

PROBLEMS IN LEARNING JAPANESE LANGUAGE FACED BY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to describe the problems students face while studying Japanese. This research used descriptive analysis methods with a quantitative approach. Data collection was carried out through documentation studies and distributing questionnaires on January 22 - 27 2024 to 43 students of the Communication Science Department of the Universitas Komputer Indonesia, semester V of the 2023/2024 academic year who took Japanese as an elective course. The results showed that most students (81,40%) stated that Japanese was a difficult subject. The problems faced are students' difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in Japanese. To overcome this problem, cooperation between lecturers, students, and policymakers to improve the quality of Japanese language learning outcomes is required.

Keywords: Problems, Learning, Japanese Language, Students

INTRODUCTION

Setiana (2018) stated that to face global competition, one of the aspects needed is mastery of a foreign language. One of the foreign languages that is widely studied in Indonesia is Japanese. The Japan Foundation survey (2021) explains that there are 711,732 Japanese language learners in Indonesia from various levels. Setiana, Rusman, and Ali (2020) explained that the high interest in studying Japanese is due to the high market demand in Indonesia which requires graduates who have Japanese language skills.

Seeing this opportunity, quoted from the Communication Science Department website (2021), it was explained that the Universitas Komputer Indonesia Communication Science Department reviewed & changed the curriculum to follow the trend in the development of communication science based on input from relevant stakeholders. This is in line with the policy of Universitas Komputer Indonesia requires every study program to develop a curriculum for the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework based on OBE (Outcome Based Education). Furthermore, Wijaya (2020) explained that the OBE-based curriculum had a very good impact on student learning, experiences, and learning outcomes. The curriculum development carried out has resulted in 24 new courses, one of which is Japanese as a compulsory elective subject. The Japanese language course is given in semester V for 2 credits per week. Based on an interview with the Head of the Communication Science Department on September 25, 2023, it is known that the aim of the Japanese language course is so that students can recognize, understand, and apply it in simple forms of communication in everyday situations.

In its implementation, various kinds of obstacles were found that students faced related to Japanese language material which included four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Previous research on the problems of learning Japanese was conducted by Harisal (2021) who revealed that the problems faced by hospitality students in learning Japanese were grammar, pronunciation, diction, and cross-cultural understanding. Istiqomah, Diner, and Wardhana (2015) stated that Japanese has a language form that is different from Indonesian in terms of the letters, grammar, and language forms used. Therefore, it does not rule out the possibility that students will experience difficulties in learning Japanese. Setiana and Arianingsih (2018) and Mardhatillah (2023) stated that the problems faced by Japanese language learners are listening and speaking. Megawati (2016) stated that three language elements play an important role in supporting these four skills, namely pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Furthermore, Setiana (2023) stated that to improve Japanese language competence, programs, and learning materials are needed that suit the needs of students as a reference for developing teaching materials and learning methods that suit the situation in Japanese language lectures.

However, research regarding learning Japanese as an elective subject in communication science departments has not been carried out. Based on this, research was conducted on the problems of learning Japanese from a student's perspective to develop Japanese language learning in the Communication Science Department. This research used descriptive analysis methods with a quantitative approach.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Saito (2022) stated that in learning Japanese as a second language, in practice many problems are encountered, namely the varying number of letters used in Japanese (hiragana, katakana, kanji); complicated grammar, as well as the large vocabulary in Japanese. This causes difficulties for students to listen, speak, read, and write in Japanese.

According to the literature, students struggle for a variety of reasons, including misinterpreting directions, copying thoughts, arranging them, and focusing on accuracy. On the contrary, the first category comprises challenges with expressing ideas "properly," "accurately," and "smoothly," whereas the second category covers "writing the method sections," "writing references," and "writing results section." The findings of Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) and Dalsky and Tajino (2007) corroborate this. When students struggled to use proper writing styles, organize ideas and arguments, and convey their beliefs in front of others.

Sadifard and Koosha (2013), students are very reluctant to participate in writing assignments; they may view them as one of their final options or attempt to avoid writing until necessary. Furthermore, they mentioned that when students believe their work might not be carefully examined, they eventually grow disinterested in writing, which could lead to hesitation. The findings revealed that the students struggle to understand written criticism. Students were satisfied with their writing abilities, according to Ismail (2010), although they still need to work on this area. Additionally, he said that during writing lessons, first language (L1) influence and L1 cultural trends should be taken into account because the use of L1 may enhance better writing performance in a second language(L2).

