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as a Foreign Language in Barcelona**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the motivation and strategies used by Spanish learners of Japanese as a foreign language in the city of Barcelona through a questionnaire that was completed by 20 participants. The results were compared with the ones from similar studies that were carried out both in Spain and in other countries. It was found that motivation has a central role in the study of languages and that it is connected to individual variables. Also, in the case of Japanese, students' motivation comes from an interest on Japan's culture and it can be increased through study abroad experiences. At the same time, the use of English as a learning tool and a focus on vocabulary and the role of the teacher were found to be strategies to take into account during the learning process.

**Keywords** Japanese as a Foreign Language · Motivation · Strategies

## RESUMEN

Este ensayo se centra en la motivación y estrategias usadas por estudiantes españoles que están estudiando japonés como lengua extranjera en la ciudad de Barcelona a través de un cuestionario que ha sido completado por 20 participantes. Los resultados han sido comparados con los de estudios similares que se han llevado a cabo tanto en España como en otros países. Se ha constatado que la motivación tiene un papel central al estudiar idiomas y que está conectada con otras variables. Además, en el caso del japonés, la motivación de los estudiantes viene del interés por la cultura japonesa y esta se puede aumentar mediante estancias de estudio en el extranjero. Al mismo tiempo, se ha comprobado que el uso del inglés como herramienta de aprendizaje y centrarse en el vocabulario y el papel del profesor son estrategias a tener en cuenta durante el proceso de aprendizaje.

**Palabras clave** Japonés como lengua extranjera · Motivación · Estrategias

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*Appendix I*

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## **1. Introduction**

The areas of motivation and strategies in the field of SLA have gained importance in recent years. Due to that, new information regarding those topics has been discovered, such as the relationship between motivation and individual variables (Bernaus, 1995; Masgoret and Gardner, 2013), the connection between motivation and specific L2 skills (Takahashi, 2005) and the importance of the choice of the vehicular language in class regarding motivation (Lee and Lo, 2017). Despite the considerable amount of studies that have been carried out (both theoretical and experimental), the truth is that most of these have traditionally focused on English as a foreign language (FL). This is the reason why this study aims at gathering the discoveries from those previous studies and put them into practice with a different language as the focus; in this case, motivation and strategies in relation to Japanese as a FL will be the aim of this paper. Although comparatively less in number, there have been some studies that have dealt with Japanese; however, very few have been conducted in Spain. Even if this country will be the basis of the study, other countries from all around the world and their studies about the same topic will be taken into account. Therefore, not only does this paper aim at contributing to the findings in relation to motivation and strategies in Japanese as a FL at the national level, but also internationally. Overall, this paper will answer the following research questions:

- (1) What is the importance of motivation in the learning process and how can it be used to favour the learning experience?
- (2) What strategies can be used to improve the learning experience of Japanese as a FL in Spain?

## **2. Review of the literature**

### *2.1. Introduction: Theoretical background in relation to motivation and strategies in SLA*

Several researchers have centred their studies on motivation and strategies; however, most of them limit their scope to English as a FL. Such is the case of Li (2017), who gives a comprehensive account of what is understood as “motivation” and “strategies” (actions that learners take during the processes of learning and communicating in the target language, which are essential for language attainment (Hurd, 2008, as cited in Tragant & Victori, 2012, p. 293-294) and how these are linked with a “self-regulated language learning”. Li cites Holec (1981, p. 3) when defining the connections that these terms share. According to the latter, in self-

regulated language learning, students are in control of all the aspects of the process, such as the selection of strategies and the monitoring of their language acquisition. Zimmerman (1986), who is also mentioned, asserts that learners are involved in the process of learning at the cognitive, motivational and behavioural levels.

Another author who is worth mentioning for her contributions in the field is Bernaus (1995), who centred her work on the relationship between motivation and foreign language achievement, and how those are influenced by individual variables, such as the role of the teacher and the teaching methods. Masgoret and Gardner (2003) also made contributions to this area, following the same line of study. They merged the concepts of integrativeness (how much the learner identifies with the target language community), attitudes (the learner's reaction to the context in which the language is taught; for instance, the learning environment) and motivation (a behaviour linked to a series of goals). They even made a list of what a motivated learner is like: for example, they mention how this individual makes use of strategies to achieve goals and how he or she experiences reinforcement from success and disappointment from failure. They connected those three concepts and came up with the idea of "integrative motivation", which is constituted by the same three items afore mentioned. According to them, motivation is the most reliable variable to determine success, but the other two help in the process.

However, more research in the area of motivation is necessary. Dörnyei (2020, pp. 50-52) already pointed this out when asserting that, since motivation is a higher order mental function and it is closely related to other types of learning, it can be transferred to other areas apart from SLA. Due to this, research on motivation has taken a more general approach and, consequently, motivation in relation to specific skills (i.e. reading, writing...) is under-researched.

In the following subsections, practical studies related to motivation and strategies will be presented, both in relation to English as a FL as well as Japanese as a FL.

## *2.2. Experimental studies in relation to motivation and strategies in FLA*

Apart from theoretical studies, other researchers have carried out some practical experiments in relation to motivation and strategies in L2 English. Dörnyei (2020, p. 52) also contributed to this field of research when mentioning Takahashi (2005), who did a study with Japanese learners of English that were found to be specially interested in idiomatic expressions, independently of their proficiency levels. This is one of the few studies in which motivation



and a particular L2 feature are linked through the Small Lens approach, according to Dörnyei. The author also introduces the concept of Noticing, which is enhanced by motivation. Their connection is not fully understood yet; however, what is known is that, if learners are motivated to pay attention, optimal performances are more likely to occur.

Another experimental study related to motivation is that of Lee and Lo (2017), who tested a group of 366 L1 Korean undergraduates who were learning English as a FL. The authors focused on the vehicular language that should be used in classroom contexts, an element that is closely related to the “Ideal L2-self” scale of motivation. Their findings showed that those students with a higher proficiency in the language and with a higher score in the L2-self scale were in favour of an English-only learning approach; yet, from those two variables, the most reliable source to determine which language should be used in class was the Ideal L2-self variable. They made reference to the anti-L1 tendency present in formal contexts since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (due, in part, to the “Interactionist approach”) but, given the results, they concluded by saying that it was important to focus on motivation before deciding which approach should be adopted. Bernaus (1995) did a similar study but, in her case, she used 137 students of 4 different secondary schools of Barcelona that were studying English as a FL. Her conclusions were mentioned in the previous subsection.

