

Lived Experiences of FL Students in Nihongo: Basis for a Proposed Program for Teachers About Providing Corrective Feedback

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Abstract

Globalization has greatly increased the demand for highly skilled foreign language speakers. Workplaces are becoming more global; thus, cultures and languages are continuing to diversify. One foreign language offered and studied in Higher Educational Institutions in the Philippines is Nihongo. Considering the disparity between the official languages of the Philippines and the foreign language in focus, specifically in grammar patterns, speech and writing systems, and other technicalities that comprise a language, it is truly challenging for course-takers to acquire the new language. This prompted the proponents of the present study to investigate the experiences that foreign language students, particularly Nihongo, have upon taking the course. This probe aimed to determine the factors that contribute to students' difficulty in learning Nihongo through testimonies and the different coping mechanisms that can be employed in dealing with this difficulty. Results of this are expected to yield the creation and proposition of a program that contains suggestions that may be considered for the course delivery to be more impactful, worthwhile, and beneficial for course-takers.

Keywords: Challenges, coping mechanisms, lived experiences, Nihongo, La Consolacion University Philippines, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The demand for highly skilled foreign language speakers has greatly increased because of globalization. Workplaces are becoming more global; thus, cultures and languages are continuing to diversify.

With this, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the main proponents of language instruction, are devoted to helping the augmentation of language instruction. In the Philippines, the teaching of foreign languages is mandated as anchored on CHED Memorandum Order No. 23, Series 2010, the teaching of foreign languages is part of the curricula of higher education. With the end goal of this, the students will be globally employable and competitive.

One of the foreign languages being offered and studied is Nihongo. In the eyes of the younger generation, Japan has established itself as one of the language-speaking nations of global economic importance (Rose & Carson, 2014). Due to its economic ascent to prominence, people became more interested in learning about its culture and presenting its cultural characteristics. Despite this boom in language education, introducing Japanese as a foreign language entails obstacles in teaching and learning, as shown in a few studies. In a recent evaluation of language training needed by State Department workers, Everson (2011) asserts that languages such as Japanese and Chinese take at least four times longer to learn and master than European languages. In addition, Wenhua and Zhe (2013) identify five major

adjustment problems international students face in foreign countries: personal psychological issues, academic issues, sociocultural issues, general living issues, and language proficiency. Also, Andrade (2006) investigated what affects the academic success and adaptation of international students using documentary analysis of published literature as a foundation. The results indicate that international students had more trouble. In contrast to household surroundings, transitioning to new academic and social students. The special academic difficulties faced by overseas students are linguistic difficulties that are connected to them and can have a detrimental emotional impact (e.g., embarrassment, disappointment, and boredom). As a method of coping, international students should seek out assistance with their English language skills programs. International students have more experience with social acculturation.

Meanwhile, the study of Lumabi (2023) revealed that age is crucial in learning Nihongo as well as in recognizing their difficulties in learning a foreign language rather than other learning limitations such as affective factors, learning environment, workload, etc. In addition, it was found that the difficulties encountered by ESL teachers in learning the Nihongo language in graduate school include writing and translating sentences and phrases, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Furthermore, Gebhard (2012) investigated the types of adjustment issues among 85 international students at an American university through interviews, observation field notes, and students' self-reports. The findings indicate that students were challenged by academic, social, and emotional difficulties in the new environment. He indicated that international students were not familiar with social and cultural norms, which could negatively affect social interaction in America. As a coping strategy, the study suggests that international students establish supporting groups with co-nationals or friends who share similar cultural backgrounds. The above-mentioned realizations from different reviewed materials prompted the proponents of the present study to conduct an investigation regarding the experiences that foreign language students, particularly Nihongo, have upon taking the course.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Recent developments in language studies showed a great need for effective communication in a globalized world. Aside from international certifications for English proficiency, enrollment in other language courses is booming. One of the Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2019 – Humanity, Education and Social Sciences (IcoSIHESS 2019) include the study of Rosi Rosiah and Arsyl Machawan titled, "Application of e-Learning in Japanese Learning at Japanese Language Education Program Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta." This study is a descriptive qualitative study with results in the Chukyu Bunkei (Intermediary Grammar) lecture; the activities carried out were Assessment, discussion, and Quiz, as well as the Nihongo Indonesiago Honyaku course (Japanese Language to Indonesian Language Translator). And the problem faced is ineffective e-learning page mastery, e-learning participants find it difficult to access e-learning.

