



STATUS OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN KENYA

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Abstract:

Japanese language is one of the major languages and the eighth most powerful language in the world. In Kenya, the Japanese language is taught in some universities and middle-level tertiary institutions. However, a large number of learners study the language at the basic level, and only a few of them progress to the advanced levels of the language. There is a need to establish the cause of the high rate of attrition with a view to propose remedial measures necessary for the enhancement of progression rates. In this paper, the status of the teaching and learning of the Japanese language in tertiary institutions in Kenya is investigated. The study focused mainly on instructional methods and instructional resources employed in the teaching of the language. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. The study revealed that teachers blend Grammar Translation, Direct and Communicative Language Teaching methods during instructions. It was further seen that Kanji script is not taught in some of the institutions and that though learners are exposed to authentic listening resources, they are not exposed to authentic reading resources. In addition, the instructional resources employed in the learning of the language do not contain local cultural content and therefore, the learners are not adequately exposed to aspects of local context during instructions. Lack of emphasis on Kanji in the language curricula was identified as the main factor contributing to high dropout rates and hampering the progression of learners of the Japanese language to advanced levels.

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1. Introduction

Japanese language is one of the major languages of the world and is the eighth most powerful language globally. The language is the ninth most spoken language by native speakers in the world, with over 128 million native speakers (Ethnologue & World Atlas.com, 2017). In Kenya, the Japanese language is taught in some universities and some middle-level tertiary institutions. A study conducted by the Japan Foundation in 2017 revealed that the number of students studying the Japanese language in Kenya decreased by 37% between 2012 and 2015. In addition, the number of learners taking the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) declined by 61% between 2010 and 2018 (Japan Foundation, 2018). Further, most of the language learners do not advance beyond the beginners' level (Wamuti et al., 2016).

In many parts of the world, there has been a growing number of people interested in the Japanese language in the recent past. This has been attributed to the uniqueness of the Japanese culture and Japan's universal status as one of the world's economic powers (Miyazoe-Wong, 2003). Over the years, the learning of Japanese as a foreign language has been mainly by professionals such as teachers, doctors, and business people for business purposes, but recently, even the younger generation has developed a liking of the language. The interest of the younger generation is especially due to the unique Japanese animation (anime), comics and cartoons (manga), which are very popular amongst the youth (Chan, 2016).

Japanese language is the eighth most powerful language globally. The ranking is according to Power Language Index (PLI) analysis, which considers the efficacy of a language in relation to the opportunities it provides, viz., the opportunity to travel widely (Geographic), opportunity to earn a living (economic), ability to communicate (communication), ability to acquire information and knowledge (media and knowledge), and ability to network internationally (diplomacy) (World Economic Forum, 2016; Chan, 2017). Further, the Japanese language is among the seven working languages of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) alongside English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Arabic (Chan, 2017). Table 1 shows the position of Japanese among the powerful languages of the world.

A lot of research on the status of teaching and learning of Japanese language has been carried out in various parts of the world including France (Forato, 2008; McGee et al., 2013), United States (Abe, 2009; Osumi, 2019), Malaysia (Jabbar, 2012) and Australia (Matsumoto and Obana, 2001).

Table 1: Ranking of Powerful Languages of the World

Rank	Language	No of Native speakers (million)	Geography	Economy	Communication	Knowledge & media	Diplomacy
1	English	446	1	1	1	1	1
2	Mandarin	960	6	2	2	3	6
3	French	80	2	6	5	5	1
4	Spanish	470	3	5	3	7	3
5	Arabic	295	4	9	6	18	4
6	Russian	150	5	12	10	9	5
7	German	92.5	8	3	7	4	8
8	Japanese	125	27	4	22	6	7
9	Portuguese	215	7	19	13	12	9
10	Hindi	310	13	16	8	2	10

Source: World Economic Forum, (2016).

