

Endorsement by Dr Keiichi Kodaira

Former President of the
Graduate University for Advanced Studies
(SOKENDAI) Japan

At present, over 100,000 overseas students study in Japan and the government would like to see that number grow to 300,000. Moreover, it is believed that many more workers must be accepted into Japan to cover the acute labour shortage in certain fields. We need to ensure that these people acquire proficiency in Japanese so they can work with us for the good of Japanese society. Language is the reflection of a country's culture, and in this global age I believe we should emphasize this distinctive cultural aspect as the source of value and energy.

To meet the demands of this age, a new learning method has emerged to enable foreigners who arrive in Japan to learn the language in a speedy and accurate manner. It is designed for people who have completed compulsory education and are familiar with logical thought processes. Unlike language courses for infants and school children, this new method has identified the common characteristics of the Japanese language and organized them in a systematic manner. It teaches students to familiarize themselves with these patterns and their applications. In order to achieve the quickest results, the lessons are organized in thematic stages that ensure students learn quickly, retain what they have learned, and can test their new skills in action at each stage. And since the Japanese taught here is rooted in the essential aspects of Japanese culture, it aims to nurture smooth human relationships. So this innovative method is especially suited for people working in science and technology and those who will be involved in nursing care.

The creator of this method, Mikiko Iwasaki, attended the same high school as I did in Tokyo (although she was quite a few years my junior). She accompanied her husband to the United States and raised their young children just around the time they were first learning to speak. After the child-rearing years, she became interested in teaching Japanese and spent 20 years devising this very practical method: MISJ (Mikiko Iwasaki's SYSTEMATIC JAPANESE). I, myself, attended graduate school in Germany and spend my early years as a researcher in the United States. My wife is German and she had to overcome many obstacles while bringing up our three daughters in Japan. When I was at the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, in charge of building the Subaru Telescope in Hawaii, I realized how difficult it was for Japan to perform adequately in the global context. When I was President of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies and coming into daily contact with overseas students, I hoped for an innovative method like MISJ to teach these students Japanese. I have only recently come across MISJ, but I immediately set about learning the theory from Mrs. Iwasaki herself. I became convinced that this new method is exactly what is needed today.

For those businesses and organizations hoping to welcome science and technology personnel and caregivers from abroad, and universities and technical schools preparing for foreign students, I wholeheartedly recommend they adopt MISJ. And for all those who dream of seeing Japan display its truly vibrant cultural characteristics to the whole world, MISJ is their answer.

Dr Kodaira is currently Director of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) Liaison Office in Bonn, Germany, and Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo.