Linguistic Research and Language Teaching

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Abstract

It is not uncommon for theoretical linguists to find themselves involved in language teaching because of their expertise in a specific language, even though their primary training is not in language instruction. Apparent lack of intellectual stimulus and career development is a typical concern shared by those who are in these academic positions; and it is sometimes the case that time spent on language teaching is perceived to be detrimental to a successful tenure decision. Based on my own experience as a linguist in a language department for the past 20 years, I will discuss some of these dilemmas and suggestions that may lead to a more positive outlook of those who face a similar situation.

1 Introduction

It is not uncommon for theoretical linguists to find themselves involved in language teaching because of their expertise in a specific language, even though their primary training is not in language pedagogy or language education. They are often concerned that language teaching lacks intellectual stimulation and does not offer obvious options for career development; and it is sometimes the case that they perceive time spent on language teaching to be detrimental to a successful tenure decision. For linguists in language departments whose primary job description is foreign language instruction, the question of how they can be involved with language teaching but still maintain an active theoretical research career becomes an extremely challenging and often daunting task. They may feel that their jobs are less rewarding than jobs where the primary responsibility is teaching linguistics but that expressing such concerns is somehow shameful or taboo. Based on my own experience as a linguist in a language department for the past 20 years, I can attest that these feelings are real.

In what follows I wish to assert that despite the negative image held by many linguists in such a situation, there are ways to balance linguistic research and language teaching by using such a position effectively. Here, I will not address the topic of how linguistic knowledge should be successfully incorporated in language teaching and learning; rather, the goal of this essay is primarily to address a career issue that is motivated by
my own personal experience and to provide what I hope to be helpful advice to current and future linguists who may find themselves in a language department. I shall begin by discussing several misconceptions about a job as a linguist in a language department. Subsequently, I will lay out some suggestions regarding professional development that have helped me enhance my own research career, with the hope that they would lead to a more positive perspective for whoever might be or will be on a similar career path.

2 Common Misconceptions

The negative image attached to a job as a linguist in a language department frequently stems from various misconceptions about the job. I will discuss three examples below, but by calling them ‘misconceptions’, I want to make clear that they are myths that do not have logical or empirical backing.

2.1 Misconception No. 1

A most disturbing statement that is heard from time to time is something like, ‘a job in a language department is not as good or prestigious as one in a linguistics department’; or ‘a job in a language department is not a real job for a linguist.’ While linguists, whether they are in a language department or in a linguistics department, may not actually verbalize such prejudices, it will not be surprising that more linguists than we wish share them. Many college and university faculty members, regardless of their field, regard language departments not as research-oriented units but as units whose primary missions are teaching and service. Thus, they do not understand or value the research that these units produce. As fellow language professionals, linguists should do better. In fact, there are many linguists in language departments who not only have survived in the field but also have had rewarding and successful careers with strong research records. Our professional value should be evaluated not by the label of our department but by our academic accomplishments – the quality and extent of research activities and their impact in the field.

The two types of positions, a linguist in a language department vs. a linguist in a linguistics department, should not be compared on the basis of the false sense of prestige that seemingly accompanies them. But, instead, it should be recognized that they are indeed different types of positions in several respects, and it is totally up to the individual whether these differences are positively accepted as challenges or are negatively perceived as barriers or burdens in one’s career. The first and perhaps largest difference is that a linguist in a language department does not teach as many linguistics courses or at a level one might wish. Linguistics(-related) courses offered in language departments are largely for their majors whose primary interests tend to be subjects in humanities. Second, language
teaching occupies a major part of the job description, and thus tenure and promotion criteria may be different from those for a linguistics job. Third, colleagues in language departments may not understand what linguists do in research, nor are they aware of the research standard of the linguistics field. Finally, there are fewer, or sometimes no other, linguists in the language department as opposed to in a linguistics department.

These differences do create challenges, but the situation is by no means without its positive aspects. The pedagogical content of a foreign language does not call for a frequent need to ‘catch up with the field’ at the same pace that emerging linguistic theories or developments of older ones do. That is, while new methodology for classroom instruction is sometimes introduced in language pedagogy, they seem to emerge in a cycle of 5 to 10 years at most. New developments in linguistics take place more frequently, and keeping up with them, or at least maintaining an awareness of them, is one of the most important requirements to staying active in the field. Because new trends in language pedagogy move at a slower cycle, we can still focus our professional maintenance on linguistics. Furthermore, the lack of linguistic colleagues in a language department is not as limiting as in the past given that technology has made it so much easier to communicate with linguists all over the world. If we need colleagues with whom we exchange ideas about our research, face-to-face discussions are no longer the only, or even the most effective, method to that end. Finally, we might note that the simple presence of linguistics colleagues does not ensure communication. Professional (and sometimes personal) disputes among colleagues affect linguistics departments just as they do other departments.

