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The perception of Japanese among teachers and learners in Kenya: A case of tertiary institutions

ABSTRACT

Japanese is one of the foreign languages taught in tertiary institutions in Kenya. Though the language is offered at basic as well as at advanced levels, most of its learners do not pursue it beyond the basic level. One of the contributing factors to the low progression could be how the teachers and the learners perceive the language. This paper examined the perception of teachers and learners of Japanese in tertiary institutions. Data was collected through administering questionnaires and interviews to the teachers and learners of the language. The data was then analyzed using statistical software. The study revealed that learners' perceive the language as a tool for communication and socialization, as well as a means for professional advancement. It was also found that some teachers do not consider it necessary to teach the logographic scripts (Kanji) scripts, and that some institutions do not teach Kanji at all. The lack of emphasis on Kanji scripts, perceived difficulty of the language and the perception that the language is a tool of socialization of which basic level is sufficient, were seen to be among the main factors that hinder learner progression to advanced levels.

Keywords: Japanese language learning, learner's perception, teacher's perception, motivation, attitude.

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1 . INTRODUCTION

Language Learning in Kenya

Kenya is a multilingual country with 42 ethnic groups, and each ethnic group has a distinct indigenous language (Okal, 2014). Besides the indigenous languages, most people in Kenya also speak Kiswahili and English, which are the official languages. Both Kiswahili and English are taught as compulsory subjects in primary and secondary schools, and English is the main language of instructions for all subjects. Beside English and Kiswahili, some foreign languages including Arabic, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese are taught as optional subjects in some schools and colleges.

Nairobi is the regional headquarters for some major Japanese Agencies including Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). By December 2014, there were over fifty (50) Japanese companies operating in Kenya. Consequently, there are over 700 Japanese nationals in Nairobi, making it one of the largest Japanese communities in Africa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2018). The language of interaction in these companies is mainly Japanese and English. Therefore, for employment in these companies, Kenyans with some proficiency in Japanese are preferred to those who have no proficiency, even though the Japanese nationals who work in these companies have some proficiency in English. Further, besides benefiting from annual Japanese scholarships, Kenya has the highest number of participants in the African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative), among other African countries. The ABE Initiative was launched at the 5th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), held in Yokohama in 2013. This initiative is part of a five-year strategic plan to provide 1,000 African youth from both private and public sectors with opportunities to study at Japanese universities and also undergo practical training through internship programmes in Japanese enterprises. By 2015, a total of 100 Kenyans had gone to Japan for training under this programme. JICA also offers a variety of training programmes to young Kenyans granting them opportunities to interact with Japanese people (JICA Kenya, 2015). There are therefore, strong political, economic and cultural pillars that support the growth of Japanese in Kenya. The growth of the language is likely to enhance the growth of various economic sectors including trade, tourism and hospitality.

This study focused on the perceptions of teachers and learners of Japanese in Kenya. The motivation to undertake the study was a concern based on the noted relatively low level of learners enrolled for intermediate and advanced levels as compared to the large number of learners enrolled for the basic level of the language. For example, in 2014, there were 1,050 learners taking the language, of which 1017 (96.9%) were at the basic level, 30 (2.9%) at the intermediate level and only 3 (0.2%) at the advanced level. The number of learners of Japanese as a foreign language in the years 2014

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and 2018 is shown in Table 1 below. It can be seen in this Table that the status of enrolment at different levels in 2018 was similar to that in 2014.

Table 1: Number of students taking Japanese Language at various levels in Kenya (2014, 2018)

Year	Level			Total
	Basic	**Intermediate**	**Advanced**	
2014	1,017	30	3	1050
2018	960	34	3	997

Source: Wamuti et al., (2016); Wamuti, (2021)

Factors Influencing Language Learning

As it is the case with any other subject, the level the learners of a language can attain is governed by several factors including their motivation, the effectiveness of instructional materials and methods, perceptions of the teachers and learners, level of difficulty of the language, and competence of the teachers (Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Yang, 2008; Yu & Watkins, 2008; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011; Masuhara, 2013; McGee et al., 2013; Wolf, 2015; Ilhan & Yildiz, 2016). These factors are discussed in details below.

