



## **Research on Experiential Japanese Training Methods At Universities in Ho Chi Minh City**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the context that Vietnam and Japan are maintaining and strongly developing a good and comprehensive relationship in all fields, it is required that the Japanese-language workforce must have high professional qualifications and be able to compete with other markets from other countries in Vietnam in general and in Ho Chi Minh City in particular. The problem is that it is necessary to have new educational methods to help Japanese language students become interested in theoretical professional knowledge, create interest in learning, and above all, create opportunities to experience with future jobs so that students can have the right orientation later. The survey was conducted at two universities offering Japanese language training in Ho Chi Minh City. Research results show that this method is gradually being applied to training programs at the above schools, but it still does not bring the spirit of an experiential class due to difficulties in choosing content and form of training appropriate to the situation. This study aims to research on experiential Japanese training methods and propose some measures to apply to training programs of students studying Japanese language at universities in Ho Chi Minh City.

**Keywords:** education, Japanese language, students, experiential education

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the number of Japanese workers is gradually becoming more, the Japanese labor market in Ho Chi Minh City has also become more competitive. Therefore, universities in Ho Chi Minh City are finding new ways to equip students with the necessary skills to meet the needs of high-quality human resources in the future. Experiencing Japanese language learning will contribute to overcoming the limitations in the previous training process such as Japanese language majors' students do not have many opportunities to practice, leading to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. In addition, because there are not many opportunities to interact with reality, leading to the situation that students of all majors in general and students of the Japanese language major in particular do not meet the requirements of recruiting enterprises, creating difficulties for them in finding a job after graduation. Participation in experiential learning sessions and extracurricular training sessions is essential for student growth and development (Kawai Toru, 2012). To help students have opportunities and conditions to develop their capacity, promote creativity, take initiative in work as well as help students have the opportunity to apply professional knowledge learned in class. In fact, recently, universities have been putting experiential learning hours into their training programs (Kemeny et al., 2006). As one of the main units responsible for training human resources for society, the university must ensure the training of human resources with solid practical knowledge, comprehensive theoretical knowledge, etc.; have cognitive skills related to criticism, analysis and synthesis; practical skills, communication skills and behavior necessary to perform complex tasks, etc." (Chi, 2017). However, this activity was not carried out according to a long-term and methodical plan, but was more formal, so the effect was not as expected. The problem is how to improve the feasibility as well as improve the efficiency achieved from a Japanese language class when applying the experiential training method.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Research history**

An experiential field trip is an activity held at a location outside the classroom. It could be a short-term activity under the supervision of a lecturer or a multi-day survey project. The important thing here is that this activity needs to take place outside the rigid framework of the classroom (Diep, 2013). In university training programs, experiential learning is believed to be a means to build students' skills and facilitate the application of theory into practice. That is why practical experience is increasingly important for future job search (Eyler, 2009). Moreover, creative experiential activity is an educational activity through personal experience and creativity in connecting

experiences learned in school with real life so that experiences are accumulated and gradually transformed into capacity. John Dewey is said to be the first person in the world to propose an experiential training method in 1938. And this method has been applied methodically at famous universities in the world. In Vietnam, according to the program "General education - Experience activities and career guidance activities in 2018" of the Vietnam Ministry of Education, experiential activities will help students reinforce positive habits in life, studying and living, communicating and behaving culturally and focusing more on developing responsibility to self, family and community; forming individual values according to the general standards of society; forming and developing the capacity to solve problems in life; know how to organize work in a scientific way; consciously practice the necessary qualities of employees and make a study and training plan in accordance with their own career orientation (Milne et al., 2002).

However, practical experience activities only really bring good results when well prepared. Specifically, before conducting the actual lesson, students need to be equipped with relevant knowledge and terms as well as understanding about the field and location of that lesson (Diep, 2013).

### Reality of experiential Japanese language training at universities in Ho Chi Minh City

In the current period of integration, to be able to easily integrate into society requires people to always cultivate and learn new skills to be able to assert their position in the labor market full of fierce competition. Therefore, in addition to professional knowledge, foreign language ability is also one of the advantages (Hussein & Mater, 2020). Through learning a foreign language to understand oneself as well as understand each other with the aim of creating a bond to build a cooperative society between individuals (Chi, 2017). According to the Government's report, Japan is one of the largest investors in Vietnam, so the Japanese language training industry is also facing the problem of improving the quality of teaching to build a qualified high-quality force to serve the national production and development process. On the other hand, the university is in charge of training human resources with both professional knowledge and professional skills and ethics, so the current priority is to have new training methods in the university environment learning (Walters & Misra, 2013).

