

# Needs Analysis: A Japanese Language Learning Module of University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)

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## Abstract

Reports show that the Japanese language achievement among Malay students at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) is less impressive. This problem is due to the less attention given to the psychological factors, purpose, background, and the need to learn the Japanese language. Thus, this study aims to identify the relationship between motivation and students' achievement based on the approach of The L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) and appropriate learning materials based on the analysis of learning needs. This quantitative study involved 73 samples of level 1 Japanese language students. The results of the survey found that the students were influenced by curriculum factors, teachers, peers, and teaching materials. The students also have a high imagination towards the native speakers. Besides, based on the analysis of learning needs, it was found that the theme of communication that focuses on conversations with native speakers and travel activities is the dominant factor chosen by the students. Based on this feedback, a proposed syllabus has been introduced to meet the needs of students learning the Japanese language at UTHM.

## Keywords

Motivation, L2MMS, Learning needs analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Globally, the Japanese language has been given attention and learned by many people. According to Heida and Maserah (2014), the language is developing in 133 countries, especially in the East Asia (Korea and China) as well as in the South East Asia. Based on The Japan Foundation report (2017), there are approximately 3.6 million learners of this language in the world. Besides, there are 176 centres (private and public) for languages which offer a Japanese language course. The uniqueness of the Japanese language can be identified in various forms: characters, sentence structure, grammar, and vocabulary. According to Habibah (2010), it can be observed that from a structural point of view, there are significant differences between English and Japanese. Arabic, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese are classified as non-orthographic languages. Each of them has its uniqueness, however, it is difficult for the students to master it without understanding the strategy and recognizing the actual needs of learning the languages. Hence, the needs analysis for the language is essential and should be carried out by observing the aspects to be learned and what should be learned. In fact, according to Brindley (1989), the learning processes such as motivation, attitude, concern, sensitivity, personality, goals, and learning style are influenced by emotions and ways of thinking. Syllabus and specific language skills are required in achieving the optimal learning outcomes for a particular language teaching group. Thus, the relationship between needs analysis and language learning for specific purposes is inseparable (Tu'aymah, 1989).

The Japanese language has been offered at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) in 2001 when the undergraduates were required to register for a foreign language course as a compulsory elective subject (UTHM, 2019). The Japanese language course is offered at level 1 by the Centre for Language Studies which carries a load of 2 credits. This course is conducted based on the main reference which is Minna No Nihongo. In Malaysia, The Japan Foundation has the role of controlling and researching the content of reference materials by following the JF Standard

(JF 2010). Each individual is considered to be motivated due to a goal. Ridzuan, Arman & Razlina (2018) state that goals are the needs of every individual that transcend cultural boundaries, environment, and hereditary differences. Besides, the study of motivation on language learning has been much debated starting from the integrative and instrumental concepts which are introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Next, it involves the dynamic process models to form the L2 Motivational Self-System (L2MSS) model where the components of The Ideal L2 Self, The Ought to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience are being introduced (Osumi, 2019). As a foreign speaker, the individual prefers “The Ideal L2 Self” where it is a reflection of the self-image. It is the individual’s imagination of himself that would be ideal or perfect as a native speaker (Dörnyei, 2005). “The Ought-to L2 Self”, which is the second dimension, refers to a future self-image that receives pressure from others such as family and friends, in fulfilling expectations, and has the potential to avoid getting negative results or failure (Dörnyei, 2009). The third dimension, “L2 Learning Experience” covers the aspects of the situation and environment in the learning process and involves the individual learning experiences.

Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) is at the peak when achieving success involving international recognition such as being at the top 291-300 QS World University Rankings in its class (Source: UTHM, 2020). Also, UTHM receives various student excellence awards at the national and international levels. With the excellent background, dynamic and competitive students, they should have no problems and be able to communicate and master the foreign languages, especially Japanese language course offered at the basic level. However, in reality, there are many students who fail to achieve their objectives after completing the courses. The examination results reported that the percentage of students who achieved excellent level is 12 percent, while 28 percent and 53 percent at a good level and medium level respectively. There are also a handful of students who are weak and fail the course, approximately 7 percent (Source: Centre for Language Studies, UTHM). With these differences in achievement, questions arise if the students are facing any barriers in learning the language. According to Teo (2010), lack of awareness in understanding the students’ psychological factors will hinder the efforts to ensure the betterment of student performance and achievement of learning objectives. In addition, lack of self-confidence and courage were identified as barriers for students to interact using a foreign language.