In Kenya, the use of the Japanese language is gradually becoming widespread as the number of Japanese nationals residing in Kenya grows (Embassy of Japan in Kenya, 2014). The increased use of the Japanese language is expected to derive demand for learning of the language, as more Kenyans strive to effectively interact with the Japanese community in Kenya. However, the number of learners of the Japanese language in Kenya has been declining in the last few years. Moreover, only a few of the learners of the language manage to progress to advanced levels. This study aimed to establish the status of Japanese language education in tertiary institutions in Kenya, with a view to establishing reasons for the decline and failure to progress to advanced level in the language by Kenyan learners. The study provides baseline data on the current state of Japanese language teaching and learning. It contributes to the existing body of knowledge on teaching a logographic scripts-based language to learners whose first writing script is the alphabet. The study will provide teachers of the Japanese language with an opportunity for pedagogical reflection and professional growth.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Instructional Methods for Language Teaching

Instructional methods are a combination of techniques that are used and practised by teachers to deliver the course content to the learners (Liu & Shi., 2007). Over the years, new instructional methods for foreign languages have continuously been developed to make learning more meaningful and also to suit new learning theories (Richards, 2001). Several different methods for teaching foreign languages have been in use over the years. These include Communicative Approach, Direct and Grammar Translation methods, among others.

The Grammar Translation method approaches language learning through a detailed analysis of the grammar rules of the language, and applying the knowledge of these rules to translate sentences to and from the target language (Kongevold, 2014).

In the case of the Direct Method, the target language is used as the sole language of communication in class. In this approach, the learning of the foreign language is similar to that of mother-tongue in that the language is learned by use. The target language words and phrases are not translated into the learners' local language, but rather, the meanings are imparted through signs and actions such as gestures, pictures, and realia (Mart, 2013).

In Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), foreign language learners learn and practise the target language through interaction with one another and the teacher and through the study of information written or recorded in the target language for purposes other than language learning. In this approach, the learners discuss personal experiences with each other, and the teacher teaches on topical issues in a wide variety of situations in order to enhance language skills. The approach seeks to develop the ability to communicate in real-life situations rather than on mastering language structures (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Being a learner-centred approach, the learning activities are based on social interaction, such as pair work activities, games, dialogues, role plays or a practice exercise that requires spontaneous use of language to communicate meanings (Ellis, 2012).

The Communicative Approach has been adopted in many curricula designs globally as it focuses on improving speaking skills by exposing language learners to numerous activities of real-life language use. However, some researchers claim that for an effective learning outcome, several teaching approaches should be blended where each approach complements the others (Ilhan & Yildiz, 2016). Other researchers claim that the Communicative Approach is suitable only where there are linguistic and cultural similarities between the target language and the learners' first language as these similarities enhance the ability of the learner to communicate in the target language (Ohta, 2001; Gokcora & Eveyik-Aydin, 2011; Wolf, 2015).

2.2 Instructional Materials for Language Teaching

Instructional materials are a key component in foreign language teaching. As a major source of input, foreign language instructional materials should provide examples of how the target language is used in real situations and should also expose learners to a variety of language forms and functions (Masuhara, 2013). According to (Park & Park, 2013) instructional materials should provide learners with opportunities to accomplish tasks by integration of the four language skills, namely, speaking, listening, reading and writing. Further, Tomlinson (2013), proposes that the criteria for selecting suitable instructional material should be based on how the materials engage the language learners affectively and cognitively. He also states that foreign language teaching materials should help exploit the learner's potential for learning through meaningful experiences rather

than engage them in answering simple factual questions or undertaking drill-based activities repeatedly.

Park (2015) gives some characteristics of effective teaching materials. The author states that the teaching materials should; help the learners feel at ease and develop confidence, expose the learners to language in authentic use, provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to communicate, take into account the fact that the learners differ in learning styles and attitudes, and provide opportunities for feedback. The author further states that the teaching materials should help the learner identify the various linguistic features of the target language.

Park (2015) emphasizes the significance of learner-centeredness and authenticity in language instructional materials. Richards & Rogers (2001) emphasized the use of authentic instructional materials, basing their argument on the fact that literacy acquisition is related to authentic functions of language. The authors noted that since authentic materials comprise a variety of sociolinguistic features that embed cultural concepts, the materials enable learners to engage in activities that simulate real-life communication in the target language. Authentic material includes audio and audio-visual materials and also print and non-print material such as newspaper extracts, magazines, hotel menus, charts, and maps. In the learning of the Japanese language, these resources offer language that is contextually rich and culturally pertinent.