Instructional Methods and Resources

Ilhan & Yildiz (2016) noted that for an effective learning outcome, several instructional methods should be blended where each method complements the others. On instructional resources, Masuhara (2013) recommends that in foreign language learning, effective institutional resources should provide examples of how the target language is used in real-life situations and should also expose learners to a variety of language forms and functions. The use of authentic instructional resources can be very effective in exposing learners to the use of the target language in real situations.

Learners' Motivation and Perception

Concerning motivation, McGee et al., (2013) observed that the rate of attrition for learners of Japanese who are intrinsically motivated is lower than for those who are extrinsically motivated. The type of motivation of the learner may be determined by the

learner's perception of the language, and thus determine whether the learner is likely to pursue the language to higher levels or not.   A great deal of studies have been reported on the influence of perception on learning (Guthrie, 2005; Shehab, 2007; Akurugu, 2010; Habeeb, 2013, Kayaoglu, 2013), but only a few of these studies have focused on foreign language learning. Thus, this study explored the perception of teachers and learners of Japanese, a foreign language in Kenya.

Perception refers to the views, opinions and beliefs formed through the experiences and interpretation of one's environment (Pickens, 2005).   The terms perception and attitude relate closely in meaning, and both determine one's interpretation of information and predisposition of action (Pickens, 2005; Shehab, 2007; Habeeb, 2013).   Perception influences one's conviction and also what they pay attention to in their environment. When a person is convinced that something is good and beneficial, they perceive information supporting that conviction and vice versa (Habeeb, 2013).   According to Akurugu (2010), the decision to learn a language is based on alearner's perception about that language or an aspect of the language. Perception is not directly observed, but can be inferred from observable responses of likes or dislikes, for or against, and positivity or negativity towards a phenomenon (Habeeb, 2013). A teacher's perception is essential in the implementation of a curriculum as it influences their choice of instructional methods and materials as well as evaluation methods, which in turn affect the learners' attitude towards the subject, and consequently the learning outcome (Habeeb, 2013).   Furthermore, a negative perception by the learner can undermine the efforts of the teacher towards achieving the learning outcomes, while a positive perception can actually augment the efforts.

Thomson (2009), noted that learners with negative attitudes fail to make good progress and consequently become even more negative in their language learning. Conversely, positive attitude towards learning leads to progress, and when learners experience this progress, their attitude is reinforced, thus making a significant contribution to the rate of progress.   Furthermore, when learners have a positive perception about a target language, they readily use the language to communicate inside and outside classroom, thereby reinforcing their fluency in that language. The perception and attitudes of the learner can be modified through experience, and as such, effective instructional resources and strategies, and motivation can be employed to improve their attitudinal and perceptual orientation (Thomson, 2009).   According to Shehab (2007), attitudes usually require a longer experience to be developed than perception.   For this reason, the term perception was chosen as the focus of this article, as the study involves learners who have not interacted with the language for a long period.

Regarding perceptions in foreign language educational contexts, Thompson (2009) noted that a negative perception and unhealthy attitude can result in diminished efforts by learners and high attrition rates, and thus impede the acquisition of language proficiency. This finding is also supported by Akurugu (2010) who argues that negative perceptions towards a foreign language, often come from biased and negative beliefs about the language or teaching of that language. According to Spence-Brown (2014), Japanese

language learners in Australia have a perception that the language is difficult, and the learning of the language requires more work than the learning of most other foreign languages.

Akurugu (2010) noted that a knowledge of learners' perception and attitude towards learning is crucial to educators as it helps them determine the kind of intervention measures that are needed in addressing poor performance in a given subject. An examination of the perceptual disposition of learners towards learning Japanese in Kenya may explain the underlying cause of the prevailing decline in the number of learners and the slow progress in the learning of the language. Just as perception can determine the rate of achievement in any endeavor, it is also key to the acquisition of competence in a foreign language. This study therefore examined the teachers and learners' perception of Japanese as a foreign language.

The Japanese Writing Systems

The writing system for Japanese consists of three distinct scripts namely, Kanji, Hiragana and Katakana (Masumi, 2013). The Roman alphabet, *romaji*, is also sometimes used to write Japanese especially for acronyms and product names. The Kanji script is a logograph of Chinese origin which represents the word root. Hiragana and Katakana share similar phonemes but their uses are different (Stanlaw, 2004). Katakana is used mostly for loanwords and foreign names while a combination of Hiragana and Kanji is used for grammatical features. Most of Japanese words can be written in all the three systems and also in Romaji. For example, the word sensei which means teacher can be written as *sensei* (Romaji), せんせい (Hiragana), 先生 (Kanji) or センセイ (Katakana).