Suraiya (1989), Sanimah (2006), Zoraida (2009), Hieda and Maserah (2012), Muhammad Alif Redzuan (2014), and Redzuan (2018) work on the importance of understanding students’ backgrounds and their purpose in attending Japanese language courses. The accessibility of students’ information enrolling Japanese language course by getting information regarding their motivational factors, needs, and background can determine the appropriate learning materials, the teaching and learning process, as well as appropriate activities, which can ultimately attract interest and have a positive impact on student achievement (Ghazali Yusri et.al, 2010). Thus, denoting the importance of recognizing the factors of motivation, purpose, and desire of students in the effort to learn the Japanese language, the organization as a provider of language programs, it is necessary to conduct a needs analysis. Furthermore, it can ensure that each objective, material, and teaching and learning process is appropriate for the target students.

## 1.1 Objectives

Based on the importance of motivation in language learning and the needs for analysis on Japanese language learning, this study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1.1.1 To identify the students’ motivation in learning the Japanese language as a foreign language.
- 1.1.2 To analyse the correlation between students’ motivation and their achievement in a Japanese course.
- 1.1.3 To list the appropriate materials for the Japanese course in UTHM.

## 1.2 Research Questions

- 1.2.1 What are the factors that motivate students to enrol in the Japanese language course?
- 1.2.2 Is there a relationship between motivation and students’ achievement in a Japanese language course?
- 1.2.3 What type of learning materials do students want to learn in a Japanese language class?

## 2. Literature Review

Motivation is a term that is often used to describe a source of success or failure in most things done. It can be moved consciously or not. Motivation is also associated with the individual's interest in doing something continuously or vice versa (Nuradibah and Hazlina, 2016). Muhammad Alif Redzuan and Sanimah (2018) stated that students' motivation can be improved through the application of Japanese songs in the teaching of new vocabulary as they are more interested and happy in the Japanese language lecture session. With Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) students as their samples, they found that the approach of music and song can function directly by motivating students to learn Japanese. This is in line with the findings of Yamato (2006) and Hirano (2007). Besides, Jamila and Talaibek (2017) found that the course requirements, course mode, as well as the goal of offering the Japanese language courses, have affected the factors of students' motivation. However, not all factors of motivation are significant to the students. Therefore, further research on students' motivation towards foreign languages has been developed by Donyei (2009) through the model L2 Motivation Self System (L2MSS).

This model consists of three dimensions namely "The Ideal L2 Self", "The Ought to L2 Self" and "L2 Learning Experience". Many researchers seek to unravel the study of student motivation and achievement based on the L2MSS model such as Lamb (2012) in the context of secondary schools in Indonesia and Osumi (2019) in higher learning institutions in the United States. Some motivational studies on Japanese language achievement were also reported, for instance, by Moskovsky et al. (2016), Zhang (2017), and Shimoura (2018).

Needs analysis is a tool in measuring the effectiveness and success of a program, especially language programs that require the exploration and collection of information on what the students need in language learning. Nunan (1988) explains that a language module or program is formed through a technique and process of gathering information based on certain needs. Needs analysis is implemented as a guide to the organization and evaluation of the students. It should be beneficial in many things such as material development, student activities, teaching and learning strategy formulation, and assessment system, which can ultimately determine the effectiveness and suitability of a program with the students' actual needs. Therefore, many linguists emphasize the analysis of needs as an important prerequisite and its implementation is an initial step in the formation of the curriculum or syllabus (Taba, 1962).

In this study, the concept of language learning motivation refers to Japanese as a foreign language. Each evaluation result is based on the instrument used on language learning motivation, which is the L2 Motivation Self-System (L2MSS) model introduced by Dörnyei (2009). Students who show a score above the average value of any type of language learning motivation is considered as having a high tendency towards a certain type of motivation. The assessment of needs analysis refers to a learning approach that is adapted from the learning needs analysis model introduced by Hutchinson and Waters (1987).