Despite the considerable number of studies centred on motivation and strategies in relation to English as a FL, there are other instances in which authors have focused on languages that are comparatively under-researched. An example of this is Japanese, which was used in an insightful study that presented the hypothetical case of a young woman that was learning Japanese on her own. In her case, she had an extrinsic motivation related to business and job opportunities (Thomson, 1998). This study also cites Holec’s (1981, p. 3) definition (mentioned in 2.1.) but adds a series of steps that define what self-teaching requires. It also mentions the limitations that self-study has in terms of content, time and the learner’s own background. Interestingly, it is mentioned that “school education is structured to discourage learner autonomy” (p. 8), particularly in Asian countries, where the relationship teacher-student can be compared to that of master-disciple. The author, despite coming from this particular educational background, gives support to self-directed learning. The reasons for this are the positive effect that it can have on motivation, the opportunity it provides for learning “how to learn” and the importance it gives to individual differences.

It is interesting that some researchers move away from the mainstream line of study of language motivation and strategies given that the acquisition of additional languages (apart from the L1 and English) is a common phenomenon in a period of time defined by its global

and multicultural character. For that reason, more research on the acquisition of other languages is necessary, since generalizations from the study of English as a FL are sometimes not enough.

Several recent studies examining the areas of motivation and strategies in relation to L2 Japanese have been conducted in different countries, such as Indonesia, New Zealand, China and Spain. Each of them has given an account of the particularities of learning L2 Japanese in their specific territories, which has been useful for establishing comparisons between them in terms of student's motivation and the strategies used to acquire the language. Whereas this study will be focused on Spanish speakers learning Japanese in Spain (Japanese as a FL), the current situation of different countries will also be taken into account.

### *2.3. Studies on motivation in L2 Japanese as a FL*

Several studies that were conducted in different parts of the world have been insightful in terms of the motivation of students for starting to learn Japanese and the strategies and techniques they have used. Apart from sharing the same topic of study, all these articles are quite recent, which shows that the interest in this area and, more particularly, in this language in relation to this area, is quite new. All this is due to the multilingualism that characterizes the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which will increase exponentially as times passes and countries become more interconnected and society becomes more globalized. These ideas are mentioned in Burgh-Hirabe (2019), Huang and Feng (2019) and Brata and Brata's articles (2018), which were used in this study to know more about strategies and motivation on L2 Japanese all around the world. And, as seen when comparing Brata and Brata (2018) and Burgh Hirabe's (2019) studies (which were conducted in Indonesia and New Zealand, respectively) it is inevitable to become aware of the fact that context matters. Whereas Japanese has the same relevance in Indonesia that English has in Spain, the learning of languages in general is not a requisite in New Zealand. As an English-speaking country, they already speak the most international language in the world and, for that reason, having an L2 is not significant, according to Burgh-Hirabe (2019). Consequently, the number of students of Japanese has declined a lot in recent years.

In comparison, the reason why so many students in Indonesia feel motivated to start their language journey is because of economic reasons. Brata and Brata (2018) stated that the acquisition of L2 Japanese can secure good job opportunities and scholarships. Japan's economy is also mentioned as one of the reasons why students in Spain become interested in the language, as mentioned in Ito-Morales (2019). Some of Huang and Feng's (2019)

respondents also reflected on the outcomes of learning the language; that is, the benefits they would obtain, which are intrinsically related to work opportunities. Interestingly enough, economy is actually one of the reasons why learners of L2 Japanese in New Zealand have decreased; Burgh-Hirabe (2019, p. 95) mentions that, since Japan's economy is becoming weaker, the number of students is decreasing, as a result. This example also shows that perspective matters.

Other sources of motivation are geographical and cultural proximity, as is the case of China. Huang and Feng (2019) conducted a study with 55 participants from all parts of the country who were majoring in Japanese Studies at a university in Beijing. They asked the participants to compose a series of metaphors to illustrate their experience and motivation when learning this language. Some of these students were also interviewed. After analysing their responses, Huang and Feng noticed that many participants mentioned the similarities between both countries (in terms of their culture and written systems, to be more specific) as some of the reasons for enjoying the learning process.

Other countries, despite having very different cultures, present a deep interest in the country, as argued by Ito-Morales (2019), Huang and Feng (2019) and Burgh-Hirabe (2019). In Spain, the number of learners is increasing thanks to the influence of *manga* and *anime* (Ito-Morales, 2019, p.142), which are cultural products that originated in Japan and have a very high demand all around the globe. Also, in the metaphors that Huang and Feng analysed (2019, p. 610-611), *leisure* and *eating* were topics widely used by Year 1 students, who were the ones who had started studying the language more recently. This shows that leisure products (as in the case of Spain) and the gastronomy of the country are important sources of motivation in China. These two countries, which are so far away from each other, demonstrate that the pattern of interest in the country and its culture is repeated in numerous places, no matter their geographical position.

As mentioned above, learners in New Zealand do not present an extrinsic motivation to learn the language, and that is due to the influence of their L1. However, English also has a role in motivation in the case of other countries, as stated by Huang and Feng (2019, pp. 614-616). They cite Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) when suggesting that English can have a positive or negative impact in the process of learning other languages. The authors agree with them when asserting that motivation to learn Japanese depends on the specific country (in this case, China and Hong Kong) and the interference from "English as a global language" that is present in that particular country. It is important to take into account China's case, given that, in 2012, it was estimated that this country had the largest number of learners of L2 Japanese in the

world, and that only English as an L2 had more learners, in this region (Huang and Feng, 2019, p. 606).

The last source of motivation mentioned in these studies are study trips, which helped to increase the motivation in students from New Zealand. Intrinsic motivation was very much present in them, and their interest in learning that language often came from positive L2 learning experiences, either in exchange or field trips. Thus, Burgh-Hirabe (2019, pp. 100-101) concluded by saying that, in this country, students can get lots of motivation from outside the classroom.

