

## LEARNING JAPANESE AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE: BASIS FOR AN ENHANCED LEARNING PLAN

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### Abstract

The researcher has been teaching the Japanese Language and observed that students are having difficulty coping with the writing system. The complex system of Japanese writing makes learners of the language have difficulties to pass the Japanese Language Professional Test or JLPT. In this study, the researcher used True Experimental Research Design. The students-subject were exposed to the former learning plan and the enhanced learning plan. The researcher aims to test their listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visualizing skills. The participants were students from the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

The classes were divided into two groups. The students of HRM were the controlled group and the Tourism students were the experimental group. The HRM group was exposed to the former learning plan while the tourism group was exposed to the learning plan. The difference between the two learning plans is the exposure to the writing system of Japan. The result has shown in the pretest that both groups do not have any mastery of the language making them perfect subjects for the study. The groups were exposed to two different learning plans; both took the post-test examination to test the learning plan. The controlled group still was able to get no mastery. While the experimental group was able to get mastery of the language. The researcher was able to develop a Teacher's Guidebook to be able to use the learning plan for other teachers who would like to use the Enhanced Learning plan of the researcher.

**Keywords:** Learning Plan, Macro-skills, Foreign Language.

### Introduction

The ever-growing population of Filipinos working in Japan would be the trigger for many to work there. But one of the requirements of Japanese Government one must and can speak Japanese (Nihongo) before deployment. A foreign worker can take the **JLPT**, or Japanese Language Proficiency Test conducted by Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Relation of Japan, through many embassy and Japanese Foundation round the Globe. This examination works like the IELTS of UK and Australia and TOEFL of USA. It aims to measure the language proficiency of the person or applicant.

The researcher has been engaged in teaching Japanese as a mandated course of the students who are taking BS Hospitality Management (formerly BS Hotel and Restaurant Management) and BS Tourism Management of Arellano University-Jose Rizal Campus, Malabon City. The researcher would like to help these students to reach their goal in working abroad especially with the doors of Japan which open its opportunities to the Filipino Workers. They need Japanese speaking workers in Japan, especially in the field of Tourism and Hospitality Industry. Likewise, despite of being the third largest economy in the world, there are very few studies being conducted for Asian foreign

languages learning and teaching especially in Japanese, except for English as foreign language to non-English speakers. The researcher was prompted to conduct study through **Experimental Research** in which it will tested and challenged traditional or old **learning plan** being used in conducting the classes in Japanese Lessons through the Enhanced Learning Plan he developed.

### Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to assess the students' Japanese Language macro-skills competencies at Arellano University-Jose Rizal Campus, Malabon City.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. As measured by the teacher-made pretest, what is the mastery level of the control and experimental in the following macro skills:

- 1.1 Listening,
- 1.2 Speaking,
- 1.3 Reading,
- 1.4 Writing,
- 1.5 Viewing?

2. How significant is the difference on the mastery level of the two groups on the pretest in terms of the variables cited above?

3. After exposing the experimental group to the learning plan what is their mastery level in the posttest?
4. How significant is the difference between the mastery level of the two groups on the posttest?
5. What is the average gain as regard the mastery level of the two groups in the posttest?
6. How may the result of the study be utilized in preparing a *Teacher's Guide* in an Enhanced Learning Plan to improve the Language Skills of the students?

### Scope and Limitations of the Study

In this study a Total Population Sampling was used since it was conducted to the students who were enrolled in Foreign Language: Japanese. The study was conducted in the second semester of school year 2019-2020 and was limited only to the students of

10 BS Hospitality Management and 10 BS Tourism Management with a total of 20 subjects from the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Arellano University- Jose Rizal Campus, Malabon City. These students were the last set of students who graduated from former Revised Basic Education Curriculum in School Year 2014-2015. The enhanced lesson plan was intended to be used by graduates of K-12 who were enrolled in Tourism and Hospitality Management. These subjects were the students who were enrolled in the old curriculum of School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. These students served as the perfect subjects. Nevertheless, the 10 BS Hospitality Management students composed the controlled group, and the 10 BS Tourism Management students were the experimental group.