Generally speaking, in the listening exercises, instructors must offer pertinent and adequate background information; essential If not, there would most likely be problems with their comprehension. Beyond cultural differences, the terminology they are familiar with has a big impact on how open they are to listening. Since there is a sense of appreciation for the lecture, it is possible that knowing the meanings of terms piques the students' attention and makes them more intrigued about the subject. This concurs with Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) stated that oral language—which the teacher also uses—rarely allows pupils to learn new material and have meaningful conversations about concepts in the process of learning a second language. As a result, Mouhobi Messadh's (2017) research revealed that students frequently experience anxiety in the classroom due to their fear of speaking too much or worrying about the teacher's unfavorable response. Perhaps peer assessment has a comparable effect.

Okumus (2019), stated that Japanese language learners experience difficulties when hearing sounds in English as a result of differences in pronunciation, stress, and intonation pattern rules that determine the rhythm of the sentence as a whole which are not in the Japanese sound inventory.

METHODOLOGY

This research used descriptive analysis methods with a quantitative approach. This method was chosen because this research describes, examines, and explains a condition with data as it is without the intention of testing a particular hypothesis. The respondents in this study were 43 fifth-semester students of the Communication Sciences Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Academic Year 2023/2024 who took the Japanese language as an elective subject. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires via Google Forms on January 22-27 2023. The questionnaire covered the identity of the respondent and students' problems in learning Japanese. Analysis of the questionnaire data used was descriptive quantitative using SPSS 20 software. Data obtained from the questionnaire was tabulated using a Likert scale.

DISCUSSION

Students' experiences in learning Japanese are presented in Figure 1.

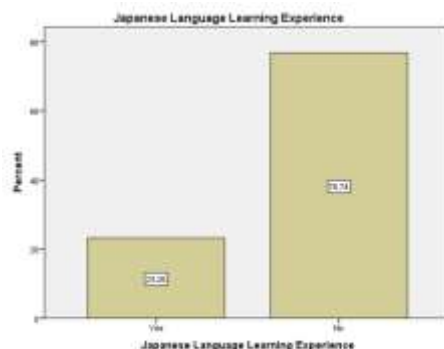


Figure 1 - Japanese Language Learning Experiences

Figure 1 showed that the majority of students (76.74%) had never studied Japanese before, while a small proportion of students (23.26%) had studied Japanese before. Even though most students have never had experience learning Japanese, this does not mean that students who have studied Japanese experience problems in learning Japanese. This is in line with the opinion of Suryadi and Rosiah (2018) who stated that students who have not studied Japanese or have studied Japanese have problems in learning Japanese. The obstacle in the process of learning Japanese is the difficulty of learning Japanese letters such as hiragana, katakana, and kanji.

Furthermore, the difficulties faced by students of the Communication Sciences Department of Universitas Komputer Indonesia in learning Japanese are presented in Figures 2 to 6. Students' opinions regarding Japanese language courses as difficult subjects are presented in Figure 2.

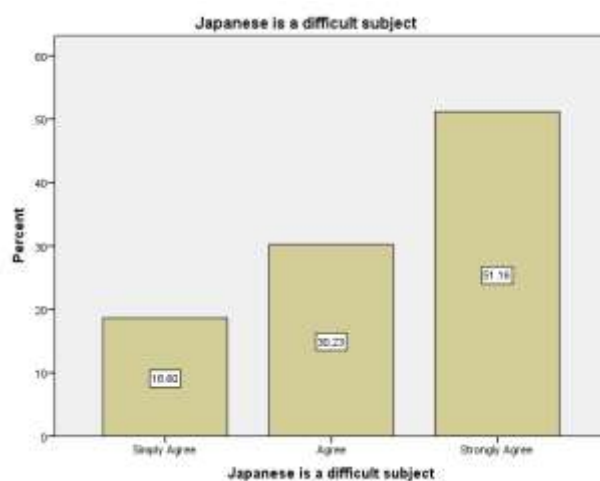


Figure 2 – Japanese is a difficult subject

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that 51.16% of students strongly agree, 30.23% agree, and 18.50% quite agree that Japanese is a difficult subject. This is in line with the opinion of Febrianty et al (2015) who stated that Japanese is a foreign language that is quite complicated to learn. This is because the letters used in Japanese are very diverse, namely romaji, katakana, hiragana, and kanji. Then, the fairly complicated grammar and quite diverse vocabulary and expressions also cause difficulties in learning Japanese. The implication is that students must have high motivation and study seriously to master the required Japanese language learning material