#### 2.4. *Studies on strategies in Japanese as a FL*

Regarding strategies, in general lines, more research needs to be done because, this way, it is probable that motivation on students will increase. The reason for this is mentioned in Burgh-Hirabe (2019, p. 95); according to the author, one of the causes of the decrease of L2 Japanese learners is that this language is too difficult for L1 English speakers. If more information is known about strategies to learn it, both teachers and students will be more informed, and the acquisition of the language will be easier, since L2 Japanese learners will learn how to learn the language more efficiently. Huang and Feng (2019, pp. 611-612) had the possibility of investigating this issue with Year 2 students from their study, since they used *journey* metaphors to illustrate the process of acquisition of the language, which was becoming more complex as time progressed. Through their experiences, relevant information regarding strategies can be obtained, from which other learners can benefit in the future.

In terms of context, both formal instruction and self-study have been analysed, in relation to this language. In fact, Japanese is such a popular language in Indonesia that there are not enough available institutions that can provide formal instruction of the language. For that reason, many Indonesians are self-taught learners, Brata and Brata (2018) acknowledge. Self-study is also a common practice in Spain, Ito-Morales (2019, p. 144) points out. She quotes The Japan Foundation (Japan's embassy), who asserts that the number of L2 Japanese students in institutions has decreased in recent years due to the emergence of a high number of self-taught learners that start acquiring the language at a younger age. Part of this may be due to, among other reasons, the fact that Spain is, together with France, England, Germany and Italy, one of the European countries where Japanese is most commonly taught and learnt. However, the difference is that Spain is the only country among those in which L2 Japanese is not offered at schools. Also, as mentioned before by Huang and Feng (2019, p. 606), Japanese is the second

most studied language in China which, in turn, is the country with the highest number of inhabitants in the world. For that reason, more research on strategies (both in classroom and self-study contexts) needs to be done, in order to satisfy the increasing demand.

One strategy mentioned by Ito-Morales (2019, p. 147) is the use of the L1 as a tool to learn L2 Japanese. Despite focusing on L1 Spanish speakers, she mentions L1 Chinese speakers when pointing out that these students can benefit from their previous knowledge of the writing system that they share with Japanese speakers. Ito-Morales states that approximately 70% of the Japanese Kanji (Japanese written characters) are the same in Chinese; however, the meanings and the ways of reading them vary considerably, among both languages. Therefore, despite being an advantage for them, it can also be detrimental in the process of learning, since those differences cause confusion among L1 Chinese learners.

As for other strategies, M-learning and ICT become indispensable tools for L2 Japanese learners (specially for self-taught students). Brata and Brata (2018) based their research on a mobile application that focused on listening and speaking, which are skills traditionally overlooked in this type of learning tools. The majority of them focus on vocabulary and grammar and, in the case of Japanese, in the study and memorization of its two syllabaries (Hiragana and Katakana) and Kanji, which were imported from China and adapted to the Japanese phonological system. Ito-Morales (2019, p. 142) also deals with the use of ICT for learning purposes and, whereas she defends them because they help to make Japan's language and culture more accessible (and, thanks to that, students can attend class with some previous knowledge) there is also the possibility of encountering some inconsistencies between what the teacher explains and what the student sees on the Internet, which is not always correct or accurate. For that reason, precautions need to be taken, when relying on the Internet as the source of information.

Other researchers from Indonesia, such as Tamara, Rusli and Hansun (2019), deal with mnemonic techniques that can be used for memorizing the two syllabaries and Kanji previously mentioned. The 4 mnemonic techniques that are explained in the article are Mnemonic (linking a particular letter with a specific image), Pictograph (imagining a word as a picture; however, this is only practical at the beginner levels, where the Kanji can be considered to have a less opaque meaning), Songs (used to memorize sequences and patterns) and Movement (for instance, pointing at your eye or your ear when you try to memorize the Kanji that have those specific meanings. In Japanese, they are written and pronounced as this: 目/me/ and 耳/mimi/).

The above discussion reveals that there is a recent and increasing interest in other languages in the area of Linguistics and, more specifically, in the sub-fields of motivation and strategies. This study aims at contributing to the findings already mentioned in the previous sections, and will be based on L1 Spanish speakers learning Japanese as a FL.

## 2.5. *Background information about the Japanese language*

Since section 5 will deal with many particularities of the Japanese language that may influence the results obtained, this last subsection has been added in order to give a bit of background knowledge of how the language works. Thus, it will be just a short overview of the basic characteristics of Japanese which are relevant for the understanding of the results obtained. In this case, the focus will be on the fields of syntax, semantics (including Kanji) and phonology.

First, Japanese syntax presents some similarities and differences compared to English, as discussed in Tanimori and Sato (2012). This resemblance is due to the fact that Japanese is an SOV language and, although English is SVO nowadays, it used to have the same word order as Japanese. For that reason, it still retains some characteristics of that typology (Baugh & Cable, 2002) like, for instance, placing the adjective before the noun in noun phrases. Yet, whereas English has a fixed syntactic structure most of the times, Japanese is much more flexible in that respect: it only requires the placement of the verb at the end of the sentence. Also, contrary to English, it is preferred to omit the subject. Japanese has this flexibility for two reasons: on the one hand, it has more verbal and adjectival inflections than English and, on the other, it has a syntactic element that it is not present in English: particles. These are used to indicate the function of words in a sentence, and they are placed after the word they accompany (Tanimori & Sato, 2012, pp. 16-17). The following is an example of the use of particles in Japanese:

彼は部屋でサッカーを観ています /kare wa heya de sakkaa wo miteimasu/

“He is watching football in the room” (example taken from Tanimori & Sato (2012))

The symbols marked in orange are the so-called particles, and each of them has a different function in the sentence. は is the topic particle that, in this case, also works as the subject; therefore, as previously mentioned, it can be omitted. で indicates the place in which an action is performed (with the exception of actions related to movement, with which another particle is used). The last one, を, has the function of direct complement. From these three, で could

be considered as an equivalent of English prepositions, but the other two do not have English counterparts (Tanimori & Sato, 2012, 84-100).