2.2 MISCONCEPTION NO. 2

The second misconception I would like to discuss has to do with time management and the intellectual stimulation (or the lack thereof) associated with language teaching. Because of the job requirements of language teaching, time and time again we hear comments like, ‘I don’t have time to do research because language teaching takes up all my time and because I don’t get to teach linguistics courses.’ It is true that we do not have ‘24–7’ exposure to linguistics, but for the reasons that I have discussed in regard to the first misconception, language teaching does not necessarily have to be time consuming – at least with respect to the upkeep of the subject matter. Instead, language classes can be rich sources of research topics or book projects. In fact, as I will demonstrate from my own experiences, language teaching and linguistic research could feed each other to provide opportunities that lead to intellectual incentives and academic productivity.

In the language department to which I belong, I have developed an introductory level course of Japanese linguistics. This course is offered primarily to our undergraduate majors who are mostly interested in
humanities subjects, such as history, literature, and religion, and to a few graduate students in language pedagogy. I have been teaching the course on average every 2 years, but the course materials I had accumulated for the first several years of my career with the department grew into the book, *An Introduction to Japanese Linguistics*. This book was initially published by Blackwell in 1996 (Tsujimura 1996), and its second edition has just been published in 2007 (Tsujimura 2007a). In compiling materials that are informative and compelling for non-linguistics students, I was challenged to research into the topics beyond my specific area of expertise. The book’s breadth, however, has been considered beneficial not only as a pedagogical tool for students who are interested in various aspects of Japanese but also as a reference source for linguists who need specific information about Japanese. Furthermore, guiding students of the humanities orientation to work with ‘data’ requires the kind of pedagogical skills that one would aspire to have. Although this course itself was not meant directly for linguistics students, the process of developing it has produced a major publication in my discipline, and at the same time has raised my intellectual and pedagogical motivations for raising students’ analytical ability to treat language as a source of scientific problem solving.

Another example of how language, or language-related, teaching feeds into research projects is shown in my more recent work. In teaching a foreign language, we deal with a normative form of the language. Often, we forget how prescriptive we are in language classes. This ‘textbook-language’, however, can give us a rare opportunity to think more vividly about the form that is actually spoken. As the average age of my students seems to get younger, I often encounter comments from the students about the difference between the language we teach and the one they hear from their Japanese friends. These comments led me to look at more ‘trendy’ language used by the younger generation, specifically concerning loan words and hip hop lyrics. They exhibit interesting morphological and phonological phenomena that are yet to be discussed extensively as their accurate descriptions bear considerable theoretical implications (e.g. Tsujimura, et al. 2007; Tsujimura and Davis forthcoming). In a similar vein, the enormous Internet use by students has motivated me to pay more attention to the language used in computer-mediated communication (CMC) and on the Internet in general. CMC has come to be an increasingly fruitful research area in sociolinguistics (e.g. Herring 2003, 2004), but at the same time it has proven to be an interesting data source that I have been able to take advantage of in looking at some intriguing sociolinguistic variants. For instance, I have found uses of intransitive constructions in Japanese on the Internet that would be regarded as erroneous or prescriptively ungrammatical. However, upon conducting a questionnaire study involving real-life speakers, a certain percentage of native speakers now accepts the new forms, suggesting that innovative patterns of the intransitive constructions are indeed emerging (Tsujimura 2007b).
Our theoretical research can in turn enhance language teaching in enlightening ways. I have been interested in the linguistic contributions of mimetic words (subsuming onomatopoeia and ideophones), long underestimated in linguistic circles. This word class happens to be ubiquitous in Japanese, both spoken and written forms, but its acquisition by non-native speakers has been taken to be extremely difficult, partly because there are virtually no logical patterns for the learners to be guided by and partly because English, which is the native language of the majority of my students, does not have an inventory of the word class as rich as in Japanese. Thus, Mimetics are rarely introduced in the language classroom and are believed to require individual memorization that relies on the learner's independent motivation. Although it is not realistic to expect a drastic change in the pattern of acquisition, in my language classes I have been introducing mimetic words that belong to similar sound symbolic or iconic classes so that my students will be exposed to them from early on. For instance, I introduce about five mimetic words of the same semantic class, such as the ones that describe the way people look at others (e.g. staring and glancing), and explain how they are different and how they are used. At the same time, I add some regularities between morphology and semantics, such as in reduplication referring to repetition. Since mimetics often represent sounds and images and their extended applications could result in humorous usages, the introduction to mimetics at any proficiency level has proved to make potentially tedious language classes lively and entertaining.

