japanese along with their major studies; and/or having a difficulty in access to the Japanese course.

Recommendations and suggestions are made in the light of facilitating Yr 13

students of Japanese to continue Japanese at tertiary level. Further research on post-Yr 13 students of Japanese in other regions, and post-Yr 13 students of other languages who discontinued their language learning at tertiary level are also recommended.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Every now and then, the media in Anglophone countries deplore their countries' poor performance in second languages (L2) (Jeffrey, 2007; McCrone, 2008; Reisz, 2009; Sussex, 2008; They all speak English; Monolingual Britain," 2006; Tomazin, 2008). Although there are billions of people communicating in English as their L2, Anglophone countries fear that these countries and their monolingual citizens, might be losing global capacities and potential economic growth because of their restricted abilities to communicate across and between cultures. New Zealand is one of these Anglophone countries and despite a large number of primary and secondary students who have been learning foreign languages (FLs) in recent years, there were not many students continuing the FL of their choice to Yr 13 (Ministry of Education, 2010b). Those who have learnt a FL know mastering a FL is a long, slow process which requires consistent work and progress will not be made instantly. Moreover, learning FLs as school subjects throughout secondary school, or just for three years at university will probably not be enough to reach a desirable level of fluency for practical use, particularly for Anglophone students learning a non-Roman language like Japanese (Beal, 1994; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Lo Bianco, 2000; Trotter, 1994). Whilst some of the benefits of FL learning (FLL) can be obtained through the process of language learning itself, more desirable, direct benefits of FLL generally come with proficiency. Unfortunately such benefits are not enjoyed by a majority of New Zealand students of FLs due to their early attrition of FL study. This study therefore attempts to begin to address this problem by examining the reasons why secondary students who have been relatively successful learners of Japanese decide not to continue with their Japanese studies when they embark on their tertiary education.

1.2 Background to the research

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. It is envisaged that this study will also have relevance for language learning more generally in New Zealand because it is not just learners of Japanese who stop language learning at their transition to tertiary education.

There have been a couple of large scale studies of secondary students of Japanese in New Zealand which tried to explain reasons of their discontinuance at the secondary level (Aschoff, 1992; Holt, et al., 2001; McLauchlan, 2007). There has also been some research on university students of Japanese which looked at motivation factors and students' course retention (M. Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Okamura, 1990; Tsuchiya, 1999). Although, in a broad sense, these

studies explored FL learner attritions which I wanted to find the reasons for, I thought there were significant differences between students in previous studies and those who discontinued Japanese at the transition stage from secondary school to tertiary education. Firstly, both in the length of FLL prior to discontinuance and in the level of proficiency and knowledge of Japanese, Yr 13 students of Japanese surpass students in previous studies who discontinued the TL after one or two years of FLL. Moreover, at the time of discontinuation at the transition stage students face major changes in life and in the learning environment whereas students in previous studies were in the same learning environment throughout the study, either in secondary school or in university. Therefore, it seemed inappropriate to apply findings of previous studies to Yr 13 students of Japanese at the transition stage. However, even in other countries or on other FLs, there has been very little research on student attrition at the transition stage from secondary to tertiary level. Thus, I felt that it was important to investigate why Yr 13 students of Japanese discontinue their Japanese learning at the transition stage from secondary to tertiary level.

1.3 Research aim and methodology

As mentioned the aim of the research is to investigate the reasons for a discontinuance of Japanese learning amongst New Zealand students who have studied Japanese to Yr 13 at their transition stage from secondary school to tertiary education. It is hoped that achieving this aim will help to increase the number of students of Japanese who continue learning the language at tertiary level and become competent in the language.

As there was not enough research on L2 student attrition at the transition stage, setting up hypotheses based on other L2 student attrition studies and testing their applicability seemed impractical and inappropriate. Finding a large number of post-Yr 13 students of Japanese who discontinued the language at the transition stage as participants of the study within a limited budget and

time seemed difficult and unrealistic as well. To achieve the aim while considering these limitations, grounded theory methodology was chosen to conduct an inductive, in depth qualitative research. The methodology and methods of grounded theory are discussed further in Chapter 4.

1.4 Thesis overview

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides historical background and examines existing problems of Japanese language teaching and learning in New Zealand, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels. Chapter 3, the literature review, briefly reviews the literature on student attrition in higher education, then narrows down to student attrition in language courses and Japanese language courses, for more relevant discussions. New Zealand literature on student attrition and motivation in Japanese learning is also explored to see if there are issues specific to FL teaching and learning in New Zealand. Literature on motivation, particularly on motivation to learn languages in school settings, is reviewed and discussed as well. Following this a gap in the research is identified and a rationale for the present study is given.

Chapter 4 describes grounded theory, the methodology used in this study, and the research method. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also discussed. In Chapter 5 findings and the grounded theory of the study are presented. Chapter 6 examines findings further and proposes several ideas to promote a continuity of FLL from secondary to tertiary education. The chapter also includes recommendations for further study and conclusions which are drawn from the findings.

Chapter 2: Japanese language teaching in New Zealand

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the history of Japanese language teaching in New Zealand and other contextual issues at secondary and tertiary levels of education. These include the number of students learning Japanese, changes in the secondary qualification system and language education curricula. Some issues and problems of Japanese language teaching which previous studies identified are also reviewed as they were affected by changes in the secondary qualification system and language education curricula that are discussed in this chapter. In addition, the chapter discusses ongoing changes to the achievement standards of the secondary qualifications relevant to the Japanese language.

2.2 A history of Japanese language teaching in New Zealand

Over the last two decades, Japanese has been one of the most widely taught FLs in New Zealand. Its teaching started about half a century ago and has grown as the relationship between Japan and New Zealand has developed. In the mid 1990s, Japanese became the most popular FL to be studied in New Zealand, reflecting the importance of Japan in the New Zealand economy (Haugh, 1997). The popularity of Japanese at the secondary and tertiary levels decreased after the mid 1990s and the population of Japanese language learners in New Zealand has shifted to younger students. Since 2000, the number of primary and intermediate pupils learning Japanese has overtaken the number of secondary students learning Japanese (Ministry of Education, 2010b). However, in this section I would like to look at Japanese language education at the secondary and tertiary levels as they are more relevant to the research question.

2.2.1 Secondary level

At the secondary level, Japanese was initially introduced as a trial scheme from 1967 for sixth and seventh forms in the Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton, Palmerston North and Wellington areas (Nuibe, 1993). According to Nuibe

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(1993), in 1972 there were twenty seven schools teaching Japanese to 614 students. After becoming a Bursary subject in 1973, the number of students taking Japanese increased steadily and peaked in 1996 to 27,039 (Ministry of Education, 1996). At around the same time more schools introduced Japanese as an optional language (The Japan Foundation, 2000). It then started decreasing to 2002, when School Certificate was replaced by NCEA Level 1. A downturn of Japanese economy might be partially responsible for the decreasing trend after the peak (McLauchlan, 2007).
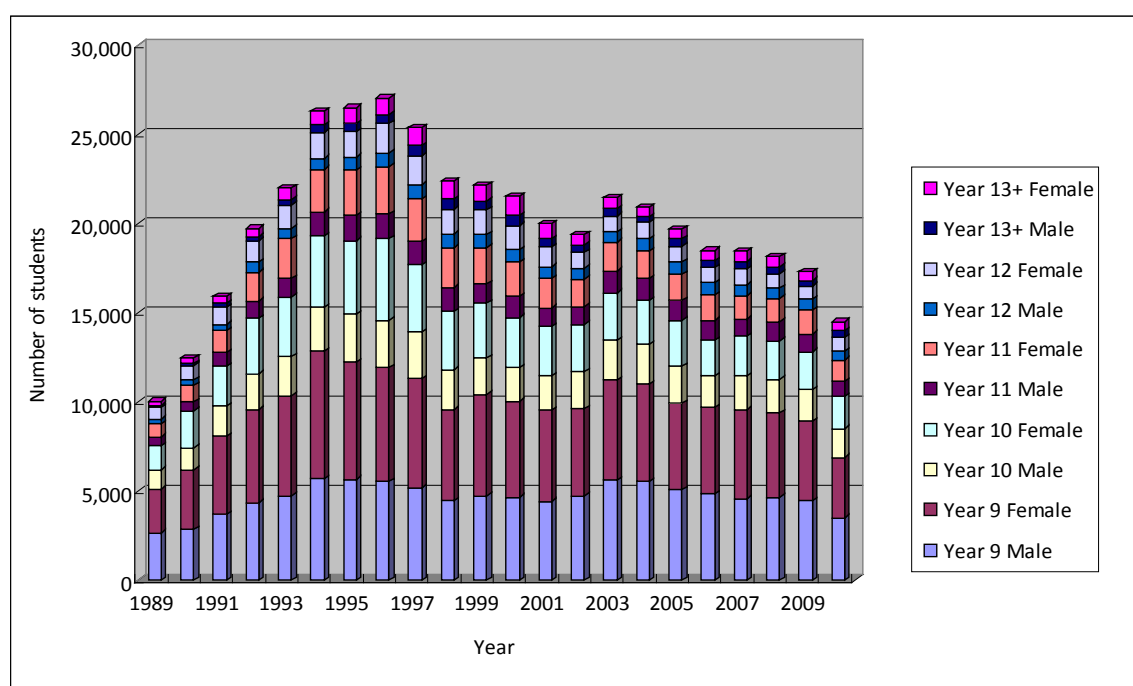
Figure 2.1 *Number of students taking Japanese at Secondary level in New Zealand 1989 – 2010 (Data compiled from Ministry of Education, 2004; 2010b)*

As Figure 2.2 shows, after decreasing for four years, the number of secondary schools offering Japanese jumped to 290 in 2003. Likewise, the number of students taking Japanese increased in 2003, but mainly in Yr 9 as seen in figure 2.1. Unfortunately neither of these increases in 2003 continued from 2004 onwards. A huge drop in the number of Yr 9 students taking Japanese in 2010 was a concern as this might be an indication that a number of schools decided to terminate Japanese courses and stopped offering Japanese to Yr 9 students.

Recent data from the Ministry of Education (MoE) (2011) showed there were fifteen schools which only had one student taking Japanese in 2010. In addition, another ten schools had two to four students enrolled in Japanese across all levels and a further six schools had no students taking Japanese at the junior level. These schools were likely in the process of terminating Japanese courses and as a result, a further decrease of the number of secondary students taking Japanese seems likely to happen.
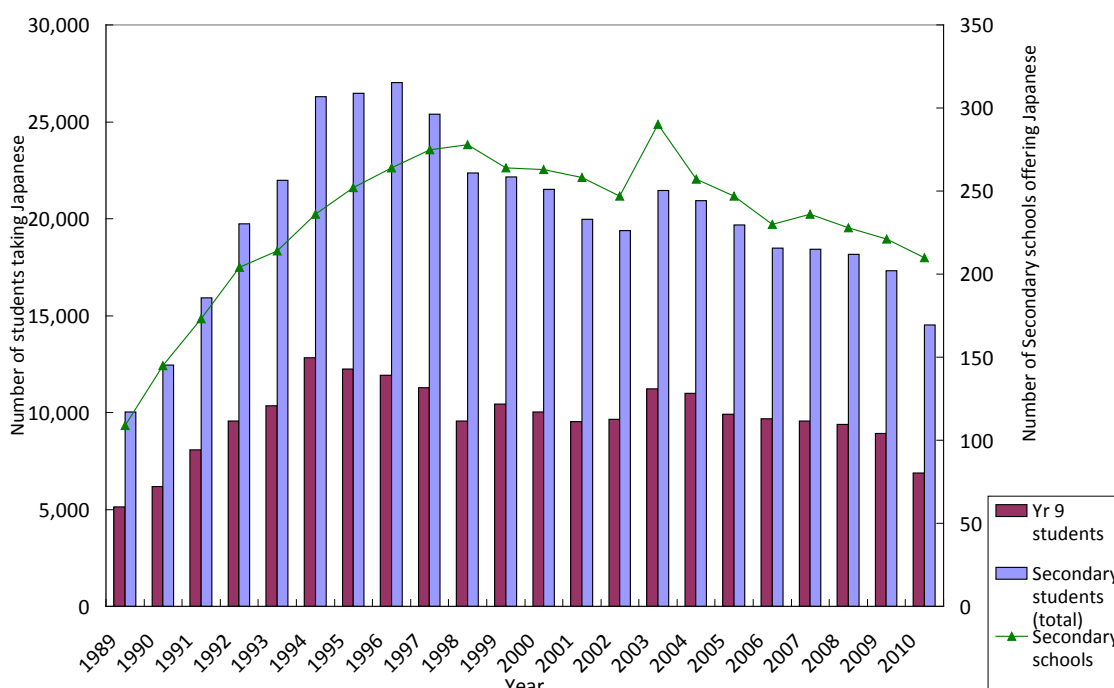
Figure **2.2** *Numbers of secondary students taking Japanese and secondary schools offering Japanese in New Zealand 1989 – 2010 (Data compiled from Ministry of Education, 2004; 2010b, 2011)*

From the early 1980s MoE started developing a national Japanese syllabus and its interim version was published in 1991 (Nuibe, 1993; Nuibe & Okuno, 1999). This initiative was undertaken because of the increasing number of students taking Japanese over the decade. At around the same time the government introduced the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF) and Unit Standards. Responding to this movement, MoE then developed 'Japanese in the New Zealand Curriculum', the first national curriculum of Japanese language. Its draft version was circulated in 1995 and in 1998 the final version was

published. Although the secondary qualification system in New Zealand has changed significantly in recent years, from School Certificate and Bursary to NCEA, the Japanese curriculum has not been changed. This is probably because the Japanese curriculum was relatively new during the introduction period of NCEA between 2002 and 2004.

The changes in the qualification system, however, have been quite controversial and have pushed some schools to offer other international qualifications, namely Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and International Baccalaureate (IB). Since state schools are obliged to offer students NCEA, in most of these state schools which opted to offer one of other qualifications, two qualification systems (NCEA and CIE or IB) have been co-existing. However, in CIE, Japanese is not available at Advanced (A) level, which is generally taken by Yr 13 students while other languages, such as French, Spanish, and Mandarin, are all available at A level. Therefore, Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level is the highest level for Japanese but it only carries half the weighting of an A level (University of Cambridge International Examinations, 2011). Consequently, schools offering CIE and students at these schools might see Japanese as a disadvantageous subject for university entry.

2.2.2 Tertiary level

In New Zealand, Massey University was the first tertiary institution which offered Japanese language courses in 1965 (Harvey, 1988; Haugh, 1997). It was followed by the University of Auckland in 1967, then the Universities of Waikato and Canterbury in 1971 (Harvey, 1988). Japanese language was also introduced to various polytechnics in the mid 1970s. By 1993 it was taught at twenty tertiary institutions including all seven universities in New Zealand as well as at all the main polytechnics (Haugh, 1997; The Japan Foundation, 1995).

However, some of the courses in those institutions did not last very long.

According to the Japan Foundation (2000, 2005, 2008) the total number of tertiary institutions teaching Japanese dropped from twenty to eighteen in 1998, twelve in 2003, then eleven in 2006. The rapid increase of Japanese courses amongst tertiary institutions in the 1990s might have caused an overabundance of supply of Japanese courses, resulting in some of these courses being unsustainable.

Since 2006, a few more Japanese language programmes have disappeared. At postgraduate levels, Massey University proposed the deletion of the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language in 2008 (CUAP, 2008). Its website information suggested that it also stopped taking new enrolments for other postgraduate qualifications specialising in Japanese in 2009. At undergraduate levels, Unitec has decided that it will no longer offer a Bachelor of Arts (Japanese). Still, Japanese language programmes are available at seven universities in New Zealand for undergraduate levels and there are also extramural courses offered by Massey University for undergraduate levels. According to university websites, Japanese language courses above Level 8 (400-Level, postgraduate) are offered by the Universities of Auckland, Waikato, Canterbury, Otago and Victoria University of Wellington. Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) also offers a Bachelor of Language (Japanese). Amongst private tertiary institutions, AIS St Helens and International Pacific College offer Japanese language programmes, but AIS was not included in the 2006 survey carried out by the Japan Foundation (2008) probably due to no response by AIS to the survey.

Figure 2.3 shows the number of Japanese language learners at tertiary level in New Zealand from 1990 to 2006 based on the data from the Japan Foundation's surveys (The Japan Foundation, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2008). According to the data, despite the decrease in the number of tertiary institutions offering Japanese language courses after its peak in 1993, the number of tertiary students

taking Japanese language courses in New Zealand seemed to be rather stable at around 2,200 between 1998 and 2006. However, figures in the data were based on responses filled and returned by the institutions which might not be consistently counted across institutions and years. Haugh (1997) pointed out that "some institution use the number of course enrolments, some use the number of Equivalent Full-Time Students (EFTS), while others use a physical count of students" (p. 7). There might also be some institutions which failed to return their responses. Unfortunately, the Japan Foundation's data seem to be the only detailed data on students of Japanese across New Zealand tertiary institutions readily accessible.
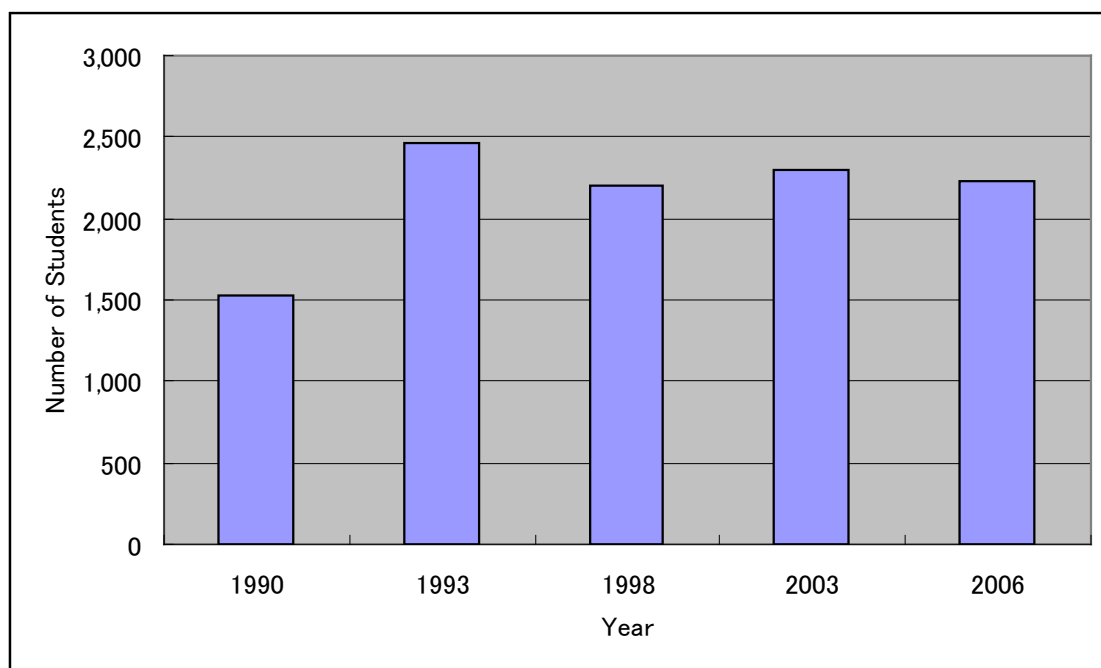
Figure **2.3** *Number of students taking Japanese at tertiary level in New Zealand 1990 – 2006 (Data compiled from the Japan Foundation, 1992 – 2008)*

2.3 Recent changes in language education curricula

In the early 2000s, MoE was reviewing the New Zealand Curriculum Framework/Te Anga Marautanga o Aotearoa (NZCF) to meet changing societal needs and to improve student outcomes. The 2002 review of NZCF recommended establishing a new learning area, 'Learning Languages' and

stated that "schools should be required to provide instruction in another language for students in years 7 to 10" (Ministry of Education, 2003). In November 2007, NZCF was revised and launched as the New Zealand Curriculum/Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007a). The recommendation was implemented and 'Learning Languages' became one of eight learning areas, separated from the main languages of instruction, English and Te Reo Māori (Ministry of Education, 2007b). Given a two year preparatory period, schools were required to fully implement NZC in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2007a). However, under the 2007 NZC it is not compulsory for students to take L2. Even so, it is expected that a significant number of intermediate students will experience learning another language offered at their intermediate school. This experience is likely to change students' views on language learning, and may, therefore affect their subsequent choice of option subjects, including languages, at secondary level. Thus, a popularity of Yr 9 FL classes at a secondary school might be influenced by the selection of languages and the quality of language teaching at local intermediate schools which feed their students into the secondary school.

Learning languages in intermediate school also potentially creates a disparity between those who carry on with the same language and those who take a new language in secondary level. Although learning a FL in intermediate school might initially seem like a trivial disparity between students, research suggests that students' previous language learning experience affects student motivation for language learning (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 2009). Moreover, presence of false beginners affects true beginners' motivation (Tse, 2000). Therefore, language teachers in secondary schools might be concerned about what languages are offered, and how much and what kind of language learning takes place in neighbouring intermediate schools where their incoming students are.

While the new curriculum is in the process of being implemented, MoE and

NZQA are currently conducting a review of NCEA standards and Unit Standards. The review started in 2008 and is now "in a phased implementation" which will be completed in 2013 (NZQA, 2009). In FLs, the change on Level 1 standards implemented in 2011 increased the proportion of internal assessments to total assessments in terms of credits and the number of standards compared to the previous set of standards.

Table 2.1 Comparison of the Standards of NCEA Level 1 Languages (Ministry of Education, 2009)

	Reference	Assessment	Credits	Title
Previous standards (2001 - 2010)	1.1	External	6	Listen to and understand spoken language in TARGET LANGUAGE in familiar contexts
	1.2	Internal	3	Deliver a prepared talk in simple TARGET LANGUAGE on a familiar topic
	1.3	Internal	3	Converse in simple TARGET LANGUAGE in a familiar context
	1.4	External	6	Read and understand written language in TARGET LANGUAGE in familiar contexts
	1.5	External	3	Write text in TARGET LANGUAGE on a familiar topic
	1.6	Internal	3	Write crafted text in TARGET LANGUAGE on a familiar topic, with the support of resources
	Total	3 Int., 3 Ext.	24	(9 credits from internals, 15 credits from externals)
New standards (2011 -)	1.1	External	5	Demonstrate understanding of spoken TARGET LANGUAGE
	1.2	Internal	4	Give a spoken presentation that communicates a personal response in TARGET LANGUAGE
	1.3	Internal	5	Interact using spoken TARGET LANGUAGE to communicate personal information and opinions in different situations
	1.4	External	5	Demonstrate understanding of TARGET LANGUAGE written/visual text(s)
	1.5	Internal	5	Write a variety of texts for genuine purposes to communicate in TARGET LANGUAGE
	Total	3 Int., 2 Ext.	24	(14 credits from internals, 10 credits from externals)

As Table 2.1 shows, the previous standards include six standards, 24 credits in total of those only 9 credits were offered across three internally assessed standards. The new standards, on the other hand, include five standards, 24 credits of those 14 credits were offered across three internally assessed

standards. Detailed explanations on the specific conditions of internal assessments allude that the change will put more pressure on classroom teachers as well as students. This is mainly because two internally assessed standards, 1.3 (conversation) and 1.5 (writing), require students to gather evidence of a minimum of three different interactions/text types instead of previously required one type each. These changes of the standards could potentially affect both students' and teachers' motivation due to excessive assessments. Students might perceive the main purpose of taking Japanese is for assessments instead of gaining competent Japanese communication skills. Therefore, when all assessments have been completed, students might feel they have accomplished their purpose and lose their motivation to continue Japanese thereafter.