Second, regarding the field of semantics, it is worth mentioning the word サッカー that was used in the example sentence and which means “football”. This word is actually a borrowing from English that comes from the word “soccer” and which has been modified to fit in the Japanese phonological system. Loan words sometimes add new sounds to a language but, in most cases, these sounds are modified using the ones that are present in the receiving language (Ohso, 1973, p. 2). There are a great number of English borrowings that have undergone the same process like, for instance, ドア /doa/ “door”, ノート /nooto/, “notebook”、 ドラマ /dorama/ “(TV) drama”, etc.

Apart from borrowings, Japanese semantics is characterised by the presence of Kanji, which are written characters that represent the morphemes of spoken Japanese and which have both a semantic and phonological correspondence. Given their semantic value, Kanji are connected to the Japanese vocabulary. However, Kanji have more than one way of being pronounced and, for that reason, one can conclude that the relationship between phonology and orthography is not straightforward. This non-correspondence makes the learning process more difficult; however, they are actually an essential element in written contexts, because Japanese has many homophones and is written with no spaces between words. Consequently, Kanji become necessary in order to notice the boundaries between words and to distinguish meaning between homophones. (Morita, 2019, p. 502).

These Kanji, which were introduced in Japan at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. from China (where they are called Hanzi), underwent a different development in both countries, in terms of form and use (Heisig, 2001, p. 10). One of the most notorious differences between both writing systems is that the Chinese characters that are used in Chinese speaking regions (except in Hong Kong and Taiwan) underwent a simplification in their way of being read and written. As stated in Liu (2015, p.1943), this process started in 1956. Given their different evolutions, there are many Kanji and Hanzi that are not equivalent, as mentioned in Ito-Morales (2019, p. 147) and, for that reason, learning them can be a bit challenging for Chinese speakers.

Third, in terms of phonology, Japanese has some similarities with Spanish. Apart from the fact of having only 5 vowel sounds (which are a[A], i[i], u[w], e[e], and o[o] (Cao, Li, Fang, Wei, Song & Dang, 2012)), there is a direct correspondence between pronunciation and written representation (only when using the two syllabaries; as seen before, Kanji complicates this correspondence) (Tanimori & Sato, 2012). In addition, most sounds are shared by both

languages, and only some of them present some differences. The most notorious one has to do with liquids; in Japanese, there is only one liquid that is commonly pronounced as an apico-alveolar tap [ɾ], which is the neutral realization of the rhotic version of other languages. Its main characteristic is its centralization; however, its pronunciation can vary due to social and geographical variants (Labrune, 2011, pp. 2-3).

### 3. The study

#### 3.1. Context

The present study was carried out in Barcelona during the year 2020 in which the global pandemic caused by the so called Covid-19 happened. Due to the consequent lockdown established by the Spanish government (as well as other countries all around the world) there was no possibility of doing face-to-face academic activities. Therefore, the experimental part of this study was done electronically, with online questionnaires being filled in by a series of participants.

#### 3.2. Participants

A total number of 20 participants took part in the present study. They were informed that they would be participating in a study related to the acquisition of languages, and the only requisite for being a valid participant was that the person had learnt Japanese at some point in his/her life. Table 1 presents a summary of the participants' personal information.

Table 1. Description of the participants

<b>Gender</b>		
Male	6	30%
Female	13	65%
Not specified	1	5%
<b>Age</b>		
15-20	1	5%
21-25	16	80%
26-30	1	5%
41-50	1	5%



+60	1	5%
<b>Mother tongue</b>		
Catalan	2	10%
Spanish	1	5%
Catalan and Spanish	15	75%
Catalan, Spanish and Italian	1	5%
Spanish and French	1	5%

There were more females than males among the participants, and the majority of them were 21-25 years old. Interestingly, there were two old learners, among the participants. Almost all of them had Spanish as their mother tongue, and the majority were bilinguals. This was to be expected, since Barcelona is a bilingual city; however, two of the participants reported having Italian or French as their mother tongue, also.

Table 2. Academic and professional life of the participants

<b>Work/Studies</b>		
Student	11	55%
Worker	2	10%
Both	5	25%
Unemployed	2	10%
<b>Field of study</b>		
Arts and humanities	14	70%
Science	1	5%
Social sciences and law	1	5%
Engineering and architecture	2	10%
Others	1	5%
<b>Field of work</b>		
Arts and humanities	6	30%
Science	1	5%
Natural sciences	1	5%
Social sciences and law	1	5%
Engineering and architecture	2	10%
Others	3	15%

As seen in Table 2, due to the age group that was predominant in this study, the majority of participants were students, although a number of them were working at the same time. Most of them had either studies or work related to the field of arts and humanities.

Table 3. Foreign languages spoken by the participants

<b>Other foreign languages</b>		
English and Japanese	6	30%
English, Japanese and French	6	30%
English, Japanese and Korean	4	20%
English, Japanese and Spanish	1	5%
English, Japanese and Catalan	1	5%
English, Japanese and Italian	1	5%
English, Japanese and Swedish	1	5%

Table 3 shows that English and Japanese were the foreign languages shared by all the respondents. Many of them reported that they are currently studying an additional language. Most of them are European languages, with the exception of Korean. The two most common languages mentioned by the respondents were French and Korean.

Table 4. Study abroad experience

<b>Study abroad</b>		
Yes	8	40%
No	12	60%

Table 4 shows the number of participants that have taken part in some kind of study abroad program. One of them did so in Ireland and the rest in Japan. One of those 8 people is reportedly living and working in Japan, nowadays.

### 3.3. Instruments

A questionnaire consisting on 28 questions was used for this study (see Appendix I). It was written in English and later translated into Spanish. The one distributed among the participants was the Spanish version, given that it is the mother tongue of the majority of them.

The information collected from the studies used in the Review of Literature section (section 2) was taken into account to elaborate the questionnaire. Questions 1-6 focused on personal features (age, gender, mother tongue...). Relevant details are mentioned in the previous section (see 3.2.). Their perceived level in each non-native language was also asked, but proficiency will not be one of the aims of this study. Classification of fields of study and work taken from Moratinos-Johnston, Ballester, Juan-Garau & Salazar-Noguera, (2019, p. 480).