Currently, written Japanese contains modernized *Katakana* and *Hiragana* syllables, along with Kanji.

The Kanji (漢字) script was adopted from China in the 6th century AD. It was during that time that Japanese came up with their first recorded literature (Hsiung, 2007). Katakana was devised as a phonetic system of writing shorthand in the 7th century AD, by Japanese Buddhist priests. The Hiragana phonetic script was invented in the 8th century AD, by women of the Heian Court in Kyoto while in the process of looking for a simplified way of writing diaries, novels and poetry (Seeley, 2000). This study investigated the teachers' perception on the importance of Kanji scripts.

2. METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was collected from 5 tertiary institutions which offer Japanese as a foreign language in Kenya. The data was collected through questionnaires and interviews to obtain information on various topics including the reasons for studying

Japanese, the language aspects liked and disliked, and the language aspects difficult to learn. The questionnaires comprised of structured and unstructured questions. Structured questions provide quantitative data which gives the number of respondents who hold a certain view or opinion. Such questions are closed and have predefined answers (Hague et al., 2004). Unstructured questions are open-ended and give qualitative responses to the questions. The interview questions were narrative, and the respondents were requested to answer them orally. Where necessary, the respondent would be probed further, based on how they answered the questions in order to elaborate on and clarify the responses given.

The study involved a target population of 644 Japanese language learners and 18 Japanese language teachers. The questionnaires and interviews were administered to all the 18 teachers of Japanese, 4 of whom were native Japanese speakers, while 14 were Kenyans. A total of 150 language learners were selected to participate in the study of which 126 responded (a response rate of 84%).

The perception of the teachers towards the language was inferred from their viewpoints in relation to the goals of learning the language, the importance of teaching Kanji scripts, the attrition rates among learners of the language and the teachers' reasons for studying the language. In order to establish the learners' perception of the Japanese language, the learners were asked unstructured questions relating to their reasons for choosing to study the language and their experience in studying the language, among other aspects.

The data, which was mainly qualitative was grouped thematically and coded. The data was then analyzed using Microsoft Excel® 2016 software, for simple statistical measures which included central tendency and frequencies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The goals of learning Japanese language

The teachers were asked to indicate what they considered to be the goals of learning Japanese in Kenya. The teacher's responses are summarized in Table 2. Twelve out of the 18 teachers (66.7%) perceive economic benefit as a goal for learning the language. Other goals mentioned included the promotion of intercultural knowledge (44.4%), the opening of opportunities to study in Japan (44.4%), becoming competitive in industries (22.2%) and understanding Japanese technology (11.1%).

Table 2: Goals of learning Japanese language in Kenya

Goals	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Economic benefit	12	66.7
Promote intercultural knowledge	8	44.4
Open opportunity to study in Japan	8	44.4
Competitiveness in industries	4	22.2
Understand Japanese technology	2	11.1
N	**18**	

These findings reveal that economic benefit is perceived to be the main reason for studying Japanese in tertiary institutions in Kenya. The other reasons for studying this language according its teachers include the desire to gain Japanese cultural knowledge, the opening of opportunities to study in Japan, becoming competitive in industries and understanding Japanese technology. Economic benefit has also been cited as a reason for studying the language in United States (Ishikura, 2013), Australia (Spence-Brown, 2014) and Spain (Osumi, 2019). It can thus be concluded that the reasons for studying Japanese in tertiary institutions in Kenya are similar to those of the rest of the world.

Teachers were further asked to indicate how the language could be promoted in order to achieve these goals. They gave several measures which included the inclusion of Japanese in the secondary school curriculum by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), offering the language in a wider geographical region for ease of access by interested learners throughout the country, the promotion of interaction between Kenyans and Japanese, and conducting regular seminars on language teaching, as those that could be employed to promote the learning of this language (see Table 3). Thus, there is a perception by the teachers that the language needs to be promoted.

