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INVESTIGATION OF CHINESE LANGUAGE EARNING STRATEGIES FOR JAPANESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Currently, there is a dearth of research on Chinese language learning strategies among Japanese international students. This study examines the Chinese language learning strategies of 84 Japanese international students from selected universities in China. A questionnaire based on Oxford(1990) learning strategy scale was developed to investigate the strategies used by the students. The study primarily employed a questionnaire survey method, and the results were analyzed using the social statistical software SPSS23.0. The objective of this research is to gain insights into the present usage, characteristics, and other factors of Chinese language learning strategies among Japanese international students. Based on the research findings, this paper recommends suitable learning strategies for this group of Japanese international students that can aid them in learning Chinese more effectively and efficiently. The study revealed that the social strategy was the most commonly used strategy among Japanese international students, whereas the affective strategy was the least used. Additionally, the results showed no significant differences in variables such as age and Chinese proficiency level. After analyzing the research results, this paper puts forth three affective strategy teaching suggestions to improve the Chinese language learning strategies of Japanese international students: fostering a sense of accomplishment in learning Chinese, developing an interest in learning Chinese and maintaining a sense of novelty, and reducing anxiety by creating a relaxed learning environment and assisting Japanese international students in overcoming anxiety.

Keywords:

Japanese International Students, Chinese Language Learning, Learning Strategies, Teaching Suggestions.

Introduction

China's culture and economy are relatively open. Mandarin Chinese is the official language of China. With the global promotion of the "Chinese fever," more and more people are starting to learn Mandarin. The total number of Mandarin speakers worldwide is about 1.3 billion, with the majority of them concentrated in China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia. In addition to the countries and regions mentioned above, many foreigners also learn and use Chinese characters, especially those interested in Chinese culture and economy. Because Japan and China are geographically adjacent and have a lot of cultural and economic exchanges, many Japanese people choose to study Chinese characters in China. (Azizan, 2022) Learning Chinese characters in a language environment can improve the efficiency of learning Mandarin and enable learners to learn more accurate Mandarin.

Many scholars, both domestic and foreign, focus only on studying learning strategies for English as a second language. There is very little research specifically targeting Japanese students studying abroad, and even less research on regional differences. Most scholars have a mistaken belief that Japanese students have a significant advantage in learning Mandarin because the Japanese language contains many Chinese characters. This mistaken belief arises from an overemphasis on the actual role of linguistic transfer in language learning. (Brown, 1990)

This thesis will focus on selected universities in China to study the characteristics of Mandarin learning strategies used by Japanese students studying abroad. Based on this, three questions will be addressed: What is the overall use of Chinese language learning strategies among Japanese students studying abroad? What are the Chinese language learning strategies used by Japanese students of different ages? What are the Chinese language learning strategies used by Japanese students with different levels of Chinese language proficiency?

A questionnaire survey was conducted to understand the basic situation of Japanese students' Chinese language learning strategies, and to find out which learning strategies have practical guiding significance based on different situations. (Chen, 2014) The most suitable Chinese language learning strategies for Japanese students were identified in order to improve their efficiency in learning Chinese, and to provide reference for Chinese language teaching for future Japanese students.

Literature Review

In second language learning strategy research, the most widely used strategy inventory by scholars is the learning strategy classification system proposed by American applied linguist Oxford, and the language learning strategy inventory based on it. Theoretical framework: The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Learning strategies are divided into two major categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. (Deng & Hu, 2022)

Direct strategies involve actively engaging in second language learning by processing the target language directly. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, provide support for language learning indirectly by enhancing attention, planning, evaluation, seeking opportunities, managing anxiety, fostering cooperation, and promoting empathy. Direct strategies can be classified into three categories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Memory strategies aid in the retention and review of new information, cognitive strategies help with comprehension and production of language, and compensation strategies allow learners to use the new language with limited knowledge.

The classification system for learning strategies by Oxford is the most comprehensive one to date, which includes both direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve the processing of the target language, and can be further categorized into memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. On the other hand, indirect strategies provide support for language learning through attention focusing, planning, evaluation, anxiety control, cooperation, and empathy. Indirect strategies are further divided into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies are used for coordinating learning activities and cognitive processing, affective strategies help manage and regulate emotions to develop learners' confidence and perseverance, and social strategies encourage interactive and empathic learning with other learners. (Fei et al., 2022) These strategies are interconnected, coordinated, and mutually supportive.