2.3 MISCONCEPTION NO. 3

We are not always fortunate to enjoy a fount of new ideas for research topics. It is commonplace for junior faculty to spend months and semesters searching in vain for a new project to launch beyond their dissertation, especially given the pressure to be productive for the tenure review. With good intentions, some of my colleagues suggested, ‘You can get into second language acquisition research; it will be easy to collect a lot of data in your language classes.’ It may look as though this is logical – and I thought so, too – since I would have access to L2 learners, but this is another misconception. The reality is that finding a research area that bridges linguistics and language teaching is easier said than done, especially if L2 acquisition or language acquisition in general is not the research area in which one has had proper training. For example, my research focus has been on lexical semantic issues, and I have attempted second language acquisition research by undertaking experimental work with students learning Japanese as a second language. However, I was not trained to do experimental work and had no background in statistical analyses. While coming up with good experimental ideas may seem practical and straightforward, carrying them out successfully is a totally different matter. Although the
L2 research project I undertook eventually produced some publications, I do not consider them to be among my better works. Experience in language teaching and research training in general linguistics, thus, do not immediately prepare a linguist to conduct L2 acquisition research unless he or she has already had training in that area. For anyone who feels strongly about launching a new research area, I would advise that he or she consults an applied linguist or find a colleague for collaboration, perhaps in the same institution, who might complement his or her area of expertise; and, it may be better to do it after tenure is awarded.

I have just discussed three misconceptions concerning linguists in language departments. These, and others like them, are more prevalent in our field than we would like to admit. In fact, I myself have held such mistaken beliefs at various times. Nevertheless, whatever appears ‘detrimental’ to our career cannot, and should not, be attributed to language teaching per se. As I mentioned, instead, there are a number of positive aspects of language teaching that can be effectively used to our advantage, so that there are direct connections to theoretical research activities. Those who are at an earlier stage of their career facing a similar situation should constantly remind themselves of the positive aspects.

At the same time, it is extremely important for senior faculty who are in the position of advising graduate students in linguistics to never put the type of misconceptions illustrated here into the students’ heads. One key suggestion that is often overlooked while students are still in a degree program, but which will be enormously helpful when they are at the job market, is to seek a teaching assistantship (TA) in a foreign language department and get experience in language teaching. Teaching a foreign language is a whole different world from teaching a linguistics course, but all else being equal, experience in language teaching is an overwhelming preference, if not a prerequisite, for a tenure-track position in a language department at a research institution. The more experience in language instruction a candidate has, the less time the department would need to spend in training him or her and therefore the more time the candidate would allocate to research activities. As is the case with the second misconception concerning a faculty position in a language department, a TA position in a language department also comes with prejudice, and a number of graduate students believe that language assistantships should be avoided if they can get one in linguistics departments. It is in part a faculty member’s professional responsibility to guide graduate students into looking at the two kinds of TA positions and the two kinds of jobs not with prejudice against one but with a reasonable sense of differences built upon equality. After witnessing numerous job searches, I cannot stress enough that experience in language teaching during the graduate career tremendously enriches, rather than narrows, the professional profile of a graduate student, giving a wider range of expertise and making him or her far more marketable than would be otherwise the case.
3 Suggestions for Staying Professionally Active

While recognizing the differences in the fundamental nature, but not in the status or prestige, between a job for a linguist in a language department and one in a linguistics department, it remains true that professionals in both types of academic positions are expected to stay active in their research activities. I turn now to some suggestions to that end that have been, or would have been, helpful to my own career.

