

## International Students: Learning Japanese as a Foreign Language

*Berdikulova Nigina Mirsoliyevna*

*Department of Far Eastern Languages teacher of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages*

### ABSTRACT

*This article discusses the importance of learning foreign languages especially Japanese, the current state, and the role of the Japanese in today's life of Uzbek people as well as provide several recommendations to spread this language in this country.*

**KEYWORDS:** *foreign language, Japanese, cooperation, degree.*

### Introduction

As, of May 6, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev chaired a meeting on measures to improve the system of teaching foreign languages, several improvements have been made in this sector. It should be noted that learning foreign languages can benefit both at the individual and governmental levels. Therefore, foreign languages have been prioritized at a governmental scale for the last decade in our country. On this basis, the issue of attitudes to foreign language teaching is addressed in the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated May 19, 2021 No PP-5117 "On measures to bring the promotion of foreign languages in the Republic of Uzbekistan to a qualitatively new level": "... education in foreign languages. [1] It is no coincidence that the need to develop as a policy priority, radically improve the quality of education in this area, attract qualified teachers to the field and increase the population's interest in learning foreign languages ". Especially, it should be stressed that the attention to the Japanese has been changed compared to the past and as a fact, the official visit of the head of our Republic to Japan can be stated.

### Literature Review

A carried study by Oxford, R (1992) revealed that [2] second language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students employ—often consciously—to improve their progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving, and using that language. Strategies are the tools for active, self-directed involvement that is necessary for developing foreign language communicative ability. Hundreds of foreign language learning strategies exist and many are well recognized and used regularly by students. In a given class of students, for example, Lázló will seek out conversation partners, like will group words to be learned and then label each group. Marijke will encourage herself through positive self-talk before getting up to give a speech in the target language. Additionally, it has been studied that learning a language can boost the chances of success of any student. In fact, second language study benefits basic skills development, language study benefits higher order, abstract and creative thinking benefits academic progress in other subjects, narrows achievement gaps, enriches and enhances cognitive development, enhances a student's sense of achievement, students score higher on standardized tests, last but not least promotes cultural awareness and competency [3].

According to Ganschow and others [4], although there are certain difficulties in learning a new foreign language, practicing and listening to this language can encourage people to learn that language.

## Methodology of the Research

Analysis of statistics and visualization of the data have been used to indicate the results of conducted researches. It should be stressed that the data has been taken from the official sites of Japan and Uzbekistan.

## Results

Conducted research revealed that there are certain stimulators that encourage people to learn the Japanese language and they are followings:

**1. It raises your status in the workplace.** Although this is quite obvious, it may not be in the way you think. Knowledge of Japanese for business will increase your value as a global employer and market player. Whether it's business Japanese or just getting your foot through the door with basic greetings, your potential clients or business partners from Japan will greatly appreciate your efforts.

Japanese business language might lack the conversational tone you are more used to, so more formality is required. It's best to study exactly what is or isn't allowed, and this will save you from committing any faux pas. Learning the basics helps get you started, and it helps you appreciate a foreign culture even more.

**2. You will become more approachable.** Japanese for business shouldn't be your only goal. A little-known fact, unless you have lived in Japan, is that the Japanese do not speak English so much. Not only that, a large majority of the population is reluctant to speak or use the English they do know. Even if you speak just a little bit of Japanese, a simple "ohayho!" will make a noticeable difference. It will prompt Japanese people to be friendlier and more welcoming — after all, you took the trouble to learn something about them instead of expecting them to do all the work.

**3. You can further appreciate Japanese culture and entertainment.** While we're pretty sure you have tried sushi or ramen in your home country, there's a lot more out there. Learning Japanese can help you understand the origins of ingredients, styles of cooking, and even converse with chefs (however basic the conversation maybe).

You may also be familiar with adorable animated characters such as Totoro and Hello Kitty. But do you know the thought and stories that go behind the creation of these beloved cartoons? Likewise, Japanese anime has taken over the entertainment world by storm.

And take one of the most vaguely familiar aspects of Japanese culture: Sumo. Sumo wrestling is a sacred sport that originated during the Edo period. It's extremely unique, and the reason for the sport may not be known to many. Sumo is actually a religious ritual, and to be a pro-sumo wrestler is a difficult task. Wrestlers live with many limitations but are very well respected.

Knowing more about entertainment and what's trending in Japan could open up opportunities for conversation with your Japanese clients or business partners, and this can be important in relationship-focused business cultures like Japan.

**4. It's a self-imposed challenge.** In the workplace, many managers and supervisors give raises and promotions based on the work they produce. Many admire a person that challenges themselves with personal growth.

