

Foreign Language Diversity in Japanese Higher Education

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Foreign Language Diversity in Japanese Higher Education

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Purpose of the Research

- Gain information regarding students' curriculum from their own perspectives as primary stakeholders in their university education.
- Find ways to improve the overall foreign language learning experience for students.
- Ultimate/Ulterior goal to incorporate intercultural awareness in university education/FL courses.

A Fundamental Rationale for this Research

“Resistance by nationalistic elements in the state and corporate culture to higher education’s humanistic mission of valuing learning for learning’s sake has seriously impaired foreign language instruction”.

(McVeigh, 2004)

Rationales of Study

- Over emphasis on English Education and instrumental education
- Increasing importance of world languages and learning about different cultures
- Lack of solid data regarding Less Commonly Taught (LCT/2nd) foreign language education in Japan
- Need to start a discussion regarding LCT language requirements and the importance of student choice.

Diversity of Language Learners

1. “Japanese” students
 - Diverse motivation and attitudes toward FL (integrative vs instructive).
 - Various levels
 - Returnees
2. Heritage Speakers
 - “Half and/or “Double” students
3. International Students

Makes placement tests and streaming classes even more essential than previously.

Foreign Language Learning Motivation

Successful language learners have to be psychologically receptive to the target language's community; ethnocentric attitudes hinder acquisition of the target language

(Gardener & Lambert, 1972; McVeigh, 2004).

Japanese Student Attitudes Toward Language Study

- Students attitudes toward language study not found to correlate with concepts of worldmindedness or social distance.
- However, Japanese score higher (than Americans) on integrative attitude for language study and worldmindedness.
- The two types of motivation (integrative & instrumental) for language study are quite differentiated in Japan.

"There are pedagogical benefits to increasing the diversity of languages taught in school" (Sakuragi, 2008, p. 88)

Diversity of Language & Cross-Cultural Attitude

Shibata & Okado (2001) survey

- 1) Schools offering only English as foreign language
- 2) Schools offering other languages

"The latter group of schools generally placed a higher priority on fostering a global perspective and intercultural competence than did the former" (Sakuragi, 2008, p. 88)

Research Questions

1. What is the overall situation for LCT languages in Japanese higher education?
2. What are students' perspectives toward studying LCT languages?
3. Are students generally satisfied with foreign language offerings?
4. How can LCT language study contribute to global awareness and internationalization of the university compared with English language education?

Foreign Language Diversity in Japan

National Center Test for University Admissions (2007)

Chinese	487
Korean	186
French	158
German	126

(Kansai University, 2007)

(550,000 took the test in 2010)

Research Approach & Methodology

- **Interpretive (endeavors to analyze and explain phenomenon)**
- **Phenomenological (studying stakeholder's perceptions)**

(Adamson & Morris, 2007)

Previous Study (2008)

Japanese language questionnaire distributed on last day of class, 2007-2008 school year.

- Large mid-level private university in Kanto area
- 328 Respondents
- Male: 225 (68.5%); Female 31.4%
- 2 Majors:
Law (67%) ; Business Administration (32%)
- Most (78%) were 2nd year students

Foreign Language Study at the University

Opportunity to study foreign language at the university? (n=328)

50% said "not enough".

Interest in university FL courses

- 54% Interested
- 46% Not interested

Reasons for Disinterest (n=151)

Not interested in subject	36%
Classes aren't interesting	28%
Content not useful for job search	18%
Other	17%
	100%

2010 Student Survey

127 University Students studying at 2 private universities in the Kanto area.

- Male: 78 (61.4%)
- Female: 49 (38.5%)
- Average Age: 19 (98% were 1st year students)
- 73% from the Kanto area, 7 foreign students
- Majors:
 - Business Administration/Commerce: 90 (71%)
 - Law: 37 (29%)

Total Language Study Time

- Average # minutes: 93 minutes (eliminating outlier)
(1 student noted 600 minutes/10 hours of English/Chinese study)
- No study (0 minutes): 20 (15.7%)
(8 were studying English/Spanish at one university)

Languages Studied

- 116 (91%) Students taking English plus another foreign language (LCT)
- 11 Students(8.6) only taking foreign language (Chinese)
- Chinese: 65 (51%)
- Students taking European Languages (French, German, Spanish): 51 (40%)

Time spent learning

2nd FL

(n=127)

One year or less:	95 (75%)
One semester:	19 (15%)
2 years:	4 (3%)
3 years or longer:	9 (7%)

FL Ability Level (Self-Report)

(Reading & Writing)

