

# **A NEW GLIMPSE INTO THE MERITS NATIVE-SPEAKING STUDENTS ACQUIRE THROUGH EXTRACURRICULAR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

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## **Abstract**

Refining extracurricular foreign language learning programmes is one way that educational institutions can improve the quality of their foreign language departments. Previous research has demonstrated that organisations can better promote optimal foreign language learning by acquiring both native and non-native speaking participants. Continuous emphasis on what merits native-speaking students can acquire through participating in foreign language learning programmes significantly impacts native-speaking students' participation rates. Though prior research illustrated 11 benefits native-speaking students may gain by participating in foreign language learning programmes with non-native students, the method through which these gains are specifically acquired has not been previously demonstrated. In this study, 34 Japanese university students were surveyed about what they had learned in their extracurricular Japanese language education. Data was collected via an online questionnaire centered around the 11 benefits discussed in previous research. The participants were asked to answer each item using a four-case method. The collected data was analysed through a correlation analysis method. As this study delineates foreign language education from a unique perspective, its results can be expected to broaden the future language learning debates.

## **1 Introduction**

In which parts of school do learners study foreign languages? Many might answer that learners study a foreign language in the classroom or in lessons. Though this is correct, it is not enough. Learners may also study a foreign language outside the classroom or outside the lesson. In light of this, when institutions try to improve the quality of their foreign language teaching, they should not only focus on the learning that takes place during classroom instruction but also on the foreign language learning environment outside the lecture hall. Extracurricular language learning programmes are considered to be foreign language learning opportunities that take place outside the classroom. Improving the quality of these extracurricular language learning programmes is directly linked to improving the foreign language learning environment outside the classroom. With this in mind, extracurricular foreign language learning programmes—henceforth abbreviated as EFLLPs—were studied.

## **2 Literature review**

### ***2.1 Extracurricular Foreign Language Learning Programmes***

Aida (2022a), based on the ideas highlighted in Yurino (2010), Otake and Suwa (2017) and Tsuji (2019), explains that the difference between regular and extra-curricular education in school is whether or not the activity gives students educational credit. In consideration of this,

this research defines EFLLPs as educational programmes in which students learn or practice foreign languages without earning educational credit.

## **2.2 Gaps in previous studies**

It is not very difficult to guess that foreign language learners are provided merits by joining EFLLPs, as doing so provides opportunities for the learners to polish their skills in their target language alongside native speakers. However, Aida (2022b) underlines that it is very important to encourage native target language speakers to join EFLLPs by clearly demonstrating the merits that they can gain by participating in the programmes as well. In line with this idea, Aida (2022b) interviewed five Japanese university students regarding what benefits Japanese students gain from extra-curricular Japanese language programmes. The result showed that Japanese students gained 11 benefits from participating in extra-curricular Japanese language programmes, which are as follows: 1. an attitude that is more understanding of the intentions of non-Japanese speakers, 2. knowledge of life and culture abroad, 3. confidence in speaking with foreigners, 4. additional practice in translating Japanese expressions with consideration for non-Japanese speakers, 5. a serious attitude towards future goals, 6. a positive attitude towards extra-curricular activities, 7. increased flexibility in thinking about the future, 8. a positive attitude towards joining new communities, 9. consideration for promoting conversation in the whole group, 10. consideration in choosing topics that appeal to a group as a whole, and 11. a deeper awareness of the Japanese language. However, Aida (2022b) does not make it clear how these 11 benefits are related. Therefore, this study investigates the links between these 11 benefits.

## **3 Aims and significance of this study**

In order to solve the gap in previous studies explained above, the aim of this study is to clarify the links between the 11 benefits. By doing so, previously unknown aspects of the merits that native target language speakers can earn by joining EFLLPs can be explored. Added to this, by researching these previously unknown aspects, the unlimited educational potential of EFLLPs may also be developed. Therefore, it is not an overstatement to say that this study has the possibility to broaden the future debates regarding EFLLPs.

## **4 Research methods**

### **4.1 Participants**

The participants in this study were 34 Japanese university students who have taken part in EFLLPs. When selecting the subjects, it was noted that in order to reflect the reality of the Japanese language programme in the data, the subjects were those who understood the content of the activities and who had participated in the Japanese language programme at least five times.

### **4.2 Data collection**

The data required for this study was collected via an online questionnaire with questions focusing on the 11 aforementioned benefits of a native speaker participating in an EFLLP. In this online questionnaire, the participants were asked whether or not they had acquired the 11

benefits and were asked to rate their mastery of the 11 benefits using a four-point scale (1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Disagree, 4. Strongly disagree). When the participants were asked to engage in this survey, it was explained to them that the researcher would not know who had responded or when, that the data would be anonymously compiled at the end of the response period, and that they could choose 'disagree' for all questions if that was the answer they felt best represented them. This explanation was provided to prevent any pressure or sense of obligation from weighing on the participants if they felt nothing could truly be learned from this Japanese language programme as a native speaker.

### 4.3 Data analysis

The collected data was analysed via correlational analysis in order to clarify the relationship between the 11 benefits.

## 5 Results

A table of correspondence between the 11 benefits and their numbers was prepared (Table 1). The results of the overall responses—the number of respondents who selected each option and its percentage—are shown in Table 2 below, and the trends in the response results are shown in Table 3. Based on these results, a correlation analysis was conducted for each item, and 22 combinations showed significant associations (Table 4).

