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Employment of Graduates of Japanese Language

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Abstract

An underlying assumption behind the former Australian Federal Labor Government's 2012 Asian Century White Paper was that language skills were not only important for Australia's future engagement with its regional neighbours but would also lead to employment opportunities. Yet, little research has been undertaken into the employment of graduates with majors in languages, irrespective of the language. This paper discusses the results of an online survey on the use of their Japanese language in employment by graduates who undertook a major or a minor in Japanese language between 2008 and 2012. The results discussed here focus on the questions which addressed graduates' use of their speaking, reading and writing skills as well as the regularity and level of skills used. The results show that spoken skills are the most commonly used, followed by reading and writing skills.

Keywords

employment, graduates, japanese, language

Disciplines

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EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

An underlying assumption behind the former Australian Federal Labor Government's 2012 *Asian Century White Paper* was that language skills were not only important for Australia's future engagement with its regional neighbours but would also lead to employment opportunities. Yet, little research has been undertaken into the employment of graduates with majors in languages, irrespective of the language. This paper discusses the results of an online survey on the use of their Japanese language in employment by graduates who undertook a major or a minor in Japanese language between 2008 and 2012. The results discussed here focus on the questions which addressed graduates' use of their speaking, reading and writing skills as well as the regularity and level of skills used. The results show that spoken skills are the most commonly used, followed by reading and writing skills.

INTRODUCTION¹

An underlying assumption behind the former Australian Federal Labor Government's now-archived *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper 2012* (hereafter *Asian Century White Paper*) is that Asian language skills are not only important for "building capacity" for Australia's engagement with its regional neighbours in the twenty-first century but that the development of Asian language literacy would lead to employment opportunities for speakers of Asian languages (DPM&C 2012). This latter expectation is not new and various government language policies (e.g. National Asian Language and Studies in Schools Program) over the last two or three decades have assumed a similar position. Yet, little recent research has been undertaken into the employment of graduates with majors in languages, irrespective of the language, and hence it is largely unknown whether language skills are being used in the workplace and, if so, to what level. To investigate the use of language in the workplace by recent graduates of Japanese from a non-metropolitan university in New South Wales, a pilot questionnaire was sent to 2008–2012 graduates who had undertaken a major or a minor (four sequential language subjects) in Japanese. The questions in the survey (Appendix 1) were designed to ascertain whether graduates use their Japanese language skills in their workplace or not, and the regularity of their use of their skills.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Japanese is one of the most studied languages in Australian universities and schools (de Kretser and Spence-Brown 2010) and Australia ranks as No. 4 in the world in terms of the number of Japanese language learners (Japan Foundation 2013). Anecdotal evidence from university information days suggests that some of these learners hope to use their language skills in the workplace. Yet, there is little recent information available on how and to what level graduates use their language skills in the workplace. One exception is Thomson (1996) who surveyed employers in Sydney about their employment of non-native Japanese speakers and found that many employees had been hired "not on language ability" (1996, 29) but for other skills. Moreover, as Bashfield (2013, 11) indicates, there are "few recognisable measures of the success" of policies outlined in documents such as the *Asian Century White Paper*. Without more research such measures cannot be developed.

The dearth of information on the use of language skills in the workplace is disconcerting in light of the view that the globalisation of business operations has led to increased global recruitment of staff and the expectation that candidates speak another language (CILT, in Lunn 2008, 239). Michael Byrne, Chief Executive of Linfox, in his criticism of Australia's education standards commented that his company was increasingly hiring staff from Asia because they "speak four or five languages" (in Schwarten 2014). Whilst Byrne's comment suggests the importance placed on linguistic skills in the recruitment process, there is no clear indication how those skills are being used in the workplace. Nevertheless, the recent growth in careers fairs held in Australia, particularly in Sydney, aimed at Japanese speaking graduates indicates that there is a growing need. Yet, these fairs tend to target Japanese native speakers studying in Australia; in May 2014, DISCO Ltd, a careers consultancy company, expressly included "[s]tudents from Japan currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate exchange program" (Careerforum.net n.d.) in its target audience. Whilst non-native speakers are encouraged to attend these fairs, particularly if they have technical skills in engineering or computing, anecdotal evidence suggests that most participants are native speaking Japanese students.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