Based on the language learning strategy classification system, the Language Learning Strategy Inventory (LLSI) was developed as a questionnaire to measure language learners' use of strategies. As shown in Table 1:

Table 1: SILL Learning Strategy

learning strategy	Variable content
Memory strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishing knowledge chains to facilitate the memorization of words and texts. 2. Categorizing all words and linking their sounds and images together. 3. Repeated practice to consolidate memory. 4. Storing new knowledge.
Cognitive strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice switching between second language and mother tongue 2. Pass on the knowledge learned to others 3. Practice quickly grasping the intention of a conversation 4. Establish the structure of input and output
Compensation strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supplementing deficient knowledge structure 2. Trying to use body language and finding clues based on the situational context to overcome speaking and writing limits.
Metacognitive strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adjusting one's own learning methods 2. Setting learning goals and self-evaluating
Affective strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regulate emotional factors such as feelings, attitudes, and motivation, and encourage oneself.

	2. Reduce one's anxiety.
Social strategy	1. Collaborate with others to learn Chinese together. 2. Create and maintain an environment for communication with others.

Previous Research On Chinese Language Learning Strategies

There have been many studies conducted by Chinese scholars on Chinese language learning strategies. For example, Shen Yali (2008) conducted a questionnaire survey on Chinese international students at three different levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced), and found that there were differences in their learning motivations and strategies based on their proficiency level. (Stevenson et al., 1993) Her research revealed a correlation between learning motivation and learning strategies, but this correlation was limited to the participants' proficiency level and did not fully reflect all the correlations between the two factors.

Yao Yiru (2009) analyzed the correlation between individual factors, including age, gender, native language, learning time, and proficiency level, and Chinese language learning strategies. (Gong et al., 2020) She found that overall learning strategies were only influenced by proficiency level, and not by the other four factors. Her study consisted of five individual factors.

Zhou Li (2013) compared the use of Chinese language learning strategies by 30 Thai Chinese students studying in Thailand and China and analyzed the various factors that caused differences in strategy use between the two language environments. The study found that, under the joint influence of environmental factors and language proficiency, the participants used various learning strategies more frequently in the target language environment. However, due to the limited number of participants, the study did not have significant persuasive power. (Guo et al., 2022)

Liu Zhu (2015) collected data on the learning motivations and strategies of Japanese learners of Chinese in China and found that these learners used social-emotional strategies most frequently and metacognitive strategies least frequently. However, their learning motivations and strategies may change based on their Chinese proficiency level and length of stay in China.

In a study conducted by Zhu Xue (2018) on the Chinese language learning strategies of students at the Confucius Institute at Sapporo University in Japan, it was discovered that memory strategies were the most frequently used by these students, while emotional strategies were the least frequently used. However, the study's focus was on Japanese learners of Chinese in a non-Chinese language environment, and thus may not accurately reflect the characteristics and current state of Chinese language learning strategies among Japanese learners in a Chinese language environment. (Hancock, 2022)

Research Method

This study used a quantitative research method. There were three steps involved in conducting this study. Firstly, the literature review method was used to search for practical research frameworks that could address the problem discussed in this paper. Secondly, the survey method was used to collect objective questionnaire data. Thirdly, the researcher analyzed and compared the data, and evaluated the effectiveness of the research.

The literature survey method involves reviewing literature related to Chinese language learning strategies and organizing relevant knowledge as a reference for this paper. The questionnaire

survey method is based on Oxford's "Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)" and is tailored to the specific situation of this study. The questionnaire is answered using a Likert scale and consists of a total of 49 questions. The questionnaire data was collected using the social science statistical analysis software SPSS23.0, and the data obtained from the questionnaire survey was organized and presented in charts and graphs.(Kessler et al., 2020)

The survey targeted Japanese students studying in Chinese universities whose native language is Japanese. A total of 84 Japanese students were surveyed, with 35 students aged 20 or younger, accounting for 41.66% of the total number of participants; 39 students aged 21-24, accounting for 46.42% of the total number of participants; and 10 students aged 25 or older, accounting for 11.92% of the total number of participants. HSK scores were classified as elementary, intermediate, and advanced. Among the participants, 28 students were classified as elementary level, accounting for 33.33% of the total number of participants; 26 students were classified as intermediate level, accounting for 30.96% of the total number of participants; and 30 students were classified as advanced level, accounting for 35.71% of the total number of participants.

