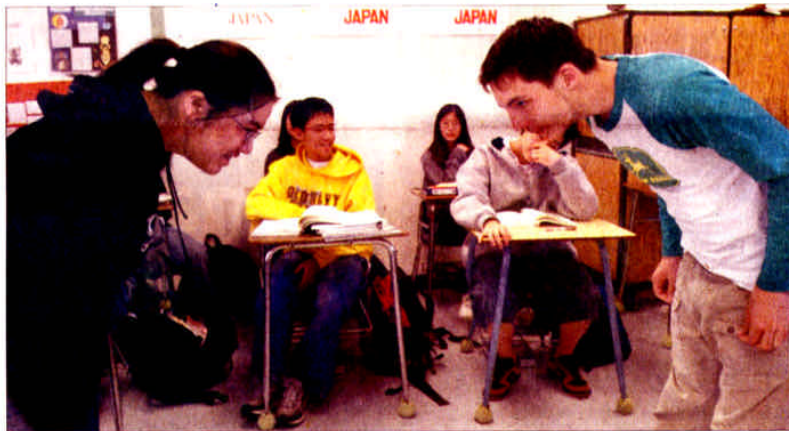




LOST IN TRANSLATION? TAKE A CLASS



BEA ANBECK — Staff photos

MISSION SAN JOSE HIGH SCHOOL students Carla Sum and Todd Hessar bow to greet one another during a Japanese 1 class at the Fremont school. Teacher Mariko Okamura (top) leads the class.

Shelve German, students want Japanese

By Grace Rauh
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — Auf wiedersehen. Deutsch. Konnichi wa Nihongo. (Rough translation: German is out. Japanese in.)

In a sign that Americans are shifting their attention from Europe to the Pacific Rim, Asian language courses are becoming a standard offering in local schools, while German textbooks appear

destined to join Latin ones on the library shelves.

It is no secret China is fast on its way to becoming an economic superpower and that Japan is renowned for its cutting-edge technology.

And in Fremont — where nearly 40 percent of residents are Asian — Mandarin and Japanese courses are cropping up faster than you can say "Gung Hay Fat Chov."

Four Fremont high schools, one junior high and one elementary school offer Mandarin, and Mission San Jose High School added Japanese 1 to its course lineup last fall.

Japanese 2 is scheduled to debut there in the fall.

"There are economic pressures. There are societal pressures to do it," said Kathy Kochran, Mission San Jose High

Please see LEARN, Local 2

Asian languages gain popularity with students

► LEARN, from Local 1

School's foreign language department chair.

"Certainly, for us, it is our population. It seems perfectly normal and appropriate to offer these languages in addition to the others."

About two-thirds of Mission's student body is Asian.

But as one new language is added to the course catalogue, another will be dropped.

Washington High School, the only Fremont school that offers German, will end its program in June.

"We just weren't having students sign up to support it," said Washington Principal Milt Werner.

Phone calls to Washington German teacher Yvonne Reynolds were not returned.

"I think it's a terrible shame that the schools aren't able to offer that broad a spectrum of foreign languages," said Pamela Rosen, president of the German School of Fremont.

"I firmly believe that the more

languages you can speak, the more open you are to the world."

Mission Japanese teacher Mariko Okamura said she believes Chinese and Japanese classes will open doors in the business world for her students, she said. When she taught Japanese at Ohlone College, many of her students were engineers hoping to work in Japan.

The business and career opportunities the language skills offer may explain why parents may want their children an-

gushing over complicated characters. But Okamura's students insist they are not in it for their careers. They are just interested in the language, they said.

Ninth-grader Sterling Stovall loves Japanese technology, and Joy Wu, 14, wants to watch Japanese animated movies, known as anime.

"There are some that have English translations," said Wu, who also speaks Mandarin. "But listening in Japanese. I think, is better."

Staff writer Grace Rauh can be reached at (510) 353-7010.

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