The respondents strongly agreed that they had difficulty in understanding Japanese listening with a score of (4.651), with the results of the largest number of scores, namely agreeing that Japanese is difficult to hear as much as (34.88), then followed by a fairly agreed response with a score of (32.56). as well as responding disagree and strongly disagree as much (23.26) and (4.651). (Figure 3).

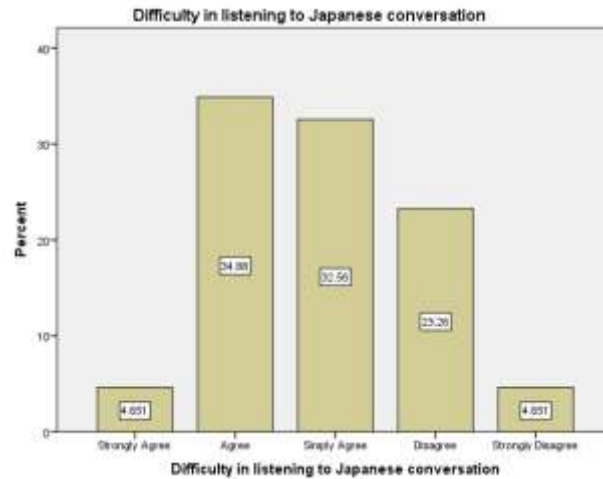


Figure 3 - Difficulty in Listening

Previous research conducted by Dewi (2020) implied that students have the hardest time understanding new topics because the new information has significantly differed from their native language. Similarly, minimal exposure to language communication and usage also causes problems with the speaker's speaking rate and accent.

The respondents strongly agreed that they had difficulty speaking in Japanese according to the right pronunciation. The result showed a score of (6,97), with the results of the largest number of scores, that Japanese is difficult to speak then as well as responding agree and simply disagree as much (39,53), followed by disagree (13,95). (Figure 4)

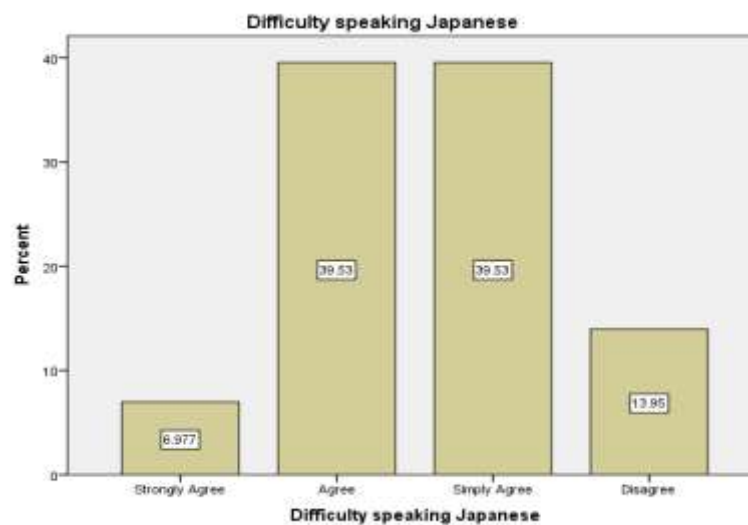


Figure 4 - Difficulty in Speaking

In their study, Leong and Amahdi (2017) emphasized that students cannot improve speaking skills unless they learn to listen. They must first develop the ability to comprehend what is uttered to them to be able to give an effective response. Kondrateva (2016) asserts that listening is a unique kind of speech action that is harder than speaking, reading, and writing. By enabling pupils to understand the statement in a foreign language, it helps to meet educational goals.