The change of the standards also creates extra work of making new sets of internal assessments for individual teachers, adding extra pressure on them. Indeed the quality of internally assessed standards heavily relies on individual teachers. Meanwhile, tertiary institutions might need to reconsider the entry criteria for courses they offer after the implementation is completed as the quality of school leavers who meet the new standards is currently unknown. From the tertiary education sector's point of view, unsteadiness of FL education at secondary level in New Zealand might discourage tertiary institutions in New Zealand from developing well-sequenced FL courses which articulate well for Yr 13 students of FLs.

2.4 Previously identified issues in the Japanese language education

Whilst Japanese established its status in New Zealand education over decades, a variety of issues in Japanese language education have been raised and discussed over the years. These have included, but are not limited to the following:

- 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 competence reached by students in Japanese (Harvey, 1988; Haugh, 1997; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003);

- A lack of curriculum continuity between secondary and tertiary institutions (East, Shackleford, & Spence, 2007; Haugh, 1997; Shearn, 2003), and between secondary schools (Barrowman, 1995, as cited in Haugh, 1997) due to differences between course plans 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);

- Presence of native Japanese speakers in senior Japanese classes at secondary level, which has made it difficult for other students to achieve high marks (Haugh, 1997; McLauchlan, 2007);

- Combined classes for different levels due to the insufficient/uneconomical number of students in one level (McLauchlan, 2007; Shearn, 2003).

Although some of these issues were identified more than two decades ago most of these issues are still unchanged and many are interrelated. In the following section, I will discuss the issues that seem to be more relevant to student attrition at the transition stage.

2.4.1 Competency and curricula continuity

Japanese is often seen as a difficult language to learn and the problem of the low proficiency level reached by Japanese learners in New Zealand is also identified in other countries (McCormack, 1994; Tohsaku, 2010). Due to the difficulty of mastering Japanese, the level of competency tertiary students of Japanese can reach after three years of study does not really meet the expectation which the students, their parents and prospective employers have (Beal, 1994; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). This realisation of likely proficiency might

be a reason for high student attrition at an early stage of Japanese study (Lo Bianco, 2000, 2009; M. Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Trotter, 1994). Early attrition of students of Japanese reduces the number of students in more advanced levels who might study further and gain a high level of proficiency in Japanese. This may result in a shortage of New Zealand trained Japanese language specialists who might in turn be future academics, translators and diplomats, or might be in other industries and utilise Japanese with other specialities.

In the United States (US), McGinnis (2003, as cited in Tohsaku, 2010) claimed that through a four year degree programme without previous learning of Japanese, students would only reach a lower intermediate level of proficiency in Japanese. In New Zealand where more than 800 Yr 13 students have been taking Japanese each year, it seems realistic to develop a tertiary programme for first years who already have a good foundation of Japanese. With their foundation of Japanese and perseverance in learning Japanese, these students can reach a marketable level of proficiency through three to four year degree programmes. Currently most FL degree programmes in New Zealand accept students without any experience of learning FLs (East, et al., 2007). Most Japanese language curricula at New Zealand tertiary institutions were developed without considering the "vertical articulation" (Tohsaku, 2010) from secondary curriculum and were designed for beginners of Japanese. Some studies also pointed out a lack of continuity between secondary and tertiary language courses and there was a question of the appropriateness of the courses in local tertiary institutions where courses for non-beginners did not seem to reflect what was taught at secondary school (Haugh, 1997; Shearn, 2003). Although other commonly taught FLs in New Zealand, such as French and German, share the same issue of the lack of curriculum continuity, considering the unsatisfactory level of competency graduates can reach, it is a more serious disadvantage to the students of Japanese. As a result of this, when students who have learnt Japanese in secondary to Yr 13 intend to continue Japanese at

tertiary level, they may face unfavourable situations as described below.

At present, in most New Zealand universities, Japanese language courses at Level 5 (100-Level, or stage one, first year) for a BA (Japanese) degree are waived for those who have learnt Japanese in secondary to Yr 13. These students usually enrol in a Level 6 (200-Level, or stage two, second year) Japanese language course in their first year, but because of the lack of curriculum continuity, the Level 6 course might consist of repetitious content they have already learnt. In addition, the waived courses usually create a shortfall of credits. The shortfall is fulfilled by other available courses, which are usually non-Japanese language courses. Because most universities do not offer more advanced Japanese language courses to graduate students, students of a three year BA (Japanese) programme who have studied Japanese to Yr 13 mostly end up completing required Japanese language courses in their second year of three years' study. This means, for these students who have studied Japanese to Yr 13, the total time of exposure to Japanese language within the tertiary programme is much less than for those who started the programme as beginners. Likewise, the likely proficiency in Japanese that graduates should attain at the end of degree programme is the same regardless of their proficiency prior to commencing the programme. Therefore, there is less increase in proficiency for students who were non-beginners. However, because the programme still requires both beginners and non-beginners to gain an equal number of credits, non-beginners end up paying a tuition fee almost equal to beginners and might see the programme as less cost-effective.

There seem to be only a couple of tertiary institutions which reward students for their Japanese study at secondary level. The University of Otago offers an alternative advanced Japanese language course at Level 7 (300-Level, or stage three) to replace the credits of the introductory Japanese courses waived in the first year. CPIT have tried to attract students who completed Yr 13 Japanese, by

limiting the entry criteria to Bachelor of Language (Japanese) to those who have completed Yr 13 Japanese and gained at least 14 credits from NCEA Level 3 Japanese.

2.4.2 Presence of native speakers of Japanese

Through his personal communication with a Japanese teacher at a secondary school Haugh (1997) pointed out that "the increasing number of Japanese native speakers taking Japanese as a Bursary subject has made it more difficult for other students to achieve high marks in Bursary examinations" due to the "scaling distribution" and "correlative means analysis" (p. 10). This practice was believed to have ended when NCEA, which uses standards-based (or criterion-referencing) assessments and which is claimed to have no scaling, was introduced. Japanese native speakers taking Japanese as an NCEA subject should not change the predetermined standards and marking schedule for each standard.

However, some in New Zealand society doubted if the introduction of NCEA ended scaling, particularly after the media revealed re-marking of exam papers ("Test re-marking just 'refining'," 2005). In 2005 NZQA had developed a "profile of expected results for each exam" prior to marking and "if [raw] results appeared to be way off the expected profile, the marking guidelines were investigated and changed" (Nash, 2005, p. 103). Nash (2005) argued the new practice of re-marking was virtually the same as scaling and he pointed out its potential risk to disguise actual improvement attained by the cohort of the particular standard in the particular year.

For subjects like Japanese, which has a relatively small number of candidates, the presence of native Japanese speakers in the cohort of the standard might lift the raw results of the cohort up to a higher than the expected profile. When this happens, NZQA might conduct a re-marking of the exam papers by the revised

marking schedule in order to adjust (i.e. to lower) the results to the expected profile. Therefore, the presence of native Japanese speakers in the cohort have probably meant that it is more difficult to gain higher grades, or achievement levels, particularly Excellence, than when the standards were initially set. It would be hard to prove whether some candidates' grades were affected by re-marking but it was reported that the Level 1 Japanese exam was re-marked in 2009 ("NCEA exam papers need remarking," 2009).

For the New Zealand Scholarship examinations, the issue was initially removed when NZQA ruled out native speakers of TL as ineligible to receive any monetary award for Scholarship languages (NZQA, 2005). Presumably then native speakers' presence in the exams has not affected the number of non-native candidates able to receive monetary awards. However, NZQA (2007) announced the change of eligibility for FL Scholarship candidates to allow native speakers of TL to receive a monetary award from 2008. This created the same situation as Bursary. Interestingly, top subject scholarship award winners of Japanese between 2008 and 2010 (NZQA, 2011a, 2011c) appeared to have Japanese names, reflecting the change of eligibility. This suggests that probably a number of non-native candidates have lost a monetary award for tertiary education, as well as their confidence and motivation to further study Japanese. This may well be the situation for other FLs as well. In fact, Yr 13 students seemed to be well aware of the fact they have to beat native speaking candidates. Responding to a media interview on NCEA and Scholarship exams, a Yr 13 student of Mandarin Chinese stated the presence of native speakers of TL as a reason of not sitting the scholarship exam for Mandarin:

> "If I wanted to get a scholarship I would have had to beat native speakers," he said. (Hunt, 2011)

This situation seems unfair and may well dissuade many high achieving students from continuing FLs to Yr 13.

2.4.3 Shortage of qualified teachers

The shortage of suitably qualified language teachers at the secondary level seems to be a continuing trend and has worsened due to an increasing demand in intermediate and secondary levels since the 2002 Curriculum Stocktake Report recommendation which stated that "schools should be required to provide instruction in another language for students in years 7 to 10" (Ministry of Education, 2002). Barnard (2004) expressed his concern over a shortage of language teacher supply and suggested MoE make provision for the recruitment of competent language teachers. The investigation carried out by Christchurch College of Education in 2003 also predicted an increasing shortage of specialist language teachers in secondary schools (Guthrie, 2005).

To respond to building the numbers of quality language teachers, MoE have commissioned a professional development course in teaching languages for teachers of Yrs 7 to 10, the programme known as Teacher Professional Development in Languages (TPDL). Its evaluation report (Harvey, Conway, Richards, & Roskvist, 2010) by the AUT research team expressed a concern over "… the low number of teachers of Asian languages on the TPDL programme" (p. 115).

In practice, the availability of teachers often determines the choice of languages schools offer. This is particularly so at the stage of schools introducing languages. The Education Review Office (ERO) (2009) reported that "languages offered tended to depend on suitable and available staffing" particularly in rural and small urban schools (p. 5). Thus, the shortage of teacher supply results in a further imbalance amongst languages taught at the intermediate level. As explained earlier in this chapter, the choice of languages taught in

intermediate schools can affect the number of students taking particular languages in secondary level.

2.4.4 Quality of Japanese teaching and teacher training

Supporting Haugh's (1997) concern over the quality of Japanese teaching at the secondary level, Nuibe and Okuno (1999) pointed out that the teacher training for secondary teachers of the Japanese language by Colleges of Education might not be good enough to increase the quality of Japanese teaching. The training itself was generally done along with other languages, therefore, it was not specialising in building proficiency in the Japanese language (Nuibe & Okuno, 1999). These studies might be seen as outdated, however, my personal communication with recent language teacher trainees indicates that the issues remain.

Although trainee teachers of Japanese in recent years have often completed Japanese language courses at the tertiary level or worked and lived in Japan for some years, their communication skills in Japanese vary and some may not be competent enough to teach senior classes. Unfortunately, teacher training providers do not always examine language teacher trainees on their competency of TLs prior to their enrolment, so there is no guarantee that all trainees of future language teachers have satisfactory competency in TLs. Nevertheless, after completing their teacher training, they can apply a job for teaching TLs. It might be necessary that responsible training providers set entry tests for FL teacher trainees for TL proficiency such as a TL interview and essay writing at a standard beyond NCEA Level 3 or Scholarship of the TL.

2.4.5 The impact of combined classes at secondary level

A term 'combined class' refers to a class in which two separate classes, usually two classes of consecutive year levels for one subject, are placed together in one classroom at the same timetable slot and instructed by one regular teacher.

Combined Japanese classes, particularly for Yr 12 and Yr 13, have been seen in many secondary schools across New Zealand as a small number of senior students at each school continue to study Japanese. Combined classes are not limited to the Japanese language but are a feature of all FL teaching at secondary level. However, at many schools having combined classes seems uncommon in other subject areas. There is a question, therefore as to why this might be seen as acceptable for FLs (McLauchlan, 2007; Shearn, 2003).

Teachers and students of combined classes of different courses (e.g. NCEA Level 2 and Level 3) often find their teaching and learning conditions difficult. This is because the teachers have to allocate her/his time in the classroom between two courses, thus having less time for teaching each course than in a regular classroom setting. However, students are still expected to achieve the same performance level they will achieve in a regular classroom setting. For teachers, classroom management and organising activities for each course which can be conducted without distracting each other are also challenging.

Combined classes can therefore have a negative impact on students' overall achievement level, thus increasing teachers' workload. Interestingly for part-time teachers, their potential salary can be affected because the contact time for two courses becomes one. It can also devalue the status of languages in education by giving students a negative view of language classes compared with other subject areas. In addition, younger students who witness senior language students facing difficulties in a combined class might opt out of language learning due to the potential of ending up in a combined class.

Currently there is no data available to identify the number of combined language classes in New Zealand secondary schools. However, based on data on school roll by subjects (Ministry of Education, 2011) I assume that in 2010 there were probably about fifty or more combined senior Japanese classes (e.g.

Yr 12/Yr 13) across New Zealand. NCEA/CIE combined Japanese classes also exist in some state schools which offer both NCEA and CIE Japanese courses due to a relatively small number of students taking Japanese at senior levels. Although students of NCEA/CIE combined classes are often in the same year level, teachers of such combined classes have to teach students for different styles of assessments in different time frames.

2.5 Summary

After half a century from its introduction to New Zealand schools, Japanese has established its status as a widely taught FL in New Zealand. However, at the tertiary level, a recent decrease in the number of programmes offering the Japanese language is a concerning trend. Deletions of Japanese programmes after 2008 suggest there has been a further reduction of students of Japanese across the tertiary sector. In the secondary education sector, Japanese attracted 27,039 secondary students in 1996 and was the nation's most popular FL (Ministry of Education, 1997). It is still the second most popular FL, but the number of students is on the decrease. The latest drop of Yr 9 students learning Japanese in 2010 is a concern as it indicates that many secondary schools stopped offering Japanese in Yr 9 which is usually a sign that Japanese has been deleted from these schools' option subjects.

Previous studies have pointed out a number of issues negatively affecting Japanese language education in New Zealand. Some of these remain unchanged and some have become more complex over time. In the tertiary sector, the main issue significantly relevant to student attrition is a low level of proficiency attained by the graduates for which a lack of curricula continuity between secondary and tertiary sectors is partially responsible. Currently, the majority of New Zealand tertiary institutions which offer Japanese language courses seem to ignore Japanese teaching at secondary level and establish their own Japanese curriculum intended for total beginners. Thus, there is no conspicuous

advantage for non-beginners to continue Japanese.

The latest curriculum change created additional demand for qualified teachers of languages at intermediate and junior secondary levels, thus potentially worsened a shortage of competent language teachers in the secondary sector. Changes of the qualification system to NCEA were initially thought to rectify the problem of scaling which had made scoring a high mark in Japanese increasingly difficult. However, it seems that the presence of native Japanese speakers continues to affect other candidates' final grades. In CIE schools, Japanese might be seen as disadvantageous because of the absence of A level Japanese. Further changes to NCEA are likely to create more pressure on students and increase teachers' workload.

Combined language classes (either by year or qualification) have become a problem which is not normally seen in other subject classes. Teachers and students of combined language classes are often disadvantaged and penalised unfairly by this setting where one teacher has to teach students of two separate courses at the same period. This setting not only disadvantages teachers and students of the class, but also degrades the status of FLs as option subjects in school and discourages junior students from continuing to senior level.

Some issues affecting Japanese have become more complicated and are interrelated with each other, seemingly creating a vicious spiral of factors leading to low proficiency and student attrition. A slow, but certain decline of the number of students, schools and programmes of the Japanese language over the last decade suggests that neglecting these issues has contributed to the demise of the Japanese language. Despite these problems, however, there are still a considerable number of beginners starting to learn Japanese across New Zealand. This may be an indication that many students still take some interest in Japanese to start with, but the problem is that not many of them continue

Japanese to more advanced levels.

One way to break the downward spiral may be to encourage persistent students of Japanese to continue further, as well as providing students of Japanese with suitable, quality Japanese courses which can motivate them to keep learning Japanese and maintain their interest in Japanese. By doing so, the high attrition rate might go down, and student numbers may stabilise and students may stay on and attain better proficiency. In the long term, enrolments across all levels may be more balanced and predictable. However, to realise these ideas, it is important to know why students decide to continue or discontinue their study of Japanese. In the next chapter, the literature review, I will explore previous studies relevant to student attrition and retention of Japanese with a focus on the transition stage to tertiary education.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will explain and discuss the literature which underpins the present study, examining the reasons why relatively successful students discontinue Japanese at their transition from secondary school to tertiary education. In particular, I discuss student attrition research in general, L2 student attrition and motivation research, as well as L2 Japanese research concerning student attrition and motivation. In addition, general motivation theory is reviewed as it seems to have some strong explanatory power for data collected from the participants in this research.

The literature on general student attrition is helpful in that it mostly covers first year student attrition at university and discusses factors associated with transition which affects students' decision to continue or discontinue their tertiary studies. It also examines attrition from different points of views, including characteristics of courses which have high student attrition rate.

The L2 student attrition research, particularly in Japanese as TL, is relevant to the present study to a certain extent. While it paints part of the picture, however, this literature leaves out some key aspects of interest that are important to the present study. This is because unlike many students in L2 attrition studies who discontinued their L2 learning at an early stage, students in the present study continued Japanese for more than four years, from when Japanese became available at their school to the end of their secondary education. In this respect they demonstrated persistence and motivation to learn Japanese and this survived for at least their four or five years learning the language at high school. The literature on motivation for both general and L2 learning provides good insight into students' behaviour and their ways of thinking as they learn a language. How students' persistent motivation to learn Japanese (over four or more years) changed and what was involved in this change is the focus of the

present study.

3.2 Attrition studies for higher education

For most tertiary institutions a high attrition rate in any particular programme or course is a serious concern as this often directly affects the total number of students, the institution's revenue and reputation, and in some cases, closure of the course might follow. For example, Wilson, Coulter, Lunnen, Mallory and Williams (1999) claimed that "retention of undergraduate students is a major concern of universities today" (p. 36). Similarly, Tinto (2005) stated that "increasing retention has substantial immediate economic benefits for the institution, if not the society generally and persistence, if it leads to completion, substantial immediate and long-term benefits for the individual" (p. 89), which explains why tertiary institutions and often the wider community see student attrition as a significant problem.

Amongst general student attrition and retention studies for higher education, firstly, I would like to introduce studies which focus on students at the transition stage from secondary to tertiary education to understand the common features of students at this stage. According to previous studies and statistics, the student attrition rate in the first year of tertiary studies is significantly higher than the second year (DEST, 2004; Dennis, 1998, as cited in Wilson, et al., 1999). Various student attrition studies and research on transition have discussed the importance of students' experience at the transition stage (Gohn, Swartz, & Donnelly, 2001; Johnston, 2010; Krause, 2005; Madjar & McKinley, 2010; Scanlon, Rowling, & Weber, 2007; Tinto, 2005). Successful social and academic integration at the transition stage is a critical feature which impacts on students' persistence in their studies in the first year (Krause, 2005).

Emphasising the importance of academic integration, Hinton (2007) pointed out the potential inadequacy in students' prior knowledge for the level of content

information taught in the courses, timetabling issues, and "a lack of cross-disciplinary communication about timing and volume of assessment pieces" (p. 22). Consequently, first year students were likely to suffer from academic pressure on top of other stresses of transition. Some students at the transition stage might consider choosing courses which seem less demanding in order to avoid academic pressure rather than choosing what they are interested in. Hinton (2007) urged universities to understand the characteristics of their student cohort and to prepare to offer more appropriate, suitable courses in terms of the learning – teaching process, timetabling, support, and the mode of study.

Previous learning experience by students might also play a part in student attrition. Skelton (1959) found a positive correlation between students' retention and their previous learning of FL(s) in secondary school. This "FL advantage" might be an effect of skills transfer that the students have developed better learning skills through FLL. Also they might be more persevering in their study as FLL often involves more drills and practice than other subjects.

Some student attrition studies looked at reasons in faculties and classes rather than students. It is understood that "the discipline plays a part in student attrition rate" but also "the characteristics of students whom it [the discipline] attracts and the way that it is taught" relate to student attrition (Danaher, Bowser, & Somasundaram, 2008, p. 277). Results of a survey conducted by Conklin (1997) indicate the high attrition classes tend to be seen as more demanding, less attainable, and probably less enjoyable compared with other classes. For students of this study who continued Japanese to Yr 13 but dropped at the transition stage, it is less likely that Japanese at secondary school was seen to have the characteristics of high attrition classes in Conklin's study. However, it is possible that these students conceived Japanese at tertiary level differently from Japanese at secondary school and to a certain extent particular

characteristics of the subject or the courses at tertiary level could be responsible for the attrition.

Some general attrition studies identified the importance of a smooth transition between secondary school to university while others indicated that courses with a high student attrition rate seemed more academically difficult than other courses. In the next section, I will explain the more specific concerns of student attrition in language courses.

3.3 Student attrition in language courses

Amongst language teachers and researchers, student attrition has clearly been a major concern. Some studies back in the 1950s already tried to identify problems in language courses in order to reduce high student attrition rates (Fulton, 1958; Lemieux, 1954). As a teacher who had run a two-year Russian course at the United State Naval Academy with successful student retention rates, Lemieux (1954) opposed the idea of "more rigid selection of candidates" which was suggested by some Russian teachers to avoid the high student attrition rate in Russian classes (p. 119). He insisted that the strict selection of students based on their linguistic background and academic ability was unrealistic and suggested an earlier intervention and extra instructions for weaker students that would increase their success rate. By observing his own students at the Naval Academy, Lemieux (1954) also said "the morale factor has been a major factor" to avoid high student attrition amongst American students of Russian (p. 119). However, it was the post-war era when the political conflict and the military tension between the US and the USSR were prevalent and the students in Lemieux's Russian course, future US marines, were likely to be in the front line of the conflict. Under such circumstances, the students must have been aware of the importance of understanding the language and potential advantages associated with mastery of the language, so the morale of the students as a whole was probably already high or could be easily boosted.

Lemieux's observation can be interpreted that an explicit, immediate public/political demand for the TL might facilitate learners' motivation.

Considering a very different student group from Lemieux, Fulton (1958) discussed possible reasons for students' discontinuance of language classes after finishing their second year of high school. She reported that FLs were not required subjects for graduation from high school in many States and this has been claimed as a major cause of poor enrolment to FL classes in high school. In some States, however, often two years of FL study was required and their student survey results showed that most students dropped FLs once they "completed the language requirement for the diploma" (Fulton, 1958, p. 117). Other reasons indicated that from their two years of learning FLs many students found learning a FL required more time and effort than other subjects and it was difficult to meet the expected standards. These issues have also been claimed as major reasons of discontinuance in more recent research (Curnow & Kohler, 2007; McLauchlan, 2007).

Similarly, status changes of a modern foreign language at secondary level in the UK affected the number of students taking FLs at secondary level, and probably affected tertiary level numbers as well (Coleman, Galaczi, & Astruc, 2007; Curtis, 2009). Coleman et al. (2007) stated that while the inclusion of a language as a foundation subject at secondary level in 1996 increased the numbers of language learners, the removal of language from the core curriculum at Key Stage 4 (ages 14 to 16) in 2004 has "led to a dramatic fall" (p. 249). The British media pointed out the decrease of language students in universities in the UK between 2003 and 2008 while overall student numbers increased over the same period. Presumably, the removal of FL study at Key Stage 4 was at least partly responsible (Curtis, 2009).

Through her qualitative study conducted amongst adult students in the US, Tse

(2000) claimed that "the strong negative views of the FL classroom" were a factor of discontinuance of language learning they have taken at high school or university (p. 81). Written responses from students indicated that they had doubts about the usefulness of the learning content, they regarded the level of proficiency they reached as low, and the presence of false beginners in the classroom was off-putting as was the negative student-teacher relationship.

The term 'FL anxiety' has been coined to describe the anxiety experienced by FL learners when learning or using FL. It has been argued that this can negatively affect student progress and performance (Baily, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2003; Kitano, 2001; Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999). Due to its negative impact on learners of FLs, FL anxiety can be a contributor to the student attrition which Baily, Onwuegbuzie and Daley (2003) investigated in courses of Spanish, German, French and Japanese at various levels. In their research, the participants' learning process was divided into three stages, input, process and output, and the Anxiety Scale at each stage was assessed by six 5-point Likert-format items. Their research revealed that students who dropped out of their FL classes "tended to report a statistically significantly higher level of anxiety experienced at the input and output stages" and concluded that anxiety was an important predictor of student attrition in FL courses (Baily, et al., 2003, p. 306).