Questions 7-8, 10 and 14-15 focused on the use of non-native languages (frequency of use, place of use, etc.). Questions 11-13, 16-17, 20-23 and 26-28 were aimed at evaluating the participants motivation in relation to Japanese as a FL, and questions 9, 18-21 and 24-27 focused on the strategies used by them. As seen, some questions were aimed at both motivation and strategies.

### 3.4. Procedure

The data collection took place electronically through a Drive questionnaire. The original questionnaire had been designed to be handed in face to face but, as mentioned in 3.1., that was not a viable option. For that reason, an electronic version was used instead. Some specific participants were provided with a link that redirected them to the questionnaire, and they were encouraged to share that link with their friends and colleagues that were also studying Japanese. The questionnaire was made available for a whole day, the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020. It was required that the participants gave their name or a pseudonym for the sake of clarity when analysing their answers, but they were informed that their anonymity would be kept.

Some of the questions were marked as obligatory so that, if they wanted to submit their answers, they needed to answer them. However, some of them were optional, and only required an answer depending on the option that was chosen in the previous question.

All the answers were stored and put together in an Excel document. Also, in order to analyse the results more efficiently, questions were divided into sub-topics in the following manner:

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Reasons for learning Japanese as a FL	Methodology used for learning Japanese as a FL

Current learning situation and reasons for stopping	Study of Kanji
Motivation for using the language whenever there is a chance to do so	Vehicular language in class
Reasons for choosing Japanese as a FL in high school (hypothetical case)	English and Spanish as learning tools
Details of the Study Abroad experience	Self-study

The answers given in each sub-section will be analysed in detail in section 4.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. *Motivation in relation to Japanese as a FL*

#### 4.1.1. Reasons for learning Japanese as a FL

Interest in Japan's culture and cultural products were selected by almost all the respondents as the sources of motivation for starting to learn the language (95% and 80% of the participants, respectively).

The desire to live there (40%), the possibility of making new friends (35%) and better future prospects in relation to work (35%) were also common answers among the respondents, although less frequent. In the case of English, this last category was chosen by the 70% of participants.

Finally, the participant that mentioned that he/she is currently living in Japan added his/her desire to be more proficient, and one of the old learners of the group reported that it all started with a bet with friends.

#### 4.1.2. Details of the study abroad experience

From the 8 participants that claimed that they have experienced a study abroad program, 12,5% have done so in Ireland and the rest (87,5%) in Japan. Among that 87,5%, one of them claimed that he/she had also studied in Korea. One of the old learners claimed that he/she had participated in a study abroad program in England, but he/she did not give more details about that experience. Regarding their age at that moment, 25% did not specify, 12,5% were 15,

12,5% were 18 and 50% were 21-23. Their length of stay was one month (12,5%), half a year (12,5%), 9 months (12,5%), one year (37,5%) and a year and a half (12,5%).

Regarding the usefulness of the experience, all of them claimed that their language level improved. Here are some excerpts that were taken from their answers:

**Excerpt 1:** *Muchísimo, ha naturalizado el uso del idioma de manera que no parece copiado de un libro* (participant 9)

**Excerpt 2:** *Si, en todos los ámbitos, vivir en otro país te obliga a aprender la lengua más y a seguir queriendo entenderla más. Novia de ese país etc...* (participant 11)

**Excerpt 3:** *Sí, obligándome a utilizarlo y aprendiendo a leer con las señales y las facturas* (participant 8)

#### 4.1.3. Current learning situation and reasons for stopping

80% of the participants claimed that they are currently studying Japanese, whereas 20% admitted that they are not, nowadays. From that 20%, their reasons for stopping the study of the language were lack of motivation (75%), increased difficulty of the language (75%), lack of time (50%), interest in learning other languages with better future prospects in Spain (5%) and lack of a sense of progress (5%). One of them mentioned that he/she studied the language during his/her degree but, given that he/she had already graduated, there was no exposure to the language anymore.

Regarding the difficulties mentioned by the 75% of the respondents, they were the impossibility of memorizing and remembering Japanese words (66,67%), the differences between their mother tongue and Japanese (33,33%) and the difficulty of Kanji (33,33%).

#### 4.1.4. Motivation to use the language when there is a chance to do so

40% of the respondents claimed that they are willing to use the language when there is a chance to do so, in contrast with the 60% that do not want to. Their reasons for not using the language are their perceived low level (58,3%), shyness (66,67%) and lack of opportunities (8,33%).

#### 4.1.5. Study of the language in high school (hypothetical case) and motivation behind their choice

80% of the participants claimed that they would have been interested in learning Japanese during their school years. Their reasons were the interest on Japan and its culture (45%), interest on the Japanese language (35%), curiosity for such a different language (40%), usefulness of the language (10%), desire to learn it a younger age because it would have been easier (5%), confidence on being able to study it (5%), desire to live in the country for many years (5%) and personal interest (5%).

Among the 20% that answered that they would not have chosen Japanese during high school, their reasons were the irrelevance of the language when compared to others (10%) and Japanese being an overwhelming language (5%).

### 4.2. *Strategies in relation to Japanese as a FL*

#### 4.2.1. How did they learn the language?

95% of the respondents answered that they used textbooks to acquire the language, along with TV series and movies (80%) and books (75%). Other tools were YouTube and other electronic sites (40%), daily conversation (40%), work (5%) and exchange programs (5%).

#### 4.2.2. Study of Kanji

95% of the participants asserted the usefulness of learning Kanji for the study and acquisition of the language. The reasons given by the remaining 5% of participants were:

**Excerpt 4:** *Creo que si en vez de un kanji se pone la palabra en hiragana es más fácil de entender* (participant 1)

#### 4.2.3. Vehicular language in class

Regarding the vehicular language used in class, it was Japanese (50%), Catalan/Spanish (40%) and “none, I’m a self-taught learner” (10%). Their preferred language in class was Japanese (95%) and only 5% chose their native language.