Table 3: Teachers' views on measures to promote the language

Measure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Include Japanese in the national curriculum	15	83.3
Expand the teaching of Japanese to the entire country	10	55.6
Train more Japanese language teachers	4	22.2
Conduct seminars on language teaching locally and internationally	6	33.3
Offer refresher courses to all teachers of Japanese	5	27.8
Design instructional resources suitable for Kenyans	6	33
Promote interaction between Kenyans and Japanese	10	55.6
Emphasize cultural knowledge in the curriculum	5	27.8
Increased support by Kenya government	5	27.8
Increased support by Japanese government and companies	5	27.8
Encourage more Japanese companies to invest in Kenya	6	33.3
Introduce Japanese club to many primary & secondary schools countrywide	4	22.2
N	18	

The perception on the importance of Kanji scripts

Concerning the teaching of Kanji, the teachers were asked to indicate whether the teaching of Kanji was a requirement in their respective institutions. It was established that in two of the five tertiary institutions, teaching Kanji was not a requirement. Thus, Kanji is not considered as important in some of the tertiary institutions.

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 (Kuwana, 2016). Furthermore, it has been argued by several authors that mastery of the Kanji scripts enhances proficiency in the acquisition of all the four language skills. In addition, Kanji being symbolic and conveying 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 4. One of the teachers gave two reasons while the rest gave one reason each.

Table 4: Reasons for not teaching Kanji

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The College is not keen on teaching foreign languages at 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
N	**10**	

It can be seen in Table 4 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 for the teaching of Kanji. Four (40%) of the teachers indicated that Hiragana and Katakana are already difficult for the learners and that introducing Kanji would be counterproductive. Two (20%) of the teachers indicated that a knowledge of Kanji is unnecessary, and argued that the 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 Japanese in the United States who reported that learners of this 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 the 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.

Reasons for dropping the language after the basic level

The teachers were asked to indicate what they thought were the reasons for the large numbers of students dropping Japanese after the basic level. All the respondents gave more than one reason. Their responses are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Reasons for dropping the language

Reason	Frequency	Percentage %
Lack of motivation of the learners	5	27.8
The core courses become more demanding and time consuming as one advances	13	72.2
The language becomes difficult at higher levels	9	50.0
Learners who go outside Nairobi after college have no opportunities to advance	6	33
Shortage of teachers and learning materials	5	27.8
The language is not a mandatory course requirement	8	44.4
Kanji is difficult to learn	7	38.9
N	**18**	

The main reasons for high dropout rates as cited by the teachers include the core courses become more demanding and time consuming as one advances (72.2%), the language becomes difficult at higher levels (50%), the language is not a mandatory course requirement (44.4%). In Kenya, Japanese is offered as an optional course to students who are majoring in other subject areas. As the learners advance in their studies, the time demand in their core courses usually becomes critical, forcing some of the learners to give less attention to the learning of Japanese.

The opinion that the learners drop the language due to the competing demands with the core courses is similar to that of learners in United States (Ishikura, 2013) and Australia (Matsumoto & Obana, 2001) where difficulty in the language and time conflict with other core courses were reported as the main reasons for dropping the language. Furthermore, the view that learners drop the language because it becomes difficult at higher levels has also been cited by McGee et al. (2013), Matsumoto & Obana (2001) and Lo Bianco & Slaughter (2009), who noted that the attrition at early stage occurs once the learners begin to realize the difficulties of learning the language and the time it takes for one to acquire basic proficiency in it.

Reasons for taking Japanese language course

The learners were asked to state the reason for choosing to study Japanese. Most (38.9%) of them indicated that the main reason for studying the language was their interest in the Japanese people and culture. Other reasons given included to be competitive in the industry (15.1%) the desire to know a foreign language (10.3%) interest in going to Japan for work or to study (9.5%) and the availability of the foreign language course (9.5%), among others. Also, some programmes such as tourism and hospitality require that learners study at least one foreign language. A few of the learners (3.2%) indicated that they enrolled for the language because it was a course requirement for their programmes. These findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Reasons for taking Japanese language course

Reason	Category	Motivation	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Percentage per category (%)
Availability of the foreign language course	Academic	Extrinsic	12	9.5	
It is a course requirement	Academic	Extrinsic		3.2	18.3
Interest in going to Japan for study	Academic	Intrinsic	7	5.6	