Experience of FL study in secondary school could lead students to continue the language learning and help them to persist at tertiary level. Through analysing a review of the teaching of modern languages in Australian higher education, Baldauf and Djité (2000) noted that "a significant number of students who continue language study over [three] years or more at university began that study as a result of having learned the language in secondary school" and concluded "previous study of a second language is a relatively powerful motivator for language study at university" (p. 244). In other words, the

attrition rate of L2 among students with previous L2 learning experience is lower than the attrition rate among students without previous L2 learning experience.

To investigate the reasons that students continue or discontinue language learning after it has ceased to be compulsory, Curnow and Kohler (2007) gathered data from secondary school students in South Australia. According to their responses from those who discontinued, language learning is seen as "a great deal of work" for "little outcome" and skills gained are not easily maintained (Curnow & Kohler, 2007, p. 23). Some comments also indicated that those students could hardly see what relevance the language had to their future career. Although they quoted other Australian studies which similarly found these two sets of reasons, 'difficulty' of learning language and 'relevance' to career, as the main reasons of dropping the language, it is interesting that the continuing students did not generally mention 'relevance' to their career as their reason to continue (Curnow & Kohler, 2007).

Sometimes a particular language or languages can attract more learners at one time for various reasons such as economic or political environmental changes. For example, when the Japanese economy was booming and the relationship between Japan and Australia was flourishing from late 1980s to mid 1990s, Japanese increased its popularity in Australia and "vast and rapid enrolment increases in Japanese" was seen at all levels and all states (Lo Bianco, 2000). At around the same time, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy was introduced in 1991. The Japanese boom and the new policy significantly influenced a number of language learners to take Japanese and increased funding for language education, particularly Asian languages (Pauwels, 2002). However, in the late 1990s, the Japanese boom faded and student enrolment started to decline while the student attrition rate in Japanese programmes accelerated (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Lo Bianco, 2000). Research

indicated a number of potential reasons of student reduction and attrition, including problems with the quality and suitability of programmes, unsatisfactory level of proficiency students were likely to reach, and lack of vertical articulation (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010; Lo Bianco, 2000, 2009; Pauwels, 2002). Paradoxically, some commentators have suggested that the Japanese boom was responsible for many of these problems:

> Strains imposed by over-rapid expansion without adequate
> planning, leading to employment of under-qualified teachers
> in some jurisdictions and lack of attention to continuity and
> transition issues. (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010, p. 7)

In addition, cuts to the funding for language education by the successive governments (1996 – 2007) presumably affected the quality of the FL courses as staff numbers and class contact hours declined (Baldauf & Djité, 2000). Pauwels (2002) expressed her concern over the uneven distribution of learners in different levels which accompanied an increasing shift towards beginners' classes because it would lead to a reduction of graduates with advanced language skills. In New Zealand, similar concerns over the uneven learner distribution as a result of high student attrition among beginners, and a potential shortage of graduates with FL proficiency was also mentioned by others (Holt, 2006; Trotter, 1994).

Pauwels (2002) also found that despite their previous FLL some students who had low esteem in their FL abilities chose to enrol in beginners' class at university, but were likely to drop out due to a lack of challenge in the class, thus worsening student attrition rates in FL classes. Similarly, a previous study of students perceptions of FL study found that the presence of false beginners discouraged true beginners from continuing (Tse, 2000). Thus, as Pauwels (2002) argued, ensuring curriculum continuity from secondary to tertiary levels for smooth transition seems crucial.

In the US a similar concern over the discrepancy between secondary school and tertiary institutions on the standard of FL teaching was mentioned by Lambert (2001). He argued that despite increased national attention to articulation between secondary and tertiary FL instruction many language departments in tertiary institutions disregarded FL teaching at secondary level. While secondary schools adopted the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Standards, a number of tertiary institutions were placing first year students with previous FLL inappropriately in the beginners class or unfairly allowed them few credits (Lambert, 2001). Schulz (1999) also insisted that FL students need well-articulated language instructions to ensure seamless transition across education sectors in order for them to reach practical and useful level of proficiency and experience as few disjunctures in their experience as possible. While statistical figures Schulz (1999) quoted suggest an overall increase of FL learners in the US during the 1990s, the heavy concentration of enrolments in lower-level courses, in other words high student attrition before reaching intermediate and advanced levels, is also evident.

Internationally, students discussed in FL attrition studies seem to share similar reasons for their discontinuance of FLs. The studies suggested that if students started their FL study to meet an academic requirement, they were likely to drop FLs once they have completed the requirement. Therefore, compulsory FL study at certain year levels, e.g. first three years of secondary education, increases the number of students learning FLs at these year levels, but this also increases student attrition rates afterwards. Although compulsory FL study provides all students with the opportunity to learn a FL, some students are forced to continue even when they have found FL study too difficult and wish to discontinue. These reluctant students often experience failure and cannot see the point in FL study, thus they are likely to develop negative views of FL study which might affect their attitudes toward FL study even later in their life. Moreover, the presence of reluctant students in FL classes might negatively

affect the dynamics of FL classrooms and might interfere with other students' motivation and progress. However, if a few years of compulsory FL study can change students' views of FL study from negative to positive, from pointless to meaningful, and can satisfy a majority of students, more students may continue FL study afterwards. In order to maximise continuing students' proficiency and therefore encouraging them to study FLs further, providing a well-articulated FL curriculum across the education sectors is required.

3.4 Student attrition in Japanese language courses

While access to learning Japanese as a FL has increased in many English speaking countries, high student attrition rates in Japanese courses have attracted particular attention. In the following sections, I would like to explain and discuss the literature concerning student attrition in Japanese language courses including student attrition rates and potential reasons for high attrition rates specific to Japanese.

3.4.1 Attrition rate in Japanese classes

In many studies the Japanese language is often noted for having high student attrition. For example, Mills, Samuels and Sharwood (1987, as cited in Komiya Samimy, 1994) claimed the attrition rate amongst tertiary students who took Japanese was "as much as eighty percent". Similarly, Anderson and Ramsay (1999, as cited in Ferguson & Grainger, 2005) supported this by stating that "attrition rates as high as 80% are experienced by learners of Japanese in many universities" (p. 77). Kinoshita Thomson (2008) considered "the attrition in many Australian tertiary Japanese programs … a big problem for quite some time" (p. 317). Moreover, describing the Japanese programme at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) she said "In 2006 half the students who entered the first semester course in Japanese never started the second semester, and half of them never started the third. Three-fourths dropped out before they learned to use Japanese" (p. 317). The trend is not only in UNSW. From the component

ratio of the students of Japanese classes in Wakabayashi's study conducted at Griffith University in 1994 and the Australian Catholic University in 1998, high student attrition rates were also evident (Wakabayashi, 1999, p. 71).

Furthermore, at the University of Otago in New Zealand, in the Level 5 (100-level, or stage one, first year) Japanese classes in 1995, there were 203 enrolled students at the beginning of the course, but only 105 of them attended the end of course examination (Tsuchiya, 1999). The study did not give the final student attrition rate as the pass rate of the examination was unknown, however, it showed a more than 48 per cent attrition rate for the first year alone. According to the combined figure of 1995 and 1997 course enrolments, 68 out of 76 students in Level 6 (200-level, or stage two, second year) Japanese classes completed the course which gave a considerably lower attrition rate of 10.5 per cent. However, the figure also indicated that there were a number of students who completed the first year course but who did not enrol in the second year course. This study is now more than ten years old and dates to the period in which Japanese study peaked. It would be interesting to find out how Japanese class attrition was now trending at Otago.

It is important to note that not all Japanese classes suffered high attrition rates. The Bachelor of Learning Management (BLM) (Japanese) degree at the Central Queensland University (Ferguson & Grainger, 2005) maintained low attrition rates, averaged around 13 per cent. Ferguson and Grainger (2005) explained that reasons for this included the design and the structure of the programme, such as a small number of students, extensive contact time, in-Japan experience and communicative approach that facilitated close contact with tutors and fellow students and maintained high exposure to the TL.

Nevertheless, figures given in the literature suggested that high attrition rates amongst Japanese learners have been a marked problem in many countries and

many universities and there have been a number of studies conducted to find out the reasons of student attrition in Japanese courses. In the following section, I would like to discuss the reasons which seem salient in the Japanese language learning experience that contribute to high attrition.

3.4.2 Language specified reasons of high attrition

Many of the reasons for student attrition and/or retention, such as language anxiety, motivation and poor career relevance, are common issues across all FLs and have been investigated in Japanese language classes as well (Holt, 2006; Kitano, 2001; Machida, 2001; Nuibe, et al., 1995; Saito, et al., 1999). However, there are a few other reasons for attrition, associated with a particular group of languages, including Japanese, which were mentioned in the literature. These reasons include syntactic, lexical, and orthographic differences as well as cultural distance between the learner's first language and the TL. However, the most significant difficulty seems to be Japanese script and the complexity of its use in Japanese.

Japanese can be classified as a non-alphabetic language or non-Roman script-based language as its orthographic system is based on the Japanese script, not the Roman alphabet. There are a number of non-Roman script-based languages in the world, such as Russian, Chinese, Korean and Arabic, however, compared to Roman script-based languages, such as French, Spanish and German, learning a new script can be seen as adding an extra burden to learners and even more so in the case of Japanese which uses three types of script, hiragana, katakana and kanji in writing. Many academics have assumed that this complex orthography is a reason for the high attrition rate in Japanese. For example, research by Komiya Samimy and Tabuse (1992, as cited in Ferguson & Grainger, 2005) suggested that "the major differences in orthography are significant hurdles for students to overcome, resulting in high attrition rates" (p. 78).

The hours of study required by native English speaking students to reach a certain level of proficiency in different languages has often been quoted to show the level of difficulty of learning Japanese compared with other languages. According to Jordan and Lambert (1991, as cited in Ferguson & Grainger, 2005), for the same level of proficiency reached by studying French for 480 hours, it takes almost 1320 hours studying Japanese, which is nearly three times longer. Also the ETS (Educational Testing Service) Oral Proficiency Testing Manual states that under ideal conditions, it takes American students 720 hours of instruction to reach the Advanced level in oral skills in Group 1 languages (e.g. Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, French) whereas it takes the same students 2,400 – 2,760 hours to achieve the same level of oral proficiency in Group 4 languages (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean) (Liskin-Gasparro, 1982, as cited in Beal, 1994). However, the comparisons were made on not just reading and writing skills which were strongly affected by the degree of difficulty of learning the Japanese script, but also on aural-oral proficiency, thus other factors affecting the difficulty of learning Japanese compared with French, including other differences, such as grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, and cultural background should also be taken into account.

Although the complexity of Japanese orthography is partly responsible for the difficulty of learning Japanese, it sounds too simple to conclude that being a non-alphabetic language is the main reason for high student attrition, particularly at tertiary level. Tertiary level students who enrol themselves in a Japanese language class presumably have some idea that the script is totally different from the English alphabet. However, it might be understandable if students were surprised to find out that there are three types of script in Japanese. One of them, kanji, is a non-syllabic and ideographic script and is therefore seen as a difficult script to memorise compared with other two syllabic scripts, hiragana and katakana. It is because the "use of morphemes rather than phonemes represents a significant departure from the language

decoding experience of most Westerners", learners have to develop a new system of decoding (Shimizu & Green, 2002, p. 228). It is interesting to know that despite the fact that a significant proportion of students claimed "Constant rote memorisation of many Kanji" as their most discouraging learning experiences, some students also claimed "Learning Kanji in an interesting way" as their most encouraging learning experiences which "helped them to learn Japanese most" (H. Matsumoto, 2007, pp. 199 - 200). While it is an extra hurdle for learners to master the new, challenging script, it might also be seen as an attraction or privilege to learn and use the language which enables learners access to a new world.

Japanese script alone is not to blame, but the overall time expected to reach a certain level of proficiency compared with other commonly taught languages, and slower progress overall, might be causing learners frustration, resulting in high attrition (Lo Bianco, 2000). Writing about Asian languages in New Zealand, Beal (1994) argued that the unrealistic expectations that learners and society have is one of the problems:

> Students (and parents) think that they will achieve fluency (and a job), and employers presume that language graduates will be able to operate easily and effectively in the language without further training and exposure. Both sides are likely to be disappointed. (Beal, 1994, p. 73)

Midway through their Japanese language course students might realise what they expected was unrealistic and this could lead them in different directions, resulting in attrition. Trotter (1994) warned about the mismatch between expectations of learners and the language courses they take:

> while language departments have always suffered from a high drop-out rate at second and third year, the commercially oriented student is an extra high risk undertaking in a language course when he or she discovers that even after a

year it may be impossible to ask the way to the station. … It is disillusioning to parents who have seen an Asian language degree as a meal ticket for their children and to the students themselves to find that they may not be a marketable commodity. (Trotter, 1994, p. 111)

More than a decade and a half has passed since this was discussed and it is clear that the language, Japanese, itself does not become easier to master. Therefore, if the problem causing high attrition is the unrealistic expectations of students, changing the course design (e.g. more contact hours, exposure to TL, practical contents relevant to students' needs) and informing potential students of the expected proficiency they might eventually reach before their enrolment may mean that the gap between expectations and reality would be smaller now. Although closing the gap may have resulted in fewer students taking Japanese in the first place, these students might be better prepared for learning Japanese and consequently the attrition rate may be lower.

Overall, the Japanese orthographic system is complex and unique, which is not a single cause of high student attrition rate, but is likely to contribute to the difficulty of learning Japanese. The difficulty is seen as a hurdle and it slows learners' learning to reach a certain level of fluency, thus making Japanese more time-consuming than other commonly taught languages and this can lead to learner attrition. Although, the literature often negatively refers to the amount of time learning Japanese requires, it could be more encouraging to interpret the time-consuming nature of the Japanese language differently. When the TL requires lengthy time for mastery, persevering in learning the TL is an essential factor for success. If the learners of Japanese are aiming to gain linguistic competency and recognise the time-consuming nature of Japanese language, they have a logical reason to continue learning Japanese.

3.5 Motivation

Previous Canadian research by Gardner and his associates claimed that

motivation relates to learners' success in L2 learning and is also influenced by the learners' learning outcomes (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, as cited in Ushioda, 1996). In New Zealand, findings of previous studies at the secondary level (Holt, et al., 2001; McLauchlan, 2006) have suggested that students' success is related to their persistence of learning Japanese. Therefore, in the New Zealand context, students' motivation relates to their persistence of learning Japanese.

In New Zealand secondary schools, students have rather a wide variety of subjects to choose from. For senior students, apart from a few schools which only offer IB, LOTE (languages other than English) learning is not compulsory. As already discussed in Chapter 2, the recently revised curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2008) clearly identified Learning Language as one of eight essential learning areas, therefore, required all schools with Yr 7 to Yr 10 students, except for Maori immersion schools, to offer the students opportunities for learning LOTE. However, while the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007a) stated that the schools "should be working towards offering the students the opportunities for learning a second or subsequent language" (p. 44), unlike other subjects in the eight essential learning areas, for example, English, science, arts and technology, learning these languages are not mandatory to all Yr 7 to Yr 10 students (Ministry of Education, 2008). Thus, to start learning a language as an option subject, and to continue learning the language at senior levels, there could be motivation involved in students' decision making. It would also be useful to understand how students lose their motivation, or what demotivates them during learning languages, which is likely to lead to them dropping the L2. Factors that demotivate students are discussed later in the following sections.

3.5.1 Theory of personal investment

Motivation is an "abstract, hypothetical concept that we use to explain why

people think and behave as they do" (Dörnyei, 2000, p. 1). It is responsible for "the *choice* of a particular action" and "the *effort* expended on it and the *persistence* with it" [emphasis from original] (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 7).

In their comprehensive model of motivation "Personal Investment Model" which focuses on certain actions taken by persons, Maehr and Braskamp (1986) employed a metaphoric term "personal investment" as an alternative to motivation (Maehr & Meyer, 1997). They avoided the word "motivation" as it is somewhat difficult to be understood properly and the involvement of motivation in actions can be seen clearly through the model which uses the alternative term.

Maehr and his associates (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986; Maehr & Meyer, 1997) assumed that individual persons in any given situation are motivated, but they hold different meanings, in reference to certain tasks or courses of action, which are influenced by the present situations and the past experiences of persons. These personal meanings determine how and when they engage, or invest themselves in a particular task or a course of action and we generally infer their motivation by observing their engagement.

In addition to these personal meanings, Maehr and Braskamp (1986) mentioned the nature of the task as another factor which determines "whether or not a person will demonstrate motivation toward achievement" (p. 32). They outlined "four general dimensions" of task characteristics: inherent attractiveness (e.g. whether the given task itself is boring or interesting), sociocultural definition (i.e. meaning of given task within a sociocultural context, e.g. group norms and expectations), interpersonal demands (e.g. given task involves cooperation with others), and task-associated incentives (e.g. money, recognition, praises, enjoyment, satisfaction) (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986, p. 32). In relation to the sociocultural definition, it is also understood through

previous L2 motivation research that the students' perception of their parents' support is related to their "willingness to continue language study and in their own assessment of how hard they work to learn the second language" (Gardner, 1985, as cited in Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005).

Maehr and Braskamp (1986) considered motivation as partially a direct product of the situation in which the person is placed, and indicated the potential for increasing motivation by changing the situation. In order to increase learners' motivation to continue learning Japanese, the New Zealand situation that Japanese learners are in might need to be changed. For example, the combined class situation in many New Zealand secondary schools which was explained in the previous chapter is likely to demotivate students of Japanese at secondary and therefore impact on their further study of Japanese. Moreover, looking at the value of L2 skills in the New Zealand job market, previous research highlighted that L2 skills were poorly valued in workplaces where employees with L2 skills were hardly given any extra financial reward, even though L2 proficiency was required and L2 skills were perceived to be important by the employers (Cullen, 2005). A more discouraging observation for the learners of Japanese is that New Zealand employers seem to prefer Japanese with English skills to New Zealanders with Japanese skills (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). Considering such a discouraging situation the learners of Japanese are placed in, currently learning Japanese might be less attractive in New Zealand as an investment in terms of gaining satisfactory returns.

3.5.2   *Motivation to learn languages in school*

Gardner (1979, as cited in Dörnyei, 2000) proposed that unlike other school subjects which were viewed as educational phenomenon, L2 learning should be seen as a central social psychological phenomenon. He discussed the point that other school subjects involve learning elements of the student's own cultural heritage but L2 learning involves imposing elements of another culture into

one's own lifespace. Therefore, the student's harmony with his/her own cultural community and his/her willingness or ability to identify with other cultural communities become an important consideration in the process of L2 acquisition. His seminal work with Lambert (Gardner & Lambert, 1959) also considered that the attitude toward an L2 group would partly determine the student's success in learning the new language as they saw the attitude as a motivational construction.

Ushioda (1996) stated that students might perceive a FL as "just another school subject" and their "motivational perceptions and responses are no different" from those that any school subject might elicit (pp. 29 - 30). However, she also asserted that learning FL could provide students with an important dimension of motivational experience, i.e. the experience of language use, which might occur outside the classroom. Through the experience of language use, students could become aware of their competency in terms of how successfully they have communicated in the TL, rather than how well or badly they performed relative to one another. Therefore, Ushioda (1996) remarked that language learning should "bring into play a host of motivational processes and patterns of thinking associated with skill development, perception of competence, personal mastery of learning targets, communicative success and progress" (p. 30). Her view on L2 learner's motivation, in which the learner's actual learning experience plays an important part, was put forward as "a person-in-context relational view of language motivation" (Ushioda, 2009). She discussed the uniqueness and complexity of L2 learners' motivation which could not be explained by linear cause and effect models of motivation. Ushioda (2009) argued that we need to "view motivation as an organic process that emerges through the complex system of interrelations" (p. 220):

> Let me summarise then what I mean by a person-in-context relational view of motivation. I mean a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on

the agency of individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and inherently part of. (Ushioda, 2009, p. 220)

She concluded that a person-in-context relational view of motivation may "help to illuminate how language learners' current experiences and self-states" and may "facilitate or constrain their engagement with future possible selves". Ushioda also pointed out that since students are often also learning other disciplines their motivation for FLL is not wholly independent of the motivation for other areas of learning which researchers might ignore or treat too lightly (Ushioda, 1998, as cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This relative perspective can be defined as a component of the "person–in-context relational view" and helps explain the reasons for the student attrition of FLL amongst successful language learners.

Dörnyei (2009) also included L2 learners' learning experience as an important component of his new approach, the "L2 motivational self system", in which he has reconceptualised L2 motivation as part of the learner's 'self system'. The L2 motivational self system is made up of three components: Ideal L2 Self; Ought-to L2 Self; and L2 Learning Experience (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). The ideal L2 self reflects a learner's vision of how they wish to be as an L2 user which Dörnyei (2009) claimed as "the possible interpretation of integrativeness" but also implies internalised instrumentality (p. 26). The ideal L2 self could be a powerful motivator to learn the L2 "because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves"(Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). However, if the learner does not perceive the ideal L2 self as being possible to attain, the learner is "unlikely to invest effort" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 36). While the ideal L2 self emerges from the learner's own idea and wishes, the ought-to L2

self is an externally generated but internally processed image of self, "which concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid negative outcomes" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). The ought-to L2 self could affect the learner positively or negatively, depending on how the learner perceive others' views. For example, the learner might work hard to try not to disappoint his/her parents or teacher, or the learner might not try much due to "peer-induced views about academic attainment", for adolescents this often means 'low achieving expectation' that are in conflict with the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 20). The L2 learning experience "concerns situated, executive motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). The concept of the L2 learning experience acknowledges the fact that some learners might not be motivated when they started their language learning, but rather the initial motivation to learn a language might be derived after the learner successfully engaged with the actual language learning process.

The motivation research on L2 learning in school identifies the uniqueness of L2 as a school subject. Ushioda and Dörnyei suggested that L2 motivation cannot be explained as a linear process, but this is a complex, multidimensional process. Their perspective of L2 motivation seems to encourage more individualised, in-depth, qualitative research on L2 motivation.

3.5.3   Factors that demotivate students

The literature on FL learners and motivation (Holt, et al., 2001; Nuibe, et al., 1995; Tse, 2000) stated that decreasing learners' motivation likely led them to discontinue their learning. Thus, it is important to know what might demotivate students.

In instructional communication research, Gorham and Christophel (1992) noted that approximately two-thirds of the reported sources of demotivation were

'teacher-owned'. The first five categories represented a rank order of frequency of the various negative motives mentioned by the students were:

1. Dissatisfaction with grading and assignments;
2. The teacher being boring, bored, unorganised [sic] and unprepared;
3. The dislike of the subject area;
4. The inferior organisation of the teaching material;
5. The teacher being unapproachable, self-centred, biased, condescending and insulting. (Gorham & Christophel, 1992)

Additional research findings further confirmed the teacher's responsibility in demotivating students, indicating the importance for teachers to use "appropriate immediacy behaviours" such as nodding and smiling that reduce physical and/or psychological distance between the teachers and their students (Gorham & Christophel, 1992).

A famous experiment by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968, as cited in Dörnyei, 2000) proved that the expectations toward the students by a teacher would also influence students' performance; this is known as the 'Pygmalion effect'. The original study only looked into positive expectations, but it is also known that the negative expectancy-driven teacher behaviour can reduce student motivation (Brophy, 1985, as cited in Dörnyei, 2000). The Pygmalion effect was also seen at the group level in Schrank's (1968, reported by Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, as cited in Dörnyei, 2000) experiment in which teachers were given false information of the learning potential of their classes that raised teachers' expectations on false high potential groups. This resulted in the false high potential groups gaining better learning outcomes than false low potential groups. In New Zealand, some secondary schools allocate students based on their academic ability, but this is not often the case in option subjects like languages. In mixed ability classes, teachers might set their expectancy level for the class at that of the majority of the class and this could disadvantage some students whose potential is far beyond the teacher's expectancy level. As

explained in the Pygmalion effect, this expectancy level set for the class might demotivate high potential students in the class.