- Attend linguistics conferences and stay updated. There are several annually scheduled conferences on general linguistics such as LSA, BLS, CLS, WCCFL, NELS, etc. In addition, there are linguistics conferences that focus on specific languages or language families (e.g. Japanese/Korean Linguistics, Linguistic Symposium on the Romance Languages, Arabic Linguistics Symposium). These language(family)-specific conferences are often particularly helpful since linguistic analyses and theoretical implications are discussed in-depth without having to spend time in describing phenomena to a general audience. Furthermore, it is more likely that attendees are also linguists in language departments who share similar career situations. Paper presentations at these conferences are desirable, but even attending them should help with keeping updated on new theoretical developments as well as on the range of new data that have been taken up in theoretical debates. In addition, specialized workshops and theme-oriented conferences are occasionally held. These events can be very critical for the purpose of keeping current in a particular subfield and for meeting with linguists who specialize in the specific theme. This may become important when one comes up for tenure and must submit names of possible external evaluators. The announcement of conferences is easily looked up on LinguistList’s website, and it is important to make it a habit to visit this website on a regular basis.

- Circulate your work and get yourself known in the linguistics circle. Related to tenure evaluation, it is highly critical that your work is known to linguists who work on the same or similar topics, and better yet, to get your work cited. Most research institutions ask external referees for the purpose of tenure evaluations about the impact a candidate’s work has had on the field. The more well circulated the work is, the more easily and detailed a reviewer can speak about it. A situation that should absolutely be avoided is that an external evaluator knows nothing about a candidate or his or her work. Conference presentations serve as a strategy to get your work known, but at the same time, it is a good idea to send publications and presentations to scholars or senior colleagues whose work overlaps with yours to make sure that they are aware of them.

- Regularly go through periodicals in the library and online. Given the increasing number of journals in the field, coupled with time restrictions,
visiting the library obviously is needed but it seems to be more and more infrequent. Even if we do not actually read all the relevant articles in linguistics journals, at least going through titles and abstracts of articles gives a rough idea regarding recent topics of linguistic debates. A quick perusal of book reviews and book notices also helps with being aware of publications of new books that might be relevant to our research. (It is good to remember that book sales at conferences usually offer discount prices, which adds another reason to attend professional meeting.)

- Stay in touch with the linguistics department, if there is one, and find linguists on campus, such as in other language departments. As was discussed earlier, one of the differences between a job in a language department and one in a linguistics department is the number of linguistics colleagues. I personally do not find it essential to my own linguistics career that I have not been surrounded by linguists in the same department especially because professional communications these days can expeditiously be done electronically and also because the situation has motivated me to attend conferences regularly. On the other hand, it is indeed useful to keep contact with the linguistics department or units in related disciplines at the same institution. This can help with obtaining information about relevant events and grants on and off campus that sometimes bypass language departments as well as having collegial discussions on current work with other linguists. Moreover, mutual feedback is always encouraging and stimulating. Regular exchanges with linguists in other language departments of the same institution adds further benefits of ‘comparing notes’ with respect to guidelines on tenure and promotion, merit evaluation and salary, teaching loads, and the like.

- Stay focused on what you have been working on and with your interests. As I explained above, it is not usually a good idea to start a totally new line of research particularly before tenure, unless a large overall picture of the project is clearly envisioned and all necessary research apparatus is immediately available.

- Observing young linguists at an early stage of their careers and based on my own experience, I would recommend developing research that grows out of the dissertation into journal publications, or into a book. This is one of the most efficient ways of becoming professionally productive. Also, if your dissertation has very little to do with the language that you are teaching, it would be worthwhile to consider how your dissertation works and postdoctoral research can apply to that language. One thing to be aware of is that the reviewing processes journals adopt may take a great deal of time and their results could often be accompanied by disappointment. There are a few tips to try to minimize the long time lapse that may come from insufficient preparation both on the basis of content and on the basis of logistical matters. It is advisable to get as much feedback from linguistics colleagues as possible
and try to incorporate it before submitting. It is not a coincidence to see a surprising amount of overlap between anonymous referees’ comments and feedback from colleagues with respect to the content of their criticisms and suggestions. It is tempting to take a chapter of a dissertation and send it to a publisher after only minimal editing, but thoroughly integrating potential issues that might be raised by referees should be done before submission. To this end, a paper presentation at a conference is a suitable path through which assessments on the research, both positive and negative, are obtained, and this can easily lead to a journal submission on the same topic.