**5. It opens up more doors and job opportunities.** The Japanese have their way of life, different laws, and a unique way of doing things. This makes certain integration more difficult for some foreigners. Additionally, conducted deeper studies showed that the following reasons can be additional reasons for learning foreign languages:

1. Learning foreign languages grows the brain. Research, how old is the person's age demonstrate the cognitive benefits of learning another language, regardless of the occupation of the person. These studies have shown that the brains of bilingual people are larger, good memory, are creative, have problem-solving, etc. These advantages not only make it easier to learn more languages but to learn everything.

The ability to quickly switch tasks is in today's busy multi-tasking world especially important. Bilingual tasks are much faster than their monolingual counterparts can be exchanged and perform many other tasks at the same time.

2. When an individual learns a foreign language, travel becomes cheaper and easier. Of course, a lot of people love to travel. Knowing the language is up to the person and when they go abroad it gives great benefits. Simply go for a meal and eat whatever you want you can easily explain. Ask for directions from the locals around you and you can find it without difficulties. If you take a guide, it would be costly.

3. Learning a foreign language opens the world to finding work. It is no secret that learning a foreign language can improve employment prospects. More than ever, companies are few, often dozens, in the world are working in their home countries, but they speak at least one foreign language they can't do without hiring people who understand. The ability to speak a second language in local companies also makes you a different business is more likely to be separated from recipients.

4. It allows you to make new friends while learning a foreign language. New and interesting people really strive to develop lifelong friendships, worthwhile goals and learning another language will speed up the process. Language expresses our feelings, our desires; helps to reach out and connect with other people around us and forms meaningful relationships.

5. Learning a foreign language encourages you to think more openly. Learning a foreign language and immersion in an entirely new culture and worldview - open-minded, is the surest way to become an understanding, tolerant person, and that's for sure priceless. Seeing the world from a different perspective and where you and others are understanding that you have arrived is a fantastic, eye-opening experience.

6. Learning foreign languages helps to better understand their language and culture. Learning a foreign language can involve you in reverse psychology and allows you to better understand your language and culture by comparison. This is one of the most unexpected benefits of learning a foreign language.

The next study shows the benefits of learning Japanese and studying in Japan as a foreign student. First and foremost, you can learn about cutting-edge science, technology, and medicine, etc. Despite its scarce resources, Japan was able to grow economically and become a leading country in manufacturing precisely because of the advanced knowledge and technology fostered by its excellent education system. Using its state-of-the-art science, technology, and medicine, Japan has introduced many products to the world, including electric vehicles, digital cameras, optical fibers, and the artificial heart. Instant noodles, which have changed the dietary life of the world, and Karaoke, are also innovations of Japanese origin. The practice of transforming innovative ideas into creative products goes far back into Japanese history. Japanese schools focus not only on academic achievements but also on the development of human quality. This aspect of Japanese schools is highly appreciated by international students who think the studying experience in Japan helps them after they start working.

Additionally, Cultural heritages such as Mt. Fuji and Japanese cuisine and "Omotenashi" hospitality can be another reason for learning Japanese and studying there. Surrounded by the sea, Japan enjoys

all four seasons. In Japan, there are several world heritage sites, such as Mt. Fuji, a symbol of Japan, as well as the Himeji Castle and Itsukushima Shrine. Washoku (traditional Japanese cuisine), a registered intangible cultural heritage, is a colorful and healthy food that uses seasonal ingredients and contributes to Japan being one of the countries with the world's highest life expectancy. Japanese people are known to be hardworking and attach importance to the discipline. "Omotenashi" hospitality, the mentality of caring for guests by giving them the highest priority, is second nature to Japanese people, and thus international students are always welcomed warmly.

Moreover, a conducive living environment and safe and secure infrastructures can be the next reason. Japan is known as a good place to live with its low crime rate. Even if you misplace something, it will be returned to you most of the time. Japan's public transportation system boasts of its on-time departure and arrival and helps you reach your destination safely and securely. With a well-established health insurance system, you can receive advanced medical care when you fall ill for only a small fee. Even international students who feel anxious after leaving their home country can find some peace of mind while staying in Japan.

In fact, it should be said that there are international students from more than 170 countries and regions across the world in Japan. About 220,000 international students from more than 170 countries and regions of the world are studying at higher educational institutions in Japan. These students can broaden their horizons through exposure to Japanese as well as the diverse cultures of the world. Japan is a tolerant country where freedom of religion and thought is guaranteed by the constitution.

It should be stressed that Japan is one of the most welcoming countries for international students and they visit this country for several reasons. Following research has been carried out by the official organization of Japan and statistics have been made by the author based on that research.