In fact, at present, the experiential training method has been applied to other training fields at universities in Ho Chi Minh City with the desire to create conditions for students to connect with other students' knowledge has been learned with practice to turn it into the foundation and experience for future work. However, when applying the experiential method to the field of Japanese language training, it has not really achieved the desired effect due to the impact of many different factors (Khuanwang et al., 2016).

### RESEARCH METHOD, OBJECT AND SCOPE

This study is conducted based on the survey process as well as data analysis from previous and current studies. The two research methods used in this article are mainly qualitative and quantitative research. The research results were carried out through the process of collecting opinions from 21 students majoring in Japanese language at universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The reason these subjects were selected is because the space, time and distance as well as the knowledge and expertise to carry out the research have many advantages and are suitable for the research content. Students majoring in Japanese language have the most practical experience and comprehensive insight into this new training method. Survey form by survey form and supporting tools such as Zalo, Email, etc. have been utilized to get the most appropriate and accurate survey results.

### RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The application of the experiential method to Japanese language training at universities is generally implemented, but has not been effective. In addition, there are many disagreements in the process of choosing appropriate methods and topics, etc., it also causes difficulties for students.

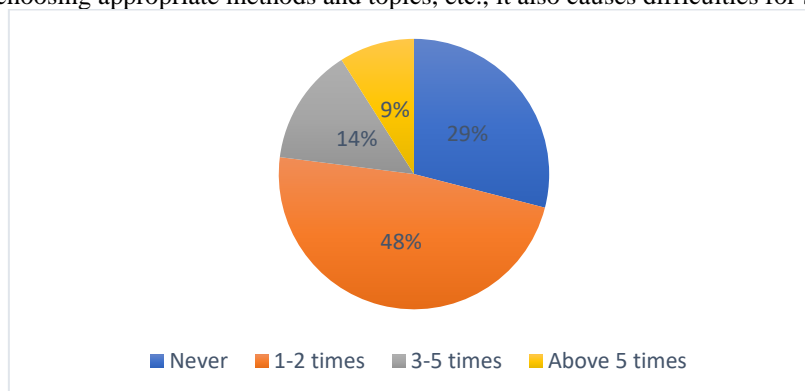
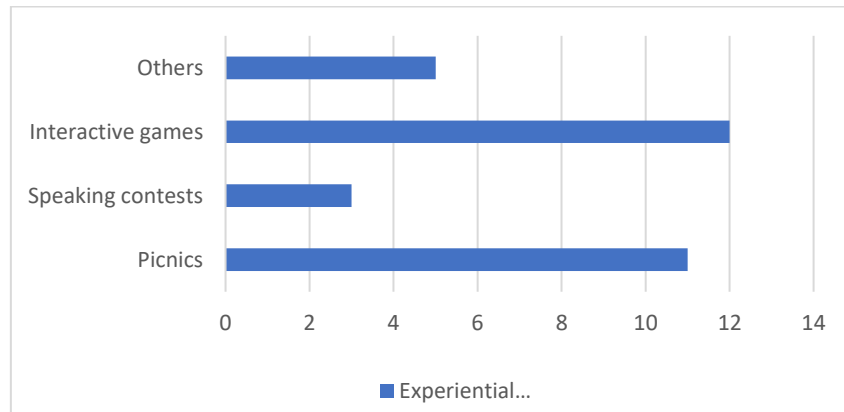


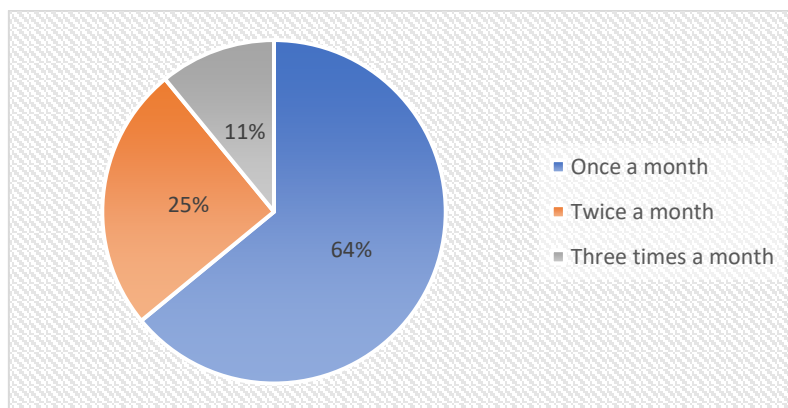
Fig.1: Number of times students participating in experiential Japanese classes