It is also believed that a teacher's motivation and enthusiasm have some effects on students (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Wild et al., 1992 reported by Deci et al., 1997; Good and Brophy, 1994; as cited in Dörnyei, 2000). To summarise, the students believe in learning the subject if the teacher is intrinsically motivated and genuinely believes the subject is worthwhile learning whereas students might be demotivated if they think that the teacher is merely teaching for financial reward.

A more recent cross-cultural investigation highlighted the significance of teacher behaviours in demotivating students (Zhang, 2007). The research involved tertiary students in China, Germany, Japan and the US and the results confirmed that teacher incompetence, including confusing and/or boring lectures, unfair testing, and information overload, is "the greatest source of demotivation within and across cultures" (Zhang, 2007, p. 220). Although participants of the present study have continued Japanese to Yr 13, some of their Japanese teachers at secondary school might have demotivated them and affected their attrition at the transition stage.

Deci and Ryan (1985, as cited in Dörnyei, 2000) discussed the notion of 'amotivation' which "refers to the relative absence of motivation that is not caused by a lack of initial interest but rather by the individual's experiencing feeling of incompetence and helplessness when faced with the activity" (Dörnyei, 2000, p. 144). People can be amotivated because they think they lack ability; their strategies are not effective enough; the effort to reach the outcome is too excessive; and their efforts are inconsequential considering the enormity of the task to be accomplished (Vallerand, 1997, as cited in Dörnyei, 2000). We can clearly see that amotivated students will give up learning as they generally

see there is no point in trying because, in any case, they could not achieve the expected outcome.

Finally, there is a concerning demotivation factor amongst L2 learners which seems clearly relevant to L2 learning in New Zealand. A number of studies suggested that the status of English as a global language and an international lingua franca might have demotivated students in English speaking countries to learn FL (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Coleman (2009) asserted that British society which is sending monolingual, xenophobic messages to youth is responsible for the decline of FL learners in the UK schools. Carr and Pauwel (2006, as cited in Coleman, 2009) pointed out the impact of English monolingual leaders in the major Anglophone countries who could have also been sending a message to society that monolingualism is acceptable. McLauchlan (2007) was critical of the fact that many New Zealanders held a belief that "English equates to some form of linguistic self-sufficiency", thus FL study was not regarded as important (2007, p. 123). New Zealand secondary students might also hold this belief, especially when they see many international students from non-English speaking countries, such as Korea, China, Japan, continuing to come and study in their schools to gain English skills. Recent education statistics and FL studies in the UK, Australia and New Zealand also indicated FL courses in these countries now have fewer native English speakers while an increasing number of students from non-English backgrounds are enrolling in these courses (CILT, 2009; Lo Bianco, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2010a). Unfortunately, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) predicted a continuance of this negative interference by the dominance of English in relation to the motivation for learning LOTE.

In this section, I explained the factors that demotivate students. In a classroom learning situation, so far, the literature seems to paint teachers as largely responsible for students' demotivation, thus affecting their learning of the subject and choice of further study. In the present study, demotivation factors

were identified within participants' comments on: individual students' views on their Japanese teachers in secondary school; dynamics of Japanese classrooms; and the competency of their Japanese teachers. The notion of amotivation suggests L2 learners who decided to discontinue their L2 learning might have lacked confidence in their ability or might have perceived the goal they wanted to achieve beyond their reach.

3.6 Relevant research in New Zealand

Japanese is one of the most widely taught languages in New Zealand and there has been some research on motivation factors for student learning of the Japanese language as well as reasons for student attrition in language studies.

3.6.1   Motivation factors to learning Japanese

In the1990s, there was some motivation research on Japanese language learners at both secondary and tertiary levels (Aschoff, 1992; Nuibe, et al., 1995; Okamura, 1990; Tsuchiya, 1999). Aschoff (1992) conducted a nationwide, large scale survey which involved students learning Japanese in secondary schools. The results revealed that nearly ninety per cent of students thought of Japanese as a "career tool" and 71.8 per cent took it "for travel".

In his study of Japanese language education in New Zealand, Nuibe (1993) compared Aschoff's (1992) motivation survey results with the draft Japanese Syllabus (Ministry of Education, 1991, as cited in Nuibe, 1993) to see if the syllabus met the students' expectations. He pointed out the mismatch between students' views of Japanese as a useful 'career tool' and the aims and general objectives in the syllabus. The syllabus did not aim for business level Japanese but regarded the educational perspective as important and emphasised on cultural understanding as well as communication skills. A similar mismatch at tertiary level in New Zealand was also indicated by Trotter (1994). While students of Japanese at university have expected practical language skills

usable in their prospective occupations, Japanese programmes at New Zealand universities then were not necessarily focusing on marketable linguistic competency (Trotter, 1994). Moreover, although having Japanese language skills enhances students' employability in New Zealand, it is not a sufficient condition for students to find employment (Enderwick & Gray, 1993) but unfortunately students have not always been aware of this. Therefore, commercially oriented students who have taken Japanese as a 'career tool' are more likely to drop out of Japanese (Trotter, 1994).

Nuibe, Kano and Ito (1995) conducted similar motivation research among a total of 107 students in Japanese classes at Victoria University of Wellington. They concluded that the student's experience of visiting Japan and the duration of studying Japanese were found to affect the student's motivation in terms of Integrative Orientation (e.g. to get a job or live in Japan), "the duration of studying Japanese also showed effects in terms of Instrumental Orientation" (e.g. took the subject as one of the options available with no definite purpose, a requisite for graduation), however, "the causality of the factor(s) and the orientation is unclear" (p. 168). They also suggested that extrinsic motivation could disappear easily and might lead to attrition, thus it is important to guide students to raise their motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic which helps them persevere in language learning.

At the University of Otago, Tsuchiya also conducted a survey among students in a Level 6 (200-level, or stage two, second year) Japanese class on their motivation and Japanese language background (Tsuchiya, 1999). According to the survey results, more than half of the respondents had studied Japanese for more than three years in secondary school. However, Tsuchiya commented that her impression as a lecturer after the course was that the length of their Japanese study was not reflected in their Japanese language skill and motivation. In combination with interviews after the course, she also found that

of students who selected career orientation as their motivation factor, those who started their Japanese study in secondary school all admitted that they originally started Japanese study because they thought it seemed interesting. She discussed that presumably the purpose of Japanese study for the students changed over the years of their study. In some extreme cases, students continued Japanese study unwillingly rather than positively, for example, Japanese was the only available major for them. In such cases, Tsuchiya suspected that the motivation factors that students indicated, such as career orientation, might be a subsequent justification for their study.

Okamura's (1990) survey research involved 164 students who were taking at least one Japanese language course at the University of Canterbury in 1989. Interestingly, at that time, the University had a non-beginners course for those who had some Japanese as a stage one (Level 5 or 100-level, first year) course and 29 student participants from her research were taking this. She found that the stage one non-beginners had "no distinctive motivation for learning Japanese" (Okamura, 1990, p. 95) while stage one beginners were more instrumentally motivated to learn Japanese, for example, to get a job that requires Japanese. Okamura reasoned about their lack of distinctive motivation from their previous learning of Japanese, assuming that the non-beginners might be "discontented with repeating the basics of Japanese language" (Okamura, 1990, p. 95). As the presence of false beginners affects true beginners' motivation (Tse, 2000), it was appropriate to provide different stage one courses for beginners and non-beginners. However, the course for non-beginners was probably not well-articulated and planned to lead to the same stage two course which the course for beginners led to. Thus, the stage one course for non-beginners became tedious, and less challenging which failed to maintain student motivation to learn Japanese.

3.6.2   Research on student attrition in New Zealand language classes

Large scale attrition research carried out by Holt, et al. (2001) focused on Yr 10 secondary students in New Zealand. Their research found that the main reasons for non-continuance of L2 study (Japanese, German, French) in Yr 11 were: 1) intrinsic (e.g. boring); 2) extrinsic (e.g. not useful); and 3) difficulty. Their data indicated that Japanese learners were more likely to cite 'difficulty' as the main reason compared with other L2 learners, and nine out of ten students in Yr 10 who viewed L2 as their best subject would continue to study their L2 study into Yr 11 (Holt, et al., 2001). In their conclusions, they suggested that accentuating the practical benefits, including vocational aspects and the special experience of communicating authentically with another culture were important in stemming attrition (Holt, et al., 2001). However, the suggestion might also cause the students to have an "unrealistic expectation" (Beal, 1994, p. 73) about the usefulness of FLs as a "career tool" (Aschoff, 1992). As noted previously these unrealistic expectations have been seen as one of the reasons for a high student attrition rate.

Through a three year study on senior secondary students of FLs in Christchurch, McLauchlan (2006) found that the 39.4 per cent attrition rate of Yr 11 Japanese (Yr 12, in 2005) was much higher than the 25 per cent intended attrition rate which the same cohort has indicated when they were Yr 11 (April/May 2004). McLauchlan (2006) used individual interviews with questionnaires and found that true reasons of discontinuation were likely to be 'loss of interest' and 'level of difficulty' rather than an often stated reason of timetabling. He assumed that the "timetable becomes a substitute excuse" and insisted that the students "excluded by a timetable impasse, could have enrolled at the Correspondence School" (McLauchlan, 2007, p. 78).

McLauchlan also blamed the unfavourable L2 climate in New Zealand schools. For example, many schools having combined L2 classes (e.g. Yr 12 and Yr 13 in

one classroom), reducing the number of L2 classroom hours per week and therefore allocate L2 teachers reduced timetabled hours per week. He observed that "none of these options is in the interests of good education, and none would be deemed acceptable for subjects other than L2s" (McLauchlan, 2007, p. 126). Although McLauchlan (2007) made some useful points, his comments about students who had opted to give up L2 due to a timetable impasse seems unreasonable. Presumably most L2 teachers and students would consider learning L2s through a correspondence course rather difficult and lacking in the important aspects of L2 classes, such as direct communication and interaction with the teacher and classmates, possible immediate support and feedback from the teacher, and a wide variety of activities adjusted to the needs of the students/class. It would be understandable that ordinary students opted out of an L2 class if only the correspondence course was offered.

Shearn (2003) explored attitudes among Yr 8 and Yr 9 students in New Zealand who have learnt FLs through their intermediate school. She found that the majority of the students "did not believe that FLL was too difficult" and "the greatest value of FLL perceived by the students seems to lie in improving cultural understanding" (p. 185). It is notable that according to her their "positive attitudes were based largely on interest in other languages and culture" and "in language learning itself" (Shearn, 2003, p. 185). Shearn also looked at the reasons for these students not choosing FLs at secondary school despite their previous learning experience in intermediate school. Her analysis suggested that rather than a negative attitude towards FLs, too many options in secondary school was the main reason for Yr 9 students not taking FLs. The problem of combined L2 classes was also mentioned in Shearn's research. My own experience as a L2 teacher of a combined Japanese class indicates that both teachers and students under such circumstances suffer serious disadvantages, and this affects many aspects of teaching and learning, including student and teacher motivation. Moreover, it is likely to implant the idea of potential

combined L2 class in the wider school community, including junior students, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff, and potential students and parents, which discourages potential L2 learners by suggesting they might have to face a difficult learning environment.

L2 student studies in New Zealand vary in their focuses of student levels and there seem to be very little research conducted on L2 student attrition at the transition from secondary to tertiary levels. A few, rather dated studies on tertiary students of Japanese identified that some students who responded to their research have continued Japanese from secondary to tertiary education. However, their findings suggested that the students who have continued Japanese from secondary to tertiary level did not seem motivated to learn Japanese (Okamura, 1990; Tsuchiya, 1999).

3.7 Discussion

The present study is concerned with investigating the major reasons for students discontinuing L2 Japanese learning at the transition stage to tertiary education. Although there were some studies concerning students' attrition at the transition stage, they were not specifically looking at L2 Japanese.

Since tertiary studies have become more accessible, student attrition at tertiary level, particularly in the first year, has increased (Assiter & Gibbs, 2007). Some of these general attrition studies include common issues that L2 student attrition studies also found to be problems, such as workload and attainability (e.g. students found themselves academically unprepared, the level of programme is too high, etc). However, attrition is generally seen as complex and there would not be one single reason causing students to drop out from their learning. Although the participants of the present study did not fail to complete the Japanese courses they took at secondary level, these participants too stopped studying a subject which they had opted for. Clear differences

between these two patterns of attrition are the timing of attrition and formality of the process. Thus, some reasons behind general student attrition, withdrawing either fully from the entire programme or only from a class, might be similar to the problems which have stopped the participants of the present study enrolling in Japanese courses at tertiary level. Participants might have seen Japanese courses at tertiary level as more demanding than other courses, while the stress of transition and timetabling issues might have caused them to drop Japanese at the transition stage. Therefore, knowing the common problems behind first year dropout might help in understanding the decision making process of the research participants of the present study.

L2 Japanese is perceived as a difficult language to learn and master (Anderson & Ramsay, 1999, as cited in Ferguson & Grainger, 2005; Kinoshita Thomson, 2008; Mills, Samuels & Sharwood, 1987, as cited in Komiya Samimy, 1994). Despite these widely acknowledged difficulties, there is a lack of continuity in the curriculum of L2 Japanese from secondary to tertiary levels which is pointed out by several researchers (Lambert, 2001; Pauwels, 2002). It seems that a logical flow of learning embedded in a seamless curriculum from secondary to tertiary levels is necessary. Within such a model, students may eventually gain marketable Japanese skills and this may therefore be one way to improve student retention. Inappropriate student placements in classes were also of concern to some researchers (Pauwels, 2002; Tsuchiya, 1999). However, it is unclear if enrolling tertiary students are fully informed about the level of Japanese classes at the transition stage, in terms of content and skills, prior to the enrolment and this could be key information for many intending students thus enabling them to decide whether or not a class is worth taking.

A "theory of personal investment" (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986) focuses on actions rather than persons who are or are not motivated. The theory explains people's behaviour and helps to understand how their decisions of dropping

Japanese were made by the participants of the present study who were at least once motivated to learn Japanese. Amotivation and demotivation factors also explain some students' motivation changes over the course of their L2 Japanese learning. In recent motivation studies, learners' language learning experience was seen as an important component of motivation and L2 learning motivation is explained as a more complex system which involves many interrelated factors (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 1996, 2009). In the present study, it seems important to take the participants' motivation throughout secondary education to the transition stage into account to adequately evaluate the impact of their situations at times, and their past experiences, on their motivation, not only motivation to learn Japanese but also motivation to do other things.

3.8 Conclusion

The literature covered in this chapter highlighted concerning issues of Japanese language education in New Zealand. Japanese language has been identified as a difficult language for English speakers, like New Zealanders and it takes a longer time to reach a level of proficiency useful for pragmatic purposes (e.g. business correspondence) (Beal, 1994; Anderson & Ramsay, 1999, as cited in Ferguson & Grainger, 2005; Haugh, 1997; Kinoshita Thomson, 2008; Mills, Samuels & Sharwood, 1987, as cited in Komiya Samimy, 1994).

Research suggested that the difficulty of learning Japanese, or the time-consuming nature of Japanese, as main reasons of early student attrition (Holt, et al., 2001; Komiya Samimy, 1994; Lo Bianco, 2000; McLauchlan, 2007; Trotter, 1994). Research also indicated that extrinsically motivated students are more likely to drop out than intrinsically motivated students (Nuibe, et al., 1995; Trotter, 1994; Tsuchiya, 1999).

High student attrition rates amongst Japanese learners, particularly at the beginners' level, have been of concern as this reduces a number of graduates

who are proficient in Japanese (Pauwels, 2002; Trotter, 1994). Early student attrition in secondary school causes combined senior Japanese classes in which the students are often disadvantaged (McLauchlan, 2007; Shearn, 2003).

A possible solution for more L2 Japanese learners in New Zealand to reach a high proficiency level is to target those who have studied Japanese at secondary level to Yr 13 and encourage them to continue or resume Japanese at tertiary level. However, currently a majority of tertiary institutions do not seem to offer courses which take into account what students who have completed Yr 13 Japanese have already learned.

Unfortunately, there was limited research looking at the reasons of discontinuance of particular languages at transition stage. The research on the L2 attrition at the transition stage could give some ideas to encourage Yr 13 Japanese students and also other FL students in Yr 13 to continue the TL at tertiary level and gain more pragmatic, desirable fluency. The literature also highlighted the discrepancy between what the Japanese courses could offer and what the students expected from the course which resulted in attrition (Beal, 1994; Nuibe, 1993; Trotter, 1994). Although the students' realisation of the discrepancy and consequent attrition seems to be a typical scenario of early attrition among beginners, the scenario does not seem to be applicable to Yr 13 L2 Japanese students as a main cause of attrition at the transition stage. Investigating the reasons L2 Japanese student discontinue at the transition stage will be helpful in identifying what support or improvement could prompt Yr 13 L2 Japanese students to continue their Japanese study after the transition stage.

Chapter 4: Research method and process

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of grounded theory, the research methodology which is used in this study. The specific features which differentiate grounded theory as a research methodology are examined. The chapter then describes how the research method is applied and the characteristics of the research participants. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also discussed.

4.2 Grounded theory: an overview

Grounded theory is a general methodology in which "researchers work inductively to generate theories strictly from the data" (O'Leary, 2004, p. 96). As an inductive research methodology, the research does not start with a preconceived hypothesis, but it "begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). It was first developed by two American sociologists, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss as "an alternative to positivistic, social constructionist and interpretive qualitative data methods" (Glaser, 2001, p. 2). It can be seen that the methodology was first developed as a reflection upon the shortcomings of previous trends in social research which tend to test a preconceived hypothesis. Glaser pointed out problems of more "conventional" research methodologies:

> ...with a logical approach, research hypotheses are created *before* the researcher has initiated investigation. The investigator may then feel compelled to find the information which is presupposed by the hypotheses that were logically derived…Commitment to pre-conceived hypotheses may limit the kinds of observations, information and insights that the researcher makes and actually may have access to. (Glaser, 1978, p. 38)

In contrast, grounded theory aims to generate a theory derived from data without being biased by the researcher's preconceived theoretical ideas.

Grounded theory gives "a conceptual grasp by accounting for and interpreting a substantive pattern of action" (Glaser, 1992, p. 14). Since grounded theory research does not start with preconceived hypotheses, it is recommended for research on a particular topic in areas which are almost unexplored (Birks & Mills, 2011). Birks and Mills (Birks & Mills, 2011) mentioned that grounded theory is appropriate for research which has an intent to generate theory that gives an explanation of a phenomenon in which the researcher is interested. The applicability of grounded theory stated above therefore seems to coincide with the present study which aimed to understand why students who have continued learning Japanese to Yr 13 discontinued at the transition stage.

There are two basic kinds of theory generated by grounded theory methodology. These are "substantive theory", which is developed for a substantive, or empirical area of sociological inquiry, such as patient care, race relations, etc., and "formal theory" which is developed for a formal, or conceptual area of sociological inquiry, such as stigma, authority and power (Glaser, 1978). While substantive theory is directly relevant to a particular situation or a group of people, and is more specific in terms of level of generality, formal theory is more generally applicable (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The generation of formal theory is achieved by making a comparative analysis "among different kinds of substantive cases and their theories, which fall within the formal area, without relating the resulting theory back to any one particular substantive area" (Glaser, 1978, p. 145). Both substantive and formal theories must be grounded in data and describe the interrelation among the conceptual categories and their properties which have emerged from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the sample of the present study is limited to New Zealand learners of Japanese in the Auckland region, theory grounded in data of this study is substantive. To develop a formal theory of this research, the substantive theory of the present study should be further tested and be proved its applicability through extensive research, e.g. students in other

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region/countries and other FLs.

4.3 Specific features of grounded theory

This section includes specific features which differentiate grounded theory methodology from other research methodologies.

4.3.1 Avoids preconceived ideas

Grounded theory does not test a hypothesis, therefore, research procedures are significantly different from much other research. In addition, grounded theory discourages researchers from starting a specific literature review in the early stage of their research. It is thought that setting a hypothesis and learning from past research relevant to the study prior to data collection may in fact interrupt a researcher's ability to analyse the data without prejudice (Glaser, 1992).

Without anticipating a problem, a researcher first moves into an area of interest. This allows the researcher to keep "his [sic] mind open to the true problems in the area" (Glaser, 1992, p. 22). Although a full literature review in the early stage of the research is strongly discouraged, this does not mean that literature is disregarded altogether. Instead, Glaser suggested the researcher review the literature at a later stage. Once "the theory seems sufficiently grounded", the researcher may "begin to review the literature in the substantive field and relate the literature to his [sic] own work in many ways"(Glaser, 1992, p. 32). This means that an analysis of data directs the researcher to go into literature relevant to the developing theory which might not be seen as important prior to the data collection. The relevant literature is then treated as a secondary source of data analysed to direct the researcher to further develop the theory (Birks & Mills, 2011).

4.3.2 Data collection – Theoretical sampling

The data collection process in grounded theory is called "theoretical sampling",

one of the distinctive features of grounded theory. Initially, a researcher starts collecting data without any preconceived theoretical framework, and just uses his/her existing knowledge, general ideas and common sense in the situations s/he studies. At this stage, coding is conducted as "open coding", which involves "coding the data in every way possible…for as many categories that might fit" (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). Through this initial data collection and its coding and analysis, concepts and their relationships to the problem can be considered as to whether they are relevant or irrelevant. So the researcher can narrow and focus questions for further collection of data more closely relevant to the situation. This stage of the selected data collection is called "theoretical sampling". In the later stage of the research, interviews are directed by the emerging theory, so the researcher can ask direct questions relating to his/ her categories and then conduct "selective coding". During the theoretical sampling that involves collecting, coding and analysing data simultaneously, further direction of the research will be determined by the concepts that emerge. As theoretical sampling progresses unnecessary questions which do not elicit relevant data are omitted from further data collection and revised questions efficiently elicit relevant data. Consequently, theoretical sampling reduces the amount of data that needs to be coded, thus saving the researcher's time in analysing his/her data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

4.3.3   Constant comparison

To analyse data, Glaser and Strauss proposed a "constant comparative method". The method "involves four "stages" that are characterized as (1) generating and (2) integrating categories and their properties, before (3) delimiting and then (4) writing the emerging theory" (Dey, 1999, p. 7).

The first stage involves "coding each incident in his [sic] data into as many categories as possible" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105). The researcher will then compare previously coded incidents applicable to each category, while coding

an incident for a category. The constant comparison at the first stage generates the theoretical properties of the category, so while data collection, coding and analysis are simultaneously conducted, the researcher moves from comparison of incident with incident to comparison of an incident with the properties of a category. Through constant comparisons between incidents and the properties of categories the researcher may find that a property of a category relates to other categories.

This integration of the theory is more likely to emerge by itself during the theoretical sampling when the data are collected and analysed at the same time (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The third stage, delimiting, occurs at two levels: the theory and the categories. Delimiting in the theory occurs as the theory develops and solidifies:

> … the analyst may discover underlying uniformities in the original set of categories or their properties, and can then formulate the theory with a smaller set of higher level concepts. This delimits its terminology and text (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 110).

This reduction of terminology leads the researcher to discover theories that can be generalised. With this reduction and consequent generalisation Glaser and Strauss (1967) claimed that "the analyst starts to achieve two major requirements of theory: (1) *parsimony* of variables and formulation, and (2) *scope* in the applicability of the theory to a wide range of situation" (pp. 110 - 111).

The second level of delimiting, or reduction of the categories for coding, occurs as the research progresses and the theory is reduced. Glaser and Strauss (1967) insisted that the researcher can reduce categories by cutting down the original list of categories "according to the present boundaries of his [sic] theory" (p. 111). Another factor of delimiting the categories is that "they become *theoretically saturated*" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 111). This is when the

researcher can finally stop collecting the data.