Reason	Category	Motivation	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Percentage per category (%)
Interest in going to Japan for work	Economic	Intrinsic	5	4,0	19.0
To be competitive in industry	Economic	Extrinsic	19	15.1	
To understand anime	Social	Intrinsic	7	5.6	62.8
To learn martial and/or performing arts	Social	Intrinsic	3	2.4	
To acquire knowledge of a foreign and unique language	Social	Intrinsic	18	14.3	
Interest in culture and the people	Social	Intrinsic	49	38.9	
Influence by friends	Social	Extrinsic	2	1.6	
	N		**126**		

The reasons mentioned can broadly be categorized as academic, social or economic. For example, studying the language in order to satisfy course requirements can be considered as an academic reason, while studying due to interest in Japanese people and culture or martial and performing arts are social reason. Studying the language because of interest to work in Japan or to be competitive in industries can be categorized as economic reasons. Thus, some of the learners perceive Japanese as a language of economic benefit to them, while others perceive it as an important language for socialization, entertainment and as a tool for academic advancement. Furthermore, the reasons given can be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsically motivated language learners are those who study the language for self-satisfaction or for fun while extrinsically motivated learners are those who study a language for a reward (Richard & Edward, 2000).

Studying the language because of interest to work or study in Japan, to be competitive in industries, to meet the course requirements or because of influence from peers is an indication that the motivation is extrinsic. Thus, from Table 6, it can be deduced that 29.4% (9.5 + 15.1 + 3.2+ 1.6) of the learners of Japanese were extrinsically motivated, while the rest (70.6%) were intrinsically motivated. Goktepe (2014) argued that extrinsically motivated learners are generally slower in the acquisition of language proficiency than intrinsically motivated ones. Further, McGee et al., (2013) observed that the rate of attrition for learners of Japanese who are intrinsically motivated is lower than for those who are extrinsically motivated.

It can be concluded that most of the Japanese language learners at the basic and intermediate level are intrinsically motivated. From these findings, it would be expected that the majority of these learners would progress to advanced levels. However, the proportion of those who are extrinsically motivated is significant, and this could be one of the factors contributing to low transition to advanced levels in the language.

It can also be deduced from Table 6, that 12.7% studied the language for academic reasons, 24.6 % for economic reasons while 62.8 % of them studied the language for social reasons. Thus, the majority of Japanese language learners perceive the language as a tool for socialization. This perception is similar to that of learners of Japanese as a foreign language in France (McGee et al. 2013), Spain (Osumi, 2019), United States (Ishikura, 2013) and Australia (Spence-Brown, 2014). In the past, the learners of Japanese as a foreign language worldwide were mostly professionals such as teachers, doctors, and business people, but recently, the younger generation has developed a liking of the language. The Japanese distinctive culture has led to a large number of students having interest in the language, especially due to the unique Japanese animation (*anime*), comics and cartoons (*manga*), which are very popular amongst the youth (Chan, 2016). Once the social need is met the learners may not see the need to advance. This could explain why the majority drop the language after acquiring the basic skills in it.

What learners like about the language

The learners were asked to state what they liked about Japanese language. Some of the respondents gave more than one response. The various responses and their frequencies are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Language aspects liked by learners

Aspect liked	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The language is interesting to learn	27	21.4
Pronunciations are simple	17	13.5
Expressions are rich	13	10.3
Writing system is unique	16	12.7
Japanese grammar is simple	35	27.8
The language is unique	5	4.0
The language is inherently polite	27	21.4
Interesting lecturer	8	6.3
Audio visual presentations are interesting.	5	4.0
N	**126**	

The aspects most liked about the language were its simple grammar (27.8%), that the language is interesting to learn (21.4%), and that the language is inherently polite (21.4%). Japanese has speech levels which consist of neutral and honorific components. Neutral components are used where the speaker and the referent are of the same social status and are in-group members while honorifics components are used to designate the speaker's attitude towards the referents who are worthy of respect or new acquaintances (Mizutani & Mizutani, 1987). Honorific speech level is more common than the neutral and this could be the reason some respondents perceive the language as polite.

Some of the learners cited simple pronunciation (13.5%) and unique writing system (12.7%) as the attractive features of the language. The aspects liked are similar to those of learners in various other countries as reported by Matsumoto & Obana (2001), Watanabe & Higurashi (2012) and Osumi (2013).