### Theoretical Framework



**Figure 1**

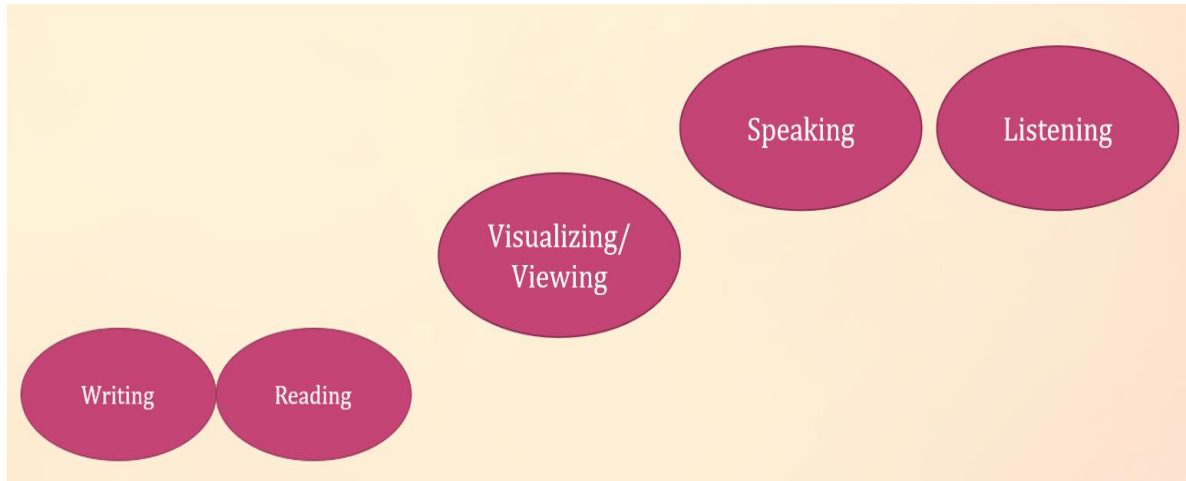
We were taught in our schools that we learn to listen and then we know how to speak. As we progress in our life reading and writing developed at the same time. As we mature, we comprehend visualizing or viewing. The fundamental theory of learning a language is through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing and visualizing. These macro skills are all necessary when learning a new language. These four abilities are of utmost significance when learning a language. The learning of writing and reading abilities is usually simpler and easier than the listening and speaking components. Remembering that we learn a language for practical purposes rather than to become literary experts is important. Knowing that language is the same as speaking it and comprehending what others are saying. You'll probably discover that listening and speaking are the two most important

components of effective communication as you continue your language learning journey.

Without a question, developing your listening abilities will have a significant impact on your capacity to learn a foreign language. If you want someone to be proficient, they should learn any language the same way they learn their native one. All of us learnt our first languages as children by constant immersion, speaking, listening, and imitation. No one ever taught us grammar rules or writing techniques. It implies that you must speak a number of foreign phrases and words as well as listen rather than merely read from a book. Associating the words with their intended meaning will help them become more recognizable. The major objective is to improve natural speaking and listening abilities.

The primary language reference, translation, and bibliographical expertise should be secondary.

Spend time honing your listening and speaking skills.



**Figure 2**

But the researcher's belief is that in order to learn Japanese as foreign language, reading and writing must be learned first. Followed by viewing/visualizing in which speaking and listening succeeded. This belief formed after years of observation in teaching Japanese as foreign language. The Japanese Language Proficiency Test or JLPT is the only approved form of the Japanese Embassy as Language Examination.

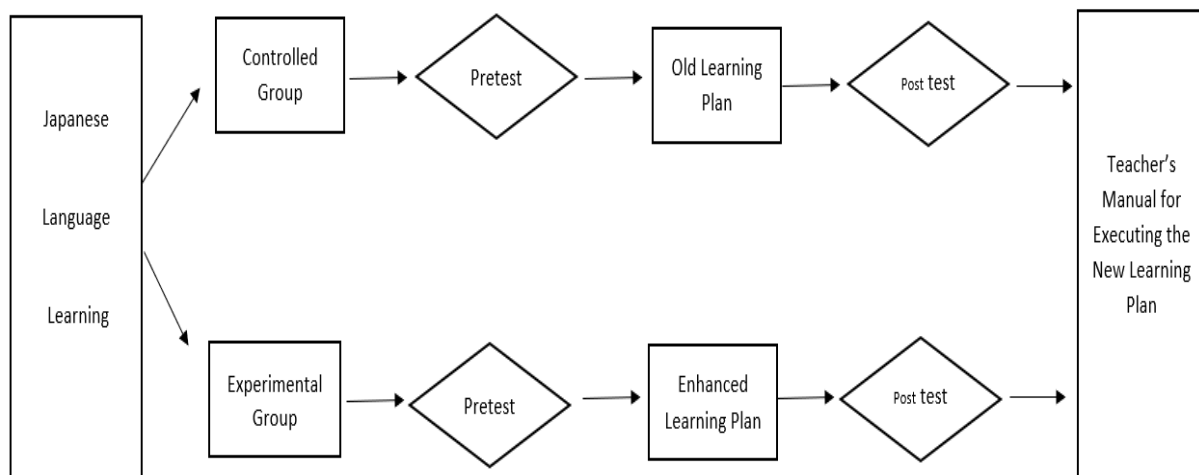
The common framework used by many foreign language schools is the usual method. The students are taught first with the greetings, days, months, etc. Learning the written and reading forms are being taught at the last part of their curricula.