For the logistical aspect of preparing journal submissions, appropriateness should always be taken into consideration in deciding where to submit an article. Many journals in linguistics have a specific theoretical or methodological orientation, and some journals also cater toward a particular language or a language family. Articles can be rejected purely on the basis of suitability to a journal’s orientation or specialization, and it happens more frequently than one may imagine. So, selecting the right kind of journal for each submission is one of the critical first steps toward the successful publication process. And, in order to know which journal is appropriate, it is very helpful to pay regular visits to the periodical room of the library for a quick glance at the titles and abstracts of recent journal issues. You may discover that you have something significant to say about a particular topic being discussed in a particular journal. Finally, it may seem trivial, but it is important to follow the submission guidelines set by each journal. Lack of compliance to precise format can be grounds for a submission to be returned to the author.

- Read and outline during the academic year and write in summer. To actually produce a research publication requires not only the actual writing but also updating theoretical knowledge and current analyses of relevant topics. A full load of teaching during the semester and doing research as well calls for constant effort. When the subject of research, that is, linguistics, and that of teaching, that is, a foreign language, do not overlap in their principal goals, the effort may seem monumental. Time management becomes a key issue. While time management must be a concern for a linguist in a linguistics department, a linguist in a language department has to switch thinking modes between something more practical for teaching and something more theoretical for research. I have found it more time-efficient to focus on reading books and journal articles when classes are in session – taking notes relevant to my research topics and writing an outline of a paper – and to spend a larger chunk of time in writing an actual paper during summer. Furthermore, to make this routine possible during a semester, at least 1 day a week should be allocated to nothing but linguistics-related work whether it is reading or writing.
4 Suggestions for Tenure/Promotion Process

Any faculty in a tenure-track position faces tenure as a first hurdle to cross in his or her professional career. In most institutions, the tenure decision is a one-time occurrence, so careful preparation toward this critical goal is essential. As serious as it is, however, junior faculty members are not always well-informed of the process, nor are they aware of the need for detailed information from the time of the initial academic appointment. Faculty in language departments whose area of expertise is literature or history, for example, primarily teach literature or history courses. But, in the case of a linguist, our area of research and that of teaching are not subsumed under the same identifiable disciplinary label as straightforwardly as with our literature and history colleagues. The following is some advice for linguists that may be of relevance to preparation for a tenure review.

- Have full knowledge and understanding of the tenure and promotion guidelines of the department. Each academic unit has tenure and promotion guidelines, some of which are dictated by the College and the University and some of which could be unique to the department. Those guidelines are usually available as a written document. It is useful to go over them with the department chair at the time of the initial appointment, in order to understand what each statement entails in practice. If the chair has no plan for a meeting upon your arrival at a new job site, I strongly suggest that you (nicely) demand one. These guidelines are normally filled with words and phrases that are understandable in concept but not necessarily so in practical terms. For example, expressions like ‘excellence’, ‘high quality’, and ‘effective teaching’, among many more, repeatedly appear in guidelines as criteria for research and teaching, but exactly what counts as ‘excellent’ research or ‘high quality’ publications varies widely. At the initial point of a career, these issues should be explained and documented in concrete terms. Furthermore, especially when a language program is fairly large and the job description involves administrative duties such as supervision of multiple TAs or even coordination of the program as a whole, the weight of teaching and teaching-related duties may be considered more substantial than a normal load of teaching. It is important to receive clarification from the chair as to whether the department’s guidelines include these aspects in teaching responsibilities and how they are evaluated in proportion to in-class teaching as well as to research. It is also good to remember that the current chair may not oversee your tenure decision process. A new chair should respect whatever was agreed upon between you as the tenure candidate and the former chair, but this can be assured only if the agreement is in writing in your file.