To understand the use of language skills in the workplace by recent graduates of Japanese, the university's Alumni Office sent an invitation to participate in an online survey in early May 2014 to graduates of Japanese between 2008 and 2012.² Due to the probability that some graduates had changed jobs at least once since graduation, the survey questions addressed not only the use of the different linguistic skills but also their use of their skills in up to four different positions after graduation. Questions included ones on whether a graduate had prior Japanese language studies before university as well as whether their Japanese language skills were a requirement for any positions they had held.

1 The author wishes to thank the Japan Foundation for financial assistance through the Sydney Office's Support Program for Research Projects to undertake this project. This project has UOW Ethics Approval (HE13/515). The author also wishes to thank Professors Kerry Dunne and Leigh Dale and the peer reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Finally, the author wishes to acknowledge the research assistance provided by Dr Kirsti Rawstron.

2 2013 graduates were specifically excluded from the survey because many take a gap year before commencing employment or would not have worked for a sufficiently long period to make a judgement regarding the use of their linguistic skills.

In regards to the use of spoken skills, the questions addressed the regularity and level (Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced) of use. Intermediate skills were further broken down into Intermediate with honorifics and Intermediate without honorifics.³ Precise definitions of the levels were not provided and it was left to the individual respondents to define them according to the content of the relevant subjects such as “Beginner Japanese” when answering.⁴ The questions on the use of Japanese reading and writing skills focussed on the frequency of use rather than the level used. In the following sections, the results of the survey are analysed and discussed. For ethical reasons, some questions which would have made the respondent identifiable to the project leader were optional.

SURVEY RESULTS

An invitation to participate in an anonymous SurveyMonkey-based questionnaire was sent by email to sixty-two graduates with a registered email address. A similar invitation was sent by mail to twelve graduates with no registered email address. Of the seventy-four alumni contacted, twenty-one responses were received (28% response rate). All respondents were coded to maintain anonymity (see Appendix 2). As Figure 1 shows, only one of these twenty-one responses was an international student, meaning that 95% of respondents were domestic students. This breakdown is a good reflection of the mix of domestic and international students who complete a major or a minor in Japanese.

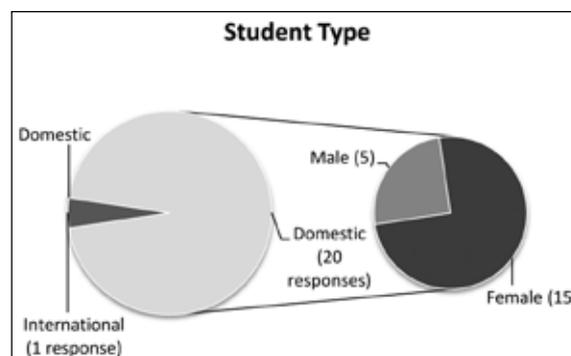


Figure 1: Student Type: Domestic or International, Gender

In terms of gender, sixteen replies came from female graduates (76%) and five (24%) from male graduates. This gender breakdown is a fairly accurate reflection of the upper level⁵ Japanese language student body where female students make up between two-thirds and three-quarters of students.

As shown in Figure 2, thirteen respondents majored in Japanese whilst four students undertook a minor in Japanese. One respondent graduated with a Diploma of Languages⁶ and the other three graduated with a Graduate Diploma in Arts (Japanese). To focus on the experiences of undergraduates, the responses from graduates holding the “Graduate Diploma” are excluded from discussion in this paper. Responses from the student who completed the Diploma of Languages are included with those who majored in Japanese.