The most difficult roadblock lies in reading and writing. Students are having difficulty recognizing Japanese letters and characters.

Students need regular exposure to a new language in order to master it especially in written language. Only by consistent exposure can students begin to build the vocabulary, grammatical structures, speech patterns and familiarization to the written language that will lead to fluency. The earlier and greater frequency that students are exposed to a new language, the better their chance of mastering it specially the written and reading forms of it.

Based on the observation of the researcher. The students' exposure to the Roman letters as well as their familiarization to it makes it difficult to learn the Japanese language.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 3**

This study used the experimental research design conceptual framework of Ahsbahs, Knipping, and

Presmeg (2015). The study starts with intention of both parties (teacher and students) in Japanese

Language Learning. The study is composed of the Controlled Group and Experimental Group, both take a pretest examination to determine their intellectual capacity and to ensure that no group is smarter than the other. When their scores were tabulated after the pretest; both groups were exposed to two different learning plans.

The old learning plan for the Controlled Group and the Enhanced Learning Plan for the Experimental Group. After the exposure to the different learning plan, the groups were subject to post test. The result of the study was used to determine the effectiveness of the enhanced learning plan. Using the result of the study, the researcher was able to create a Teacher's Manual to implement the new learning plan. The connection of Old Learning Plan to the Teacher's Manual.

## Research Methodology

### • Research Design

The researcher utilized the purposive sampling that involved examining the entire population that have a particular set of characteristics (e.g., specific attributes/traits, experience, knowledge, skills, exposure to an event, etc.) Leard (2012).

### • Participants/Respondents of the Study

10 BS Hospitality Management and 10 BS Tourism Management with a total of 20 subjects from the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Arellano University- Jose Rizal Campus, Malabon City. These students were the last set of students who graduated from former Revised Basic Education Curriculum in School Year 2014-2015.

### • Instrument/s of the Study

A teacher made pretest and post-test were constructed. It was composed of 50 item multiple choice test. Each test was composed of the following 10 items for listening, 10 items for speaking, 10 items for reading, 10 writing, and 10 items for viewing or visualizing. The test was a multiple choice type of exam patterned after Japanese Language Proficiency Test. The tests were based on the macro skills of communication being implemented in Japanese Language Proficiency Test. The examination was validated by teachers in the field of Asian Language Teaching most especially in Japanese Language. The idea behind

this type of research was to study the frequencies, averages, and other statistical calculations.

### • Data Collection and Analysis

Before administering the test questionnaire to target students, the researcher secured permission through the Program Chair of The School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. A letter of request was sent addressed to the Program Chair to conduct a study relating to difficulties in communication of the students in learning Japanese as a foreign language. The test questionnaire was administered to the students who were enrolled in the subject Foreign Language: Japanese in second semester of School Year 2019-2020. The test was conducted during the Preliminary Period-November 2019 and Final Examination-March 2020.

A dry run was be administered to a total of 20 students who took the Japanese Language subject in Second Semester of 2019-2020. It was conducted in the second semester around November second week of 2019 to determine the validity and reliability of items indicated in the instrument before finalizing it. Then the teacher-made test was presented to the researcher Program Chair of School of Hospitality and Tourism Management for approval. When approved the final copy was prepared for distribution to the respondents of the study.

The researcher personally administered the teacher-made test on November 2019 for Pre-test Examination as their Prelims and on March 2020 for Final Examination as their Post test Examination. It had attached request letter to the Arellano University-Jose Rizal Campus, Malabon City to conduct examination to identify the students' difficulty in learning Japanese as a Foreign Language.