There were some learners (4.0%) who responded to the question based on their perception on teaching methodology rather than the perception on the language itself. Perceptions towards a foreign language, often come from biases and beliefs about the language or the teaching of it Akurugu (2010). Some others (6.3%) cited the teacher's attributes as what makes them like the language. This finding suggests that a process of "positive modification" of learners could be happening during instructions, as argued by Thomson (2009), who states that the perception of the learner can be modified

through experience, and as such, effective instructional resources and strategies can be employed to improve learners' perceptual orientation.

Therefore, Japanese is perceived by most of the learners as polite, interesting to learn and as having simple grammar. Further, learners are attracted by the attributes of the teachers and mode of delivery of the content.

Aspects difficult to understand

With regard to the aspects the learners find difficult to understand, some respondents gave more than one aspect. Most respondents (66.7%) indicated that the use of different scripts in the language makes it difficult to understand. Other aspects cited include grammar (20.6%), vocabulary (8.7%), and particles (7.1%). These results are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Language aspects difficult to understand

Aspect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The different scripts used in the language	84	66.7
Grammar	26	20.6
Particles	9	7.1
Listening to native speakers of the language	5	4.0
Pronunciation	4	3.2
Vocabulary	11	8.7
Use of transitive and intransitive verbs	4	3.2
N	**126**	

These findings confirm those of Matsumoto & Obana (2001), Noda (2003), and Alsaghiar (2018) who stated that Japanese is lexically unrelated to English, which makes it harder for English native speakers to master the language. It has also been reported that character-based writing systems in Japanese present unusual challenges to learners whose first languages employ the alphabetic scripts, and that this is the main hindrance to the learning of these languages (Everson, 2011; Oriedo, 2011; Rose, 2013; Okura, 2016; Alsaghiar, 2018).

Japanese grammar is another aspect of the language that some learners (20.6%) cited as difficult in the acquisition of the language. These findings agree with those of Okura (2016), who noted that one of the challenges in the acquisition of Japanese as a foreign language is the basic word order pattern in the sentences. Unlike the English language sentence structure which follows the *Subject-Verb-Object* word order, Japanese sentences follow a *Subject-Object-Verb* order which contributes to the difficulties in the formation of correct syntax by learners.

Learners' interest in taking an advanced language course

The learners were asked whether they would take an advanced Japanese language course after completion of their studies, if given an opportunity. Out of the 120 learners who responded to this question, 102 (85%) indicated they would take an advanced course in the language, while 18 (15%) indicated that they would not.

The reasons given by those who indicated that they are interested in advancing in the language are given in Table 9. Some of the respondents who indicated that they would like to advance in the language gave more than one reason. More than fifty per cent (52.9%) of the respondents indicated that they desired to be more fluent in the language. Other respondents indicated they would pursue the language because it is interesting (39.2%), because it would open new career opportunities (29.4%), because of love for the Japanese culture (22.5%), and intention to pursue further studies in Japan (25.5%), among other reasons.

Table 9: Reasons for Interest in the Advancement of the Language

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Desire to be more fluent in the language	54	52.9
Love of learning different languages and diversifying	9	8.8
Love of Japanese culture	26	25.5
The language is interesting and enjoyable	40	39.2
It would open new career opportunities	30	29.4
To be more proficient in the language	6	5.9
To go to Japan for postgraduate studies/ work	26	25.5
n	**102**	