#### 4.2.4. English and Spanish as learning tools

In the case of English as a learning tool, 90% claimed that it was useful, and 10% that it made no difference. The reasons behind the usefulness of the language were the similarities between Japanese and English words due to borrowings (35%), the greater number of available study materials (40%), similar syntactic structures (10%), and the possibility of understanding signs and other forms of advertisement in Japan (10%). Those who answered “It’s indifferent” claimed that:

**Excerpt 5:** *Creo que no es necesario saber inglés para aprender japonés pero si que puede ayudar en algunas cosas, como en alguna palabra que no tenga un equivalente directo a una palabra de tu lengua materna* (participant 1)

**Excerpt 6:** *Teniendo una lengua materna diferente el inglés es un añadido, no necesariamente útil aunque puede serlo* (participant 14)

In terms of the usefulness of their native language (Spanish/Catalan, in the majority of cases) when learning Japanese, 45% answered “Yes”, 30% answered “No” and 25% claimed that it made no difference. Among the reasons of those that answered positively, there are their similar phonology (44,44%), having a point of reference to establish comparisons (22,22%), its helpfulness for forming correct sentences (11,11%), the motivation to learn Japanese due to the lack of *manga* in Spanish (11,11%), its helpfulness for understanding explanations that are not understood in Japanese (11,11%), and the fact that Spanish is a widely spoken language (11,11%).

Those who answered “No” claimed that there is no relationship between those two languages (83,33%), and 40% of the participants that gave that answer mentioned syntax as the major difference between both. Also, 16,67% of the participants mentioned that Japanese and Catalan’s phonology was too different.

Those that claimed that their native language was not relevant when studying Japanese wrote similar reasons as those used by the two other groups like, for example:

**Excerpt 7:** *Porque son idiomas muy distintos, aunque a veces que nos ayude a poder pronunciar sonidos* (participant 4)

**Excerpt 8:** *Saber sintaxi es muy importante, pero las dos lenguas son muy diferentes* (participant 8)

#### 4.2.5. Self-study

60% of the participants answered that they would be able to learn the language by themselves and the remaining 40% claimed the opposite. Their reasons for not feeling confident to study by themselves are that they need someone to explain the theory to them (50%), they do not know where to start from (50%), their level is too low (35,5%), boredom (25%), lack of discipline (12,5%), lack of motivation (12,5%) and the fact that the materials they have are limited (12,5%).

### 5. Discussion

After analysing the results obtained through the questionnaire, there were several points in common between them and the findings from other studies that dealt with similar topics and which were mentioned in the Review of Literature. However, there were some inconsistencies between them as well. In this section, their similarities and differences will be explained in detail.

#### 5.1. *On motivation*

Japan's culture, which was described as one of the major sources of motivation for learning the language in Burgh-Hirabe (2019), Ito-Morales (2019) and Huang (2019), was also chosen by the majority of participants (95%) of this study. No matter how different Spain and Japan's culture might be; these results show that it still attracts students. The same goes for cultural products (such as *manga* and *anime*) which are also mentioned in Ito-Morales (2019, p. 142). 80% of the respondents admitted that their purpose of study was, among other things, to be able to understand them.

When compared to Brata and Brata (2018) and the learning situation in Indonesia, the access to better jobs and scholarships is not such an important source of motivation for Spanish students that want to study Japanese; only 35% of the participants chose that option, as seen in the results. Whereas this percentage should not be disregarded, when compared to the results that English obtained in this same category (70%), the difference between the importance they give to one language and the other in relation to work is quite remarkable. In fact, this is not exclusive of English; 10% of participants stated that they were giving priority to other languages that might have better future prospects in Spain. As irrelevant as that percentage



might seem, the fact is that no control group was used for this study. If people who have never studied the language would have been asked that same question (regarding the importance of Japanese in the professional field), the statistics would, most probably, differ greatly from the ones obtained.

All these results concerning motivation are important because, as seen in Masgoret and Gardner (2003) and Lee and Lo (2017), motivation is quite relevant in the field of SLA. For instance, Lee and Lo (2017) demonstrated in a study that the choice of the vehicular language in class is closely related to motivation. In the present study, the importance of motivation is proved by the fact that, from the group of participants that claimed that they were not studying the language anymore, 75% admitted that they did not feel motivated to do it. Another reason was the increasing difficulty of the language, which will be discussed in section 5.2.

Also, just like Bernaus (1995) mentioned, motivation is connected to personal variables. In this study, it was seen that the learner's personality was closely related to his/her willingness to use the language whenever there is a chance to do so. Shyness was the main reason behind their unwillingness, since it was chosen by the 66,67% of them. Also, the 58,3% of participants stated that they did not take those opportunities because of their *perceived* low level of proficiency, which can also be considered as an individual variable.

Regarding the study abroad experience, there were similarities between the results obtained and the findings in Burgh-Hirabe (2019). From the 8 participants who claimed that they had experienced a stay abroad, all of them reported that they had positive experiences in terms of the acquisition of the language and the increase in motivation for learning it. Therefore, apart from being a useful strategy (those will be discussed in section 5.2), it is also an important source of motivation, just like Burgh-Hirabe (2019, pp. 100-101) pointed out. This is well exemplified in excerpt 2 (section 4.2.2.). When used as a strategy to learn the language, the study abroad experience can increase the motivation of learners due to the desire of adapting to a new country and being independent. This motivation can also have its source in positive L2 experiences (Burgh-Hirabe, 2019, pp. 100-101). As an illustration, participant 11 (excerpt 2) mentioned the possibility of getting a girlfriend from that country. The same can be said about making friends in a new country (35% of the participants), which is, as the results show, an important reason for learning the language.

## 5.2. *On strategies*

Regarding strategies, cultural products (which were also mentioned in section 5.1 as great sources of motivation) are one of the main tools used for learning the language (80% for TV series and movies and 75% for books). Electronic tools, such as websites and YouTube, are also worth mentioning, since they are used by the 40% of participants. This goes in line with the findings in Ito-Morales (2019), who already pointed out the importance of such tools. However, since many of the students that participated in this study attend Japanese language classes (only the 10% claimed that they were 100% self-taught learners) it is possible that the percentage of students that use electronic tools is higher than that.