**Table 1. Correspondence between the 11 benefits and their numbers**

No.	Items
1	a serious attitude towards future goals
2	a positive attitude towards extra-curricular activities
3	an attitude that is more understanding of the intentions of non-Japanese speakers
4	consideration in choosing topics that appeal to a group as a whole
5	flexibility in thinking about the future
6	a deeper awareness of the Japanese language
7	a positive attitude towards joining new communities
8	knowledge of life and culture abroad
9	consideration for promoting conversation in the whole group
10	confidence in speaking with foreigners
11	additional practice in translating Japanese expressions with consideration for non-Japanese speakers

**Table 2. The overall responses**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	8 (.24)	20 (.59)	5 (.15)	1 (.03)	.72
2	22 (.65)	11 (.32)	1 (.03)	0 (/)	.55
3	29 (.85)	4 (.12)	1 (.03)	0 (/)	.46
4	24 (.71)	9 (.26)	1 (.03)	0 (/)	.53
5	9 (.26)	21 (.62)	4 (.12)	0 (/)	.60
6	20 (.59)	11 (.32)	3 (.09)	0 (/)	.66
7	22 (.65)	11 (.32)	1 (.03)	0 (/)	.55
8	18 (.53)	16 (.47)	0 (/)	0 (/)	.49
9	21 (.62)	10 (.29)	3 (.09)	0 (/)	.66
10	23 (.68)	11 (.32)	0 (/)	0 (/)	.47
11	21 (.62)	11 (.32)	2 (.06)	0 (/)	.61

(n=34)

**Table 3. The trends in the results**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
1	3.029	.82	.18
2	3.618	.97	.03
3	3.824	.97	.03
4	3.676	.97	.03
5	3.147	.88	.12
6	3.500	.91	.09
7	3.618	.97	.03
8	3.529	1	0
9	3.529	.91	.09
10	3.676	1	0
11	3.559	.91	.09

**Table 4. Combinations with significant associations identified**

No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	1.000										
2	.413*	1.000									
3	.108	.564**	1.000								
4	.184	.390*	.625**	1.000							
5	.406*	.172	-.013	.243	1.000						
6	.096	.124	.199	.470**	.187	1.000					
7	.336	.501**	.444**	.390*	.082	.373*	1.000				
8	.456**	.096	.023	-.132	.035	.180	.204	1.000			
9	.477**	.488**	.317	.498**	.026	.138	.488**	.313	1.000		
10	.207	.208	.008	.172	.274	.144	.439**	.230	.368*	1.000	
11	.375*	.293	.038	.384*	.260	.261	.562**	.287	.593**	.640**	1.000

( \*\*: p<.01, \*: p<.05)

## 6 Discussion

### 6.1 Average

First, the average score of the questionnaire results will be discussed. The data presented in Table 3 are the subject of this section. The mean scores for all 11 benefits were above three. This suggests that participants had a positive impression of their experience in the Japanese language programme. However, it is possible that this is due to the fact that the respondents were students who had participated in the Japanese language programme more than five times, thus ensuring only students with a favourable impression of the programme were surveyed.

### 6.2 Ratio of positive and negative opinions

Next, the ratio of positive and negative opinions was examined. Again, the data presented in Table 3 above is the target. In this table, the number of positive opinions is the sum of the number of 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree' responses and the number of negative opinions is the sum of the number of 'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree' responses, both of which were then divided by the total number of respondents. As the proportion of positive opinions was much higher than the proportion of negative opinions for all items, it is expected that many participants might universally believe that the content suggested in the 11 benefits could be learnt through extra-curricular Japanese language programmes. However, as with the mean score, this result was obtained because the respondents were students who had participated in extra-curricular Japanese language programmes five or more times, and it is possible that the responses of students who had participated less than five times might be different.

### **6.3 Combinations with significant associations identified**

Of the 11 benefits, No. 10, “increased confidence in speaking with foreigners,” was found to be associated with eight other benefits and thus provides the highest correlation value of any of the benefits. The second most correlated factor was “a positive attitude towards joining new communities” (No. 7), which was associated with seven other factors. The common denominator between these two factors seems to be self-confidence. Based on this, it is expected that confidence in speaking with foreigners and a positive attitude towards joining new communities leads to positive behaviour, which in turn leads to the acquisition of the 11 benefits. On the other hand, the factors with the lowest number of correlations were “flexibility in thinking about the future” (No. 5) and “knowledge of life and culture abroad” (No. 8). Both factors only correlated with “a serious attitude towards future goals” (No. 1). “Flexibility in thinking about the future” and “a serious attitude towards future goals” are both future-oriented benefits. The fact these benefits are future-oriented may be what links them, as the other benefits do not share this trait. The combination of “a serious attitude towards future goals” and “knowledge of life and culture abroad” led to active conversation with international students. As a result, it is predicted that there may be a trend between having the opportunity to learn about various cultures abroad and the acquisition of these traits.

## **7 Conclusion**

### **7.1 Summary of this study**

The purpose of this study is to clarify the links between the 11 benefits. The data required for this study was collected via an online questionnaire. The participants in this study were 34 Japanese university students who have taken part in an extra-curricular Japanese language programme at least five times. As a result, 22 combinations showed significant associations.

### **7.2 Educational implication**

Based on the results of the correlation analysis, it seems that many educational benefits can be achieved by developing confidence through conversing with foreigners and developing a positive attitude in regards to joining a new community. It is hoped that such improvements will raise the level of satisfaction amongst Japanese students in regards to their participation in EFLLPs and thus lead to their continued participation.

### **7.3 Suggestions for future research**

The Japanese students surveyed in this study were those who had participated in the Japanese language programme more than five times. In order to consider wider educational effects, it is necessary to survey students who have participated in the Japanese language programme less than five times. In addition, because this study did not compare educational effects by frequency, the researcher has not been able to clarify how many times students can achieve the educational effects shown in the results of this study. In order to clarify this, it is necessary to examine the effects at the intervals of first and second participation, as well as to investigate how students’ attitudes towards participating changed over time. In the future, it is expected that the above-mentioned matters that have not been clarified will be pursued.

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