Reliability and Validity Test

To use the questionnaire in the researcher's teaching situation, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were validated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and factor analysis method on the 84 students as research subjects.(Le-le, 2015)

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using the alpha reliability coefficient method. According to the measurement standard, when the coefficient of the alpha reliability coefficient method is greater than 0.5, the reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable. As shown in Table 2, the total reliability coefficient of the questionnaire is 0.779, and the average alpha reliability coefficient is above 0.5, which meets the standard. Therefore, it can be judged that the reliability coefficient of this questionnaire is very good.

Table 2 Reliability Test Statistics

learning strategy	Cronbach' sAlpha
Memory strategy	0.637
Cognitive strategy	0.779
Compensation strategy	0.793
Metacognitive strategy	0.789
Affective strategy	0.868
Social strategy	0.807
Total questionnaire	0.779

In conducting validity analysis, KMO value and Bartlett's sphericity test P-value are commonly used to measure factor analysis. Prior to conducting factor analysis, KMO test and Bartlett's sphericity test are performed. (Liu et al., 2019)KMO measure is the standard to determine whether the scale is suitable for factor analysis. KMO value below 0.6 indicates that factor analysis is not suitable, while KMO value above 0.9 indicates that it is very suitable for factor analysis, and the value between the two indicates that the result obtained from factor analysis is acceptable.

The results of the factor analysis conducted on the questionnaire data using the SPSS23.0 statistical software are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Questionnaire Validity Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.726
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2011.076
	Df	1128
	Sig	0

The results showed that the KMO value of the questionnaire was 0.726, and all the data of learning strategies were above 0.6, which met the standard. At the same time, the Bartlett sphericity test p-value was 0.000, indicating that the questionnaire passed the Bartlett sphericity test at a significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that this questionnaire has high validity.

Results

This paper mainly analyzes three aspects:

The overall use of Chinese learning strategies by Japanese students studying abroad; The use of Chinese learning strategies by Japanese students of different ages; The use of Chinese learning strategies by Japanese students of different levels of Chinese proficiency.

The Overall Use Of SILL Chinese Learning Strategies By Japanese Students Studying In China Was Analyzed In This Study.

After categorizing, counting, and analyzing the survey data on the use of Chinese language learning strategies among Japanese students in some universities, the basic usage of six dimensions of learning strategies was statistically calculated. The total mean of the survey was 3.51, and the mean values of the six learning strategies ranged from 2.99 to 4.28. Among them, the mean value of social strategies was the highest at 4.28, and the mean value of affective strategies was the lowest at 2.98. The mean values of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensatory strategies, and metacognitive strategies were 3.33, 3.27, 3.68, and 3.47, respectively. In terms of standard deviation, the total standard deviation of the survey was 0.457, indicating good stability. The stability of affective strategies was the lowest, with a standard deviation of 0.778, while cognitive strategies had relatively good stability with a standard deviation of 0.546. The standard deviations of memory strategies, compensatory strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies were 0.643, 0.554, 0.642, and 0.681, respectively. See Table 4 for details.

Table 4 Using The Distribution Statistics Tables

learning strategy	least value	crest value	mean value	standard deviation
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Memory strategy	1.0	5.0	3.33	0.643
Cognitive strategy	1.0	5.0	3.27	0.546
Compensation strategy	1.0	5.0	3.68	0.554
Metacognitive strategy	1.0	5.0	3.47	0.642
Affective strategy	1.0	5.0	2.98	0.778
Social strategy	1.0	5.0	4.28	0.681
Total questionnaire	1.0	5.0	3.51	0.457

Comparison Of The Use Of Various Learning Strategies For Different Age Variables.

To investigate whether there were differences in the use of six learning strategies (Memory strategy, Cognitive strategy, Compensation strategy, Metacognitive strategy, Affective strategy, and Social strategy) and the total questionnaire of Chinese learning strategy among Japanese international students of different ages, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the average scores of the six learning strategies and the total questionnaire of Chinese learning strategy among Japanese international students of different ages. (Lin & Collins, 2011) The results showed that there were no significant differences in the use of memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, social strategy, and the total questionnaire of Chinese learning strategy among Japanese international students of different ages.