Upon retrieval of the teacher-made test from the students, the teacher-made test were identified according to two groups BS Hospitality Management and BS Tourism Management. Correct answers were tabulated using score count, ranking, and mean. Data were analyzed and interpreted by subjecting them to the prescribed statistical treatment.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Japanese Language Students' Mastery Level in Pretest on Macro Skills**

Macro Skills	Control		Experimental	
	Percentage	Mastery Level	Percentage	Mastery Level
Listening	40	Very low mastery	40	Very low mastery
Speaking	40	Very low mastery	35	Very low mastery
Reading	41	Very low mastery	45	Very low mastery

Writing	44	Very low mastery	39	Very low mastery
Visualizing	40	Very low mastery	41	Very low mastery
Overall	41	Very low mastery	40	Very low mastery

a. Controlled group

Writing gets the highest percentage of 44 with an equivalent of very low mastery. This is followed by Reading with 41 percent and still a very low mastery equivalent. Lastly, Listening, Speaking, and Visualizing get an equal percentage of 40 percent with very low mastery equivalent.

b. Experimental

Reading gets the highest rank with 45 percent with very low mastery, Visualizing gets 41 percent with

very low mastery, Listening has 40 percent with very low mastery. The lowest rank is speaking with 35 percent with very low mastery. All macro skills get a very low mastery equivalent.

Overall, both groups pretest results are equivalent to Very Low Mastery. The data imply that the two pretests in macro-skills are slightly different, which is ideal in the selection of the control and experimental groups in terms of academic ability.

**Table 2: Difference in the Mastery level of the Japanese Language Students' on the Macro Skills in The Pre-Test**

Competencies	Level of Significance	Degree of Freedom	Critical Value	Computed Value	Interpretation / Decision
Listening	0.05	17	2.110	0.0000	Not significant HO: Accept
Speaking	0.05	17	2.110	0.6956	Not significant HO: Accept
Reading	0.05	17	2.110	-0.6772	Not significant HO: Accept
Writing	0.05	17	2.110	1.4805	Not significant HO: Accept
Visualizing/ Viewing	0.05	17	2.110	0.0000	Not significant HO: Accept

Table 2 presents the difference in the mastery level of the subjects' statistical treatment in their pretest on macro skills.

As depicted in table 2, results show that no significant difference exists between the mastery level of students' assessment of respondents of learning Japanese as a foreign language in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visualizing / viewing. These findings are denoted by the T-Test

by ranks value which is equals to 1.4805, 0.0000, 0.6956, -0.6772, and 0.0000 respectively which are below the critical value of 2.110 with degree of freedom of 17 significance level of 0.05. Based on the above findings, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the assessment of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visualizing/ viewing are accepted.

**Table 3: Japanese Language Students' Mastery Level in Post-Test on Macro Skills**

Macro Skills	Control		Experimental	
	Percentage	Mastery Level	Percentage	Mastery Level
Listening	49	Very low mastery	83	With Mastery
Speaking	44	Very low mastery	83	With Mastery
Reading	49	Very low mastery	80	With Mastery
Writing	49	Very low mastery	80	With Mastery
Visualizing	40	Very low mastery	83	With Mastery
Overall	46	Very low mastery	82	With Mastery

**a. Controlled group**

Listening, Reading, and Writing get the highest percentage of 49 with an equivalent of very low mastery. This is followed by Speaking with 44 percent and still a very low mastery equivalent. Lastly, Visualizing get a percentage of 40 percent with very low mastery equivalent.

**b. Experimental**

Listening, Speaking, and Visualizing get the highest rank with 83 percent with equivalent of with

mastery. The lowest in rank is Reading and Writing with 80 percent. All macro skills get a with mastery equivalent.

Overall, both groups showed a huge difference after being exposed to two learning plans. The controlled group exposed to the old learning plan has a very low mastery. On the other hand, the experimental group was able to get with mastery.

**Table 4: Difference in the Mastery level of the Japanese Language Students in The Macro Skills in The Posttest on Macro Skills**

Macro-skills of Communication	Level of Significance	Degree of Freedom	Critical Value	Computed Value	Interpretation / Decision
Listening	0.05	17	2.110	3.2100	Significant HO: Reject
Speaking	0.05	17	2.110	3.7890	Significant HO: Reject
Reading	0.05	17	2.110	3.1090	Significant HO: Reject
Writing	0.05	17	2.110	4.2380	Significant HO: Reject
Visualizing/ Viewing	0.05	17	2.110	3.1740	Significant HO: Reject

Table 4 presents the difference on the mastery level of the students' in their post-test on macro skills.

As depicted in table 4, results show that a significant difference exists on the assessment of respondents of learning Japanese as a foreign language in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visualizing/ viewing. These findings are denoted by the T-Test by ranks value which is equals to 3.2100,

3.7890, 3.1090, 4.2380, 3.1740 respectively which are above the critical value of 2.110 with degree of freedom of 17 significance level of 0.05. Based on the above findings, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship in the assessment of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and visualizing/ viewing are rejected.