4.3.4 *Theoretical saturation*

The researcher continues the collection of data, until s/he reaches "theoretical saturation" when newly collected data no longer generate additional properties of the category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Dey (1999) emphasized that the term "saturation" merely means "the capacity of the data to generate new ideas that is exhausted here" (p. 116), and warned that reaching "theoretical saturation" does not mean these new ideas and theories have sufficient evidence.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) recognised theoretical saturation could be problematic for writing a research proposal as it is difficult to know how much time would be needed to complete the research as well as the detailed breakdown of the timing of research. As they themselves are active sociologists, they admit potential problems:

> … even the saturation of the core category can be a problem. In field work especially, the tendency always is to begin collecting data for another category before enough has been collected on a previous one. The sociologist should continue to saturate all categories until it is clear which are core categories. If he does not, he risks ending up with a vast array of loosely integrated categories, none deeply developed. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 71)

In the above sections, I explained that grounded theory provides a framework to generate theories from data, rather than to use data for verifying preconceived theories. As explained in previous chapters, there have not been many studies on L2 student attrition at the transition from secondary to tertiary education carried out. Therefore, for the present study, it is impractical and probably inappropriate to create hypothetical theories to verify. While deductive research methodologies are not feasible for the present study, grounded theory does not require preconceived theories. Moreover, grounded

theory emphasises the development of inferences that clearly explain the phenomenon which meets the aim of the present study. As a novice researcher, I can be easily biased by the literature and might feel uncomfortable to defend ideas from my own data. However, the way grounded theory considers the role of the literature review enhances my reliance upon data and enables me to criticise or object to ideas from the literature when necessary. Overall, grounded theory was chosen as it seems to meet the sufficient criteria of methodology for the present study.

4.4 Research participants

This section includes the background information of the target group of the research. The section also includes how the research participants were recruited and their characteristics.

4.4.1 Target group – Background information

The target group of the research is post-Yr 13 Japanese language learners, who have not enrolled in any Japanese language courses in the tertiary level. As mentioned in the previous chapter, although there are previous studies which explored the reasons for a discontinuance of L2 learning, the length of L2 learning by participants of these studies are generally shorter than the length of Japanese learning by the target group of this study. Another difference is that in these previous studies (Ferguson & Grainger, 2005; Holt, et al., 2001; McLauchlan, 2007, etc.) participants were in the same institutions before and after the point of discontinuance, whereas in this study the point of discontinuance occurred at the transition stage when the participants moved from secondary school to tertiary institutions.

Defining the population of the target group is important to determine statistically a reliable sample size, particularly for quantitative research, as well as to consider a sampling strategy for appropriate representative of population.

The quality of research can be undermined by an inappropriate sample size and an unsuitable sampling strategy. Therefore, efforts were made to calculate the population of the target group prior to deciding on the research methodology. Initial criteria of the target group were set to gather relevant data for the population.

The inquiry of the present study originated from my observation as a teacher of Japanese at secondary schools in New Zealand that a number of reasonably successful, motivated students continued Japanese to Yr 13, but not thereafter. These students learned Japanese as a FL in a New Zealand secondary school and achieved reasonable academic results in Japanese. Their discontinuance of Japanese at the transition stage directed me to investigate their reasons of discontinuance for the present study. Therefore, initial criteria of the target group were set to correspond to these students: they are New Zealand students who have studied Japanese language to Yr 13 at secondary school in New Zealand; they have achieved reasonable academic records in Japanese throughout; but they have discontinued Japanese at the transition.

However, there are a few pitfalls that prevented the determination of the population of the target group. As already shown in Chapter 2, the MoE provides subject based numbers of students in New Zealand at each level, but the figures include international students and native Japanese speakers, as well as students who do not have reasonable academic records. Although NZQA openly discloses the total number of students who achieve each standard of NCEA in their website each year, these numbers do not indicate how many students actually passed more than four standards of Level 3 Japanese (for available numbers see the Table 4.1). Again, an unknown number of international students and native speakers are included in these numbers for NCEA. Also, there are New Zealand students under other qualification systems, namely CIE and IB, who have taken Japanese at a level equivalent to NCEA

Level 3, but their numbers seem unavailable. In addition, what percentage of them enrolled in tertiary programmes straight after Yr 13, and how many of them chose to continue (or discontinue) Japanese language is also unclear.

The lack of clarity in these numbers, which prevented an estimation of an adequate sample size for quantitative research, did not seem to significantly affect the present study and only supported the choice of qualitative research. However, this attempt to estimate the population of the target group left some concerns over the lack of an accurate grasp of New Zealand students of L2. This could discourage other researchers from conducting quantitative research relevant to L2 student attrition at the transition stage. It is also difficult to ascertain whether or not the variety of participants in the present study adequately represents the population of the target group.

Table 4.1 Number of students who gained credits from NCEA Japanese
Level 3 Standards (Source: NZQA 2008 - 2011)

Standard No. (Component)	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
90570 (Listening)	709 (645)	708 (637)	666 (611)	604 (550)	601	484	584
90571 (Speech)	728 (669)	798 (731)	780 (729)	727 (676)	721	638	690
90572 (Conversation)	631 (575)	646 (581)	653 (603)	536 (492)	556	434	476
90573 (Reading)	712 (649)	722 (652)	681 (627)	667 (613)	668	543	612
90574 (Writing)	584 (520)	634 (568)	613 (559)	572 (518)	517	488	480
90575 (Crafted writing)	665 (610)	727 (663)	703 (654)	679 (630)	663	555	631

※Numbers shown in brackets are Yr 13 students only. Only the total number of students was available in results after 2008.

As already mentioned, when comparing research subjects (L2 students) in previous studies on L2 student attrition and the target group of this study, there were differences in the length of TL learning and the point of discontinuance. At the transition stage to tertiary education, a vast majority of students experience additional changes, such as moving from their family

home to student type accommodation (flat, student apartment, boarding house, etc.), they gain new friends and new teachers, experience more independence, along with, in some cases, financial hardship. Some of these factors are very significant to their lives and study.

Importantly, therefore, the reasons of discontinuance by the target group of this study may be different from the reasons found in previous studies. Thus, creating preconceived theories from previous L2 attrition studies could potentially misdirect the research questions as the point of discontinuance among the research participants is different from previous studies. For this reason grounded theory therefore appeared to be a suitable methodology for this research.

4.4.2 Participant criteria

Before starting to recruit it was necessary to closely define the criteria to ensure that participants fitted into the target group and also that all data and emergent theory were relevant to New Zealand students under the current New Zealand education system.

First of all, to fit into the target group participants must have studied Japanese language to Yr 13 (i.e. NCEA Level 3 Japanese or equivalent courses such as CIE Advanced Subsidiary Level) at secondary school and had proven academic success in Japanese language from the course (e.g. more than 15 credits from NCEA Level 3 Japanese, A ~ C pass from CIE AS Japanese), but had not taken Japanese language courses of any levels at the tertiary level.

To ensure their Japanese language learning took place mainly in New Zealand, those who went to Japan as a student for more than six months through an exchange programme or for other reasons (e.g. one of the parents is a native

Japanese and/or parents have worked in Japan, so they lived in Japan at one stage, attended school in Japan) were also excluded from the research.

It is important that the participants had relatively clear memories of their decision making and were not from the previous secondary qualification system (University Entrance and Bursary). Participants needed to have enrolled in tertiary programmes within a year of completing Yr 13 and were either currently studying at a tertiary institution in New Zealand or had graduated from a tertiary institution in New Zealand after 2006[1].

Thus the participant recruitment criteria were set as below.

Participants:

- not a native speaker of Japanese;
- had not studied in Japan for more than 6 months in their primary and secondary years;
- were either New Zealand citizens or permanent residents;
- were either currently (at the time of the interview) studying at a tertiary institution in New Zealand or graduated from a tertiary institution in New Zealand after 2006;
- studied Japanese language to Yr 13 (i.e. NCEA Level 3 Japanese or equivalent courses such as CIE AS Level) at Secondary School level;
- had proven academic success in Japanese language from the course (e.g. gained more than 15 credits from NCEA Level 3 Japanese, A ~ C pass from CIE AS Japanese);
- enrolled in tertiary programmes within a year after they completed Yr 13;

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[1] University Entrance, Bursaries and Scholarships, the previous secondary qualification for Yr 13 ended in 2003 and have been replaced by NCEA Level 3 and Scholarships. Those who were under NCEA system in 2004 and enrolled straight to a 2 year diploma programme in 2005 could complete the programme by the end of 2006.

- had not taken Japanese language courses (classes) of any levels at the tertiary level.

Due to the criteria listed above, there was a concern that there might be a limited number of participants available. However, I also sought to include a variety of participants, including representation from both sexes, students studying various disciplines at university, those studying at different tertiary institutions and various ethnic groups who fitted the above criteria.

4.4.3 Participant recruitment

To recruit the participants, contacting secondary schools in New Zealand for gaining access to their former Yr 13 students was not an option, not only because of privacy issues, but also because a majority of secondary school teachers do not normally know what career path their former Yr 13 students have finally chosen. Therefore, a majority of participants were recruited through the snowball sampling method (Noy, 2008; O'Leary, 2004). This started from the researcher's personal contacts including former students and friends. The contacts were asked if they knew any potential participants who met the criteria of the participants for this study. Those potential participants introduced by the initial contacts were contacted either through e-mail or telephone and their profiles were checked against the sampling criteria before the arrangement for the interview was made. There was only one invalid participant introduced through the snowball sampling method who studied Level 5 (100-level, stage one) Japanese language course extramurally during one year study break overseas before enrolling in a degree programme.

Although the snowball sampling method is useful to recruit participants from a particular group, there was a tendency that newly introduced participants were from the same secondary school or currently in the same tertiary institution. If participants were from two or three secondary schools it could be arguable

whether the participants adequately represented the target group or not and the validity of the research might be questioned. Therefore, to widen the variety of participants in terms of their learning background, both in secondary and tertiary levels, A4 size flyers were placed on notice boards in a targeted institution as the second means of recruiting participants. There were four direct responses to the flyers within one week, three of whom met all the criteria for the participants. In addition, one more participant was introduced by one of the three participants.

4.4.4 Characteristics of the participants

There were a total of sixteen participants, six males and ten females, involved in this study. An overview of participants is shown in Table 4.2.

At the time of the interview, fourteen of the participants were tertiary students and the rest were recent university graduates[2] who had studied Japanese to Yr 13 at secondary school level in New Zealand. Most of them started learning Japanese from Yr 9, or earlier through introductory courses in intermediate years, however, one participant started at Yr 10 as Japanese was not offered in the school he attended in Yr 9.

All participants lived in the greater Auckland region, and were from six different secondary schools. The school deciles[3] of these schools varied from 4 to 10. Among these schools, four schools were state, co-educational, one was

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[2] Less than a year after graduation.

[3] School deciles are related to a school's socio-economic ranking, decile 1 as the lowest and decile 10 as the highest. According to the Ministry of Education, a school's decile indicates the extent to which it draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio economic communities and decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students.

state, single-sex (boys) and one was state-integrated[4], single-sex (girls). The school rolls of these schools also vary from around 900 to over 2,000. It can be seen as reflective of post-Yr 13 students of Japanese as in 2010 more than 95 per cent of students who sat NCEA Level 3 Japanese Listening examination were from schools of deciles 4 to 10 (NZQA, 2011b). Moreover, within Auckland region in 2010, nearly three quarters of students who sat NCEA Level 3 Japanese were from schools of deciles 8 to 10 (NZQA, 2011b).

Ten participants were Asian, including ethnic Chinese (from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other countries) and Korean. The rest were five Pakeha (New Zealand European) and one Samoan. It might be seen that the data was biased because Asian participants were in the majority, however, most participants commented that senior Japanese classes in their secondary schools were dominated by Asian students, especially Koreans and Chinese. My own experience as secondary school teacher of Japanese supports their comments. Subject statistics available from NZQA website (NZQA, 2011b) also indicated that students of Japanese at Level 3 have been heavily dominated by Asian students, especially in Auckland region where more than three quarters of them have been Asian ethnicity since its introduction in 2004. All participants were New Zealand citizens or permanent residents and came from non Japanese families[5].

Although eleven participants have visited Japan before, they have not attended any school in Japan for more than six months in their primary and secondary school years, therefore, their knowledge and communication skills in Japanese

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[4] State-integrated schools are schools which originally founded as private school, but have become established as part of the state system of education, with the special character. They are state funded and operate generally the same as state school, except their property remains the responsibility of the proprietor.

[5] Participants' family language backgrounds include English, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia and Samoan.

have mostly come from classroom teaching and learning in New Zealand schools.

Table 4.2 Overview of Participants

ID	Sex	Ethnicity	Secondary School			Tertiary Programme	
			Authority	Gender	Decile	Type	length
1	F	Chinese	Integrated	Girls	9	Degree (conj)	4 yrs
2	F	Samoan	Integrated	Girls	9	Degree (conj)	5 yrs
3	F	Pakeha*	Integrated	Girls	9	Degree	3 yrs
4	F	Pakeha*	Integrated	Girls	9	Degree	3 yrs
5	M	Chinese	State	Co-ed	8	Diploma	3 yrs
6	M	Chinese	State	Co-ed	8	Degree (conj)	4 yrs
7	F	Pakeha*	State	Co-ed	8	Degree	3 yrs
8	F	Chinese	Integrated	Girls	9	Degree	3 yrs
9	M	Chinese	State	Boys	9	Degree (Hon)	4 yrs
10	M	Korean	State	Boys	9	Degree (Hon)	4 yrs
11	F	Pakeha*	State	Co-ed	6	Degree (Hon)	4 yrs
12	F	Korean	State	Co-ed	10	Degree (conj)	4 yrs
13	M	Chinese	State	Co-ed	8	Degree (Hon)	4 yrs
14	M	Chinese	State	Co-ed	8	Degree (Hon)	4 yrs
15	F	Chinese	State	Co-ed	4	Diploma	2 yrs
16	F	Pakeha*	State	Co-ed	6	Degree	3 yrs

Programme type: Degree (conj) = conjoint degree; Degree (Hon) = degree with honours
Ethnicity: Pakeha* = New Zealand Europeans

Participants were studying a variety of disciplines at university, such as science, arts, design, engineering, law, commerce, music, business, hospitality, education, aviation, and computer science. Some of them had enrolled in a double major and/or a conjoint degree programme. The lengths of tertiary programmes they had enrolled in varied from two years to five years.

A majority of participants came from tertiary institutions where Japanese language classes were available at the time of their enrolment. Only one participant attended an institution which did not offer Japanese language courses.

4.5 Research instruments

In grounded theory, the researcher first collects data from the area of interest through chosen instrument(s), such as fieldwork interviews, observations and documents.

For this research, apart from relevant documents readily accessible, such as university course information, literature and statistics, the majority of data were gathered through participant interviews. Interviews have advantages in explorative research compared with other forms of data collection methods. While questionnaires can be distributed to and be gathered from a much bigger number of subjects within a limited timeframe and cost, it is hard to follow up on the subject's answers and seek clarification and additional information. Interviews can, on the other hand, be time consuming, but they can also be more flexible and more able to elicit participants' thoughts and underlying issues. Since reasons of student attrition in Japanese at the transition stage have not been defined and the present study was conducted to explain the reasons not through verifying preconceived theories, this research was indeed explorative at its start. Kvale (1996) agreed that in an exploratory interview "the interviewer introduces an issue, an area to be charted, or a [complex] problem to be uncovered" (p. 97). As the research aimed to investigate each individual participant's rather complex decision making process, interviewing participants appeared to be the most appropriate method to gather data in this research.

An exploratory interview is supposed to be "open and has little structure" (Kvale, 1996, p. 101). However, totally unstructured interviews can be easily

sidetracked especially when the interviewer has minimum experience of the qualitative research interview and may result in a mass of irrelevant data or extravagantly long interview time. To maintain the quality of interviews within a reasonable timeframe, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured style which allowed the researcher to be flexible while covering sufficient information.

The form of the interview chosen for the data collection was individual. For some issues and topics, a group interview might be more suitable as some comments by other participants could sometimes stimulate or encourage others to speak up. However, at the same time, discussions could be dominated or driven by particular participants while other participants might hesitate or feel embarrassed to speak up. Kvale (1996) also pointed out a risk for group interviews where the group interaction reduces the interviewer's control of the interview situation and may end up with a relatively chaotic situation. Some of the opinions and/or views might also be influenced by others. In this research, it was important to explore participants' decision making processes, personal experience and views, in regard to Japanese language learning. Thus, it was crucial to let every participant speak spontaneously and therefore the individual interview was more appropriate than a group interview.

4.6 Participant interviews

Semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted with the participants and conversations were audio-recorded through the computer after the participants gave their approval. All participants approved audio-recording. Interviews were conducted in several venues, including AUT's interview room, participants' homes, two local cafés and a restaurant, between 29th November 2008 and 28th April 2009. The interviews took between 42 minutes to 91 minutes. During the interviews, semi-structured interview sheets were used for the researcher to check that sufficient information had been covered.

In the interview with the first participant, a list of indicative questions was used to derive the codes and to rewrite and refine the semi-structured interview sheet for the subsequent interviews. Most of the questions on the list were prepared in line with the general concepts. The list was reviewed during the data collection procedures and some appropriate changes were made for the subsequent interviews. Some of the indicative questions on the initial list include:

- What were the reasons for you to learn Japanese language in secondary school?
- Can you tell me about the Japanese classes in your secondary school?
- Do you think you were achieving at that time?
- Was there any drawback to study Japanese?
- Did you think you might continue Japanese language at university level?
- Why did you not take Japanese at university?
- Can you talk about your course/programme?
- Are Japanese language papers (courses) available as part of your option papers?
- Have you ever checked the timetable of Japanese courses available at the university?
- What is the biggest challenge to completing your tertiary studies?
- Have you been to Japanese class in your university?
- Where would you go/what would you do if you want to improve your Japanese language skills?

After the first interview, the last question listed above was extended to identify if participants had considered learning Japanese in Japan as a possible option and how realistic it would be. For those who have participated in their school's Japan trip, additional questions were asked to find out the impact of the trip in

terms of motivation to continue Japanese language learning. After the fifth participant interview, I added a question about how participants had gained information for tertiary programmes they chose and what details they knew prior to their enrolment as it seemed their lack of information might have contributed to their decision to discontinue Japanese.

Brief written notes were taken by the researcher throughout the interview. Immediately after each interview additional notes (mental notes) were also recorded. The mental notes included the researcher's impression from the participant's responses including tone of the voice, eye contact, wording, facial expressions, etc., which might have distracted participants if recorded in writing during the interview.

After each interview, expanded field notes were written based on the jotted notes, mental notes and the audio-recorded interviews which were partially transcribed. Glaser (2001) claimed tape recording and transcribing is not necessary in grounded theory. However, to ensure notes were taken appropriately and any important comments were not missed, the interviews were audio-recorded and replayed while writing the field notes.

4.7 Treatment of the data

Expanded field notes were read and analysed line by line, coded and examined to categorise the data thematically. The coded data were reviewed and re-categorised while conducting the data collection and frequently re-emerging codes were re-examined against previously collected data as potential core categories. Examples of the initial coding and the re-coding of the interviews are shown in Table 4.3.

To compare individual participants' experiences and see if there were any patterns of incidents and their reactions, selective codes from each participant's

comments were also used to reconstruct their experience in chronological order, from the time they opted for Japanese at secondary school to the time of their interview. As some participants had faced drawbacks to learning Japanese at secondary school but decided to continue, the differences between the conditions of two decision making processes, at secondary school and at the transition stage, were also compared.

Table 4.3 Example of initial coding and re-coding

Participant's comments	Initial code	Re-code
In Yr 11, because <u>my parents wanted me to do Asian thing, you know, two maths, three sciences! (laugh) Asian choice!</u> Then they wanted me to do this in Yr 13, then <u>I did Yr 13 maths in Yr 12, so somehow it worked out</u>.	Parents wanted 'Asian choice' instead of Japanese Took advanced maths to fit Japanese in	Drawback - Parental pressure
Cause by the time in Yr 11, <u>I have already learnt three years of Japanese and invested time and effort, so if I dropped there it would be wasted</u>. Also I didn't want to do biology! So <u>if I did Japanese, I couldn't do biology</u>. *[Interviewer: But didn't you think it is worth doing Japanese by Yr 11?...] Oh, but <u>in Yr 11, you only know a little, like you are 1 year old!</u>* (Participant #6: talking about drawback in secondary school)	Three years of investment to be wasted Avoided a lesser liked subject Yr 11 learning outcomes not good enough	Invest further in learning to gain satisfactory outcomes

From these comparisons, some codes, which were initially worded differently but represent conceptually equivalent ideas, incidents, actions or conditions, were grouped and re-coded to form a selective code. Selective codes were then analysed to raise them from descriptive level to conceptual level to develop categories. For example, codes derived from participants' reasons for not enrolling in a Japanese course in the first year of their tertiary education: 'not available within the programme'; 'inconvenient location [of available Japanese classes]'; 'timetable clash'; and 'enrolment restricted [due to the previous

Japanese learning]' were grouped as all these describe problems of access to Japanese courses. This group of codes, which was re-coded as a selective code, 'having accessibility problems', was then compared with a common problem of access to Japanese class at the secondary level, namely timetable clash. The comparison identified that some participants experienced timetable clashes at secondary level as well as at the transition stage, but reacted differently. The properties and dimensions of the code were also listed to clarify what caused the incident to happen (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Properties and dimensions of 'Having accessibility problems'

Selective code	Properties: Dimensions
Having accessibility problems	Timetabling: adjustable – not adjustable
	Distance to Japanese classroom: short – long
	Tuition: included – extra; affordable/cheap – expensive
	Course requirements: met – unmet
	Credits toward qualification: counted – not counted

This comparison and clarification of incidents highlighted that the reaction and the consequences of 'having an accessibility problem' linked to other codes and raised the code 'having accessibility problems' to a category which was later renamed to 'considering the Japanese course inaccessible'.

After sixteen interviews were completed, categories which interrelated with other categories were re-examined and analysed to explain their links. My initial attempt of using an analytic strategy "the coding paradigm" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which was supposed to "prevent novice researchers from becoming too rigid in their thinking" (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 96) did not seem to work well. I felt forced to adjust some categories into the prescribed components, rather than allowing these categories to spontaneously fit in. Thus,

instead of using the coding paradigm, I used the more recent and simpler version of the strategy "the paradigm" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which has three broad components: conditions; inter/actions and emotions; and consequences. An example of the paradigm for a category from the present study is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 "The paradigm" for a category of 'Considering the Japanese course inaccessible'

category	condition	Inter/action, emotion	Consequences
Considering the Japanese course inaccessible	Having physical distance to the Japanese classroom Japanese is not offered at the institution Not having credits from Japanese counted towards the qualification/degree Not meeting requirements of the Japanese course Having a timetable clash	Fearing academic failure Wanting to avoid risks Accepting the situation	Judging Japanese and the major incompatible

Comparison and analysis of the paradigm of categories along with their properties highlighted interrelations between categories and the logical flow of participants' decision making processes. At this stage, a general explanation of why participants decided to discontinue Japanese at the transition started to emerge. The explanation involved a number of categories and their properties, but there were four categories which appeared to be more significant than the others to students' discontinuance of Japanese, therefore, I considered them core categories. Out of these four categories, two categories 'the value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese' seemed to

affect participants' intention to study Japanese at the tertiary level. Two other categories 'considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable' and 'considering the Japanese course inaccessible' interfered in their intention to study and led to their decisions to discontinue Japanese at the transition stage. Thus, these four categories were collapsed into two main categories 'the concept of learning Japanese' and 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible'. Details of core categories and the grounded theory of the present study are explained in the next chapter.