Table 5 Statistical Tables For Different Age Variables

Learning Strategy	Age	Cases	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Memory strategy	≤20 years	35	3.16	0.526
	21-24 years	39	3.28	0.632
	≥25 years	10	3.08	0.783
Cognitive strategy	≤20 years	35	3.23	0.636
	21-24 years	39	3.33	0.492
	≥25 years	10	3.89	0.711
Compensation strategy	≤20 years	35	3.67	0.498
	21-24 years	39	3.58	0.622
	≥25 years	10	3.38	0.803
Metacognitive strategy	≤20 years	35	3.66	0.716
	21-24 years	39	3.38	0.685
	≥25 years	10	3.86	0.823
Affective strategy	≤20 years	35	2.97	0.689
	21-24 years	39	3.47	0.688
	≥25 years	10	3.53	0.578
Social strategy	≤20 years	35	3.89	0.596
	21-24 years	39	4.24	0.673
	≥25 years	10	4.31	0.761
Total questionnaire	≤20 years	35	3.43	0.510
	21-24 years	39	3.55	0.432
	≥25 years	10	3.68	0.543

Comparison Of Various Learning Strategies For Different Chinese Language Level Variables

In order to examine if there are disparities in the utilization of six learning techniques, namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, as well as overall Chinese language learning strategies, among Japanese students who are studying in China with varying degrees of Chinese proficiency, a one-way analysis of variance was performed on the mean scores of the six Chinese language learning strategies and overall Chinese language learning strategy questionnaire for students with different levels of Chinese proficiency. According to Table 6, the outcomes revealed that there were no significant dissimilarities in the employment of memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, social strategies, and overall Chinese language learning strategies among Japanese students with different levels of Chinese proficiency.

Table 6 Statistical Tables Of Variables With Different Chinese Language Levels

Learning Strategy	Chinese Level	Cases	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Memory strategy	Beginner	28	3.36	0.534
	Intermediate	26	3.23	0.564
	Advanced	30	3.28	0.673
Cognitive strategy	Beginner	28	3.43	0.613
	Intermediate	26	3.68	0.525
	Advanced	30	3.78	0.761
Compensation strategy	Beginner	28	3.57	0.473
	Intermediate	26	3.67	0.652
	Advanced	30	3.45	0.671
Metacognitive strategy	Beginner	28	3.60	0.744
	Intermediate	26	3.78	0.675
	Advanced	30	3.64	0.803
Affective strategy	Beginner	28	2.68	0.729
	Intermediate	26	3.52	0.714
	Advanced	30	3.61	0.648
Social strategy	Beginner	28	3.96	0.585
	Intermediate	26	4.04	0.621
	Advanced	30	4.27	0.709
Total questionnaire	Beginner	28	3.43	0.463
	Intermediate	26	3.65	0.425
	Advanced	30	3.67	0.470

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Japanese students who study Chinese abroad tend to utilize social and compensation strategies more frequently, while affective strategies are the least utilized. (Liu, 2020) There were no significant differences in the use of cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and memory strategies based on variables such as age and Chinese proficiency level. To enhance the effectiveness of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, it is essential for teachers to focus on the learning strategies of Japanese students and improve their learning efficiency. The following are specific methods that can be employed:

Cultivate A Sense Of Achievement

To cultivate students' enthusiasm and interest in learning Chinese in Chinese language acquisition teaching, teachers should focus on emotional factors, which play an important role in second language acquisition. (Ma et al., 2017) Compared with the sense of achievement from exam scores, Japanese students place more emphasis on the sense of achievement in the learning process. Therefore, it is necessary for Chinese as a foreign language teacher to help students develop a full interest and confidence in learning Chinese and have clear goals for Japanese students' Chinese language acquisition.

Emotional education aims to promote students' positive emotions and help them form independent and complete personalities. For Japanese students, the role of achievement motivation is significant. Chinese language teachers should pay attention to cultivating Japanese students' sense of achievement because it can easily stimulate them to achieve more. (Masitoh et al., 2023) The formation of a sense of achievement depends on certain cultural and educational backgrounds. Therefore, by using certain correct methods, it is possible to cultivate and enhance Japanese students' sense of achievement in learning Chinese.

Cultivating Interest In Learning Chinese

Motivations for learning Chinese can be broadly divided into two types: surface-level motivations and deep-level motivations. The former refers to superficial material incentives, such as improved academic performance. The latter refers to spiritual incentives, such as personal interests and hobbies. Different learning motivations can lead to changes in learning methods. In the practice of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, it is important for teachers to make cultivating Japanese students' interest in learning Chinese an instructional objective. (Min, 2012) When Japanese students regard learning Chinese as a personal interest, they tend to be proactive in their learning and can improve their learning efficiency without requiring excessive praise and encouragement.