When international students were asked the reason for their visit to this country, several reasons have been provided by students and the final results of those overall questions can be seen in the following table1.

**Table 1. Main reasons for studying in Japan (multiple answers possible)[5]**

No.	Reasons	Percentage
1	Obtain a degree	50.8 %
2	Work in Japan or get a job at a Japanese company	45.0 %
3	Acquire the skills and knowledge needed to get a job	42.9%
4	Improve Japanese language abilities	30.8 %
5	Gain international experience and build connections worldwide	23.9 %
6	Come in contact with a different culture	21.1 %
7	Acquire an international point of view	20.7 %
8	Acquire cultivation and education	20.6 %
9	Conduct research in an excellent environment	12.9 %

It can be said from the above-given table that obviously, the main reason for coming to Japan was obtaining a degree and finding a proper job in the country or one of the companies of this country. Moreover, job skills and improvements in the Japanese language abilities of the students were one of the main reasons for visiting Japan and studying here. It should be said that improving the networking skills and learning the culture of the other countries, broadening the horizon of the students also were the reasons for studying in Japan. It can be said that there is an excellent environment for carrying studies in Japan because of the highly developed technologies of the country and it could be also the reason for studying there.

The following study shows why international students preferred studying in this country over others.

**Table 2. Why did you choose to study in Japan? (multiple answers possible)[5]**

No.	Reasons	Percent
1	Interested in Japanese society, wanted to live in Japan	61.3 %
2	Wanted to study the Japanese language/Japanese culture	44.3 %
3	Found education and research at Japanese institutions, etc. appealing	36.3%
4	Because the specialty or major I was interested in was offered in Japan	23.7 %
5	Wanted to come in contact with a different culture	20.1 %
6	Wanted to work in an occupation connected to Japan	19.4 %
7	Geographically close	17.0 %
8	Considered other countries, but conditions such as academic abilities and costs in Japan suited best	15.9 %
9	Recommended by friends, acquaintances, families, etc.	15.8 %

Above-given table illustrates that Japan is one of the attractive countries for foreign students and there are plethora of reasons to visit this country and study there. Firstly, Japanese culture and this society encourages students to study here and exploring this culture a well as learning it can be another reason to prefer studying there over other countries. In fact, just under 40 % of questioned international students in Japan answered that education system and opportunities for conducting research attracted them to study in Japan rather than other countries. Last but not least, some of the students preferred that country because of geographically closeness or because of costs of studying or based on the recommendations of others and percentages of them are 17 %, 15.9%, 15.8%, respectively.

The next study shows the number of international students of Japan by institutional type and compares if there was an increase or decrease. It should be stated that statistics were made in 2020 and compares the changes with 2019. Results are given in table 3 and changes are shown in both numbers and percentages.

**Table 3. Number of international students by institutional type[5]**

No	Type of institution	People	Increase(decrease)
1	Graduate schools	53,056	(33: 0.1% down)
2	Universities (undergraduate)	79,826	(9,776: 10.9% down)
3	Junior colleges	2,828	(16: 0.6% down)
4	Colleges of technology	423	(83: 16.4% down)
5	Professional training colleges	79,598	(754: 1.0% up)
6	University preparatory courses	3,052	(466: 13.2% down)
7	Japanese language institutes	60,814	(22,997 : 27.4% down)

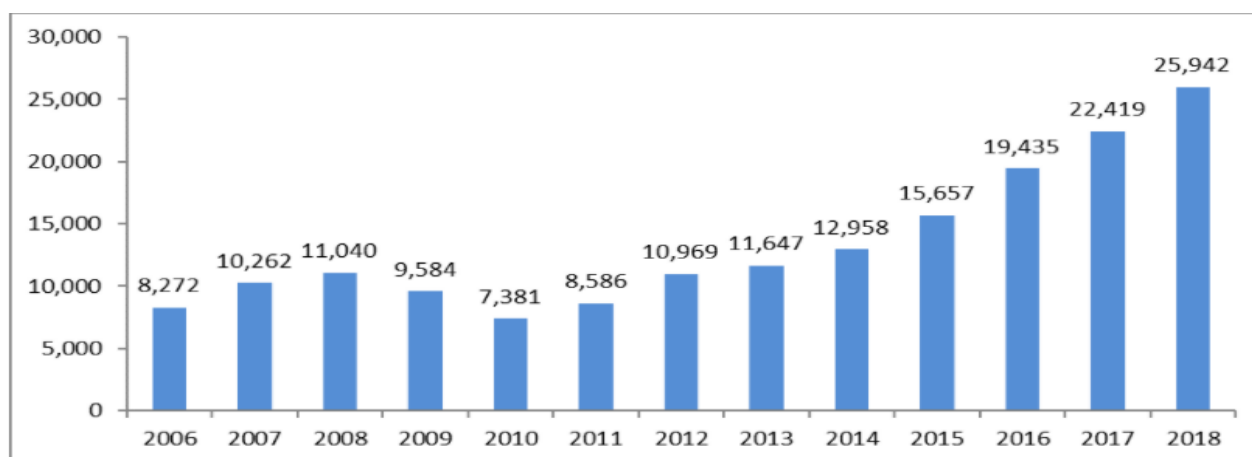
Table 3 shows that most of the international students visited Japan to study bachelor degree and professional trainings and the numbers of them are 79,826 and 79,598, respectively. Moreover, Japanese language institutions were also one of the mostly visited ones to study in that country (60,814). However, colleges of technology indicated the least number of international students, 423. It can also be seen from the given table that all of the indicators, except professional training colleges, showed a downward trend and the main cause for this trend can be coronavirus pandemic across the world in 2020.