According to the survey results of Japanese language students in Ho Chi Minh City, about 71% of students have ever participated in experiential classes (Figure 1), showing that almost schools are applying this method to training programs but it is not really feasible because the number of students participating has not reached 3/4 of the total number of students majoring in Japanese in Ho Chi Minh City. In which, most students only have the opportunity to participate 1-2 times during their study at the university. In addition, only about 9% of students participate more than 5 times during the course. That makes this method not really popular and not widely accepted in universities.



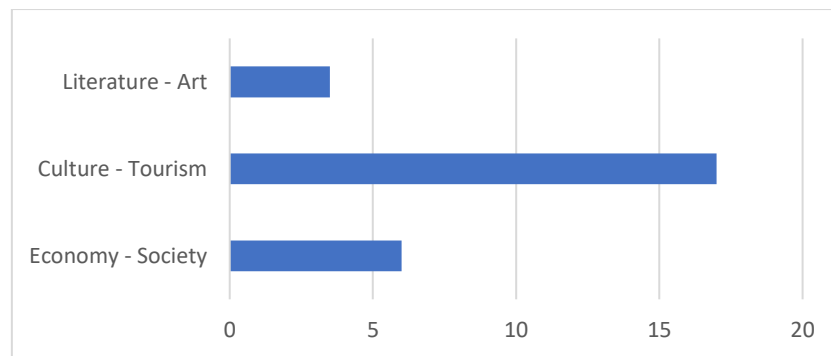
**Fig.2: Types of experiential classes that students have participated in**

In which, most of the students have the opportunity to experience through interactive games held during the lessons for the purpose of reinforcing students' knowledge (Figure 2). In addition, the organization of field trips has also been conducted at universities with the desire to bring students the most authentic experience of the Japanese language major. At the same time, speech contests are also organized by universities and universities create conditions for students to participate in speech contests hosted by organizations and associations in the city. Ho Chi Minh. This is a form of organizing activities that are attractive, attractive to students and highly effective in gathering, educating, training and orienting values for young people (Diep, 2015). The debate contest is competitive between individuals and groups and the results of the contest will reflect the participants' preparation. Therefore, this is also one of the important factors needed when organizing an experiential Japanese training class.



**Fig.3: Frequency of organizing an experience session with the highest efficiency**

Based on a survey conducted with Japanese language students in Ho Chi Minh City, the results showed that up to 57% of students think that it is advisable to organize an experiential class once a month is reasonable (Figure 3). It shows that students of schools also have positive reactions to organizing actual classes to replace conventional traditional classes. On the other hand, 29% of students want to have an opportunity to participate twice a month and 14% want to have an experiential activity three times a month. It is understandable because students have to balance their time between subjects as well as spend time on part-time jobs because according to the survey, the third- and fourth-year students account for 71% of the total number of students participating in the survey.



**Fig.4: Topics often included in experiential content**

Regarding the content that is often included in the lessons for students, most topics related to culture - tourism are the most popular because the issues related to this topic bring a lot of interest to students (Figure 4). A field trip combined with study always leaves more impressions than other topics. On the other hand, topics about culture - tourism are also relatively easy to implement, do not require specialized knowledge but mainly rely on their own understanding. In addition, literary and artistic issues also receive people's attention. Students can also obtain information related to this issue through searching for information on the mass media, the internet, etc. However, in the above topics, the topic is economy – society has received relatively little attention because these topics require students to have in-depth specialized knowledge related to the field of economics (Al-Hafidh, 2020).