Ozawa (2006) acknowledges the importance of the use of authentic material in foreign language instructions but also notes that Japanese language teachers may encounter difficulties in the use of authentic written materials due to a large number of unfamiliar Kanji characters in the texts. For instance, Japanese newspapers and magazines contain about 3,000 Kanji of which seventy percent have over seven strokes while some consist of over 20 strokes (Hourse et al., 2002). According to Rose & Carson (2014), there are more than 10,000 Kanji in use, but with knowledge of at least 2,000 most frequently used Kanji, one can be considered as functionally literate in the language. Further, Ozawa, (2006) noted that authentic Japanese texts are extremely difficult for American learners of the Japanese language, and he attributed this to the writing systems.

Hew & Ohki (2001) studied the effectiveness of authentic animated audio-visual resources in the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language to Malaysian students. The findings revealed that although the instructional resource helped to improve learners' listening skills, the resources were less effective in improving pronunciation. As Tomlinson (2013) noted, foreign language instructional resources should be exploited in a way that maximizes intake and also stimulates purposeful output. This research examined the availability and usage of instructional materials that are used in the teaching of the Japanese language in Kenya.

3. Material and Methods

This study was done through observing classroom proceedings as well as administering questionnaires and interviews to teachers of the Japanese language in tertiary

institutions. Three different instruments, namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and participants' observation schedules were used. The use of different tools served as a form of data triangulation as it helped to verify some of the data collected. It has been argued that using the observation method in conjunction with interviews and questionnaires provides clear details about the participants' responses (Hatch, 2002).

The study was carried out in 5 tertiary institutions which offer Japanese language courses in Kenya and targeted all teachers and students of the Japanese language. The study involved a target population of 644 Japanese language learners and 18 Japanese language teachers. The independent variables in this study were, instructional methods and resources, while the dependent variables were learner's performance in the Japanese language and growth in a number of learners. The status of the teaching and learning of the Japanese language was established based on classroom observations and subjects' responses to questions relating to instructional methods and materials.

The questionnaires and interviews were administered to 18 teachers of the Japanese language of whom 4 were native Japanese speakers, while 14 were Kenyans. Classroom observations were carried out in the classrooms as language lessons progressed. During the observation exercise, the observers did not participate or interfere in the running of the lessons, as they noted down the various aspects of interest during the class proceedings. The various aspects observed included languages used during instructions, instructional resources employed, the teaching methodology used and how the learners related with the teacher.

The data from the observation schedules was quantitative while that from the questionnaires was both qualitative and quantitative. The data from the interview and was mainly qualitative. Qualitative data was grouped thematically and coded for analysis. The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel® 2016 software, for simple statistical measures which included central tendency and frequencies.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Instructional Methods Employed

The study sought to identify the instructional methods employed in the delivery of Japanese language course content. The various instructional methods identified include Lecturing, Role playing, Debate, Q&A, Shadowing, Group discussions, Demonstrations, Dramatization, Field Trips, Games and Songs. Table 2 shows the various methods identified and how often they are used. From this table, it is seen that the most frequently used methods are Q&A, Role playing, Group discussion and Lecturing, while the most rarely used methods are Field trips, Games and Songs. Other than lecturing, all the other methods used are interactive, where learners are engaged in the authentic use of the language, which is a feature of Communicative Language Teaching method, as described by Ellis (2012). On the question as to why field trips are not common, the teachers indicated that the support by the institutions in organizing such trips is limited. Further, debates, games and songs are not preferred methods of instruction, perhaps due to the

fact that the learners have not yet mastered sufficient grammar and vocabulary necessary for fluent communication in these activities.