**Table 5: Average Mastery Level on the Macro-Skills in the Pre-Test and Post Test**

Test	Control Average in Percent	Experimental Average in Percent
Pretest	41	40
Post test	43.4	80.4
Average Gain	2.4	40.4

Table 5 presents the students' gain of the scores after the test.

The control group gets an average gain of 2.4 in the pretest and post test on the different macro skills Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Visualizing. While the experimental group get 40.4 average gain.

The average gain of two groups in their difference have huge difference, which shown a large increase

on experimental group after exposing the subjects in the new learning plan.

The new Learning Plan was used for encouraging the learners to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test or JLPT. Examinations in JLPT are written in Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji.

**Conclusion**

The following discussions are being drawn based on the gathered results of the study.

Based on the findings, it can be revealed that both the controlled and experimental groups had very low mastery on the different macro-skills in learning Japanese Language. These skills included listening, speaking, Reading, Writing and Visualizing. Writing got the highest in the control group, whereas in the experimental group Reading topped the different skills. However, all the skills were rated with very low mastery in terms of mastery level.

A no significant difference was revealed in the mastery level of the students in the pretest. A little difference was shown in terms of the mastery level of the students in the post test among the control group. All skills were rated as low mastery, while among the experimental group every skill gets with the mastery equivalent.

The significant difference rated in the post test may be attributed to the exposure of the experimental group to the new learning plan being introduced by the researcher. In terms, of average gains of the two groups. Experimental group showed a bigger increase than that of the control group.

The findings of the study suggested its objective of preparing a new learning plan that may be used to encourage the learners to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. Which may help them qualify for employment.

The achievement of the group pretest in learning, speaking, reading, visualizing/viewing were slightly different, which was ideal in the selection of the control and experimental groups in terms of academic ability. The achievement of the two groups in their post-test in listening, speaking, reading writing, visualizing/viewing were different. Which showed a large increase on experimental group after exposing them in the new learning plan. When the mean score in the pretest results underwent statistical treatment, it showed no significant difference. Moreover, when the mean score of the macro skills in the post-test was subjected to statistical treatment, it showed significant difference. There was a minimal increase in terms of difference between the pretest and post-test of the controlled group. However, there was an immense difference between the pretest and post-test of the experimental group.

The new learning plan compared to the old learning plan was effective to learn Japanese Language. Unlike European Languages, the writing system of many Asian Languages is complex and Japanese Language is one of them. As a syllabicated language, Japanese is easier to learn in its conversational form compared to its writing and reading. Exposure to the language is still the key for language learning. Learner of today's language is

kore inclined to multimedia, thus, learning the language through several tools will help students to learn the language. One of the reasons of foundations of the Enhanced Learning Plan is exposure to Language itself. The Enhanced Learning Plan starts with the Writing System of Japanese Language in which it starts with Hiragana, Katakana, and most useful Kanji. While introducing the writing system little by little the conversational form of the language is being introduced to students. Unlike the old learning plan, in which it follows the normal process of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and the visualizing.

The Enhanced Learning Plan incorporates the writing to system to ensure familiarization and long exposure to writing system and language itself. The students gain confidence in learning the language since the knowledge they will serve as the basis in learning further.

The new learning plan ensures the exposure also of the students in Multimedia. Students now a day is really into the usage of the multimedia. The generation of the students today is being exposed to different forms of multimedia. The Enhanced Learning Plan incorporates multimedia as one of the instructional materials in learning the language. It recognized the needs of the students of learning through the usage of multimedia. The multimedia helps the students to learn the language while learning the writing system of it.

## Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations were hereby offered to the:

- a. Students, they should follow and focused on the activities in the Enhanced Learning Plan. They should check also the appropriateness of the materials they are using.
- b. Teachers, they should design learning activities that are based on the Enhanced Learning Plan. They may suggest types that further improve the Enhanced Learning Plan.
- c. The Higher Education Institution, should consider recent researches and also may allocate funds for teachers training in the teaching of foreign language.
- d. Commission on Higher Education and Department of Education, should consider recent research in conducting and developing programs towards foreign language instruction.
- e. Curriculum Writers, may consider the data gathered from the recent researches as basis for Asian Language teaching in the country.
- f. Administrator, may consider the use of the output in this study as relevant in foreign language teaching programs.
- g. Researcher Himself, may continue to develop other materials that maybe useful to other foreign language students.
- h. Future Researchers, may use

the findings of this study as basis for other related researchers in the future.

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by the author in this manuscript.

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