On the other hand, the Proceedings of the Unima International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities (UNICSSH 2022) include the study of Diane M. Tengker and Clara Legi with the title of "Nihongo Kanoukei Teaching in Japanese Language Education Study Program." The many changes contained in the Jepang language verbs often cause mistakes made by learners, especially changes in the verbs of the kanoukei form (can form)), especially for elementary level learners at the Faculty of Language and Arts Japanese language education study program. The purpose of this study was to obtain accurate data on students'

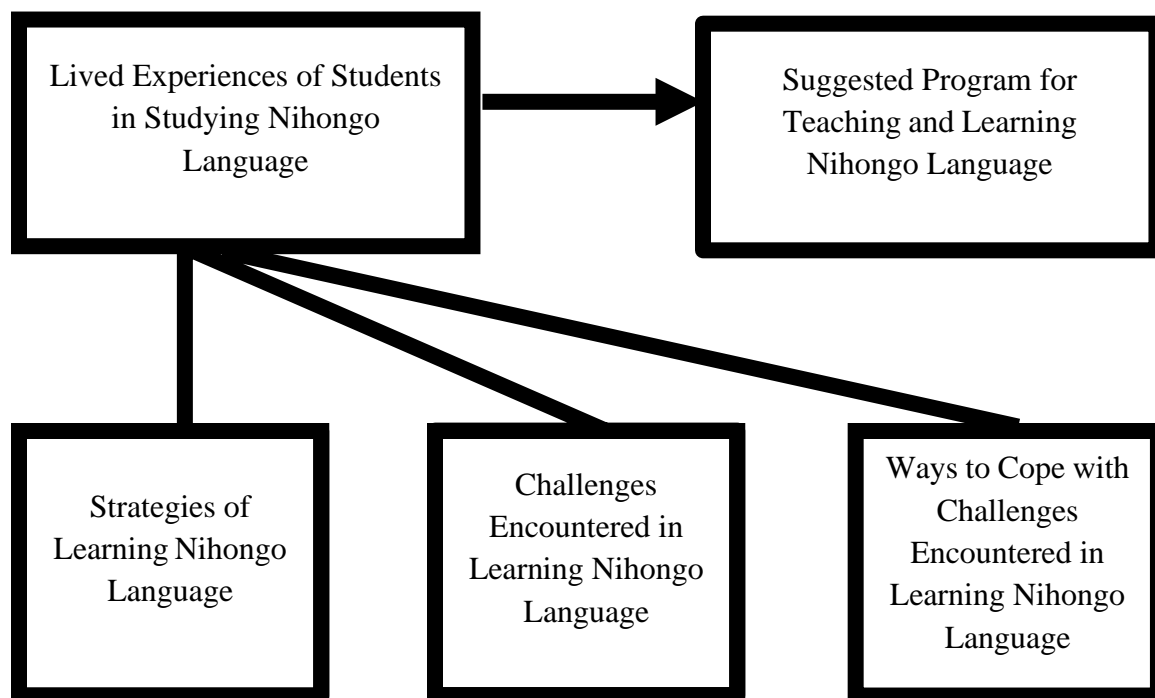
ability to convert verbs in Japanese into the form of kanoukei (can form), using kyoukasho minna no nihongo. This prompted the author to research the extent of Nihongo's teaching at the Faculty of Language and Arts, Manado State University. Based on the results of the analysis that has been obtained using the percentage formula, which is then searched for the average value, it is known that the level of student ability to change verbs in Japanese is 38%. This result is obtained from the sum of the values of all respondents divided by the number of respondents. In accordance with the existing results and when compared with the standards or assessment criteria that have been determined above, the overall level of student ability to change verbs in Japanese shows <50%. From the results of the research obtained, it is clearly stated that students have not been able to change verbs in Japanese. This is because the achievement of the overall average value only reaches 38%.

Soriano and Co (2022), in their study titled "Voices from Within: Students' Lived Experiences on English Language Anxiety" shared the factors influencing the anxiety of students in learning the English language. The findings of the study showed that teacher factor, inability to express ideas, lack of confidence, fear of committing mistakes and negative comments, family factor, fear of English classes, and lack of vocabulary/ideas were the factors that greatly influenced the anxiety of students in learning the English language. Owing to the results of the study, it is recommended that instructors/professors should be aware of the presence of these anxiety-inducing factors in the classrooms and create an environment in which students can feel more at ease in English classes by employing a variety of strategies that allow learners to express themselves and maintain motivation in English language learning.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



This framework is intended to explain the research process. It elucidates the structure of the research findings based on the lived experiences of learners studying the Nihongo language under the hybrid distance learning modality. The framework describes learners' experiences studying the Nihongo language and the strategies they use and the problems and challenges they face, and how they overcome them. The proposed study program was developed to assist learners who are faced with challenges in studying the Nihongo language under hybrid distance learning.