Beginner:	95 (75%)
Advanced beginner:	16 (12.5%)
Pre-Intermediate:	7 (5.5%)
Intermediate:	7 (5.5%)
Advanced:	2

(Listening & Speaking)

Beginner:	99 (78%)
Advanced beginner:	13 (10.2%)
Pre-Intermediate:	8 (6.2%)
Intermediate:	5
Advanced:	2

Reason for studying 2nd FL

(select up to 2 choices)

Requirement for graduation and/or need the credit:	89 (70%)
Personal interest:	64 (50%)
Interest in country's culture:	30 (23.6%)
Professor recommendation:	4 (3%)
Poor at/dislike English:	2 (1.5%)
Other:	27 (21%)

Other Responses

Examples (n=27)

- It seems like fun
- Because I lived there
- China will grow in the future
- Because the fewest number of students chose this language to study
- For study abroad (from Hong Kong to Japan)
- For taking classes (in the target language)
- Because I've been learning it since I was in high school
- Spanish is spoken in many regions, and I thought I could deepen my understanding of English as a result of learning another language that uses the alphabet.
- Because I've been to countries where the foreign language is used

How Use 2nd FL in the Future?

(Select up to 2 items)

TOTALS:	
For Travel/tourism:	70 (55%)
Helpful for future career:	54 (42.5%)
Don't plan on using it in future:	42 (33%)
Helpful for future studies:	32 (25%)
For study Abroad:	14 (11%)
Other (explain):	4

Satisfaction with LCT Foreign Language Classes (n=125)

Very satisfied:	7 (5.6%)
Satisfied:	51 (41%)
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied:	53 (42%)
Somewhat dissatisfied:	9 (7.2%)
Very dissatisfied:	5 (4%)

Satisfaction with University classes in general (n=125)

Very satisfied: 5 (4%)
Satisfied: 33(26.4%)

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied: 71 (56.8%)

Somewhat dissatisfied: 14 (11.2%)
Very dissatisfied: 2 (1.5%)

Plans for taking foreign language classes next year (n=126)

Taking only LCT FL classes: 14 (11%)
Taking only English classes: 19 (15%)

Taking both English and non-English FL classes: 88 (70%)

Not taking any FL classes next year: 4 (3.1%)

Study Abroad Plans

Do you want to study abroad in the future? (n=125)

Want to: 33 (26.4%)
Want to if possible: 63 (50%)
Haven't thought about it: 18 (14.4%)
Don't want to: 9 (7.2%)

Preferred SA Destinations

(n=100, 7 gave multiple answers)

U.S.: 51 (51%)
U.K.: 21 (21%)
Europe: 13 (13%)
Canada: 8 (8%)
Australia: 10 (10%)
China: 4 (4%)

Summary Conclusions I

- Many non-humanities faculties and majors require 1-2 years of both English and a second foreign language for graduation.
- Majority of students take the 2nd FL because they need the credit for graduation. However, half of students indicated a personal interest in the language.
- Most students do have hopes in using the 2nd foreign language in their future, though travel/tourism is the most frequently selected item.
- 1/3 of students indicate they don't plan on using the 2nd FL in the future.

Summary Conclusions II

- Students satisfaction with the 2nd foreign language is not extremely high, yet higher than their satisfaction with general university courses.
- Most students are interested study abroad, but are not actively considering studying in a non-English foreign language environment.

Implications & Discussion I

- Trend toward standardization and instrumental motivation language learning is detrimental to intercultural learning.
- 2nd FL learning may provide more opportunities for students to learn foreign culture and engage with “the other”.
- Revision of 2nd FL requirements needed to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning and cross cultural understanding.

Implications & Discussion II

- Students should be allowed more choice in continuing 2nd FL and encouraged to substitute for English requirements.
- University connections with overseas universities and high schools should be strengthened to foster and encourage 2nd FL learning. (Kansai U., 2007)

Future Research on LCT Language Education in Japan

- Qualitative studies of continuing students and teachers of LCT languages, especially looking at motivation issues, needs, and institutional-wide support.
- More data on LCT languages offered at institutions and accessibility issues.
- Availability of study abroad to LCTL countries.
- Methods of evaluating LCTL ability.

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Thank you for attending this presentation!

ご清聴をどうもありがとうございました。

gracias por asistir esta presentación

Bu tanıtımı katılıyor için teşekkür ederim

Study Abroad Aspirations (2008 Survey)

Do you want to study abroad? (n=328)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Want to but can't: | 130 (39.6%) |
| 2. Haven't given it much thought: | 82 (25%) |
| 3. Don't want to study abroad: | 61 (18.5%) |
| 4. Want to and plan to study abroad: | 55 (16.7%) |