- Inform the department of the field’s standard. Language departments are usually multidisciplinary, consisting of scholars, in some cases, of various humanities disciplines (e.g. literature, history, and religion), or
of humanities and social sciences (e.g. political science, economics, and anthropology). Faculty in area studies – both humanities and social sciences – seem to have fairly good ideas about what each other’s research is like. Linguistics is an odd ball, so to speak, partly because it is a relatively newer to the mix and partly because some approaches and theories like generative linguistics are quite abstract and strike many people as esoteric. So, it is very important for us to ‘educate’ our non-linguistic colleagues about the nature of the field. Especially in preparation for a tenure and promotion evaluation, the department should be informed of the general research criteria and standard of the linguistics field. For instance, compared to typical humanities disciplines such as history and literature, where publishing a book seems almost a minimum requirement for getting tenure, linguistics is not necessarily a book-writing field for the most part. Needless to say, producing a postdoctoral research book with a reputable publisher – especially one that is reviewed and makes a substantial contribution to the field – probably counts more than ten journal articles. But, several papers of significance in high-quality, large-circulation journals can be considered solid grounds for a successful tenure case, given that everything else, that is, teaching and service records, is satisfactory. Furthermore, articles that appear in conference proceedings, which as a rule have very little or no value in humanities fields for tenure and promotion purposes, also count toward research publications in linguistics – and, the higher the quality of the conference is, the more value is attached to the publication. An additional difference in standards for research productivity, as colleagues in my own department once told me, is that books published by university presses are viewed as a more major contribution than those published by commercial presses in (at least some) humanities and social sciences disciplines. Again, this criterion does not apply to publication outlets in linguistics. These, and perhaps other, differences in research standards that constitute the basis for the tenure and promotion evaluation need to be discussed between a candidate and a department chair for better mutual understanding. And, whatever differences may be found, a linguist’s research accomplishment should be evaluated by the measure that is accepted by the field of linguistics.

• Give colloquium talks in the department. Many of our non-linguistics colleagues in language departments feel that linguistics is too esoteric to understand. Such an impression is regrettably almost unavoidable, but we can at least attempt to have our research understood at a very basic level. To this end, it is beneficial to give an informal, non-technical colloquium talk in the department. Its primary purpose is not to create a deep understanding by our colleagues of what linguistics is or to ensure their appreciation for our academic contribution. Rather, it is to give a sense of the range of inquiry linguists undertake and to provide an idea of our own research. It also helps prepare colleagues to read a
candidate’s tenure and promotion dossier, as well as grant applications and the like on some future occasion. As such, a colloquium and similar talks cannot delve into detailed analysis or theoretical discussion to the extent found in professional conferences, but the ideas should be presented in such a way that the topic somehow relates to the audience’s shared interest in a given language. On some occasions, inviting linguists on campus to a colloquium may not be an unreasonable choice since interactions among linguists could give non-linguist colleagues an inspiring and informative picture as to what linguistic discussions are like.

5 Conclusion

A job for a linguist in a language department amounts to double duty when the primary teaching responsibility is language instruction: teaching a language in which he or she is proficient enough to give in-class instruction and conducting research to make a professional contribution to the field of linguistics. The two aspects of a single job are not immediately and necessarily connected, and the gap between them can challenge junior faculty. That being the case, a linguist in a language department needs to be aware that the job may call for unexpected maneuvering. However, it is possible, by thinking and acting strategically, to use these maneuvers to achieve professional success and to have a meaningful and fulfilling career.

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Short Biography

Natsuko Tsujimura has a research focus on lexical semantics and various aspects of Japanese linguistics. Her articles on lexical semantics have appeared in Linguistic Inquiry, Linguistics, Studies in Language, and Lingua. She has authored An Introduction to Japanese Linguistics (Blackwell, 1996, 2007), and has edited The Handbook of Japanese Linguistics (Blackwell, 1999) and Japanese Linguistics: Critical Concepts I–III (Routledge, 2005). Her current research includes rhyming patterns in Japanese hip hop, sociolinguistic examination of intransitive constructions, and mimetics. She is Professor
of East Asian Languages & Cultures and Adjunct Professor of Linguistics at Indiana University, where she has been teaching Japanese language and linguistics since 1987. She holds a BA in English Literature from Tsuda College, Japan, and an MA and PhD in Linguistics from the University of Arizona.

Notes

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1 I am not aware of research work per se that deals with the issue that will be addressed in this essay although a quick Google search finds some blogs that discuss it.

2 I would like to thank a reviewer for pointing this aspect out to me.

3 A referee notes that an introductory level course on Japanese linguistics is likely to be readily incorporated in a linguistics curriculum as many linguistics programs offer a course that focuses on the structure of a specific language.

4 I have been teaching the beginning-level Japanese courses almost every year since the start of my employment in 1987. These courses have consistently drawn the largest enrollment in my department, on average 150 students at the beginning of the first semester. The teaching of the heavily enrolled courses accompanied by the supervision of six TAs eventually made it possible for me to negotiate with the chair, resulting in counting teaching three sections of the same course as equivalent of teaching two different courses. So, it is sometimes helpful to compare teaching loads with colleagues in terms of the number of those enrolled (as well as the number of credit hours each course carries) along with supervision of TAs to get the bigger picture of what is really a comparatively reasonable teaching load.

Works Cited