**Table 4. Five major countries/regions of origin[5]**

No	Country	Number of students	Increase/decrease
1	China	121,845	(2,591: 2.1% down)
2	Vietnam	62,233	(11,156 : 15.2% down)
3	Nepal	24,002	(2,306: 8.8% down)
4	Republic of Korea	15,785	(2,553: 13.9% down)
5	Taiwan	7,088	(2,496 : 26.0% down)

It is obvious from the given table that most of the international students visited Japan from the countries that are geographically close than other countries of the world. In fact, 121,845 Chinese people visited Japan in 2020 to study there and the students of this country were the one who mostly visited Japan to study there. Secondly, the foreign students who came from Vietnam acquired second place but the number of that country students were less almost two times than China (62,233). This table also indicated downward trend and the main cause for this trend can be corona virus pandemic across the world in 2020.

It should be noted that as of May 1<sup>st</sup> 2018, the number of foreign students in Japan reached about 300,000 - more than double the number 10 years ago. In the past 10 years, the number of foreign students employed in Japan increased from 9,584 in 2009 to 25,942 in 2018. However, generally, getting a job in Japan is not easy as the employment rate of foreign students is not as high as that of Japanese but this trend was upward as the number of students increased year by year.

**Figure 1. Number of foreign student graduates and employment[6]**

\*based on the official data of Ministry of Justice, Immigration Bureau "The Employment of Foreign Students in Japanese Companies 2018.

The next study shows the popularity of the Japanese language in Uzbekistan and shows the main reasons for learning Japanese for the people of this country. The importance and prevalence of the Japanese language are increasing year by year because of improved diplomatic relations and partnerships between these two countries. In fact, there are lots of private language schools that are teaching the Japanese language to individuals and when these learners were asked about the reasons for learning Japanese following are shown as a reason:

Figure 2. Reasons of learning Japanese in Uzbekistan[7]



Having been established diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Japan in 1992, these relations have been improved year by year. It can be said based on the official statistics that at the end of 2020 about 3600 Uzbek citizens were living in Japan and it is clear from that numbers that Japan is one of the welcoming countries for Uzbek people [8].

### Conclusion

It can be concluded based on the above discussed studies and research that Japan is one of the countries that provide opportunities for international students and encourages them to conduct further and deeper studies and find proper working places. Additionally, this language has become popular in Uzbekistan because of improvements in diplomatic cooperation of these two countries. Following suggestions can be made for further improvements of Japanese language in Uzbekistan:

- Collaboration between language institutions should be improved;
- The branches of Japanese language schools should be opened in Uzbekistan;
- The branches of the big companies of Japan should be opened in Uzbekistan and investments should be attracted;
- The exchange of students of these two countries should be supported and encouraged further.

### References

1. Based on the official data of [www.lex.uz](http://www.lex.uz)
2. Oxford, R. (1992). Research on Second Language Learning Strategies. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 13, 174-187. doi:10.1017/S0267190500002452
3. Flege, J. E., Yeni-Komshian, G. H. & Liu, S. Age constraints on second-language acquisition. *J. Mem. Lang.* 41, 78–104 (1999)
4. Ganschow, L., Sparks, R. L. & Javorsky, J. Foreign language learning difficulties: a historical perspective. *J. Learn. Disabil.* 31, 248–258 (1998)
5. Based on the official data of <https://www.studyinJapan.go.jp/en/other/sgtj/>
6. Based on the <https://www.studyinJapan.go.jp/en/job/employment/general-info/inJapan.html>
7. Based on the <http://www.meidaiwatch.iech.provost.nagoya-u.ac.jp/en/2017/06/post-7.html>
8. Based on the data of <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/uzbekistan/data.html>