METHODOLOGY

Methods and Techniques of the Study

This chapter begins by discussing the various paradigms and the methodology used to conduct the qualitative analysis in this study. Teachers were interviewed regarding their experiences in learning and studying Nihongo language in a blended distance learning environment. The gathered data was encoded for similar perceptions or distinct ideas.

This study employed a qualitative approach within the framework of the phenomenological method in order to provide an in-depth examination of one test subject. The study documented the learners' lived experience of studying Nihongo in a hybrid distance learning environment. Additionally, this study documented the Nihongo language learners' difficulties and challenges, strategies for overcoming these difficulties and challenges, and programs they may recommend assisting learners who study Nihongo language. The phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study because it emphasized the

learners' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Van Manen (1990, 2014) asserts that the phenomenology of practice provides a descriptive (phenomenological) account of individuals' lived experiences.

Respondents of the Study

There were 11 willing students who volunteered to be part of the study. They were interviewed individually via email. The researchers used purposive sampling with the following guidelines in mind.

1. Participants were enrolled in Foreign Language subjects at the graduate level.
2. Participants were attending a hybrid distance learning modality.

The criteria were strictly adhered to elicit data on Nihongo language learners' lived experiences.

Sampling Technique

The study used a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method for obtaining a sample where researchers use their expertise to choose specific participants that will help the study meet its goals. These subjects have particular characteristics that the researchers need to evaluate their research question. In other words, the researchers pick the participants "on purpose."

Instruments of the Study

The study's primary instrument was an interview guide. A guide for interviews is a necessary component. To avoid ambiguity, it lists the questions, topics, and issues that the researchers wish to cover during the interview.

Data Gathering Procedure

The following questions were posed to the respondents regarding their lived experiences in studying the Nihongo language.

1. The strategies for learning the language.
2. The difficulties encountered in learning the language.
3. The ways in which the challenges faced were addressed.

The data collected from participants were treated with strict confidentiality and were approved via consent forms. Due to time constraints, the email interview took place on a weekend when there were no classes scheduled. The interview guides were distributed via email, and the respondents were given a week to complete their responses to the questions found in the interview guide. Following the interview, the researcher analyzed the participants' responses. In psychology, the descriptive phenomenological method employs a sequential data analysis approach based on certain phenomenological principles (Amedeo Giorgi, personal communication). Each step included an explanation of the process and philosophical concept that underpins its purpose and character. Thus, after the interview was transcribed, the text became the 'empirical evidence' to analyze psychological implications.

Ethical Considerations

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), the researcher's qualitative research role focuses on primary data collection. It must represent the most important principles related to ethical considerations of data privacy.

1. The research participants were not subjected to harm in any way whatsoever.
2. Respect for the dignity of research participants was prioritized.
3. Full consent was obtained from the participants before the study.
4. The protection of the privacy of research participants was ensured.
5. Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data was ensured.
6. Anonymity of individuals and organizations participating in the research was ensured.
7. Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research was avoided.
8. Affiliations in any form, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests, had been declared.
9. Any type of communication concerning the research was done with honesty and transparency.
10. Any misleading information and the representation of primary data findings in a biased way were avoided.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study, Lived Experiences of FL Students in Nihongo: Its Implications on Nihongo Classes in the Philippines, aimed to discuss the strategies, problems, and challenges encountered in studying and learning the Nihongo language under a hybrid distance learning modality.

With this study, the researcher explored the narrated experiences on the strategies, problems and challenges, and the coping mechanism by the Nihongo language learners to improve the teaching-learning process, which will benefit the students and the quality of education the learners receive.

Based on the interview questions and responses of the participants, there were three distinct categories of themes extracted from the research data. The themes identified from the results of this study are the following:

1. Strategies employed in studying and learning Nihongo.
2. Challenges encountered in studying and learning Nihongo.
3. Coping mechanisms with the challenges in studying and learning Nihongo.

Table 1
Strategies employed in studying and learning Nihongo

Code	Sub-theme / Categories	Emerging Theme	Meaning Unit/Interpretation
Oral drills / speaking-listening exercises	Strategies employed in studying the Nihongo language	Different types of language learning strategies were employed by the respondents in studying Nihongo.	FL students used several learning strategies in studying the Nihongo language; some used oral drills and speaking-listening exercises, but most of them employed several strategies.