Table 2: Various Methods Used in Japanese Language Teaching

Method	Frequency of use (%)			
	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Lecturing	50.0	38.9	5.6	5.6
Role playing	55.6	27.8	11.1	5.6
Debate	5.6	27.8	44.4	22.2
Q&A	88.9	5.6	5.6	0
Shadowing	22.2	50.0	11.1	16.7
Group discussions	55.6	38.9	5.6	0
Demonstrations	38.9	38.9	22.2	0
Dramatization	33.3	38.9	27.8	0
Field trips	5.6	44.4	50.0	0
Games	0	0	5.6	94.4
Songs	0	11.1	0	88.9

In order to gain insights on how these instructional methods are applied in class, classroom observations were undertaken during the language lessons for a total of 11 classes. For each of the classes, only one lesson was observed, which took between 90 and 120 minutes. The findings of the observations are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Findings from Classroom Observations

No.	Criteria	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Not at all
1.	The teacher delivers the course content using the Japanese language.	0	3	8	0
2.	The teacher stimulates the learners to use the Japanese language by using gestures, signs and realia.	8	2	1	0
3.	The teacher writes on the board using Hiragana/Katakana.	3	4	4	0
4.	The teacher writes on the board using Kanji.	0	0	4	7
5.	The teacher is not limited to the lesson content but incorporates other information related to the topic.	0	10	1	0
6.	Teacher integrates all language skills.	10	1	0	0
7.	The teacher actively facilitates learners' engagement in learning activities.	10	1	0	0
8.	The teacher uses Japanese authentic resources (newspaper extracts, artefacts, songs, electronic media, etc.) to aid learning.	1	5	5	0
9.	Teacher utilizes technology (audio/ audio-visual/digital) in delivery of course content.	3	5	3	0
10.	The teacher scaffolded when the need arose.	10	1	0	0
11.	The teacher emphasizes key and new vocabulary.	8	3	0	0
12.	The teacher gives an explanation of culturally unfamiliar elements.	6	2	3	0

During the lessons, it was observed that none of the teachers delivered the content fully in the Japanese language, but 3 (27.3%) of the teachers used the language most of the time. The other 8 (72.7%) of teachers used English most of the time to deliver the course content. Thus, the course content is mainly delivered to the learners using the Grammar Translation Method. This approach which is used by most of the teachers is appropriate since the learners have not yet acquired adequate knowledge of the Japanese language to fully grasp the content. For language learners who are at the basic level, more effective learning is achieved by using learners' native language as the language of instruction as opposed to using the target language. This is in line with the recommendation by Auer (2016) that at the beginners' level, foreign language learners should have the course content translated to their native language to enhance comprehension.

It was also observed that in some instances, some teachers used gestures to convey meaning during instructions, without translating words and phrases to English. Thus, the direct method was sometimes used for the delivery of the course content in the Japanese language classes. The direct method is the method in which target language words and phrases are not translated into the learners' local language, but rather, the meanings are imparted through signs and actions such as gestures, pictures, and realia (Mart, 2013).

The study also sought to establish the extent to which the various writing systems *viz* Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana and Romaji are used during instructions. Kanji is a logographic script for Japanese content words and represent semantic and phonetic values. They are used in verbs, nouns, and adjectives. Hiragana is phonetic lettering for Japanese syllables and is used to write grammatical functions including particles, suffixes and inflectional endings for some Kanji. Katakana is also phonetic lettering for Japanese syllables mainly used for loan words. Romaji is a representation of Japanese words in Latin scripts, i.e., using alphabets.

From the study, it was observed that all the four writing systems namely Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana and Romaji, are used at varying degrees depending on the teacher's preference and the level of the learners. In four (36.4%) of the classes, the teachers wrote on the board using Hiragana, Katakana and sometimes Kanji, and did not use Romaji at any time during the lesson. In the other seven (63.6%) classes, the teachers used Hiragana, Katakana and Romaji but did not use Kanji at all during the entire lesson. The lack of emphasis on Kanji by some teachers could be due to the fact that knowledge of Kanji is not among the expected learning outcomes for some curricula. Since the learners are required to memorize the various scripts, the use of these scripts by the teacher during instruction could enhance the rate of memorization. For an effective acquisition of a foreign language, comprehensible input in the target language during instructions is essential as learners acquire a language by understanding the information given in that language (Frohm and Engelska, 2009). The exclusive use of Kanji, Hiragana and Katakana in the teaching of the Japanese language can lead to faster acquisition of writing and

reading skills of the language. On the other hand, the use of Romaji alone may limit the learning of Japanese scripts, which are vital components of the Japanese language.