4.8 Ethical considerations

The main data used in the present study were collected through participant interviews. Therefore, key ethical issues of the present study are the protection of participant's rights and privacy and the relationship between the researcher and the participants (conflicts of interest) which might change the validity of the research.

In this research, due to snowball sampling and recruitment procedures, the identity of the participants were known to the researcher as well as some of the participants who introduced other participants to the researcher. Some of the participants were former students of the researcher, however, at the time of the interview, the researcher no longer taught or held any authority over the participants and no conflict of interest existed.

With regard to informed consent, all participants were given the information sheet (see Appendix A) and the consent form (see Appendix B) prior to the interview with reasonable time to respond. In addition, verbal information with an emphasis on voluntary participation was given. Prospective participants could also refuse to audio-record their interviews as the permission was sought by the researcher before starting the recording.

The interviews were coded and then aggregated to merge codes which share the same concepts into a selective code. Therefore, selective codes and subsequently developed categories represent underlying concepts across participants. Thus, there is no means of identifying individual participants from the final results of the research. Comments quoted from the transcribed interviews are only shown with participants' ID numbers to keep their identities confidential.

Ethical approval for this study was sought from the Auckland University of Technology Ethical Committee. Ethical approval was received on 7th November 2008, AUTEC Reference number 08/227 (refer Appendix C).

4.9 Limitations of the study

Significant limitations of this study were the sample size and the variety of participants who were dominated by students of two universities in Auckland and those who attended secondary schools in Auckland. However, NZQA's secondary school statistics (NZQA, 2011b) show Auckland has a large number of Yr 13 students of Japanese and in 2010 around 40 per cent of NCEA Level 3 Japanese candidates were in Auckland. Moreover, Auckland has more tertiary institutions than any other cities in New Zealand including the University of Auckland, AUT University, Unitec and Manukau Institute of Technology, as well as campuses of other universities and polytechnics and other private tertiary education providers. Therefore, a majority of the target group of this research would likely share the same characteristics of participants. However, students in other regions might have different views on Japanese and more difficult situations at the transition stage such as moving to a new city where they do not have family or close friends to support them.

In addition, in terms of the variety of ethnicity, although the sample of this study was reflective of post-Yr 13 students of Japanese in Auckland region,

compared with the rest of New Zealand the sample was dominated by Asian students who could have different values, beliefs, and linguistic backgrounds from other ethnic groups. Moreover, the variety of school deciles where participants attended did not include deciles of 1 to 3. Although statistics of NCEA Level 3 Japanese candidates in 2010 showed that nationally only four per cent of students attended low decile school (NZQA, 2011b), absence of these students in the sample is still counted as limitation.

As grounded theory research, the boundary of data which I collected through interviews amounted to the findings of this research. Therefore, although the theory grounded in the present study fits participants who are the source of data, applicability of the theory to post-Yr 13 students of Japanese outside Auckland is yet to be tested. Thus, findings of this study will not be representing the general population of post-Yr 13 students of Japanese in New Zealand who discontinued Japanese at the transition stage.

Another limitation was the time constraints associated with participant interviews that sometimes prevented the researcher from following the proper steps of theoretical sampling. Ideally, in grounded theory, data collection and data analysis are to be conducted simultaneously which determine the direction of subsequent data collection. However, in practice, availability of participants was prioritised and sometimes closely scheduled interviews suspended ongoing data analysis for theoretical sampling. This meant effective theoretical sampling was only conducted towards the end of data collection.

4.10 Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of the grounded theory methodology, justification of the choice of the methodology, research participants, research procedures, ethical considerations and limitations of the present study.

The point of discontinuance of Japanese by the target group, i.e. transition stage from secondary school to tertiary institution, made the present study significantly different from the studies on student attrition of FL courses previously carried out. Therefore, little was known about L2 student attrition at the transition stage that means creating preconceived theories for the present study prior to the data collection seemed inappropriate as well as impractical. The present study intended to give an explanation for participants' discontinuance of Japanese which meets with the type of research for which grounded theory is recommended.

As a result of constant comparison of data, core categories were identified and collapsed into two main categories which generated to the explanation of the phenomenon that participants decided to discontinue Japanese at the transition stage.

In the next chapter, research findings including the main categories and the explanation of the phenomenon, which is the grounded theory of the present study, are presented.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the present study that investigated why students who have continuously studied Japanese at secondary level to the end of Yr 13 discontinued Japanese learning when they moved to tertiary level. From the data analysis, two core categories 'the concept of learning Japanese' and 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible' emerged. In this chapter I explain details of these core categories and their significance to participants' decision-making processes to discontinue Japanese learning at the transition stage.

Firstly, I describe an overview of participants' reports of their decision-making processes with a simplified flowchart. Secondly, I explain the first core category 'the concept of learning Japanese' which affected participants' intention to continue Japanese at tertiary level. Detailed explanations of two sub-categories, 'the value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese' are also given with some comments made by participants.

Then I explain the second core category 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible'. This underlay participants' final decisions to discontinue Japanese at the transition stage despite their earlier intention to continue Japanese. As the category contains two sub-categories, 'considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable' and 'considering the Japanese course inaccessible', detailed explanations of these sub-categories are also given.

Finally I present the grounded theory of this study by showing the reasons that emerged, both main and subordinate reasons, which led participants of this study, who were Yr 13 students of Japanese, to discontinue Japanese learning at the transition stage.

5.2 An overview of decision making processes

All participants of the study shared two conditions: they had learnt Japanese to Yr 13; and had chosen their tertiary programmes which were not Japanese (see flowchart in Figure 5.1). When participants chose non-Japanese major programmes, Japanese became a non-compulsory course for participants. At that stage, some participants still had an intention to study Japanese as an elective course, while other participants had no intention to study Japanese at tertiary level. Their degree of intention to study Japanese or not at tertiary level reflected 'the concept of learning Japanese' individual participants had at the transition stage which consisted of 'the value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese'.

While participants who had no intention to study Japanese at tertiary level did not actively seek the availability of Japanese courses at their tertiary institutions, other participants with an intention to study Japanese sought information and considered whether taking Japanese was practically compatible with their major studies. Unfortunately, at the transition stage, these participants thought taking Japanese was not compatible with their major studies, either because of accessibility problems, or academic reasons, such as participants thought the level of a Japanese course at university to be high.

A flowchart in Figure 5.1 shows participants' reports of their decision-making processes. To contrast participants and those who continued their Japanese learning at the transition stage, alternative choices are also shown in a dark shade with grey dotted arrows.