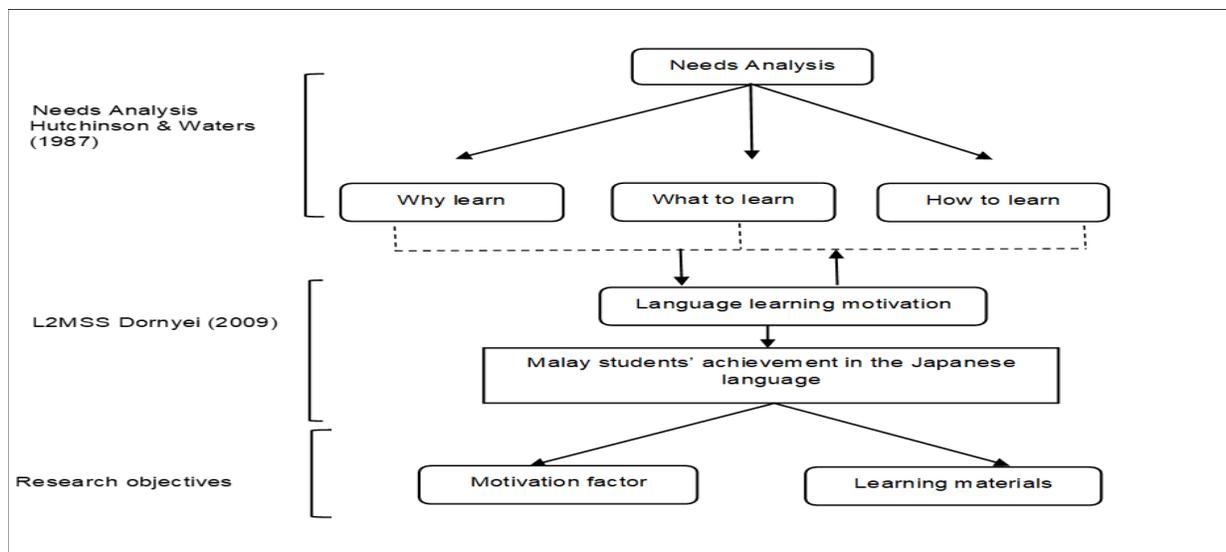


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on the Relationship between Motivation and Needs Analysis in Language Learning

### 3. Methods

This study used a quantitative approach through a survey based on the descriptive and inferential analysis. The respondents are among Malay students who attended the Japanese language course (level one) at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). The 73 respondents were randomly selected and the total population of this study was estimated at 318 students enrolling in this course for the semester I and II of 2019. The number of samples is determined based on the sample table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Questionnaires were formed using Google form and distributed to the respondents through the Whatsapps application.

### 4. Data Collection

The respondents' language learning motivation was measured using "The L2 Motivational Self System" developed by Dornyei (2009). There are 24 Likert Scale-guided questions in determining the type of motivation or motivation factor for the students to learn the Japanese language which will then be adapted to the analysis of learning needs by Hutchinson and Waters, (1987). All data were processed and analyzed using SPSS version 22. The validity or reliability of the questionnaire ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ) was obtained through a pilot study.

### 5. Results and Discussion

#### 5.1 Objective 1

To answer the first research question which is "What are the factors that motivate students to enroll in Japanese language course", the researcher has provided data with a mean score analysis approach. The highest overall average value of all respondents was measured in determining the score difference for each motivational function. Based on table 1, the analysis of the study shows the three constructs of students' language learning motivation. Findings show that "L2 Learning Experience" has the highest mean value with 4.52 (SD = 0.449), followed by "Ideal Self" with a mean value of 3.81 (SD = 0.708), and "Ought to Self" with the lowest mean value of 2.86 (SD = 1.045).

Table 1: Mean score of language learning motivation factors

No.	Motivation factor	Mean (SD)
1.	Ideal L2 Self	3.81 (0.708)
2.	Ought-to L2 Self	2.86 (1.045)
3.	L2 Learning Experience	4.52 (0.449)

#### 5.2 Objective 2

The hypothesis of the relationship between Japanese language achievement and motivational factors was tested and based on table 2, the results of the analysis found that there is a significant relationship between Japanese language achievement with three motivational factors, namely "Ideal L2 Self", "Ought-to L2 Self", and "L2 Learning Experience".