It was also observed that all the 11 teachers incorporated other information related to the topic and did not restrict themselves to the lesson content only. In addition, all the teachers integrated the four language skills during the lessons and also used a variety of teaching methods. The use of these methods actively engaged learners in the learning activities and involved the use of authentic resources. This practice is in line with the recommendations of Ozawa (2006) who emphasized the use of authentic resources and the integration of a variety of information related to the topic, for effective Japanese language instructions, and Hertel (2003), who emphasized the importance of incorporating information contained in authentic communication into the classroom in order to create a real-life situation of use of a foreign language.

It was observed that all teachers of the Japanese language used audio and audio-visual media with authentic content during instructions. In the use of these electronic media, the teacher played either a videotape, cassette tape, CD or DVD containing some of the content of the topic being taught, after which, the teachers engaged the learners in interactive sessions where the learners were required to discuss what they had learned through the media. This practice is supported by Al-Yami (2008) and Auer (2016) who suggested that in the learning of a foreign language, authentic teaching resources available could be used by the educators to scaffold in a variety of contexts, especially for the acquisition of listening skills. In all classes, there were no authentic reading materials in use during instructions. The reason for this could be due to the fact that authentic written resources contain Kanji characters which are difficult for the learners at this level. Thus, though there is a reinforcement of writing, speaking and listening skills through authentic resources, there is no reinforcement of reading skills through the use of authentic resources. It can thus be concluded that the learners of the Japanese language in tertiary institutions in Kenya are exposed to real-life situations during instructions and that the teaching of the Japanese language incorporates technology in form of audio and audio-visual media but not from print media.

During the lessons, it was observed that eight (72.3%) of the teachers sometimes corrected spoken errors while three (27.7%) of the teachers did not. For instance, in a session of questions and answers, a learner pronounced the word '*atatakai*' which is the Japanese word for 'warm' as '*atakakai*'. The teacher did not correct this error but allowed the learners to continue with their session undisrupted. However, before the end of the lesson, the teacher engaged learners in a shadowing exercise where the learners were required to listen to a recorded text and then speak it aloud simultaneously with the model recording. Among the words featured in the exercise was the word '*atatakai*' which the learner had mispronounced. The teacher did not correct the error directly but used the error as an indicator of what to emphasize in the teaching. Interrupting a learner in order to correct a spoken error in language learning may cause the learner to be embarrassed and discouraged, leading to withdrawal from learning (Jing et al., 2016).

It was observed that all the teachers scaffolded in all the task-based learning activities including role play and group discussions where the teacher offered learning support to the learners who were unable to make progress on their own. For example, for group discussions, the teacher would give a discussion task to the groups. The teacher would then join a group in discussion and instruct the learners on areas where they needed support and leave them to continue as he instructed another group. This practice is in line with recommendations by Rivera (2010), that in a classroom situation, the teacher should scaffold where necessary and withdraw the support once the learners are able to progress on their own. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that teachers of the Japanese language in tertiary institutions in Kenya exercise scaffolding during instructions.

Foreign language instructors are not only required to explain the linguistic aspects of the target language but also the cultural aspects that are unfamiliar to the learners (Wamuti et al., 2016). This study sought to establish whether the teachers explained culturally unfamiliar elements that were encountered during learning. It was observed that all teachers explained to some extent, the culturally unfamiliar elements during the lessons. For instance, in one of the classes, the learners were required to look at some pictures and then make sentences describing the activities depicted in the pictures. One of the pictures illustrated a man walking to the post office. The post office was depicted by the symbol (〒) which is the representation of a post office, a symbol that is culturally unfamiliar to the learners. The learners were not able to describe this activity and the teacher had to explain. Thus, culturally unfamiliar elements are explained to the learners of the Japanese language in tertiary institutions.

On the methods used to teach Kanji, the study revealed that the teachers used more than one method. The various methods used and the reasons are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Methods Used to Teach Kanji

Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Reason
Repeated writing by stroke order including calligraphy	18	100	Enhances internalization and retention
Use of flashcards	6	33.3	Portable thus accessible for repeat exercise
Relating Kanji with pictures of origin	4	22.2	Pictures aide in memorizing the Kanji

Note: N = 18

All the eighteen teachers indicated that they taught Kanji by making the learners write them many times, following a specific stroke order. For example, the Kanji for mountain, *yama* is written as 山, in 3 strokes and in the order shown in Figure 1.