Next, although Brata and Brata (2018) claimed that M-learning should focus on the listening and speaking skills, the answers provided by the participants show that the area of how L2 Japanese students learn Kanji should be researched in more depth as well. Despite the answer provided by participant 1 (excerpt 4), in which it is claimed that Kanji are not necessary for the acquisition of the language because Japanese can be written using Hiragana and Katakana (see section 2.5), the truth is that, since there is a huge number of homophones in the language, Kanji become necessary to distinguish meaning, in written contexts. Apart from the presence of homophones, Japanese is written with no spaces; therefore, Kanji help to establish boundaries between words (Morita, 2019, p. 502). Also, they are a useful tool for acquiring new vocabulary, since Kanji have meaning on their own and, when combined with other Kanji, new meanings are created (Morita, 2019, p. 502). From those participants that claimed that they were not studying the language anymore, the difficulty of memorizing the Japanese vocabulary (66,66%) and learning Kanji (33,33%) were mentioned as their reasons for giving up on the language. However, taking into account that the learning of Kanji and the acquisition of vocabulary are related, all of them were, in a way, talking about the same thing. For that reason, if more is known about how to learn Kanji, the acquisition and memorization of vocabulary will be easier as well and, perhaps, many students will not stop learning the language. Therefore, due to its importance in written contexts, as well as the benefits that their acquisition provides and the difficulty of learning them (which was mentioned by some of the participants), research should focus more on the study of Kanji. Tamara (2019) already gave some hints about how to go about it, for instance.

As for which one should be the vehicular language in class, although many institutions in Spain decide to use the L1 in class (as seen in the results), Japanese is preferred by the 95% of participants. As mentioned before in Lee and Lo (2017), the choice of language is closely

related to motivation. From the answers provided in questions 12 and 28 of the questionnaire, it was inferred that the participants were highly motivated to learn the language, as it can also be seen in excerpts 1 and 2. Those that stated that they were not learning the language anymore (due to lack of motivation in the 75% of cases) also chose Japanese as their preferred language of use in class; therefore, Lee and Lo's (2017) statement cannot be proved, in this case. What is worth mentioning is the fact that, from those participants that claimed that they are not learning the language, 50% claimed that Japanese was the vehicular language in class, 25% that they were self-taught learners and 25% that Spanish was used in class. By analysing these results, it can be said that the loss of motivation is not related to the context of instruction.

Furthermore, English is seen as a much more useful tool for learning Japanese than Spanish. English as a global language, concept introduced by Huang and Feng (2019), is present in the process of acquisition of less studied languages, given that most (and better) materials are only available in this language (40%). Linguistically speaking (see section 2.5), the advantages of knowing English as an L2 are mainly related to vocabulary (35%) and syntax (10%) (Tanimori & Sato, 2012; Ohso, 1973). Regarding vocabulary, it shows the great influence that English has all around the world, given that Japanese has a large number of borrowings from this language. In this case, English as a global language (Huang & Feng, 2019, pp. 614-616) could have a positive effect on L2 Japanese learners and, if more research is carried out regarding the use of English as a learning tool (with an emphasis on syntax and semantics), learners could benefit from that knowledge. Comparatively, using Spanish as a learning tool has benefits in the area of phonology (Cao, Li, Fang, Wei, Song and Dang, 2012), mainly (44,44%). This is also mentioned in excerpt 7.

Finally, the role of the teacher, which was analysed by Bernaus (1995), could be considered as quite a significant variable, given that 50% of those that claimed that they did not feel confident enough to be self-taught learners answered that they needed to be taught by someone in order to understand the theory. Among those who mentioned that they felt confident to study the language on their own, there were some who answered that they were nonetheless studying in an academy. This may be due to the reliability that teachers provide when compared to electronic tools, which was explained in Ito-Morales (2019, p. 142). Also, teachers can be sources of motivation: one of the participants acknowledged that, if he/she were to study alone, it would be boring.

## 6. Conclusions

After looking at both theoretical and experimental studies in relation to motivation and strategies for both English and Japanese, the situation in different countries all around the world regarding the study of Japanese was also analysed. Apart from Spain, which was selected because it is the country in which this study was conducted, New Zealand was chosen because the learning situation in an English-speaking country seemed worth of comparison. Finally, China was selected due to its cultural similarities with Japan, and Indonesia due to the importance of this language in the country.

A questionnaire focusing on the motivation and strategies used by L1 Spanish students that were learning Japanese as a FL was used. 20 participants took part in it and, when comparing the findings with the studies cited in section 2, some theories were demonstrated, whereas others still need more conclusive evidence. Also, in order to obtain more realistic results, a control group consisting of individuals who do not have the experience of learning Japanese should be used, in subsequent studies.

Regarding motivation, it was seen that it is an important element of the learning process (Gardner, 2003; Lee, 2017), since the lack of it seems to be connected with the abandonment of the language. However, motivation is also connected to individual variables (Bernaus, 1995), such as shyness or a perceived low level in the language. In terms of sources of motivation, in general terms, students do not choose to learn Japanese for professional purposes; actually, it is the interest for the culture of the country and its products which motivates students (Burgh-Hirabe, 2019; Ito-Morales, 2019; Huang, 2019). It has also been demonstrated that the study abroad experience helps to increase students' motivation (Burgh-Hirabe, 2019) and, at the same time, it is a useful strategy.

In connection to strategies, given the importance that Kanji and vocabulary demonstrated in this study (Morita & Saito, 2019), Brata and Brata (2018) and their proposal of focusing on the speaking and listening subskills in M-learning was questioned. It was also found that the vehicular language used in class is not related to the loss of motivation in students, because those that stopped studying Japanese had different answers, in question 20. This contradicts Lee and Lo (2017), who claimed that the choice of language is closely related to motivation.

With regard to the use of English as a learning tool, it was demonstrated that students can benefit from the similarities between both languages in terms of syntax (Tanimori & Sato, 2012) and vocabulary (Ohso, 1973), to some extent. In the case of Spanish, their similar phonological system (Cao, Li, Fang, Wei, Song & Dang, 2012) has proved to be an advantage

for L1 Spanish speakers. The role of the teacher (Bernaus, 1995) was also found to be of importance, given that the majority of students that participated in this study claimed that they preferred learning in formal contexts and not through self-study.