Table 2: Analysis of coefficient (r) for academic achievement

No.	Motivation factor	(p)	(r)
1.	Ideal L2 Self	0.000	.432
2.	Ought-to L2 Self	0.799	.030
3.	L2 Learning Experience	0.001	.375

Table 3 shows the Pearson Correlation results for Japanese language achievement with the motivational factors. It can be concluded that there is a low positive relationship (Cohen, 1988), based on the value of  $r = 0.432$  for "Ideal L2 Self" and  $r = 0.375$  for "L2 Learning Experience". Meanwhile  $r = 0.030$  for "Ought-to L2 Self" shows a very low relationship. Although the findings show statistically significance, the relationship between Japanese language achievement and motivation is weak. Therefore, this study accepts the hypothesis that there is a relationship between the level of Japanese language and motivation among Malay students at the UTHM.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation for Japanese language achievement and motivational factors

	Score	Ideal L2 Self	Ought to L2 Self	L2 Learning Exp.
Score	1			
Ideal L2 Self	.432**	1		
Ought-to L2 Self	.030*	.177**	1	
Learning Exp.	.375**	.458**	.170**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 5.3 Objective 3

To answer the third research question "What are the Japanese language learning materials that UTHM students want to learn", the researcher has listed the items of the questionnaire needed based on "why to learn", "what to learn" and "how to learn". Tables 5 and 6 show that the mean values are at a very high level for the six items listed. There are eight items in the high and one item in the moderate categories. This level of motivation is assessed based on the standards proposed by Boonchom Srisa-ard (2002) as shown in the table 4 below:

Table 4: Mean Score of Motivational Levels

Score range	Motivational level
4.51 - 5.00	highest
3.51 - 4.50	high
2.51 - 3.50	moderate
1.51 - 2.50	low
1.00 - 1.50	lowest

Table 5: "Ideal Self" in language learning motivation (n = 73)

	Mean	SD
1. I can imagine myself speaking Japanese as if I were a native speaker of Japanese.	3.71	0.950
2. I can imagine myself speaking Japanese with international friends or colleagues.	3.77	0.858
3. Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using Japanese.	3.92	0.878
4. I can imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in Japanese.	3.53	0.914
5. I can imagine myself writing Japanese e-mails fluently.	3.38	0.907
6. I can imagine myself living abroad and using Japanese effectively for communicating with the locals	3.96	0.873
7. I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak Japanese.	3.85	0.908
8. If my dreams come true, I will use Japanese effectively in the future.	4.37	0.773

Table 6: “L2 Learning Experience” in language learning motivation (n = 73)

	Mean	SD
1. Do you like the atmosphere of your Japanese classes?	4.71	0.565
2. Do you find learning Japanese really interesting?	4.75	0.547
3. Do you think time passes faster while studying Japanese?	4.62	0.637
4. Do you find the topics covered in your Japanese course book interesting?	4.63	0.613
5. Would you like to have more Japanese lessons at school?	4.63	0.589
6. Do you volunteer answers in your Japanese classes?	3.71	1.034
7. Do you consider that your teacher motivates you to learn Japanese?	4.71	0.513
8. Would you like to have more alternative activities in your Japanese classes? (e.g. group speaking activities, oral presentations, etc)	4.44	0.707