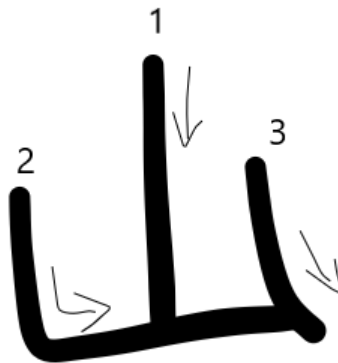


Figure 1: Order of Strokes for the Kanji *yama*

The teachers indicated that this repeated exercise enhances retention. Six (33.3%) of the teachers stated that besides giving repeated exercises, they also guide learners in making flashcards bearing the Kanji. The learners are then required to carry the flashcards with them and practice reading in order to memorize the Kanji. Four (22.2%) of the teachers indicated that they also use pictures of origin of the Kanji to help relate the shape of the Kanji. For example, the picture of origin for the Kanji for *yama* given above is as shown in Figure 2.

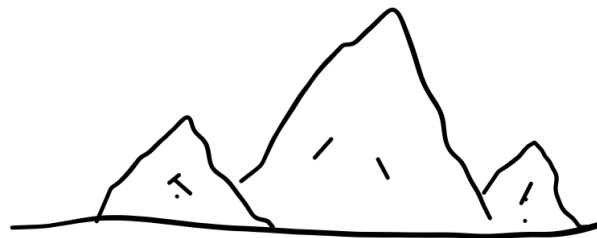


Figure 2: Picture of Origin for The Kanji *Yama* (山)

Thus, Kanji is taught using rote learning where learners are made to write Kanji many times and also through mnemonic learning where learners' link Kanji with their pictures of origin. These findings are similar to those of Gamage, (2003) and Torrijos, (2016) who stated that the most common method of teaching Kanji is the repeated writing of the Kanji whereby repetition is used to help retention of the symbol. The findings also correspond to those of Yamaguchi (2008) and Rose (2013) who noted that teachers of the Japanese language adopted both rote and mnemonic learning strategies in their Kanji teaching practice.

4.2 Teachers' Perception of Importance of Kanji Script

Concerning the teaching of Kanji, eight (44.4%) of the teachers indicated that teaching of Kanji was a requirement in their institutions while ten (55.6%) teachers indicated that it was not a requirement. The eight teachers who indicated that teaching Kanji is a requirement were from three of the five tertiary institutions under study.

The institutions which have made the teaching of Kanji compulsory may have based this decision on the understanding that lack of exposure to Kanji hinders learners'

ability to interact with authentic resources. Lack of interaction with authentic resources hampers the learners' ability to acquire proficiency in a target language. Further, it is argued that mastery of the Kanji scripts enhances proficiency in the acquisition of all four language skills. In addition, Kanji being symbolic and conveys meaning, texts written in Kanji are easier for a learner to comprehend than texts written purely in the other scripts (Bartlett, 2001; Kuwana, 2016).

Those who indicated that Kanji teaching was not a requirement were further requested to indicate what they thought the reason was for excluding Kanji in the curriculum. The reasons they gave and their frequencies are shown in Table 5. One of the teachers gave two reasons while the rest gave one reason each.

Table 5: Reasons for not teaching Kanji

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The College is not keen on teaching foreign languages at an advanced level.	5	50
Acquisition of speaking skills, listening skills and basic writing and reading are sufficient.	2	20
Hiragana and Katakana are already difficult for the learners.	4	40

Note: N = 10.

It can be seen in Table 5 that five (50%) of the teachers indicated that their institutions are not keen on teaching foreign languages at advanced levels and thus cannot allocate time to allow for the teaching of Kanji. Four (40%) of the teachers indicated that Hiragana and Katakana are already difficult for the learners and introducing Kanji would be counterproductive. Two (20%) of the teachers indicated that the knowledge of Kanji is unnecessary and argued that acquisition of speaking and listening skills together with some basic skills in writing and reading are sufficient for the learners. Similar views have been expressed by teachers of the Japanese language in the United States who reported that learners of the language did not find it necessary to study Kanji since the scripts are not used for communication in their daily lives (Yamaguchi, 2008). However, Spence-Brown, (2014) supports the teaching of Kanji but suggests that only the reading skills and not the writing should be emphasized, as society is in the digital age, where typing has become the norm.