The respondents stated that they had difficulty reading Japanese. Results showed on the following reading activities: The data showed a score of (18,60) respondents strongly agreed that they had difficulty reading in Japanese., then with the results of the largest number of scores, that agreed Japanese is difficult to read (51,16) then as well as responding simply agree as much (4,651), following with disagree (25,58). (Figure 5)

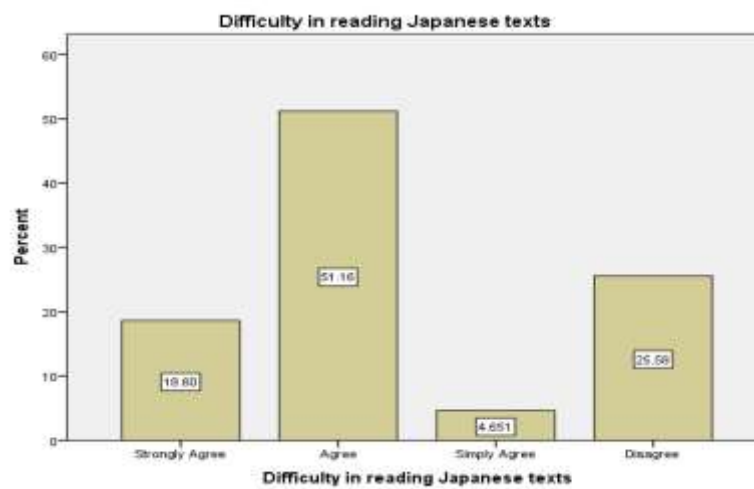


Figure 5 - Difficulty in Reading

Low text knowledge causes problems, and because Indonesia uses the Roman alphabet, Japanese letters are foreign to them and require a lot of effort to fully understand. This is consistent with Quintos's (2022) which indicated that students' most difficult reading comprehension problems stem from a lack of experience with foreign characters in the areas of vocabulary, working memory, and text processing. Following the results of research by Aisyah (2017), if the topic is not familiar to students, it will make them uncomfortable and difficult to read. for the student, it will make the student uncomfortable in the reading process and difficult to become effective.

The Results showed on the following writing activities in Japanese text that: (23,26) respondents strongly agree, (69,77) agree, and (6,977) simply agree with difficulties in writing Japanese text. (Figure 6)

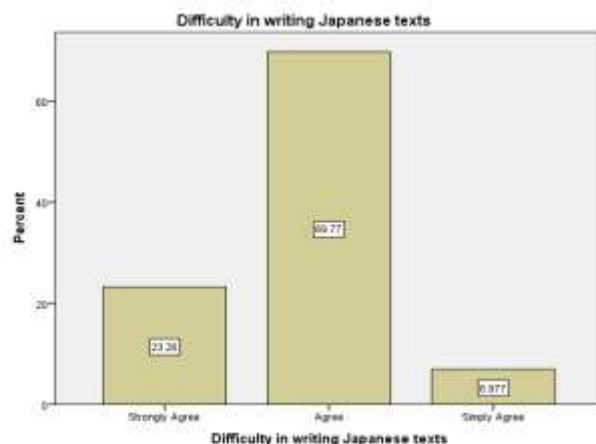


Figure 6 - Difficulty in writing

Shows that students have trouble writing foreign characters. Furthermore, many grammatical aspects, such as writing conventions and sentence patterns, totally deviate from the original tongue. Nurjanah (2018) asserted that writing aids in memory retention. Composing words and phrases into coherent sentences increases the likelihood that they will be retained in long-term memory. Recalling syntax and grammatical rules is beneficial. Writing things down helps to focus the mind and prepare it for memorization.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The order of problems faced by students in learning Japanese is writing, speaking, reading, and listening in Japanese. The difficulty of this writing skill can be understood because of the variety of letters used in Japanese, the differences in Japanese grammar from Indonesian, and also the large number of vocabulary and expressions in Japanese. To overcome this problem, cooperation between lecturers and students to improve the quality of Japanese language learning outcomes is needed. For policymakers, so that the goals of learning Japanese can be achieved as expected, it is hoped that Japanese language learning will be carried out for a minimum of two semesters. In addition, it is necessary to consider that the maximum number of Japanese language learners per class is 30 students.

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