Figure 2: Graduating Qualification

³ The Intermediate level was broken down into “with honorifics” and “without honorifics” in order to gather information to provide to current students on the use of honorifics in the workplace.

⁴ In future surveys, it would be advisable to provide a definition of the terms rather than leave it to the respondents to interpret them.

⁵ Upper level subjects have prerequisite subject requirements.

⁶ The Diploma of Languages is an undergraduate program commonly undertaken concurrently with another undergraduate degree (e.g. Engineering).

Whether a respondent undertook a major or a minor in Japanese has a significant impact on graduates' language use in the workforce, as does the number of positions a respondent has held since graduation. Respondent A graduated in 2008, while Respondent D graduated in 2009, Respondents E through J graduated in 2010, Respondents K, L and M graduated in 2011, and Respondents N through U graduated in 2012. Thus, the highest proportion of respondents (38%) graduated in 2012 (3), followed by 29% in 2010, 14% in both 2008 and 2011, and only 5% in 2009. Despite the majority of respondents having graduated in 2012, over half (twelve respondents) had held two or more positions⁷ since graduation (Figure 3).

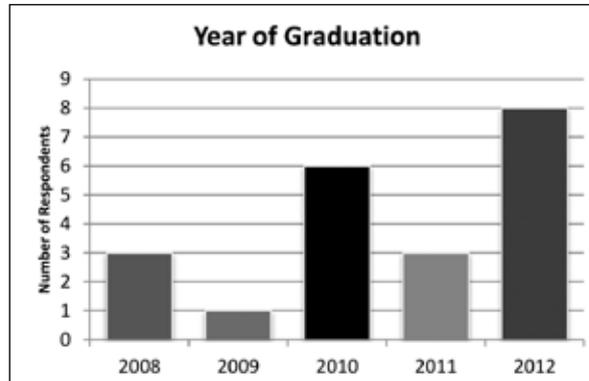


Figure 3: Respondents' Year of Graduation

Respondents currently working in their first position after graduation comprise the largest group in the survey (nine), while four respondents are working in their second, another four in their third position and a further four in their fourth or later position (Figure 4).

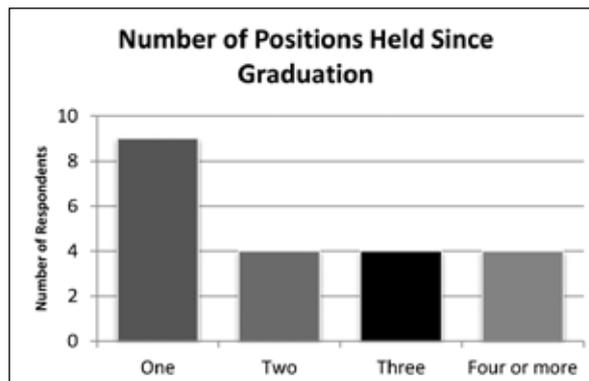


Figure 4: Number of Positions Held Since Graduation

"MAJOR" RESPONDENTS

In this section, discussion focusses on the employment experiences of those who graduated with a major in Japanese. As noted above, thirteen respondents state that they majored in Japanese. Twelve of these were domestic students and one was an international student (Respondent J). One respondent is male. Three respondents, including the sole international respondent, graduated with Bachelor of Arts degrees, while a fourth graduated with Bachelor of Arts (Honours). Of the remainder, seven completed double degrees (two Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Commerce, two Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Creative Arts, two Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Communication and Media Studies, one Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science) whilst one completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree and another a Master of Education after completing a Bachelor of Arts. While it is unclear how many respondents undertook a double major, seven respondents indicate that they combined their Japanese language studies with other areas of study. Respondents O and R double-majored in Asia Pacific Studies, while Respondent A majored in Economics and Management, Respondent G in Politics, Respondent H in Linguistics, Respondent K in Creative Writing and Respondent Q in Biological Science.