Thus, some learners of the language are not exposed to Kanji scripts and some teachers do not consider it necessary to teach Kanji scripts. Failure to teach Kanji may hinder learners from benefiting from the use of authentic reading material, which could be a contributing factor to the poor rates of progression to advanced levels.

4.3 Instructional Resources Used

The use of a variety of instructional resources is essential in the implementation of a learner-centred teaching strategy. In foreign language instruction, the use of authentic instructional resources is emphasized as literacy acquisition is related to the authentic

functions of a language (Richards and Rogers, 2001). This study sought to establish the availability of instructional resources in the Japanese language classrooms in tertiary institutions in Kenya, and how these resources are utilized. This was done by administering questionnaires and interviews to teachers, as well as attending Japanese classes for observations.

The instructional resources that were available included textbooks such as *Minna no Nihongo*, *Marugoto*, *Genki*, *Basic Kanji*, *Japanese for Hotel Staff* and *Japanese for Busy People*, most of which are supplemented with audio and audio-visual materials to enhance learners' participation during the lesson. Some of the textbooks are designed for use for a specific purpose such as for persons intending to travel to Japan for business or as tourists, and therefore the contents are area-specific. For example, *Japanese for Hotel Staff* focuses on phrases and mannerisms encountered in the tourism and hospitality industry. According to Masuhara (2013), foreign language instructional resources should meet the needs of the learners by exposing them to the appropriate language purpose and functions. The *Minna no Nihongo* (Japanese for Everyone) and *Marugoto* textbooks are more generic, and therefore suitable for general-purpose learning. Thus, both generic and special-purpose language textbooks are used in tertiary institutions in Kenya.

The audio and audio-visual materials included magnetic tapes, Compact Discs (CD) and Digital Video Discs (DVD) with content aligned to the topics in the respective textbooks. The teacher also used these devices to expose learners to authentic content as well, which included conversations, songs, drama and movies by native speakers of Japanese. In this case, the teacher played audio and/or audio-visual devices with the authentic content for the learners to listen to or watch and later discuss.

Other instructional materials included dictionaries, flashcards, pictures and maps. It was observed that learners were consulting their mobile devices frequently during group work, to access online dictionaries and Hiragana and Katakana tables. Thus, the learners of the Japanese language in tertiary institutions have and utilize, a wide variety of instructional resources.

On the utilization of textbooks, sixteen teachers indicated that they used *Minna no Nihongo* as the core text while the other two teachers indicated that they used *Marugoto*. Each of these books contains basic grammar and about 220 Kanji. The fact that *Minna no Nihongo* is used by most teachers was confirmed during the classroom observations where it was observed that in nine out of the eleven classes, *Minna no Nihongo* was the core text while in the other two classes, the core text was *Marugoto*. It was seen that all the other textbooks were utilized only as supplementary textbooks. The use of different core textbooks is an indication that the teachers have independence in selecting the textbook to use and the teaching approach to adopt. Thus, the teaching of the Japanese language in tertiary institutions in Kenya is not harmonized across the institutions. These findings are similar to those of Jabbar (2012) who noted that the approaches of teaching the Japanese language in New Zealand schools, varied from one school to another. Similar findings were reported in Australia (Kretser and Spencer-Brown, 2010), and German (McGee et al., 2013) where curriculum and standards were seen to vary widely

as institutions and individual teachers have autonomy in selecting course content and teaching approaches.

In order to clarify further on the frequency of usage of instructional resources, the teachers were asked through the structured question in a Likert Scale to indicate how frequent they utilized online resources and audio/ audio-visual resources to teach the Japanese language. The teachers' responses are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequency of Use of Electronic Resources by the Teachers

Resources used	Frequency of use (%)				
	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Online resources	0	55.6	38.9	0	5.6
Audio-visual resources (Tapes, CDs and DVDs)	50.0	5.6	44.4	0	0