**Table 1: Assessment of the benefits of participating in experiential classes**

No.	Benefits	Scales					Total of answers	Total of scores	Average scores
		1	2	3	4	5			
1	Gain specialized knowledge	1	2	8	9	1	21	70	0.09
2	Improve practical skills	1	0	6	12	2	21	77	0.10
3	Develop soft skills	1	0	7	10	3	21	77	0.10
4	Nurturing creativity	1	1	7	11	1	21	73	0.10
5	Improve reflexes	1	0	8	11	1	21	74	0.10
6	Develop communication and thinking skills	0	2	7	9	3	21	76	0.10
7	Developing leadership and problem-solving skills	0	1	6	12	2	21	78	0.10
8	Improve teamwork	0	1	7	10	3	21	78	0.10
9	The right career direction in the future	0	2	4	14	1	21	77	0.10
10	Accumulate experiences for the future	1	5	9	4	2	21	64	0.09
								744	1.00

Applying a 5-point Likert scale from disagree to completely agree, students were asked to express their views with the benefits achieved when participating in an experiential class. The results show that up to 80% agree with the idea that participating in experiential classes will help students improve professional knowledge, practical ability and foster soft skills (Table 1). In addition, more than 90% of students surveyed expressed their agreement with the improvement of thinking ability, leadership ability and teamwork ability when participating in this practical class. Experiential activities help form and develop in students the abilities of autonomy and self-study, communication and cooperation, problem solving and creativity through specific competencies" (Hai, 2014). In addition, participation in experiential courses also helps students orient and choose future jobs. Real-life work experience will help students have an overview of careers and find jobs that match their personality.

**Table 2: Difficulties encountered by students when participating in experiential classes**

No.	Difficulties	Scale					Total of answer	Total scores	Average scores
		1	2	3	4	5			
1	Insufficient professional knowledge	0	8	4	7	2	21	66	0.19
2	Bad practice skills	1	3	5	9	3	21	73	0.21
3	Poor communication skills	0	5	7	5	4	21	71	0.21
4	Not confident enough to participate	2	5	9	3	2	21	61	0.18
5	Can't balance time	0	2	10	7	2	21	72	0.21
								343	1.00

Through the 5-point Likert scale from disagree to completely agree, students were also asked to rate the difficulties that prevent them from participating in the experiential class. According to the survey results, up to 60% of

students answered that it was due to insufficient professional knowledge while 40% of students answered that professional knowledge does not necessarily bring major obstacles. On the other hand, more than 80% of students assessed that due to poor practice ability, it also becomes difficult to participate in experiential classes. Therefore, students want to participate in this class to improve their practical ability. In addition, poor communication skills and lack of confidence to participate in practical activities such as speeches also make up the majority (about 70%). Finally, with the reason of not being able to balance the time to attend extracurricular classes, only about 40% of students agree with this idea. Mostly because the third- and fourth-year students have a tight schedule, so they cannot arrange a reasonable time.

### **Some solutions to apply experiential lessons to bring high efficiency**

After analyzing the current situation as well as surveying students' opinions, a number of measures have been proposed to bring the highest efficiency when applying the experiential method to Japanese language training for students.

First, in order to be able to apply experiential lessons to the training program, it is necessary to pay attention to the selection of content and organizational form suitable to the ability and level of students to bring students the best experience in the process of participating in the actual learning session. If students are interested in the lesson, they will be motivated to study, learn on their own and confidently participate in the class. Especially for Japanese language students, learning and absorbing a new language is inherently very difficult, but it is even more difficult when learning more specialized knowledge of many fields (Lam et al., 2018).

In addition, students themselves also have to build their own plans and appropriate time for experiential activities to avoid distractions and disrupt the overall plan of the long-term learning process. Practical activities are independent of students, so it is advisable to organize for students and lecturers to participate in discussions, give opinions and develop plans, divide work, tasks and work together (UK, 2019).

On the other hand, the topic of the experiential learning session should be studied scientifically, not optional. The content should include practical knowledge that is closely related to life, community, society, etc. and synthesized in many different fields such as education, economy, etc. In addition to the activities listed, so apply many different forms to be able to organize an effective session such as exchanges with students from other schools, forums to promote students to express their opinions (Kiweewa, et al., 2013).

### **CONCLUSION**

The integration process promotes the innovation of Japanese language training methods. In the past, Japanese language education was formed based on the economic impact of Japan, the development and improvement of training quality depended on the education of the country. Experiential activities are all processes of contact with reality so that students can apply what they have learned to solve problems in life, thereby helping students practice more skills, develop new capacity development. This is also an active teaching method, characterized by activities related to the natural, economic and social fields. Therefore, when applied to Japanese language training, it is hoped that the quality of Japanese language students will be improved. Therefore, it is necessary to actively research the construction and organization of practical activities.

### **LIMITATIONS**

The article also has many limitations in terms of content and form. Hopefully the article will be improved.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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