⁷ No definition of what constitutes a "position" was given. It is possible that some respondents interpreted it to mean different roles within the same company whilst others may have interpreted it to refer to moving between companies.

In terms of the year of graduation of the respondents who majored in Japanese, six graduated in 2012, four in 2010, three in 2011 and the remaining two respondents in 2008. None of the respondents who majored in Japanese graduated in 2009 (Figure 5).

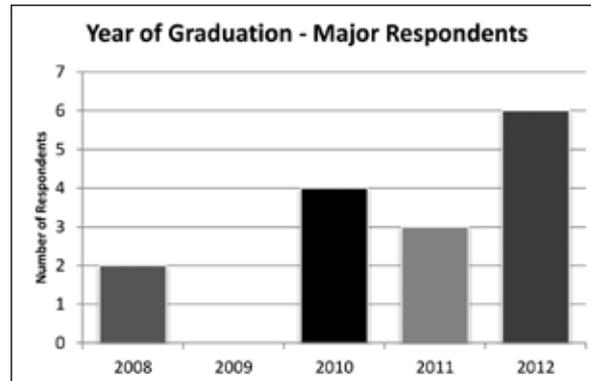


Figure 5: Year of Graduation: Major Respondents

In terms of the number of positions that respondents with a major have held, seven are in their first position after graduation whilst Respondent K is in her second and Respondent L in her third position. Further examination of the data indicates that three of the remaining respondents are not employed, although they had previously been employed, and one respondent is working in her fourth or later position.

PRESENT POSITION

Eight of the thirteen respondents state that they use Japanese in their present position, with three of these stating that Japanese language skills were a requirement for the position. Two of the latter respondents were domestic students; the third (Respondent J) was the international student. Five of the eight respondents who spoke Japanese at work use Japanese daily, at a range of levels (as shown in Table). One respondent (Respondent E) states that he uses Japanese on a weekly basis and two (Respondents A and N) use their Japanese speaking skills less than once a month.

Frequency	Level
On a daily basis (G, K, L, O, P)	Basic (O)
	Intermediate without honorifics (K)
	Intermediate with honorifics (G, L, P)
Once a week (E)	Basic (E)
Once a month (nil)	
Less often than once a month (A, N)	Basic (N)
	Advanced (A)

Table 1: Frequency and Level of Spoken Japanese – Major Respondents

In regards to the use of their Japanese reading skills, eight respondents indicate that they use this skill but only seven mention the frequency of use. Respondents K, L and O read Japanese on a daily basis, while Respondent E reads once a week, and Respondents A and G read Japanese less than once a month (6). Respondent P does not indicate how often she reads Japanese at work.

In regards to the frequency of respondents' use of their writing skills, five respondents state that they use their Japanese writing skills at work – one on a daily basis, one on a weekly basis, one once a month, and two use them less than once a month.

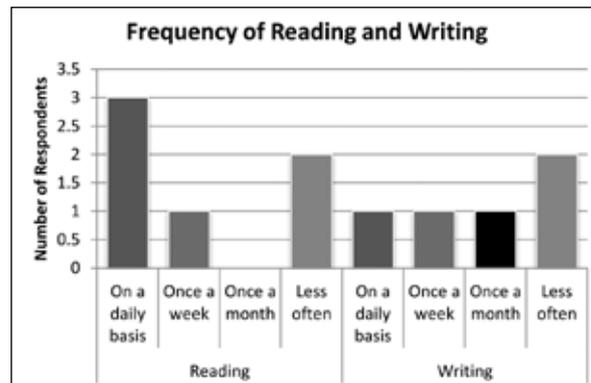


Figure 6: Frequency of Reading and Writing – Major Respondents

The results of this analysis show that for eight of the fifteen respondents who majored in Japanese the most commonly used skill was spoken Japanese, which is used at all levels with high frequency. Respondent N uses her basic speaking skills less than once a month but does not use either her reading or writing skills, while Respondent J uses her reading skills less than once a month but does not use her spoken or writing skills in her present position. Writing was the least commonly used Japanese language skill, although four of the five who use their writing skills also use an intermediate level of spoken Japanese (with or without honorifics) or higher in their present positions. The remaining respondent (Respondent J) notes that whilst she uses her Japanese writing skills in her present position but neither her speaking nor reading skills, she had used those skills in earlier positions.