On the use of online resources, 94.4% of the teachers indicated that they use online resources to teach the Japanese language, of which 55.6% use them frequently and 38.9% occasionally. Some teachers indicated that they use an application available online as a supplement for *Minna no Nihongo* textbook to aid in improving listening skills while others indicated that they use online applications to help learners practice writing and memorize Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji. Further, all the teachers, indicated that they use audio and audio-visual media; 50% of them always, 5.6% frequently, and 44.4% occasionally. The finding on the use of audio and audio-visual media was also evident during classroom observations where the researchers noted that all the teachers used these media. The learners are therefore exposed not only to the print media but also to electronic media which makes the learning more interactive and more effective. However, the teachers indicated that they faced challenges in the utilization of instructional resources. These challenges included large class size, heavy workload, insufficient time for lectures, scarcity of teaching resources such as textbooks and locally produced materials, lack of training on the use of some resources, learners' indiscipline, lack of learner's motivation, and unreliable digital network.

Availability of a textbook for each learner enhances the effectiveness of learning as it facilitates easier content delivery and lesson management, and individualized and cooperative learning, even in the absence of the teacher. When textbooks for use by learners are insufficient, learning is compromised and this is reflected through poor teachers and learners' motivation, high dropout rates, low academic achievement, and unmet course objectives (Cooley, 2014; Okongo et al., 2015). Thus, though there is a variety of textbooks of the Japanese language in the tertiary institutions, the low number of volumes hinders effectiveness in course delivery, and this could be one of the factors contributing to the high rates of attrition and failure to progress to advanced levels. Further, though there is a wide variety of instructional resources produced in Japan, there is a paucity of locally produced resources. Locally produced resources are essential as they relate topics to students' lives, thus encouraging the elicitation of the students' prior knowledge of the concept. The blending of local and non-local instructional resources is

supported by Ahmed (2017) who argues that effective instructional resources should comprise a combination of resources that have target language culture, local culture, and multicultural contexts. As was indicated by the teachers in tertiary institutions, this is not the case as there is hardly any locally produced instructional materials for teaching the language. Thus, the learners in these institutions may not be adequately exposed to aspects of local context during the learning of the Japanese language.

On class sizes, most of the classes have about twenty learners, but there are some classes with as high as seventy learners. The only viable method for teaching large classes is lecturing. The lecturing method is largely teacher-centred and therefore not suitable for foreign language learning, which calls for methods, such as Direct and Communicative Language Teaching (Liu and Shi, 2007). In addition, large classes may have various indiscipline cases including failure to participate during lessons, failure to do assignments and making noise during lessons. Further, it is difficult to create rapport with learners and to give individual attention to the learners in large classes. Moreover, a teacher instructing a large class has to deal with a heavy marking load and may also experience difficulties in giving learners effective and timely feedback (Todd, 2012; Debreli, et al., 2019). According to Todd (2012), the number of learners in a foreign language class should not exceed 45, for effective delivery of course content.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, the status of the teaching and learning of the Japanese language in tertiary institutions in Kenya has been discussed. The instructional methods and resources employed were analyzed. It was found that Communicative Language Teaching, Direct and Translation methods are used to deliver the content and that the teachers scaffold the learners and expose them to real-life situations during instruction. In addition, the teachers incorporate technology in form of audio and audio-visual media and also reinforce writing, speaking and listening skills through authentic resources. It was also found that the teachers do not use any authentic resources to reinforce reading skills.

Concerning availability and use of instructional resources, the teachers use a variety of textbooks but these textbooks are not easily accessible to the learners. Further, the learners are not adequately exposed to aspects of local context during the learning of the Japanese language as there are no locally produced instructional resources for the language. Failure to emphasize the learning of Kanji was identified to be one of the main factors that hinder the progression of learners of the Japanese language to advanced levels.

It is recommended that the Kanji script be introduced right from the basic level and that during instructions, the script be used in addition to Hiragana and Katakana. Further, in order to equip teachers of the language with knowledge on Japanese culture and modern teaching methods for the language, the non-native Japanese language teachers should regularly undergo in-service training in Japan.

Further, there is a need to carry out studies on the efficacy of instructional methods and instructional media used to deliver Japanese language course content. In addition, a comparative study on the teaching of the Japanese language, including motivation factors and beliefs of learners of Japanese language in Kenya and another country where the retention rate of learners of Japanese language is high should be carried out.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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