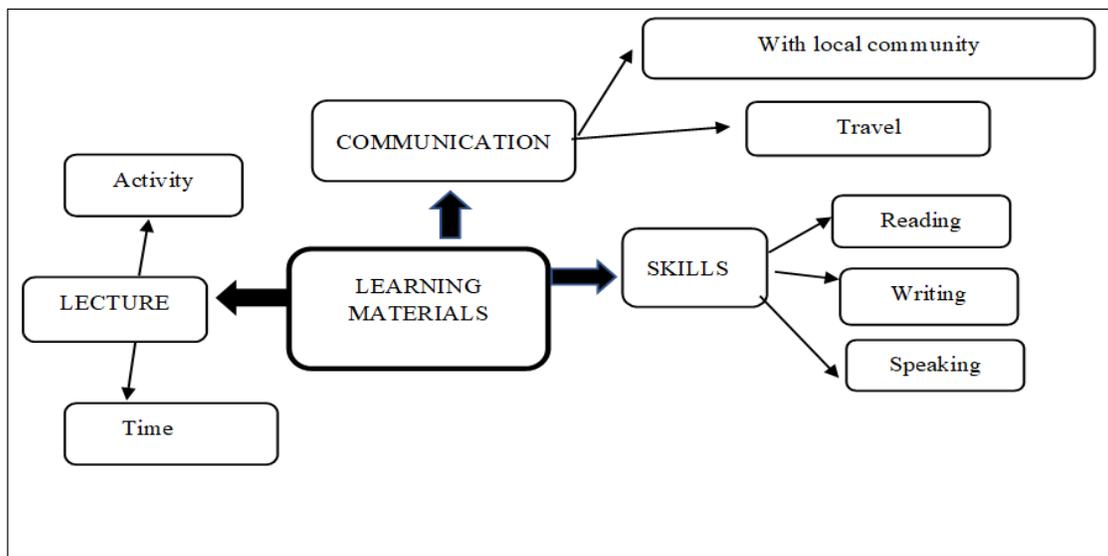


Figure 2: A summary based on the need analysis learning material

Figure 2 shows a summary of the findings based on the need analysis learning material. Questions are formulated to the themes of communication, skills, and lectures. Based on the data analysis, the theme of communication that focuses on conversations with native speakers and travel activities is a dominant factor in students’ preferences. This finding is also supported by two additional questionnaire items shown in figure 3. Respondents were asked to choose the “yes” or “no” answer for the first question: "Are you interested in traveling to Japan" and the second question "Are you interested in participating in the Japanese Language for Traveller’s course at the university”. All respondents gave ‘Yes’ answers to both questions.

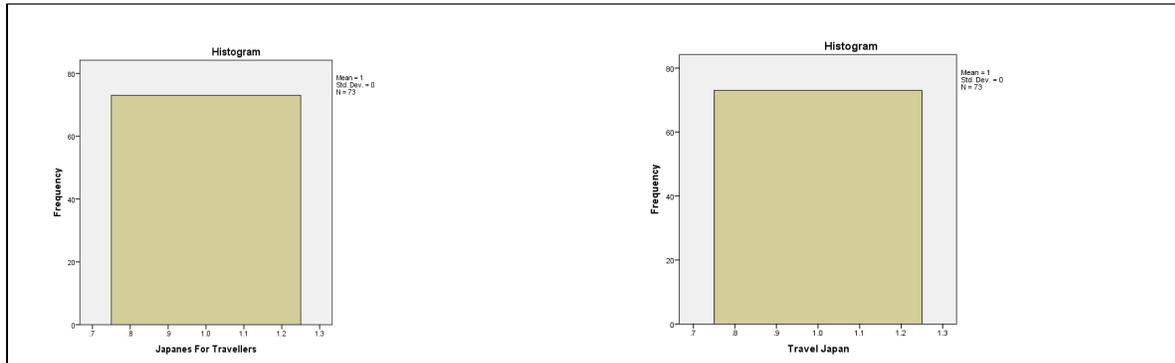


Figure 3: The Histogram on responses of courses and travel activity

## 6. Conclusion

This study shows that in general, students have motivation in learning the Japanese language introduced by Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). The results of the analysis also explain that students have a high tendency towards motivational factors for the L2 Learning Experience dimension where students are influenced by situations that are specific to curriculum factors, teachers, peers, and teaching materials. Furthermore, although the relationship between student achievement and motivational factors is moderate, it further targets the dimensions of The Ideal L2 Self as students' imagination as native speakers. Researchers believe that a comprehensive analysis of Japanese language learning needs has been translated into a new approach in the preparation of teaching and learning materials. Besides, it can generate teachers' thinking to create teaching goals, curriculum, syllabus, preparation of appropriate teaching plans while adopting the best teaching methodology. Indirectly, the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process can be achieved in a more conducive environment. Table 7 show a propose syllabus for Japanese Language course at UTHM based on the needs analysis.

Table 7: Syllabus for Japanese Language Course

Japanese Language for Travelers	
Chapter 1	Hiragana
Chapter 2	Katakana
Chapter 3	Kanji
Chapter 4	Hello (Konnichiwa)
Chapter 5	Shopping (Kaimono)
Chapter 6	Town (Machi)
Chapter 7	Food (Tabemono)
Chapter 8	Accomodation (Shukuhaku)
Chapter 9	Staying Healthy (Kenkou)
Chapter 10	Immigration Counter (Nyukoku Kanri)

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