



TEACHING JAPANESE AT OGUZ KHAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The study of the Japanese language at Oguz Khan University of Engineering and Technology in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, is an emerging field with great potential. This paper examines the current state of Japanese language education at the university, focusing on curriculum development, teaching methodologies, student engagement, and the availability of resources. The research also highlights the major challenges faced by educators and learners. Furthermore, the study proposes solutions to enhance Japanese language instruction, such as fostering international cooperation, integrating digital learning tools, and promoting cultural immersion programs. The findings underscore the importance of developing a comprehensive strategy to strengthen Japanese language education at the university and ensure sustainable growth in this field.

Keywords: Japanese language, language education, Oguz Khan University, teaching methodologies, curriculum development, digital learning, cultural exchange

1. Introduction

The Japanese language has gained increasing global significance due to Japan's economic, technological, and cultural influence. In Turkmenistan, there is growing interest in Japanese studies, particularly at Oguz Khan University of Engineering and Technology, where Japanese language courses have been introduced. However, the establishment and development of Japanese language education in a non-Japanese-speaking environment present unique challenges.

The aim of this study is to analyze the current state of Japanese language teaching at the university, identify key difficulties, and propose strategies for improvement. The research is based on an examination of the existing curriculum, teaching methods, and available resources, as well as insights from educators and students involved in Japanese language studies.

2. Japanese Language Education at Oguz Khan University

2.1 Curriculum Design and Course Structure

The Japanese language program at Oguz Khan University follows a structured approach, with courses designed to develop students' proficiency in all aspects of the language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The program is divided into the following levels:

- **Beginner Level:** Introduction to basic vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure.
- **Intermediate Level:** Expansion of language skills, introduction to kanji, and practical conversation exercises.
- **Advanced Level:** Complex grammatical structures, academic writing, and cultural studies.

Despite the structured curriculum, there is a need to further refine the course design to align with international language proficiency standards, such as the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT).

2.2 Teaching Methodologies

A variety of teaching methods are employed to enhance the learning process, including:

- **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):** Encouraging students to use Japanese in practical conversations.
- **Task-Based Learning (TBL):** Assigning real-life tasks that require students to use Japanese in different contexts.
- **Grammar-Translation Method:** Emphasizing the detailed study of grammar rules and direct translation exercises.
- **Technology-Enhanced Learning:** Utilizing multimedia resources, mobile applications, and online platforms to supplement traditional classroom instruction.

While these methods have proven effective, there is room for improvement in integrating more interactive and immersive techniques, such as virtual reality (VR) simulations of real-life scenarios in Japan.

3. Challenges in Teaching Japanese

3.1 Shortage of Native Instructors

One of the primary challenges is the lack of native Japanese teachers at the university. Native speakers provide invaluable linguistic accuracy, cultural insights, and real-world language exposure. While non-native instructors are proficient, their teaching is limited by the absence of natural pronunciation models and authentic cultural contexts.

3.2 Limited Access to Learning Materials

Students and instructors face difficulties in obtaining high-quality textbooks, kanji learning resources, and authentic Japanese media. Although digital resources are available, the lack of a dedicated Japanese language center at the university limits students' access to printed materials and cultural learning experiences.

3.3 Student Motivation and Practical Application

Since Japanese is not widely spoken in Turkmenistan, students sometimes struggle to stay motivated. Unlike English or Russian, which have clear career benefits within the country, Japanese is often seen as an additional skill rather than a necessity. This perception affects enrollment rates and overall engagement in the program.

4. Future Prospects and Recommendations

4.1 Enhancing International Cooperation

To improve the quality of Japanese language education, the university should strengthen partnerships with Japanese institutions, embassies, and cultural organizations. Exchange programs, guest lectures, and online collaborations with native instructors can significantly enhance students' learning experiences.

4.2 Integration of Digital Learning Tools

Modern language education benefits greatly from technology. Implementing AI-driven language learning applications, speech recognition software, and virtual reality (VR) tools can provide students with interactive and engaging ways to practice their skills. Popular platforms like Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, and NHK's online Japanese courses can supplement traditional learning methods.

4.3 Establishing a Japanese Cultural Center

A dedicated Japanese cultural center at the university would offer students an immersive environment where they can practice the language through cultural events, language clubs, and interaction with Japanese-speaking visitors. This would provide a deeper understanding of Japanese traditions, customs, and communication styles.

4.4 Developing an Internship Program

Creating internship opportunities with Japanese companies and organizations operating in Turkmenistan or abroad would provide students with practical applications for their language skills. Internships could motivate students by demonstrating the real-world benefits of Japanese proficiency.

5. Conclusion

Teaching Japanese at Oguz Khan University presents both challenges and opportunities. While the program is still developing, addressing issues such as the shortage of native instructors, limited learning resources, and student motivation is essential. By fostering international collaboration, incorporating digital learning tools, and creating a supportive learning environment, the university can significantly enhance the effectiveness of its Japanese language education program. The future of Japanese studies at Oguz Khan University depends on strategic improvements that align with global educational standards and local student needs.

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