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## Appendix

### Appendix I

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

I am Esther Lorente, an undergraduate student of Estudios Anglesos who is carrying out a study on the acquisition of foreign languages. The information obtained through this questionnaire will be anonymous and only used for the purpose of research. Thank you in advance for collaborating.

1. **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Age:**

15-20	20-25	25-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60+
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3. **Gender:**

Male	Female	I would prefer not to answer
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4. **Language(s) spoken from birth:**

\_\_\_\_\_

5. **Work/studies:**

Student	Worker	Both	Unemployed
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• **Branch of study:**

Arts and humanities	Sciences	Health sciences	Social sciences and law	Engineering and architecture	Others (e.g. tertiary sector)
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• **Branch of work:**

Arts and humanities	Sciences	Health sciences	Social sciences and law	Engineering and architecture	Others (e.g. tertiary sector)
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6. **Languages you know (except your language(s) from birth):** Mark with an X your level in each of them.

Language	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2

7. **Languages used in daily life (including your language(s) from birth)**

Language	Where do you use it? (at work, at home, in class...)	With whom? (family, friends...)

8. Mark with an X the approximate **frequency of use** of the languages you know (**including your language (s) from birth**)

Language	1-2 h/week	3-5 h/week	6-8 h/week	+8 h/week

**Answer the following questions. You do not need to include your language(s) from birth**  
(you can choose more than one option, in each part).

**9. How did you learn them?**

Language 1: \_\_\_\_\_

- Using textbooks
- Using YouTube videos and other multimedia materials, such as websites
- TV series, movies and anime
- Books or manga
- Through daily conversation
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Language 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- Using textbooks
- Using YouTube videos and other multimedia materials, such as websites
- TV series, movies and anime
- Books or manga
- Through daily conversation
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Language 3: \_\_\_\_\_

- Using textbooks
- Using YouTube videos and other multimedia materials, such as websites
- TV series, movies and anime
- Books or manga
- Through daily conversation
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Where did you learn them?**

Language 1: \_\_\_\_\_

- At school/language school with other peers
- Through private classes
- On my own, at home

- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Language 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- At school/language school with other peers
- Through private classes
- On my own, at home
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Language 3: \_\_\_\_\_

- At school/language school with other peers
- Through private classes
- On my own, at home
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Why did you learn them?

Language 1: \_\_\_\_\_

- It was obligatory at school
- It was my parents' decision
- I am interested in the culture of the country(ies) in which it is spoken
- I want to understand movies and/or books in original version.
- I think it can help me to get a better job
- I want to live in the country in which it is spoken, in the future
- It is easy for me, because it is similar to my mother tongue
- I want to make friends from other countries.
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Language 2: \_\_\_\_\_

- It was obligatory at school
- It was my parents' decision
- I am interested in the culture of the country(ies) in which it is spoken
- I want to understand movies and/or books in its original version.
- I think it can help me to get a better job
- I want to live in the country in which it is spoken, in the future
- It is easy for me, because it is similar to my mother tongue

- I want to make friends from other countries.
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Language 3: \_\_\_\_\_

- It was obligatory at school
- It was my parents' decision
- I am interested in the culture of the country(ies) in which it is spoken
- I want to understand movies and/or books in its original version.
- I think it can help me to get a better job
- I want to live in the country in which it is spoken, in the future
- It is easy for me, because it is similar to my mother tongue
- I want to make friends from other countries.
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Stays abroad:** Have you ever studied a language on a study abroad program (or something similar)?

- Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- How old were you? \_\_\_\_\_
- For how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you think it helped you to improve in the foreign language? How?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Study of Japanese

**13. Are you currently studying Japanese?**

Yes	No
-----	----

**14. If you answered yes, where?**

- At school/language school with other peers
- Through private classes
- On my own, at home
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. How many **hours a week** you study Japanese/attend Japanese language classes?

Language	1-2 h/week	3-5 h/week	6-8 h/week	+8 h/week
Japanese				

16. If you answered **no**, **why** did you stop studying it? (you can choose more than one answer)

- I do not feel motivated to learn it anymore
- It has become too difficult at this stage
- I do not have the time
- I prefer to focus on other languages that have better future prospects in Spain
- I do not feel comfortable in class because of my teacher and/or my peers
- I do not feel like I am improving, I do not have a sense of progress and that bothers me
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. In case you answered that it is **too difficult**, what is difficult about it?

- It is too different from my native language
- I cannot understand what people are saying
- I do not understand the grammar rules
- I cannot remember the meaning of words, I am unable to memorize it
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**18. Do you think that Kanji (the Chinese ideograms used for writing in Japanese) are necessary, to master the language?**

Yes	No
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**19. In case you answered no, why?**

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**20. Which language does (or did) your teacher use for teaching?**

- Catalan/Spanish
- Japanese
- Another language: \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Are you in favor of the use of your native language as the main language in class or do you prefer that Japanese is used?**

It is best to use my native language	It is best to use Japanese
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**22. Do you use the language whenever there is a chance to do so?**

Yes	No
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**23. In case you answered no, why not?**

- I do not have confidence because my level is still too low
- I feel embarrassed because I am a bit shy
- I do not have the need; I just want to be able to understand it
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**24. Is English a useful tool to learn Japanese?**

Yes	No	It is indifferent, for me
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Why?

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**25. Is your native language(s) a useful tool to learn Japanese?**

Yes	No	It is indifferent, for me
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Why?

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**26. Would you be able to learn Japanese on your own?**

Yes	No
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**27. In case you answered **no**, **why** not?**

- My level is too low
- The resources I have are limited
- The resources I have are not good
- I do not know where to start from
- I need that someone explains the theory to me, in order to understand it
- I would feel bored
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**28. You were given the option of learning English and another language at school. Both are obligatory. If Japanese was offered among those options, would you choose it?**

Yes	No
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Why?

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**Thank you for your help.**