Table 2
Challenges encountered in learning the Nihongo language

Code	Sub-theme / Categories	Emerging Theme	Meaning Unit / Interpretation
Latency Time Memory	Challenges encountered in learning the Nihongo language	The information learned is not always recognizable until the moment needed to display it comes	Learning a foreign language entails many challenges, but the most common problem is learners are skimmed on time. This is due to several factors.

Table 3
Coping mechanisms to the challenges encountered in learning the Nihongo language

Code	Sub-theme / Categories	Emerging Theme	Meaning Unit / Interpretation
Exposure Progress	Coping mechanisms for the challenges in learning Nihongo language	Continuous exposure to media, culture, and the language itself and tracking one's progress is key to addressing the challenges.	Effective and efficient coping mechanisms were done to achieve one's learning expectations and addressing the challenges for the learners is important aspect of studying a foreign language.

Discussion

FL students used several learning strategies in studying Nihongo language; some used the oral drills and speaking-listening exercises but most of them employ several strategies. There are truly many strategies to choose from in learning a foreign language. There are many factors as to why a learner chooses a specific strategy. It sometimes depends on the learners'

backgrounds and experiences and the overall structure of the language. Different types of language learning strategies were employed by the respondents in studying Nihongo. The second language learning theories support any strategy as long the learner can track his or her progress and reach his or her desired level of expectations. Mitchell, Myles, and Marsden (2019) discuss these theories and strategies of second language learning in their Taylor and Francis book titled, "Second Language Learning Theories" 4th edition Routledge imprint published in New York.

Learning a foreign language entails many challenges, but the most common problem is learners are skimped on time. This is due to several factors. This is like the findings of Soriano and Co (2022) which deals with the "Voices from Within: Students' Lived Experiences on English Language Anxiety." The results of the study is comparable to the factors mentioned in their study such as lack of confidence, fear of committing mistakes and negative comments, and lack of vocabulary/ideas. The information learned is not always recognizable until the moment needed to display it comes. This is evident during recitations. The learners do not know whether they have in them what was discussed and if they can positively apply the new learnings they have. Upon performing in the recitations and the speaking-listening drills, they are aware of the learnings they got.

Effective and efficient coping mechanisms were done to achieve one's learning expectations and addressing the challenges for the learners is important aspect of studying a foreign language. Of course, the learning modality is online; most of the coping mechanisms the learners found are online as well. Although there are physical and face-to-face coping mechanisms, the majority of the coping mechanisms are done online. Continuous exposure to media, culture, and the language itself and tracking one's progress is key to addressing the challenges. These ideas are similar to the findings of Rosiah and Arsyl (2019) which deals with the access to e-learning materials and how they can apply what was those on these materials.

To sum it all up, the respondents employ a variety of strategies in learning Nihongo language. Learning a foreign language is not an easy task and it comes with a variety of challenges as well. Numerous difficulties for the learners arise, and the most common one is the time and the speed at which learning should take place. Although there are challenges with learning a foreign language, the learning still took place in an efficient and effective manner because the learners chose coping mechanisms applicable and available to them. Understanding the learners' lived experiences is critical during this time as this was also reflective and appropriate as preparation in making changes to be implemented in teaching a foreign language.

Instructional intervention and a review of learners' lived experiences truly have an impact to the teaching-learning process. All the learning strategies, with the second language learning theories in mind as well, were implemented by the learners with the goal of increasing the level of achievement. For various reasons and factors that make the learning challenging, the learners utilized coping mechanisms to address the difficulties.

CONCLUSION

This research emphasizes the importance of employing diverse learning strategies and addressing time constraints in studying Nihongo. Additionally, it underscores the significance of continuous exposure, cultural immersion, and progress monitoring as effective coping mechanisms. These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on language learning and provide valuable insights for educators and learners alike, facilitating the development of more effective approaches to studying the Nihongo language.

A Proposed Program for Teachers About Providing Corrective Feedback

Session Title	Strategy
Introduction	Speaking-Listening Drills
Basic Greetings	Video recording
Vocabulary Items – school supplies	Game: bring me
Vocabulary Items – household things	Game: charades
Vocabulary Items – places and animals	Game: show me a pic, 4 pics – 1 place
Initial Self-check	Color on a scale of happy and sad faces
Sentence constructions	Write on a big board (chalk/magnetic)
Speaking short and long sentences	Video recording
Making a dialogue in a comic sketch Reenacting the dialogue and comic sketch Final Self-check	Art session (handwritten/digital) Combined speaking-listening drill and video recording, show the development of happy and sad faces

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