To cultivate interest in learning Chinese, foreign language teachers need to continuously discover and create a strong interest atmosphere among Japanese students. There are three important things to consider:

A. Foreign language teachers need to clearly define learning objectives for Japanese students and strengthen their interest in Chinese during the teaching process. Teachers should encourage students to speak Chinese as much as possible and help them experience Chinese culture. (Premaratne, 2012)

B. Foreign language teachers should create a relaxed and interesting learning environment. (Rose & Carson, 2014) In this process, teachers need to be friendly and emphasize not only teaching knowledge but also fostering emotional connections and interaction with students.

C. By using different teaching methods, teachers can maintain students' freshness and interest in learning.

To Alleviate Students' Anxiety

Teach Students According To Their Aptitude.

To alleviate students' anxiety, teachers of Chinese as a foreign language should tailor their approaches to suit individual students' needs. Given the difficulty that many Japanese students face with Chinese pronunciation, teachers should focus on creating an engaging classroom environment and gradually guiding students towards speaking Chinese. During this process, teachers should offer appropriate encouragement and patient guidance, which can help to enhance students' confidence in their Chinese language abilities.

It's worth noting that Japanese students tend to be cautious and may lack confidence when it comes to expressing their thoughts in Chinese. This fear of performing poorly can lead to high levels of anxiety while learning the language. In light of this, teachers of Chinese as a foreign language should not only assist Japanese students in overcoming psychological barriers, but also encourage more outgoing and lively students to help create a positive atmosphere that can motivate their classmates.

Creating a Relaxed Learning Environment to Reduce Stress.

The learning environment in Japan is known for its relaxed atmosphere, and this approach can also be beneficial for efficient Chinese language learning. To achieve this, foreign language teachers should aim to minimize student stress and create a calm environment during class. (Stoeber et al., 2020) Classroom games and group activities organized outside of class can help foster this relaxed atmosphere, as well as discussions on cultural topics in Chinese with classmates from different countries. It's important for teachers to be mindful of their behavior and the impact it can have on students. (Zhang & Xing, 2023) When students answer questions, teachers should provide praise, encouragement, and compliments to boost their confidence. A friendly and approachable teacher can help students relax, while positive feedback can enhance their self-assurance.

Assisting Japanese Students Studying Abroad in Overcoming Anxiety.

Anxiety is a widespread phenomenon, and it is common for international students in various countries to experience it. Teachers should communicate to their students that anxiety can be alleviated through their own efforts. (Tanaka, 2023) Achieving better grades can help to reduce anxiety levels. Additionally, it is crucial for teachers to prevent students from having incorrect ideas about learning Chinese before they begin their studies. Teachers should remind students that learning Chinese is not as challenging as it may seem as long as they master the necessary skills and remain dedicated to their studies. When students have a correct understanding of the language, it can reduce anxiety levels. Teachers should also assist study abroad students in acquiring appropriate and effective learning techniques. Organizing student exchanges and facilitating discussions on various topics can be an effective way to achieve this. Only by helping study abroad students find suitable learning methods can they improve their learning efficiency, increase their confidence, and decrease their anxiety levels.

Conclusion

At present, numerous studies have been conducted on Chinese language learning strategies for international students from Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and other Asian countries. However, research specifically focused on Chinese language learning strategies for Japanese international students is relatively scarce. (Teng & Fang, 2022) While some studies have explored Chinese language learning strategies among Japanese international students as a whole and compared the strategies used by students from character-based and non-character-based writing systems, little attention has been paid to regionally specific strategies. To gain a deeper understanding

of the Chinese language learning strategies employed by Japanese international students, it is essential to examine not only the general population but also regionally specific approaches. This will enable us to customize our teaching methods to meet the individual needs of each student and achieve greater effectiveness in teaching Chinese language.

According to this study, Japanese students studying Chinese tend to use the social strategy more frequently than any other strategy, while the affective strategy is used the least. (Yang & Chanyoo, 2022) Various factors such as age and Chinese language proficiency were tested, but no significant differences were found. The findings imply that Chinese language teachers for Japanese students should focus on developing affective strategies. To this end, three teaching recommendations are proposed: fostering a sense of accomplishment in students, nurturing their interest in Chinese language to keep them motivated, and reducing their anxiety by tailoring teaching approaches to their individual needs, creating a comfortable learning atmosphere, and assisting them in overcoming their apprehension.

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