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Learning Japanese to Yr 13 │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
           ╱                              ╲
   ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Selecting Japanese│       │ Selecting non-Japanese│
   │ major/minor       │       │ programmes            │
   │ programmes (e.g. BA)│     │ (e.g. BE, BSc)        │
   └──────────────────┘        └──────────────────────┘
           ┊                              │
   ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Japanese is      │        │ Japanese is not compulsory│
   │ required         │        └──────────────────────┘
   └──────────────────┘           ╱              ╲
                      ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
                      │ Have intention to│  │ No intention to  │
                      │ continue Japanese│  │ continue Japanese│
                      │ (seek options)   │  └──────────────────┘
                      └──────────────────┘
           ╱                   │                    │
   ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
   │ Considering  │  │ Considering  │      │ Discontinue  │
   │ Japanese and │  │ Japanese and │─────▶│ Japanese     │
   │ the major    │  │ the major    │      └──────────────┘
   │ compatible   │  │ incompatible │
   └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
```

Figure 5.1 *Participants' reports of their decision-making processes to discontinue Japanese (grey dotted arrows and dark shade choices were not chosen)*

In the following section I explain what 'the concept of learning Japanese' embraces and how it was perceived differently by each participant. I also discuss how 'the concept of learning Japanese' affected participants' decisions as to whether to continue Japanese at the transition stage.

5.3 The concept of learning Japanese

The first core category, 'the concept of learning Japanese' embraces individual participants' understanding of what learning Japanese means to them both during and after learning Japanese. The word 'concept' was chosen because it

means a collection or a group of ideas which explain how a person views a particular thing. Therefore, sometimes it might not be easily explained in words and one's concept of a particular thing might be different from another's concept. Thus characteristics of the word 'concept' seemed right for this core category which, according to participants' reports, appeared to have been formed by and resided in each participant's thinking, and reflected their own experiences, environment, knowledge and characteristics.

At the time participants started their Japanese learning in secondary school 'the concept of learning Japanese' was usually vague, almost non-existent or unrealistically optimistic as participants had little or no experience of learning Japanese, or possibly any other language, before. Also they were probably uncertain of the value of skills and knowledge they were to obtain through learning Japanese. Some participants might have heard other people talking about Japanese and had some preconceived ideas of learning Japanese. These ideas might have been 'the concept of learning Japanese' participants had first.

However, once participants started learning Japanese at secondary school, 'the concept of learning Japanese' started to be developed and be changed, from vague ideas to more concrete and individualised perceptions which reflected each participant's experience, situation and characteristics. For example, participants might have compared Japanese with other subjects and seen Japanese as more or less difficult, fun, practical, useful, etc. They will also have evaluated their own aptitude for Japanese through their learning experience. Since these introspective processes of understanding Japanese as a learner were constantly taking place during their learning of Japanese, 'the concept of learning Japanese' was not fixed for students and would have been constantly changing.

'The concept of learning Japanese' consists of two sub-categories, 'the value of

learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese'. In this section, I explain what these sub-categories mean and their components, or properties, which interacted with each other and affected each participant's overall views of Japanese.

5.3.1 An outline of 'the value of learning Japanese further'

The category, 'the value of learning Japanese further' is individual participants' understanding of what Japanese learning in the future will likely bring to them and what its worth is within their value system.

For example, a participant who had been studying journalism thought being able to communicate in other languages fluently would expand her opportunities in journalism, so she valued further learning of Japanese. On the other hand, a participant who was studying design thought Japanese was useful for travelling there but at the transition stage her Japanese was already good enough to travel. Therefore, she did not think learning Japanese further in the future was particularly beneficial.

When this participant saw that 'the value of learning Japanese further' was insignificant, further learning was less likely to be considered. 'The value of learning Japanese further' is attributed to participants' individual circumstances, their awareness of potential advantages given by improved Japanese skill, and their own proficiency of Japanese. As these factors might change over time, 'the value of learning Japanese further' might also change. Therefore, it is possible that an increased 'value of learning Japanese further' later in their life might encourage participants to resume Japanese.

5.3.2 Properties of 'the value of learning Japanese further'

The study found that there are five significant properties which determine 'the value of learning Japanese further'. They are: 'expected incentives' to continue

Japanese; participant's 'current proficiency'; 'relevance' to participants; the 'necessity' of learning Japanese further; and 'availability of perceived options'.

- **Expected incentives**

'Expected incentives' are incentives to continue Japanese, such as reward, benefits and advantages individual participants expected that they would be able to gain from further learning of Japanese. If there were a variety of good incentives expected, 'the value of learning Japanese further' increased, therefore continuing Japanese became more attractive.

Most incentives that participants expected at the transition stage were associated with higher proficiency, such as better job prospects, increased personal relationships with native speakers of Japanese, and study opportunities in Japan. In contrast, many participants had expected and recognised other types of incentives at secondary school. These incentives included academic achievement, psychological incentives such as satisfaction, fun, and joy of learning, social incentives such as meeting classmates, and enjoying solidarity in a particular subject area. The following excerpts show that participants' motivation came from something they could expect from regular activities rather than long-term goals.

> *I think I really enjoyed going [to Japanese class], I enjoyed people in the class and teachers. It was not boring. It was just hard. (#4)*

> *You could go to the class everyday and wonder what's they gonna do today. I think it's the variability. In any other classes you go and you think okay let's take notes while in Japanese class the attitude was more out, we gonna play games, maybe activities we do differently. (#8)*

Such ongoing learning motivation is referred to as "continuing motivation (CM)" which "students derived from the experience of learning itself" (Maehr, 1984, as cited in Ushioda, 1996, p. 19). Although participants had the experience

of learning Japanese, due to a change of milieu at the transition from secondary to tertiary participants lost sources of CM. Therefore, participants might have felt there were a smaller variety of incentives to continue Japanese at the transition stage than at secondary level. Consequently, participants might have seen that the attractiveness to continue Japanese was reduced at the transition stage.

- **Current proficiency**

'Current proficiency' here means the level of proficiency of Japanese which participants had at the transition stage. For participants who saw their 'current proficiency' at the transition stage as high enough for their needs, further learning of Japanese might not bring as many benefits as for those who did not see themselves at a self-perceived sufficient level of proficiency. Thus, even if two participants had reached the same level of proficiency at the transition stage, how their 'current proficiency' affected 'the value of learning Japanese further' depended on their uses and needs of Japanese.

Reasonably good 'current proficiency' might have also deferred further learning of Japanese as many participants assumed that they could later resume learning Japanese without repeating most material they had learnt at secondary school. These participants thought that their Japanese language skills and memorised work would not disappear easily, thus, they did not think that the later resumption of Japanese learning particularly difficult. Consequently, these participants did not feel that continuing Japanese learning at the transition stage desirable, so they chose to temporarily drop Japanese:

> *I know my Japanese is rusted but have the basics and would catch up once I resume, so knowing that I have the basics to start again. (#1)*

- **Relevance**

'Relevance' signifies whether or not participants recognised Japanese had

relevance to them, to what extent and what regard. When participants recognised that Japanese had 'relevance' to them, they tended to value Japanese highly. For example, participants who had personal relationships and connections with Japanese speakers, or were interested in particular areas (e.g. civil and mechanical engineering, animations or the hospitality industry) for which Japan has a good reputation, considered Japanese language skills useful, important and advantageous.

Some participants' comments indicated that when the 'relevance' was significant and strong, participants tended to show their intention to resume Japanese for higher proficiency, probably to more actively utilise Japanese. Participant#10 was keen to resume Japanese even though he was satisfied with the level of his Japanese communication skills. He considered Japanese was relevant to his career in engineering, for better prospects.

> *…by studying Japanese, I could work in Japan. Japan is very, very advanced. I should want to study masters or doctorate in Japan. I didn't plan to stop studying Japanese, I wanted to study, it's not from university's course. (#10)*

In contrast, for participants who could not see that Japanese had significant 'relevance' to them at the transition stage, further learning of Japanese had less value.

> *Not many people speak it, so I don't think I would use [Japanese for career] at all, because of my major. (#6)*

Previous research also identified insignificant relevance to their future was one of the reasons of L2 student attrition (Curnow & Kohler, 2007).

- **Necessity**

'Necessity' referred to here is 'necessity' of learning Japanese further from an individual participant's point of view. Since all participants have chosen

programmes which did not require taking Japanese, there was no institutional 'necessity' of learning Japanese further for them. Thus, participants' perceived 'necessity' of learning Japanese further at the transition stage was mainly derived from their desire to achieve particular goals, such as to work in Japan or to pass the Japanese language proficiency test at higher levels, which required them to attain higher proficiency.

'Necessity' has several dimensions, such as intensity (great or small), urgency (immediate or delayed) and duration (permanent or temporary). There were participants who suggested their perceived 'necessity' of learning Japanese further was present to be *"multilingual"* (#1, #5), to increase job prospects (#2, #3) or to work or study in Japan (#9, #10). However, at their interviews, no participants indicated that they thought improving their proficiency was an urgent 'necessity'. Therefore, at the transition stage they probably assumed it was okay to postpone further learning of Japanese.

- **Availability of perceived options**

'Availability of perceived options' includes availability of each of the options of learning Japanese which individual participants at the transition stage perceived as possibilities, for both at the present as well as the future. At the transition stage, participants might have considered practicalities, costs and access to each option. They have seen some options like Japanese courses offered at nearby tertiary institutions as almost always available, while other options like a language school in Tokyo might only be available after completing their tertiary programmes.

It seemed that when participants had the information on available alternatives to a Japanese course at university, these participants made a comparison between these alternatives and the course on the basis of suitability for their needs and circumstances. Some participants might have seen some alternatives

as more convenient, cost-effective or user-friendly compared with a course available at university. There were several options which participants assumed better than taking Japanese courses at their university:

> *I wonder if it [university's Japanese courses] will actually produce fluent students at the end of that... I'd rather go to Japan and learn language that way. (#7)*

> *I have a feeling that [Japanese courses at] University Y would be better [than my university's courses] when it comes to languages. (#8)*

Participant#14 also indicated another option at a private institution in *"Palmerston North where the special course [for Japanese was] available"*. For these participants, having the information on these preferable options of learning Japanese reduced the relative attractiveness of the Japanese course at their university. While some people might think these options unrealistic, these participants perceived that these options were accessible, though not necessarily at the transition stage but probably in the future.

In terms of availability in the future, most participants thought that learning Japanese later in their life was no doubt available. Some participants claimed that there were a number of options for learning Japanese they could take anytime in their life.

> *Japanese, you can learn anytime, you can go to night class outside or go tutor to teach you, but some other subjects you cannot… I thought if I want to study Japanese, improve Japanese, I can study later on. (#15)*

It seemed that having more 'availability of perceived options' potentially reduced 'the value of learning Japanese further' through Japanese courses at the transition stage. This is because participants did not think discontinuing Japanese at the transition stage was a significant loss of opportunities for learning Japanese in the future.

5.3.3 Correlations between properties of 'the value of learning Japanese further'

In many situations, these properties of the category 'the value of learning Japanese further' correlate to each other, reinforcing or antagonising each property's influence on 'the value of learning Japanese further'.

For example, if participants thought Japanese had strong 'relevance' to their lives, through personal relationships or work, they also suggested attractive incentives associated with Japanese, so 'necessity' of learning Japanese tended to be strong. The following comment shows that 'relevance' comes with 'expected incentives' and also creates 'necessity'.

> *I might want to go to Japan in my future after I finish my degree. I might work for a while and go to Japan and do my Master's degree…If I go to Japan's university I must [study Japanese in Japan]…Somehow it [Japanese] connects [to my career]. I guess because of my girlfriend, she is Japanese. (#9)*

Likewise, participants who assumed Japanese had little 'relevance' to their lives both at present and in the future, only recognised few incentives from learning Japanese further, therefore, participants saw that 'necessity' was also low. In these situations, vectors for participants' 'relevance', 'expected incentives' and 'necessity' faced the same directions to increasing or decreasing 'the value of learning Japanese further'.

Some participants thought their 'current proficiency' was good enough to meet their needs, and further learning did not seem to give additional benefits. Thus their 'current proficiency' antagonised 'necessity' and 'expected incentives'. The following comment by participant#11 indicated her 'current proficiency' already met her expectation and since Japanese had no 'relevance' in her career, she did not see any 'necessity' or 'expected incentive' to continue Japanese.

> *Yeah, I am happy with [my Japanese skills and knowledge]. It was better than I*

have expected… if you want to get a job using Japanese, then [learning Japanese along with your major] is good. To me it is not. (#11)

Also, how participants measured their 'current proficiency', its practicality, sustainability and potential for modes of study, interrelated with 'necessity' and 'availability of perceived options' for further Japanese study. At the transition stage, a majority of participants of this study thought their 'current proficiency' was stable and would not easily diminish. Therefore, they assumed that later resumption of Japanese study would not be difficult, so urgency of the 'necessity' was reduced. When participants recognised more perceived options of learning Japanese available in the future, this reduction of urgency often impacted on participants' view on 'the value of learning Japanese further' at the transition stage.

Yeah, anytime in my life, I can do BA [Japanese]. Now I passed [Japanese] proficiency test nikyuu [level 2] I can start stage three [Level 7, or 300-Level] paper. So I can only take two years to complete, relatively short period. (#8)

In addition, some of these participants who were confident with their 'current proficiency' assumed that they could increase proficiency through other modes of study rather than Japanese courses. This increased 'availability of perceived options'. The following comment by participant#12 shows that her confidence in 'current proficiency' in Yr 13 enabled her to consider self-study as a preferred option to a Japanese course at university.

When I was Yr 13, my older brother was taking stage two [Level 6, or 200-Level] Japanese paper as an elective paper at university and I saw the textbook which I found too easy, I thought I was already able to do that level…I thought I could study Japanese myself, so I didn't think I should study Japanese in university. (#12)

5.3.4 An outline of 'perceptions of learning Japanese'

'Perceptions of learning Japanese' represent participants' self-reflective ideas of learning Japanese. By experiencing years of Japanese study in secondary school,

participants had developed their own ideas of and opinions on the process of learning Japanese. They might have thought that learning Japanese was not too difficult but time-consuming, or quite challenging and required consistent revision at home.

Participants also recognised themselves critically as learners of Japanese. They might have assessed their own aptitude for Japanese, based on how well they achieved and how much time and effort they had put in learning Japanese. Participants' self-evaluation might be influenced by others' opinions about them, such as what their peers and teachers commented on in relation to their competency, memory and quality of work.

Participants combined these experience-based perceptions of learning Japanese and the understanding of themselves as learners of Japanese. Then participants pictured themselves continuing Japanese at tertiary level, thinking about what would be happening to them and how they would feel during their learning of Japanese. Their preconceived, self-reflected view of learning Japanese is what I call 'perceptions of learning Japanese'.

If participants developed negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' and predicted themselves to be struggling, failing to achieve, being frustrated or getting bored, participants were less likely to consider taking Japanese. On the other hand, when participants' 'perceptions of learning Japanese' were positive, participants were more likely to consider taking Japanese.

5.3.5 Properties of 'perceptions of learning Japanese'

From the study the category 'perceptions of learning Japanese' had four significant properties which emerged. They were: 'sense of competence'; 'perceived level of difficulty'; 'perceived workload'; and 'past learning experience'.

- **Sense of competence**

'Sense of competence' as a property of 'perceptions of learning Japanese' refers to participants' self-awareness of their ability to learn Japanese. It might be confused with an aptitude for learning Japanese, but 'sense of competence' is a subjective view which has come from participants themselves through their own learning experience. Therefore, even if their achievement was good and teachers saw them competent, unless participants had confidence in their ability of learning Japanese and felt themselves as competent learners of Japanese, their 'sense of competence' was not high.

Participants who had a low 'sense of competence' often compared themselves with their peers and also compared Japanese with other subjects they had taken, and suggested their lack of aptitude for Japanese.

> *[Japanese] was my lowest subject in Yr 13…with other subjects I can just write answers come up from my head, it sounds ok, but for Japanese I cannot do that.... For Japanese I have to actually put lots of work, make effort, not just sit and write. I am not naturally good at it. (#3)*

> *… [friend's name] can pick up easily, it comes naturally, but I needed to study and spend a lot of time on it to make me able to do it… Out of all subjects, I generally got good grades everything else, Japanese was the one I could not get my head round. (#4)*

In contrast, participants whose 'sense of competence' seemed high did not necessarily compare their own achievement with others. However, most of them indicated that Japanese was their good subject. Because of this comparative status of Japanese, they thought learning Japanese was not difficult for them. For example, participant#5 recognised that his academic achievement was *"not too well"* and he described himself *"[could] not learn at once"* and *"a kind of quite slow"*. However, when comparing with other subjects, he also commented that *"Japanese was [his] better subject"* and when he studied he was able to see his own progress, therefore he thought learning Japanese was

not difficult for him.

- **Perceived level of difficulty**

The property 'perceived level of difficulty' describes participants' perception of how difficult learning Japanese at tertiary level would be. This reflected their level of achievement at senior secondary years and their recognition of how much time and effort they would have to put in to achieve that level. In the literature on both general student attrition and L2 student attrition, academic difficulty was also cited as a reason for discontinuance (Conklin, 1997; Holt, et al., 2001).

Participants' 'perceived level of difficulty' was often affected by the information about Japanese courses they had received from the university and other sources. There were a couple of participants whose older siblings had studied Japanese at tertiary level. Interestingly, two of them had totally different opinions on the level of difficulty of Japanese courses their siblings had taken. While participant#12 saw the textbook of her brother's Japanese course and thought the course was too easy, participant#15 thought Japanese courses her two sisters had taken were way beyond what she could manage as she was already struggling with grammatical structures.

Unfortunately, a lack of information was common amongst participants at the transition stage leading them to perceive the level of difficulty higher than the actual level. This negatively affected participants' intentions to continue Japanese. Many participants did not have much information about Japanese courses, but somehow assumed that Level 6 (200-Level, or stage two, second year) Japanese course might be *"little bit too difficult" (#2)* for them. They later realised that this 'perceived level of difficulty' of the course was wrong. More than a year after dropping Japanese participant#10 observed a Level 7 (300-Level, or stage three, third year) Japanese class and was surprised that he

"still understood a lot of them". Participant#11 also stated that she overestimated the level of difficulty of Japanese at tertiary level.

> *Well, it [Japanese] got really hard at seventh form [Yr 13] so I thought "at tertiary level'd be too hard, actually I wouldn't be able to cope with that", now I know that is not true, I didn't know that then (#11)*

- **Perceived workload**

The property 'perceived workload' is the amount of work which participants thought would be required for further study of Japanese at tertiary level. After learning Japanese at secondary school, participants had knowledge of what kind of work and how much was involved in learning Japanese.

However, participants' learning experience was from the secondary school environment. Therefore, their assumption of workload at tertiary level was affected by their preconceived ideas of teaching and learning at tertiary level. Some participants thought language teaching and learning at tertiary level involved more self-directed study and less communication than they were used to having at secondary level. They also considered that the Japanese curriculum at university would be crammed compared with the secondary curriculum.

> *…university is all that of lecture hall base and also because that one year cram you everything while this is probably about three to four years learning [at secondary school]… (#14)*

Each participant's 'perceived workload' was individualised, modified by their understanding of self and actual work they had done at secondary level. Those who spent a large amount of time studying Japanese outside the Japanese classroom at secondary school saw Japanese as time-consuming.

> *Japanese is a very time-consuming language and it is not something you go to class from walk away and walk back a week later, you need to be constantly practising and revising. (#4)*

If participants were unhappy with their learning outcomes for Japanese at secondary level, their 'perceived workload' for being successful in Japanese learning at the transition stage would increase from what they had done at secondary school. Participants who had worked really hard at secondary school might have thought this increase of 'perceived workload' *"too much" (#15).* Australian research also found that FLL was seen as "a great deal of work" by students who discontinued FLs (Curnow & Kohler, 2007, p. 23).

- **Past learning experience**

As already explained in other properties of 'perceptions of learning Japanese', participants' 'past learning experience' of Japanese hugely contributed to develop and shape their 'perceptions of learning Japanese' through other properties. In addition, individual participants' 'past learning experience' enabled them to have insight into FLs in New Zealand. Participants saw an invisible boundary between "us [those who have learnt FLs]" and "other people" and were frustrated by how FLL and learners were seen and treated by others.

> *People think learning other languages is not that hard, but it is difficult to learn how to read and write from scratch. In secondary school, learning second languages is much harder than other subjects like English or maths, because you are used to learn these subjects, you are learning all way through anyway. Languages are something you choose to take and it's quite different from other basic subject. (#11)*

> *… somehow we should make learning languages more respectful, more desirable, and there has to be force to use it everyday, in real life situation. People hidden in classroom, learning languages are not respected by peers who don't learn languages… Learning language somewhat becomes more academic. I feel people in secondary school are really short-sighted. (#13)*

'Past learning experience' had also given participants some kind of feelings or sentiments toward Japanese and its learning. As their learning experiences were not simple, one way, but a mixture of good and bad, success and failure, etc.,

their feelings could be quite complex, negative or cynical as well as warm, comfortable and pleasant. These feelings or sentiments seemed to linger on among them and at times affected participants' intention of learning Japanese.

Probably [my passion to improve Japanese is] not very strong, probably not very hooked any more, but I guess Japanese can still linger somewhere, little bit. (#14)

These sentiments from the past had affected a couple of participants to remain learning Japanese at Yr 13 despite having a series of negative learning experiences in Yr 12. They nourished a fond hope which came from previously pleasant experiences before Yr 12.

…because I still had a good memory of being in Japanese class. I think I didn't want to give up [in Yr 13] because it was my favourite class. At that time I still wanted to get better at it… during secondary school if you enjoy a class, you would enjoy the subject and if you really enjoy the subject that enjoyment carries on to later stage of your life. I think when you start liking something it's hard to start dislike it suddenly, while if you hate something for the beginning it's hard to get to like it. (#8)

5.3.6 Correlations between properties of 'perceptions of learning Japanese'

Properties of 'perceptions of learning Japanese' also correlate with each other. As already explained, 'past learning experience' is the most significant property which influenced other properties and greatly contributed to shaping participants' 'perceptions of learning Japanese'.

When participants' 'past learning experience' had been largely successful, their 'sense of competence' tended to be high. Negative experiences which generated negative feelings such as uncertainty, insecurity, unease, embarrassment were likely to lower participants' 'sense of competence'.

When participants had a low 'sense of competence' their 'perceived level of

difficulty' and 'perceived workload' tended to be high. However, participants who seemed to have a high 'sense of competence' did not necessarily have their 'perceived level of difficulty' and 'perceived workload' low as there were other factors that affected these perceptions.

5.3.7 'The concept of learning Japanese' and participants' intention to continue Japanese

As a combination of 'the value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese', 'the concept of learning Japanese' affected participants' intention to continue Japanese at the transition stage.

For example, participants who had a combination of high 'value of learning Japanese further' and positive 'perceptions of learning Japanese' indicated that they had strong intentions to continue Japanese. To them, continuing Japanese was valuable and constructive while learning Japanese was associated with positive images such as pleasure, joy, progress and success. On the other hand, participants who had a combination of low 'value of learning Japanese further' and negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' had no intention to continue Japanese. To them, learning Japanese was associated with negative images such as difficulty, unease, failure and disappointment, and they no longer needed to improve their Japanese skills.

Such combination patterns were broadly divided into four groups of 'the concept of learning Japanese' and shown in Table 5.1. Columns for four groups include patterns of the concept marked as: +H; –H; +L; –L, exemplary comments and likely actions of applicable participants. Of course, each of these four combination patterns was not a single, flat value, but has a range of two dimensional values and there were more subtle differences in individual participants' intention to continue Japanese even if they were within the same combination pattern.

Table 5.1 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

Table 5.2 Variations in 'the concept of learning Japanese'
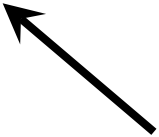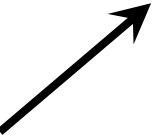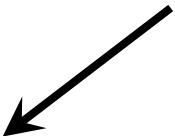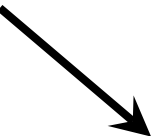
The concept of learning Japanese		Perceptions of learning Japanese	
		← Positive (+)	Negative (−) →
The value of learning Japanese further	↑ High (H)	↑+ H: Increase intention Keen to continue ↑+ L: Increase sense of freedom Satisfied to discontinue	↑- H: Increase mental conflict Reluctant to continue ↑- L: Decrease intention Keen to discontinue
	Low (L) ↓		

Table 5.2 shows variations in 'the concept of learning Japanese', with four

arrows and exemplars of participants' emotional states on their choices to continue or discontinue Japanese. If 'the concept of learning language' shifted to the direction of each arrow, the applicable emotional state became stronger.

Although a simple increase of 'the value of learning Japanese further' generally increases participants' intention to continue Japanese, with negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' participants tended to undergo a mental conflict. Participants who had negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' and high 'value of learning Japanese further' often felt if they discontinued they were about to give up opportunities Japanese might bring in the future. However, these participants also felt that continuing Japanese would be difficult and they might not be successful. Whichever they chose, they knew they would have regrets at some stage and making the right decision seemed very difficult. Therefore, they tended to seek available options to continue Japanese rather reluctantly in order to convince themselves or to find some excuses or justification for giving up Japanese. In contrast, participants whose 'perceptions of learning Japanese' were negative and 'the value of learning Japanese further' was low tended not to seek options but rather convinced themselves to discontinue Japanese as a logical choice.

Participants who had positive 'perceptions of learning Japanese' but considered 'the value of learning Japanese further' low were generally happy with what they had learnt. These participants felt that the outcomes of their learning of Japanese met their needs, thus they saw themselves as free to discontinue Japanese without losing any potential benefit. While some of them chose to discontinue Japanese, others were still interested in continuing Japanese. Since these participants were free from learning Japanese for the sake of a foreseeable benefit, their interests in further learning of Japanese seemed comparable to a sport or hobby which we do for pleasure.

Despite their intention to continue Japanese, all these participants who sought options to continue Japanese finally decided to discontinue Japanese. Their reasons of discontinuance of Japanese are discussed in the next section which explains the second core category 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible'.

5.4 Considering Japanese and the major incompatible

The second core category which emerged in this research is 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible' which embraces two sub-categories, 'considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable' and 'considering the Japanese course inaccessible'. Participants who had an intention to continue Japanese and sought options to take Japanese at the transition stage eventually decided to discontinue because they considered that taking Japanese along with their major studies was academically unmanageable or found that a Japanese course was simply inaccessible.

In this section, I explain these two sub-categories by describing conditions which have led participants to consider Japanese as incompatible with their major studies. To help explain how these conditions link to participants' final decisions, "the paradigm" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) of these categories is presented in Table 5.3. The paradigm includes "conditions" participants had, "inter/actions and emotions" which were participants' responses to these conditions, and "consequences" as outcomes of their "inter/actions and emotions" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 89).

Table 5.3 The paradigm of 'Considering Japanese and the major incompatible'

Sub-categories	Conditions	Inter/actions, emotions	Consequences
Considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable	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 Accepting the situation	Judging Japanese and the major incompatible
Considering the Japanese course 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		

5.4.1 Considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable

Since all participants had chosen non-Japanese major programmes, their priority was their major and Japanese of course had a lower priority. Thus, when these participants actually found out about available Japanese courses at the transition stage, they examined the manageability of Japanese courses and their major studies. Unless they were quite confident that taking Japanese would not hinder their academic success, not just passing all courses but also gaining desirable results in their major programmes, they saw taking Japanese as risky.

5.4.2 Conditions for 'considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable'

There were conditions found in participants' comments, often in combination and in various level of intensity, which seemed to give rise to a fear of academic failure. These conditions were: 'having a low sense of competence' in Japanese learning; 'perceiving Japanese time-consuming subject'; 'having strong desire for good academic results'; 'perceiving the level of Japanese course high'; 'being uncertain of the major courses' workload'; and 'perceiving personal resources insufficient'.

- **Having a low sense of competence**

There were some participants whose 'perceptions of learning Japanese' were somewhat negative due to their low sense of competence. However, they still had some degree of intention to continue Japanese and sought options, but reluctantly. These participants thought Japanese difficult and their programmes did not require taking Japanese. Therefore, even when Japanese was available as an elective course, they were likely to see taking Japanese as riskier than taking other elective courses which they assumed more easily achievable.

- **Perceiving Japanese as a time-consuming subject**

Regardless of whether participants were successful in learning Japanese or not, some participants found that learning Japanese was time-consuming. Although, some of them did not think learning Japanese was more challenging than learning other FLs, they felt learning any language would require time. At the transition stage, these participants felt that taking a time-consuming subject might affect their major studies or social life.

- **Having strong desire for good academic results**

A number of participants expressed their desire to be successful in their chosen fields and recognised their major was their priority. Some of them considered

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taking Japanese as well as their major still achievable if they only aimed to pass all courses, but they wanted better academic results. Others thought they would probably sacrifice Japanese for their major, thus the idea of taking Japanese and their major became impractical and inefficacious.

- **Perceiving the level of Japanese course high**

As explained before, some participants had a preconceived idea that the level of a university's Japanese courses should be high. Therefore, they assumed that continuing Japanese along with their major would be very difficult. Some of these participants felt that they did not meet the level of the course and that they would have to spend a great deal of time revising and practising Japanese in advance to catch up with other students in the course. These participants have thought that other students in the course were either more competent than them in Yr 13 or had just completed prerequisite, beginners' courses at the university, therefore, met the level of the course and were ready for the course. Since their major was their priority, these participants thought taking Japanese undesirable as this might limit time for major studies.

- **Being uncertain of the major courses' workload**

At the transition stage, participants did not know how much and what types of work would be involved in their major courses. Therefore, if participants thought Japanese time-consuming or difficult, they considered that taking a Japanese course would be risky. Also, a number of participants found Japanese courses were not available as part of their programmes. For these participants taking Japanese meant they were adding extra work on top of their major's workload and they did not know whether it would be manageable or not. Therefore, they chose not to take Japanese as a sensible choice in their mind.

- **Perceiving personal resources insufficient**

Some participants thought that they would not have enough time, money or

energy for Japanese due to other commitments. This perception of insufficient personal resources constrained them to drop Japanese. Participants at the transition stage were uncertain about their major's workload, so they only assumed the amount of personal resources, such as time, energy, and money they were to allocate for their major studies. They also found that tertiary student life required more personal resources, particularly time and money. Commuting to tertiary institutions generally took longer hours than to their local secondary school and cost more. Studying itself cost and many of them worked part-time to boost their finances. In addition, their social circles were expanding which also required time, energy, effort and money to maintain and develop good relationships. Thus, some participants were unsure if they could afford taking Japanese which had a low priority, while some other participants perceived their personal resources were insufficient to take Japanese while completing their degree programme.

'Having a low sense of competence' and 'perceiving Japanese as a time-consuming subject' were developed through participants' own learning experiences. These conditions were likely to remain the same after they dropped Japanese because there was no more experience of learning Japanese to change these conditions.

In contrast, other conditions might have changed after the transition stage because participants' limited knowledge, experience and information of tertiary education at the transition stage had contributed to these conditions. For example, in their first year many participants were 'having strong desire for good academic results', but participant#8 suggested that in the second and the third years, students' motivation tended to drop and lower academic results might become acceptable anyway.

As previously mentioned, some participants later found the preconceived level

of Japanese course was higher than the actual level of the course. If participants gained more accurate, practical information of Japanese courses, their perceived level of Japanese at the tertiary level might be reduced and they might consider taking Japanese along with their major.

Moreover, in their second year, participants were able to predict their workload and availability of personal resources more realistically. In fact, after their first year of tertiary education, some participants found extra time became available. Participant#6 has taken extra courses towards a BA, changing a BSc degree to BA/BSc conjoint degree, while participant#5 reconsidered resuming Japanese. A couple of weeks after his interview, participant#5 decided to enrol in a Japanese course.

5.4.3 'Considering the Japanese course inaccessible'

Although there were some participants who had intended to continue Japanese and thought Japanese and the major academically manageable, they had to discontinue Japanese at the transition stage. The final blow which confronted these participants, and others who had other reasons to discontinue, was the problem of accessing Japanese courses. Unfortunately, all these participants had to give up enrolling in Japanese courses.

5.4.4 Conditions for 'considering the Japanese course inaccessible'

When participants considered that a Japanese course was inaccessible, they had certain conditions. These conditions were: 'having a physical distance to the Japanese classroom'; 'not having credits from Japanese counted towards the qualification/degree'; 'not meeting the Japanese course requirement'; and 'having a timetable clash'.

- **Having a physical distance to the Japanese classroom**

A few participants complained about a physical distance between their main

campus and the Japanese classroom they considered taking. At X University, Japanese courses were offered in the main campus. Participants whose programmes were based in other campuses found this very inconvenient and almost inaccessible. As his tertiary institution did not offer Japanese courses, participant#5 found the location of other institutions which offered Japanese courses quite far away and no direct public transport between institutions was available.

- **Not having credits from Japanese counted towards the qualification/ degree**

A number of participants found that credits from Japanese courses would not be counted toward their degree or diploma. If participants wanted to take Japanese courses, they had to take them as extra courses on top of all the required courses for their programmes. Participant#9 initially expected to continue Japanese as part of his engineering degree because his older sibling had completed the same degree and told him that BE students had been allowed to take elective courses outside their faculty then. However, components of the BE programme in X University had changed and available non-faculty elective courses were limited to Level 5 (100-Level, stage one). Being unable to take Japanese within their programmes was a significant factor for participant#9 and some other participants to discontinue Japanese. At Y University, participant#16 found a comparable situation that a Japanese course available within her programme was for beginners.