Among the learners who indicated they are interested in advancing in the language, those who would want to advance either for new career opportunities or to go to Japan for postgraduate or for employment were extrinsically motivated. This extrinsically motivated group constituted 54.9% (29.4%+25.5%) of the learners. This proportion is significantly higher than the 29.4% of the learners who were seen to be extrinsically motivated to study the language as was seen in Table 6. On the other hand, the intrinsically motivated constitute 45.1% which is far much lower than the 70.6% that was seen in Table 6 for those who were intrinsically motivated to study the language. These findings are illustrated in Fig. 1 above.
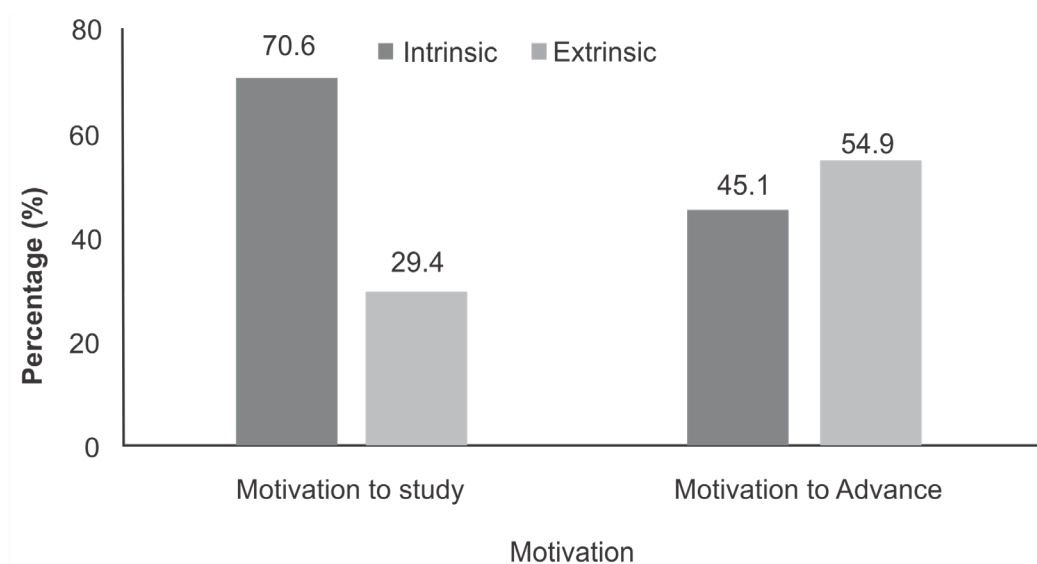
Figure 1: Learners' motivation to study and to advance in Japanese language

As can be seen in Fig. 1, the intrinsic motivation to study the language is higher than the intrinsic motivation to advance in it. It can be deduced that the need to study the language by the learners who are intrinsically motivated is largely satisfied at the basic level. This could explain the low transition to advanced levels in the language. This also confirms that the basic level of language proficiency is sufficient for social interaction.

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Table 10: Reasons for lack of interest in the advancement of the language

Reason	Number	Percentage (%)
The language learning consumes a lot of time	5	27.8
The language is difficult	5	27.8
Prefer to explore other languages	1	5.6
No longer interested in the language	1	5.6
Basic level is sufficient	5	27.8
Unspecified family issues	1	5.6
N	**18**	

The reasons given by the 18 (15%) learners who indicated that they are not interested in advancing in the language are given in Table 10 above. The main reasons they gave for lack of interest in pursuing the language are that the language consumes a lot of time (27.8%), the language is difficult (27.8%), and that the basic level is sufficient for them (27.8%).

The perception that learning Japanese consumes a lot of time agrees with the findings of Walton (1993), Everson (2011), Rose & Carson (2014) and Alsaghiar (2018) who noted that to acquire proficiency in Japanese took at least four times longer than it took to acquire the same level of proficiency in European languages. The perception that Japanese is difficult has also been cited by many scholars as one of the reasons for learners' high rates of attrition and failure to progress to the advanced level (Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Lo Bianco & Slaughter 2009; Oriedo, 2011; McGee et al., 2013). However, the perceptions that learning the language consumes a lot of time, that the language is difficult, and that the basic level is sufficient for the learners, which are each cited by 27.8% of those that are not interested in advancing in the language, translate to only 4.17% of the total respondents. Thus, this can be considered as being insignificant.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, the perception of teachers and learners of Japanese language in tertiary institutions in Kenya has been discussed. It was found that the learners perceive Japanese as interesting but difficult to learn due to the different scripts used. Furthermore, most learners of Japanese at the basic and intermediate levels are intrinsically motivated. However, the motivation to take advanced courses in the language is mainly extrinsic. In addition, the majority of the learners study the language for the purpose of socializing, of which basic knowledge of the language could be sufficient. Furthermore, some of the teachers did not consider it necessary to teach Kanji scripts and thus did not teach it. The perception that the language is difficult to learn, the fact that the motivation to advance is extrinsic, the fact that many learners study the language only for socializing, and failure to teach Kanji scripts by some teachers could be the reasons for the low rates of progression to advanced levels. In order to enable learners to transit to higher levels in the language, it is therefore necessary for Japanese curricula in tertiary institutions to, among other strategies, encourage the teaching of Kanji scripts.

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