- **Not meeting the Japanese course requirements**

A few participants in X University considered taking a Level 5 Japanese course which seemed too easy for them. They thought about this because: it was the only Japanese course available within their programmes; or they worried that Level 6 Japanese might be too difficult. Unfortunately, all these participants found they were not meeting the course requirements by which enrolment was

restricted to beginners of Japanese, thus they gave up taking Japanese.

- **Having a timetable clash**

There were some participants whose programmes allowed them to take Level 6 and Level 7 Japanese courses as their elective courses. However, those who intended to do so claimed that they had a timetable clash or their first year timetable had been almost fixed with a number of compulsory courses so they could not fit Japanese in. Since many of these compulsory courses were prerequisites for the higher level courses, these participants did not have choices to defer these compulsory courses to take non-faculty elective courses.

Accessibility problems found in this study were objective conditions which participants had to accept. Thus, even when participants had relatively strong intentions to continue Japanese, taking Japanese within their tertiary institutions became unavailable due to accessibility problems.

'Having a timetable clash' might mend in the second or third year when their timetable had more flexibility. However, temporary discontinuance reduced some participants' confidence and fluency which affected their motivation to resume Japanese later. Participant#6 and participant#7 thought that they had only temporarily dropped Japanese due to timetabling problems in the first year. But they did not take it in their second year as they had not practised Japanese and their confidence in the language decreased.

> *I didn't use it [Japanese] so long, every year you don't do, becomes longer then you're more worried, then oh, no, I don't know. (#6)*

Other conditions were likely to remain the same, as campuses, course requirements and programme structures could not be changed without a long, formal consultation process.

It was noted that a number of participants in X University found they virtually had no access to Japanese. This situation can be seen both as 'not having credits from Japanese counted towards the qualification/degree' and 'not meeting the Japanese course requirement'. Because of their major programme structure, these participants' only elective courses were generic courses which were limited to Level 5. Therefore, Level 5 Japanese was the only Japanese course these participants were able to take as part of their degree programme. However, since they had studied Japanese at secondary school, they were not allowed to take Level 5 Japanese. All participants in the BE (Hon) programme and some other participants in other programmes at X University said that this situation was their main reason for giving up Japanese at tertiary level.

5.5 The main reasons of discontinuing Japanese at the transition stage

This study has investigated why students who studied Japanese to Yr 13 discontinue Japanese at the transition stage. By collecting and analysing the data from participant interviews, two core categories emerged and I put together these categories to explain generalised reasons for discontinuance of Japanese at the transition stage.

Table 5.4 shows patterns of reasons for discontinuance of Japanese through 'the concept of learning Japanese'. As 'the concept of learning Japanese' embraces two sub-categories, there are four combinations in the concept marked in the table. Plus or minus signs stand for positive or negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' and the capital letters H or L stand for high or low 'value of learning Japanese further'. Please note when 'the value of learning Japanese further' was low, participants were less likely to have an intention to continue Japanese at the transition stage. Therefore, valuing further learning of Japanese poorly was likely to be their primary reason for discontinuance of Japanese.

As seen on the column of + H, participants who had positive 'perceptions of

learning Japanese' and high 'value of learning Japanese further' generally claimed inaccessibility of a Japanese course as a main reason of discontinuance. Their concerns over academic manageability such as insufficient time seemed to be subordinate because these concerns only derived from conditions of inaccessibility of the course, such as 'having a physical distance to Japanese classroom' and 'not having credits from Japanese counted toward the qualification/ degree'.

Table 5.4 Patterns of reasons of discontinuance of Japanese at the transition stage

Likely reasons of discontinuance		The concept of learning Japanese*			
		+ H	+ L	− H	− L
Considering Japanese and the major incompatible	Academically unmanageable	Subordinate reason	Subordinate reason [if intended]	Main reason	Subordinate reason [already decided]
	Course inaccessible	Main reason	Main reason [if intended]	Subordinate reason	N/A [already decided]

*Keys
+: positive 'perceptions of learning Japanese', −: negative 'perception of learning Japanese',
H: high 'value of learning Japanese further', L: low 'value of learning Japanese further'

Participants who had positive 'perceptions of learning Japanese' and low 'value of learning Japanese further' normally did not consider continuing due to the low value of learning Japanese further. However, those who still intended to continue were likely to have similar reasons of discontinuance to participants in + H pattern who claimed inaccessibility of the course as the main reason of discontinuance.

Participants who had negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' and high 'value of learning Japanese further' admitted that their concerns over academic achievement were the main reason for discontinuance. Although it was easier to

use inaccessibility to Japanese courses as an excuse, these participants did not claim these conditions as the main reason.

Participants who had negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' and low 'value of learning Japanese further' suggested that they did not have an intention to learn Japanese because they could not find the reason to continue Japanese at the transition stage. These participants only commented on academic incompatibility which partly contributed to their discontinuance. They did not generally seek information of Japanese courses at the transition stage as they had already made up their mind.

5.6 Summary

The chapter has presented research findings that explain why participants of this study discontinued Japanese at the transition stage. The findings identified two core categories, 'the concept of learning Japanese' and 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible'.

'The concept of learning Japanese' consists of 'the value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese'. These two sub-categories seemed to determine participants' intention to continue Japanese at the transition stage. Participants' likely actions and emotions against different states of 'the concept of learning Japanese' were explained and summarised in tables 5.1 and 5.2.

The second core category, 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible' consists of 'considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable' and 'considering the Japanese course inaccessible'. The category obstructed participants' intention to continue Japanese and led them to discontinue Japanese. The relationship between participant's state of 'the concept of learning Japanese' and 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible' as

likely reasons of discontinuance of Japanese was presented in table 5.4 and explained.

The findings highlighted how participants' past learning experiences variously affected their 'perceptions of learning Japanese'. The findings also suggested that being in the transition stage seemed to significantly increase participants' sense of insecurity as well as their tendency to give Japanese lower priority.

In summary, a grounded theory of likely reasons for the discontinuance of Japanese at the transition stage is stated:

1. Students' intention to continue Japanese is largely affected by their status of 'the concept of learning Japanese' which embraces 'the value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese'.

2. The likely reason amongst students of Japanese who have low 'value of learning Japanese further' and negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' is a perceived lack of positive outcomes for further learning.

3. The likely reason amongst students of Japanese who have high 'value of learning Japanese further' and negative 'perceptions of learning Japanese' is the academic incompatibility of Japanese and their major studies.

4. The likely reason amongst students of Japanese who have low 'value of learning Japanese further' and positive 'perceptions of learning Japanese' is primarily a lack of foreseeable advantage of further learning. However, inaccessibility to a Japanese course can be the main reason amongst those who intended to continue.

5. The likely reason amongst students of Japanese who have high 'value of learning Japanese further' and positive 'perceptions of learning Japanese' is inaccessibility to Japanese courses.

The next chapter discusses the results to present recommendations to facilitate Yr 13 students of Japanese to continue Japanese at tertiary level. Recommendations for further research and conclusions are also presented.

6. Discussion and conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This study found that when participants decided to discontinue Japanese at the transition stage, their decision making processes involved a number of issues some of which were not directly connected to Japanese. Recent motivation research (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) suggested that motivational behaviour should be seen as a dynamic process and motivation for language learning depends on motivation for other areas of learning, such as science and maths. For participants of the present study, motivation for learning their major studies probably weakened their motivation for Japanese learning. Literature on university transition (Johnston, 2010; Madjar & McKinley, 2010) also discussed that at the transition to university, students often face a number of changes and difficult situations which are likely to affect their motivation to study. Therefore, working on issues within Japanese teaching and learning alone might not be sufficient to reverse participants' decision on their Japanese learning at the transition stage from discontinuance to continuance. To promote continuous Japanese learning from secondary to tertiary level, there are also issues which need to be dealt with at institutional or wider levels. Therefore, in this chapter, I would like to propose several ideas which promote continuous Japanese learning from secondary to tertiary education. Some of these proposals require actions that involve parties beyond and outside language departments. These ideas might increase the likelihood of future Yr 13 students of Japanese, and probably other languages, continuing their language learning along with their major studies following high school.

6.2 Increase manageability of Japanese and the major

For those who considered taking Japanese alongside their major academically risky, easing their concerns on academic success might be the key. The results of this study suggested that several factors made participants feel anxious about continuing Japanese. The anxiety arose when participants were still at

secondary school but they were looking at the transition for Japanese from secondary to tertiary which they presumed would have a gap between what they had learnt and mastered, and what was expected for Level 6 Japanese courses at tertiary level. Therefore, to increase academic manageability of Japanese and their major, secondary and tertiary sectors need to work together to reduce students' anxiety, raise their 'sense of competence' and convince Yr 13 students of Japanese that they will have a smooth transition in Japanese learning.

6.2.1 Provide challenging tasks

Data from this study indicated that meeting students needs by providing students with challenging tasks appropriate to their level of proficiency in secondary Japanese class was important to maintain a high 'sense of competence'.

Most participants indicated that they initially had had a relatively high 'sense of competence' during their junior secondary years and consequently had decided to continue Japanese into their senior years. Some comments even indicated that moderate difficulty of Japanese language in junior years had been perceived positively by participants. Participants suggested they had enjoyed and been motivated by accomplishing challenging tasks given in Japanese class. Participants' reactions to challenging tasks aligned with the view of Maehr and Braskamp (1986) who stated that "those who have a high sense of competence in a performance area" will "challenge their ability, test it, and thereby enhance it" (pp. 60 - 61).

Inversely, some participants identified that they lost their motivation to learn further when a new teacher only provided tasks which were easier than what they had been exposed to before. They explained that unchallenging tasks not only demotivated them but confused their level against national standards and

their 'sense of competence'. These participants also recognised that easy tasks did not help them learn and consequently reduced their 'sense of competence'. Although these participants passed most NCEA Level 3 standards in Japanese, they saw themselves underachieving and some of them blamed themselves for not achieving their full potential.

Therefore, to keep students motivated to learn further and to raise their 'sense of competence' in learning Japanese, providing appropriate challenging tasks is important. Teachers should be aware of their students' current level to avoid constantly providing unchallenging tasks. Although giving students easy tasks might temporarily raise their confidence, in the long term, this is likely to reduce their motivation and to slow their learning. However, appropriateness of the level of challenge should be monitored carefully since excessively difficult tasks are more likely to amotivate or demotivate students (Vallerand, 1997, as cited in Dörnyei, 2000).

6.2.2 Supply course information

The research identified that there was insufficient practical information on Japanese courses amongst participants and many participants assumed that a Level 6 Japanese course would be too difficult for them. If these participants had known the actual level of difficulty of the Level 6 Japanese course at the transition stage, they might not have dropped Japanese. Thus, supplying Level 6 Japanese course information which provides Yr 13 students comprehensible and comprehensive information of the course, such as prerequisite vocabulary and structures, might make students comfortable to take the course.

One way schools of languages in New Zealand universities can promote Japanese courses and other language courses to Yr 13 students of FLs is to invite a whole class to observe appropriate FL courses. Alternatively, universities can video-record one of the lectures at the beginning of the year and show Yr 13

students. The video would provide useful information on the course as it would show the expected entry level of the course, the style of teaching and atmosphere. Ex-students of Yr 13 Japanese who are taking Japanese as elective, non-faculty courses along with their major, would be ideal informants who could explain the course from their points of view. Many participants have visited campus open days but have not learnt much about Japanese courses, so universities' open campus might not be a good enough substitute for course specific information functions.

The study found that some participants have misunderstood whether or not Level 6 Japanese courses were available as elective courses in their degree programmes. Some participants also mentioned that as secondary students they had difficulties understanding the structure of their degree programmes through information provided by the university. From participants' point of view, identifying what courses would be accessible as electives, particularly outside the faculty, and under what conditions seemed to be a challenging but less important task during their career exploration at secondary level. As a result, some of them were disappointed later by finding Level 6 Japanese courses were not accessible as electives. If these participants were aware of the programme structure and its limitation of non-faculty electives while they were still at secondary school, and wished to continue Japanese at tertiary level, they at least had a chance to explore other options which enables to take Japanese with, such as conjoint degrees. Therefore, providing secondary students with information on structures of degree programmes other than the BA that is intelligible to them might also be important.

6.3 Increase 'the value of learning Japanese further'

This study found that an individual participant's intention to continue Japanese at the transition stage was affected by 'the value of learning Japanese further'. Therefore, if there were ways to increase 'the value of learning Japanese further',

more participants might continue Japanese.

6.3.1 Discuss potential of Japanese

Findings of this study suggested that having 'relevance' to Japanese and 'necessity' of higher proficiency in Japanese contributed to participants' 'value of learning Japanese further'. While participants in engineering, tourism, media studies and hospitality recognised Japanese could be relevant to their careers, other participants could not relate Japanese to their future careers.

To enable students to link Japanese with their future, teachers of Japanese, particularly at secondary school, might need to put some effort in to educating students of Japanese about future prospects if they continue studying the language. For example, there are industries and careers Japanese skills can be used in besides an interpreter, a tour guide, a language teacher, or an international flight attendant. There are also specific areas of studies and research opportunities outside Japanese language in which Japan leads the world and students might be interested in, such as robotics (Bekey & Yuh, 2008; MacDorman, Vasudevan, & Ho, 2009) and induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells (Russell, 2010; Yoshida & Yamanaka, 2011). Discussing the potential of Japanese with students might inspire them to continue Japanese to open up opportunities for the future. In this case, teachers of Japanese need to be knowledgeable about the potential.

6.3.2 Introduce a special scheme to recognise and reward continuing FLs

To encourage secondary students to continue FLs, many Australian universities recognise and reward students who have successfully completed LOTE at Yr 12 (i.e. the final year of secondary education, equivalent to Yr 13 in New Zealand) (Sussex, 2008). The scheme provides extra points for their achievement in LOTE which is added to a student's final scaled score for university entry, thus giving a certain academic advantage through learning LOTE. New Zealand could

employ a similar scheme, but it would only encourage students to continue at secondary level and not necessarily at tertiary. Thus, to encourage Yr 13 students of FLs, or LOTE including te reo Māori, to continue after the transition stage, I propose a more advanced FL reward scheme which tertiary institutions might be able to introduce.

The first point of the advanced FL reward scheme I propose is to recognise student learning and its outcomes, proficiency of Japanese, or other FLs, students have already gained through secondary education. This might be by way of NCEA Level 3 FL results or through a university's diagnostic test which determines whether or not a student's proficiency has met the required level to skip Level 5 or Level 6 FL courses. Many universities already recognise student's NCEA results in this way, but significantly, the advanced scheme also has a second point, which is to reward continued study of FLs. The second point of the advanced scheme would offer the student credits at a heavily discounted fee, which would contribute to their degree programmes, either as elective or compulsory courses depending on their chosen degree programmes. However, the credits would only be activated when students continued their FLs and completed successfully within a certain period of time, e.g. two years.

This FL reward scheme could reduce the total cost and workload of their degree programmes by recognising students' existing proficiency as credits equivalent to one FL course with the discounted fee. Although this recognition of their diligence in the past would provide students the advantage of released time and partial fees from equivalent credits of study, it would tie them to make a commitment to continue FLL. Therefore universities would not lose actual fees or potential students by the scheme. What students could gain is proper recognition of their skills from previous study which contributes toward their formal tertiary qualifications and this can be seen as cross-credits. Under the scheme applicable students could gain two courses' credits by paying one full

course fee plus one discounted course fee and taking one full course plus probably a diagnostic test. More importantly, students could reach a higher proficiency in the TL from the course they take. The scheme might not attract some students who found FL courses require more than twice the time of learning outside class compared with other courses and who are not interested in gaining higher proficiency. However, these students would not continue FLs under the current situation of no scheme as well, so a university would not lose any potential students by introducing the scheme.

6.4 Increase accessibility to Japanese courses

For those who had an intention to continue but gave up Japanese due to inaccessibility to the course, increasing accessibility to Japanese courses could be a solution. For example, institutions could work on reducing potential timetable clashes, and offering a range of Japanese language courses as electives, non-faculty (i.e. outside their major faculty) courses that can contribute to a wider range of degree programmes might encourage more Yr 13 students to choose Japanese alongside their major studies at tertiary level.

6.4.1 Relax the restrictions on access to non-faculty courses

Many participants found that learning Japanese (or a language at all) was neither required nor contributed to their major programmes. According to universities' websites many undergraduate degree programmes in New Zealand offer their students elective courses outside their speciality. However, some undergraduate degree programmes do not include any non-faculty courses in the structure (e.g. most health science degrees in Otago) (The University of Otago, 2011) while some other programmes are limited to Level 5 (100-level, stage one) non-faculty courses (e.g. BE (Hon) and BEd in Auckland) (The University of Auckland, 2011a, 2011b). At the same time, Level 5 FL courses are designed as entry level for beginners and students who studied the TL of the course at secondary level are not allowed to enrol. Therefore, some

participants in this study who intended to continue Japanese had to give up at the transition stage because their degree programmes did not allow them to include non-faculty elective courses at Level 6 and above.

If these non-faculty elective courses aimed to provide students with a "broader range of skills and understanding to complement [their] specialist knowledge" (The University of Auckland, 2006), limiting them to Level 5 courses does not seem enough to achieve these objectives. As long as non-faculty courses are at the level above individual students' previous knowledge, studying these non-faculty courses will be meaningful. In fact, FL skills gained through NZQA Level 6 and Level 7 courses would be more likely to complement students' specialist knowledge than skills gained only through Level 5 courses. Thus, if these restrictions on access to non-faculty elective courses were relaxed, more students who learned FLs at secondary level might continue the TL at tertiary level. Moreover, after taking a Level 6 FL course as a non-faculty elective course some students might be interested in later extensive study of the TL. Unlike the transition stage when students tend to avoid risk of overload, at the time they finish a Level 6 FL course they might feel little more confident to increasing workload. Therefore, after taking the Level 6 FL course as a part of their major programmes, some students might consider conjoint degrees or a graduate diploma in the TL in addition to their current programmes.

6.4.2 Work with other institutions in close proximity

Amongst three tertiary institutions where participants of this study attended, two universities offered Japanese courses. Since these universities are within walking distance, they could work together to allow their students to cross-credit Japanese courses in order to offer students better access to Japanese. If each university offered three different levels of Japanese, students at each university would only have one timetable slot to take a Japanese course at a particular level. Therefore, when a compulsory course from their major

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programme and a Japanese course were in the same timetable slot, these students could not take the Japanese course due to a timetable clash. However, by offering cross-credits, students would have more timetable choices as the two universities could timetable the same level courses at different timetable slots which would increase accessibility to suitable courses for keen students. In addition, for those who have completed Level 7, the highest undergraduate level, Japanese course in their second year of a three or four year degree programme, the two universities might be able to offer a more advanced undergraduate Japanese course that follows current Level 7 courses. The course might be specifically for the third year university students of Japanese who have continued Japanese from secondary school to university therefore skipped the Level 5 Japanese course. Such an advanced language course might not be practical due to potentially a small number of enrolments, the cost and availability of facility and human resources. However, if two universities work together and plan to offer one course to students of two universities, this special course might be viable.

6.4.3 Work to prevent timetable clashes

Having a timetable clash was another reason for some students to give up taking Japanese at the transition stage. It was commented that many non-faculty elective courses offered, including most language courses, were not accessible to students in particular programmes. One participant complained that a university's principle of offering students a wide variety of elective courses sounded great but she was frustrated by very limited choices due to timetabling.

> *[Generic, non-faculty elective course] is supposed to expand your horizon and it's frustrating when you can't expand your horizon the way you wanted to do, when your horizon expansion is directed by timetabling rather than interests, and it's so ridiculous. (#8)*

Although many students probably enjoy learning something outside their speciality which enriches their mind and widens their views, some students might be disappointed if they were unable to take particular elective courses due to timetable clashes and they might not find any accessible courses appealing. From students' perspective, timetable clashes are often beyond their control and it is unknown if an elective course which they wish to take but had a timetable clash this year will be available next year without having another timetable clash. Some students in particular programmes might also feel it is unfair that they have a smaller variety of elective courses accessible than students in other programmes. Therefore, if universities are committed to offering their students a wide variety of elective courses in order to educate their students to have broad knowledge and skills, universities need to work to prevent timetable clashes by enforcing all faculties to work together for practical timetabling.

I remember that my own university in Japan offered a wide range of elective courses from all faculties and we did not have problems of timetabling. It was because the university controlled all faculties not to allocate any courses from the major programmes for the first year on two particular slots, in order to allocate non-faculty elective courses. For example, faculties were not allowed to allot any first year compulsory courses to Monday second slot and Thursday third slot as these slots were allotted for non-faculty elective courses. All half day or full day lab work for the first year students at schools of science, technology and medical school were allotted to Tuesday or Wednesday. Since all faculties did not have any compulsory courses for the first year students of their own faculty in these two slots, there were a number of lecturers and lecture theatres available for non-faculty elective courses. Likewise, first year students of all faculties had these two slots available to enrol in non-faculty elective courses. At the orientation, first year students were strongly advised to enrol in non-faculty elective courses in the first year as in the second and third

years these two slots might be filled with compulsory courses or faculty based elective courses. This enabled all first year students to enrol in their preferred, non-faculty elective courses in the first year.

6.4.4 Provide convenient transport services between campuses

The study found some participants felt Japanese courses were inaccessible because of a physical distance from their regular campus to other campuses where Japanese courses were taught. Although many universities have their own intercampus services, not all campuses have regular intercampus transport services. Certainly campuses where the participants mainly studied were not covered by such services at the time of their interviews. They complained that public transport between campuses was often not an option because they were unlikely to be on time for classes due to inconveniently scheduled transport services. It seems then that if a university offers programmes which are based on multiple campuses, it should work with public transport companies to provide effective, convenient transport services.

6.4.5 Offer a flexible option

Offering two or three different timetable slots for one course gives students better accessibility but it is probably uneconomical for tertiary institutions. However, if the course itself has the flexibility of time and place to study, one course can work as multiple timetable slots. Thus, developing online based courses where students can access most lectures and assignments online with a minimum requirement to attend some tutorials and assessments physically on campus might be an option.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

In this study, the variety of participants was limited to the Auckland region, therefore further research may want to focus on students in different regions. Also the limited sample size of this study means that more research is

recommended to test the reliability of findings and the grounded theory to an expanded group of students and further develop and refine on the theory.

Further research on students who continued Japanese along with their major studies, and on those who resumed after suspended Japanese at the transition stage is also recommended. These findings would contrast differences between continuing and discontinuing students and would test the grounded theory of the present study.

As teachers of FLs often share the same types of problems, it is also interesting to conduct similar research on students of different language groups. The findings from other language groups might highlight the specific problems of Japanese.

6.6 Conclusions

The primary objective of this thesis was to investigate the reasons Yr 13 students of Japanese discontinue their Japanese learning at the transition stage to tertiary education. Total of seventeen post-Yr 13 students of Japanese from two universities and one private tertiary education provider in Auckland region were interviewed in the research, of those sixteen interviews were used in data analysis.

Key findings of the present study explain that there were two significant points in participants' reports of their decision making processes which led them to discontinue Japanese at tertiary level. The first point was whether or not participants had an intention to continue Japanese at the tertiary level and the second point was whether participants who had the intention considered Japanese and their major studies incompatible at the transition stage.

Regarding the first point, participants' intention to continue Japanese, was

determined by the category 'the concept of learning Japanese' which consists of individual participants' 'value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese'. The subcategory 'the value of learning Japanese further' refers to individual participants' understanding of what Japanese learning in the future will likely bring them and its worth under their value system. It was influenced by a number of individual factors such as current relationships with native Japanese speakers, future plans where participants saw higher proficiency of Japanese would be advantageous, as well as their current level of proficiency. The sub category, 'perceptions of learning Japanese' refers to participants' self-reflective ideas of learning Japanese which was heavily affected by their previous learning experiences and their view of themselves as a learner. A combination of 'the value of learning Japanese further' and 'perceptions of learning Japanese' determined participants' degree of intention to continue Japanese at the transition stage and if the value was high and perceptions were positive, participants had an intention to continue Japanese while low value and negative perceptions caused a reduction in the intention. When participants had some degree of intention to continue Japanese, they moved to the next stage of seeking available options to study Japanese, while if the intention was nil or very weak, participants left Japanese behind.

The second point, 'considering Japanese and the major incompatible', came after these participants who had some degree of intention to continue Japanese sought available options to study Japanese at the transition stage. The incompatibility went two ways: 'considering Japanese and the major academically unmanageable'; and 'considering the Japanese course inaccessible'.

For some participants Japanese had not been an easy subject and they feared that taking Japanese alongside their major studies might cause them academic failure. Some participants had an idea that the academic level of Japanese

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courses at tertiary level was higher than they could cope with. These participants considered studying Japanese with their major academically unmanageable and decided to discontinue Japanese. Uncertainty of their workload as first year tertiary students also contributed to their negative view on academic manageability.

When participants sought available options to study Japanese many of them found that the structure of their major programmes and Japanese course requirements restricted their access to Japanese courses as a non-faculty elective course. There were also a few participants who did not have easy access to Japanese courses due to a physical distance between campuses they mainly studied on and where Japanese was offered. A timetable clash was another problem many participants had and could not sort out. These participants, despite their intention to continue Japanese, considered Japanese courses they wanted to take inaccessible. Unfortunately they also found other Japanese courses either inaccessible or academically inappropriate for them, including courses being too easy or academically unmanageable with their major studies.

To decrease a number of potential students discontinuing Japanese at the transition stage, both increasing students' intention to continue Japanese and reducing the incompatibility of Japanese with students' major studies are needed. While it is important to maintain Yr 13 students' motivation to learn Japanese, unless they have a supportive environment to continue Japanese alongside their major studies at tertiary level, the number of discontinuing students at the transition stage might not decrease significantly. Therefore, working on institutional issues, such as reviewing programme structure, course requirements, and timetabling across faculties and introducing an attractive scheme for FL learners are recommended.

Since individual students, even in the same learning environment, perceive

Japanese learning in different ways, it is not easy to change students' views on Japanese and themselves through teaching alone. However, along with quality teaching and learning at secondary school, better input of relevant information, such as tertiary Japanese course information and the potential of Japanese for various careers, it may well be possible to increase Yr 13 students' intention to continue Japanese along with their major studies at tertiary level.

Although the study focussed on students of Japanese, findings might be common across students of other LOTE in New Zealand. Therefore, as recommended in this chapter, further study on students of other FLs and te reo Māori to test the applicability of findings would be valuable.

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Appendix A: Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

22/08/2008

Project Title

An investigation into the reasons for discontinuance of L2 Japanese among tertiary students who have studied L2 Japanese to Year 13 at Secondary School

An Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research project investigating why people who have taken Japanese to Y13 choose not to continue learning the language in their tertiary studies. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you would be free to withdraw from the study at any time.

What is the purpose of this research?

The research aim is to investigate major reasons for students discontinuing L2 Japanese learning at the tertiary level despite their successful learning of L2 Japanese to Year 13 at secondary school.

The research is for a master's thesis and the completion of the thesis, including the submission and the presentation of the research results, is the requirement of MA in Applied Language Studies.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You were chosen as you have studied L2 Japanese to Year 13 at Secondary School, but have not taken any Japanese language papers at the tertiary level.

What will happen in this research?

You will be interviewed by the interviewer/researcher who will ask questions related to your learning experiences at high school and decision-making in regard to tertiary courses.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There is some chance that you will feel uncomfortable discussing some of these issues in an interview.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Please be assured that it is my priority to ensure that you do not feel uncomfortable at all. If there are any questions which you don't want to answer then it is fine to say so. Also you can withdraw from the study at any time.

What are the benefits?

I hope that the results of the research will point to problems which lie behind students discontinuing Japanese language learning at the beginning of tertiary studies. I also hope that by raising these issues tertiary education providers will be encouraged to more carefully consider the proficiency and fluency levels

and language aspirations of those who have studied Japanese language to Year 13 at New Zealand secondary schools.

How will my privacy be protected?

Protecting your privacy will be my priority. Your name will not appear on the final report and all data obtained through the interviews will be aggregated, it will not be possible to identify you amongst other participants. Any quotations from the data will be incorporated in such a way that they will be non identifiable.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The interview will take approximately 50 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will be given at least a week to consider the invitation.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Please sign the consent form attached to this invitation and send back to the researcher, Ryoko Oshima.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. Please request for a copy of the report on the consent form by ticking "Yes" and provide your contact details. The report will be sent to you after its completion.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Sharon Harvey, *Sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz*, 09 921 9659.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, *madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz*, 921 9999 ext 8044.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:
  Ryoko Oshima

  E-mail: ryoko@ihug.co.nz

  Mobile: 021 868 203

Project Supervisor Contact Details:
  Dr Sharon Harvey

  E-mail: sharon.harvey@aut.ac.nz

  Tel: 09 921 9659

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *7th November, 2008,* **AUTEC Reference number** *08/227.*

Consent Form

Project title:　　　　　　　　　An investigation into the reasons of discontinuance of L2 Japanese among first year tertiary students who have studied L2 Japanese to Year 13 at Secondary School

Project Supervisor:　　　　　*Dr Sharon Harvey*

Researcher:　　　　　　　　　*Ryoko Oshima*

○　　　　I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 22/08/2008.

○　　　　I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○　　　　I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○　　　　I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○　　　　If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

○　　　　I agree to take part in this research.

○　　　　I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○　　　No○

Participant's signature: ....………...

Participant's name: ....………..

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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…………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 7th November 2008, AUTEC Reference number 08/227.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix C: Ethical Approval from AUTEC

M E M O R A N D U M
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

To: Sharon Harvey
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC
Date: 7 November 2008
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/227 **An investigation into the reasons for discontinuance of L2 Japanese among tertiary students who have studied L2 Japanese to Year 13 at secondary school.**

Dear Sharon

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested.   I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 13 October 2008 and that I have approved your ethics application.   This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 8 December 2008.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 7 November 2011.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through *http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics*.   When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 7 November 2011;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through *http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics*.   This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 7 November 2011 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence.   AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants.   You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only.   If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service.   Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEC and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

Madeline Banda
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
Cc: Ryoko Oshima ryoko@ihug.co.nz

Appendix D: Indicative questions list
Indicative Questions for Interviews
> These will be reviewed and changed after each interview

Main reasons
- Why did you not take Japanese at university?

Japanese language learning experience
- What were the reasons for you to learn Japanese language in secondary school?
- Can you tell me about the Japanese classes in your secondary school?
- Do you think you were good/achieving at that time? – why/why not?
- Did you enjoy the course in secondary school? – What did you enjoy the most?
- Was there any drawback to study Japanese?
- Did you think you might continue/resume Japanese language at university level? – why/why not?
- How would you describe your Japanese language skills? – why?/are you happy with what you can do in Japanese?

Japanese language and the course requirement
- What is your major in university?
- Can you talk about your course/studies?
- What are the required papers for the degree course?
- Are Japanese language papers available as part of your option papers?

Obstacles
- Have you ever checked the timetable of Japanese courses available at the university?
- How did you pay the course fee and other cost for your studies? Any financial support available? Was financial support an obstacle to your study?
- How many papers are you currently taking?
- What is the biggest challenge to completing your tertiary studies?

Course knowledge/expectation
- Do you have any friends who are taking Japanese language at university?
- Do you know about Japanese courses available at your university?
- Have you heard about the course?
- Have you been to Japanese class in your university? – how did you find/think?
- Where would you go/what would you do if you want to improve your Japanese language skills?