RESPONDENTS IN THEIR FIRST POSITION

Six of the thirteen respondents indicate that they are presently employed in their first position after graduation. Replies from the remaining seven respondents relate to their first position after graduation. In this section, the responses to questions regarding the first position upon graduation – whether present or not – are discussed to show the full picture of Japanese language use in the first position after graduation, regardless of number of positions held since. This discussion of linguistic skills usage immediately after graduation could serve as useful data for those potential graduates hoping to use their Japanese skills in the workplace.

Only five of the thirteen respondents state that they use their Japanese language skills in their first position after graduation. Respondents A, G and J state that Japanese language skills were a requirement for their first position upon graduation. Respondents N and O state that although it was not a requirement of their employment, they use their Japanese skills in their first position. Despite the lack of any requirement, Respondent O speaks Japanese on a daily basis, while Respondent N speaks it less than once a month. Both of these respondents only use basic spoken Japanese skills but the three respondents who were required to speak Japanese for their first position did so at either a basic (Respondent J) or intermediate with honorifics (Respondents A and G) level. The frequency and level of spoken Japanese use for respondents' first positions after graduation are summarised below in Table 2.

Frequency	Level
On a daily basis (A, G, O)	Basic (O)
	Intermediate with honorifics (A, G)
Once a week (nil)	
Once a month (nil)	
Less often than once a month (J, N)	Basic (J, N)

Table 2: Frequency and Level of Spoken Japanese – Major Respondents, First Position

In contrast to the use of spoken skills, reading and writing skills are used less in the workplace. Respondents G, J and O were the only respondents who use their reading skills in their first position (7); Respondent O uses her reading skills on a daily basis while Respondents G and J use their reading skills less than once a month. Only Respondents G (once a month) and J (less than once a month) state that they use their Japanese writing skills in their first position. According to these results, spoken Japanese language skills are the most commonly used skill in their first position by those who majored in Japanese. Reading and writing skills follow in that order.

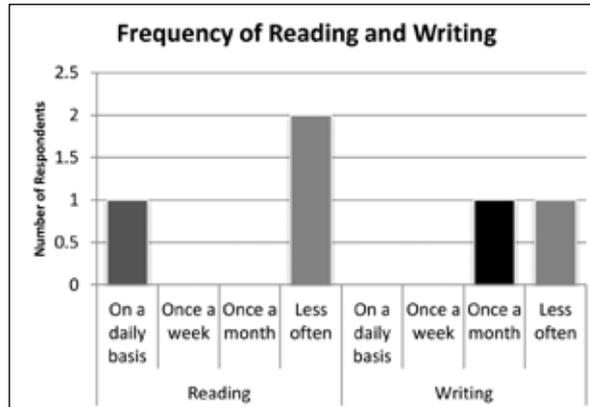


Figure 7: Frequency of Reading and Writing – Major Respondents, First Position

RESPONDENTS IN THEIR SECOND POSITION

Eight of the thirteen respondents who majored in Japanese answered questions relating to the use of Japanese language in their second position after graduation. Of these eight respondents, only Respondents A, J and K use their Japanese language skills in their second position. For Respondents A and J, Japanese language skills were required for their second position after graduation but they were not a requirement for Respondent K’s second (current) position after graduation although she does use them. Table 3 shows the level of usage by these three respondents.

Frequency	Level
On a daily basis (A, K)	Advanced (A)
	Intermediate without honorifics (K)
Once a week (nil)	
Once a month (nil)	
Less often than once a month (J)	Basic (J)

Table 3: Frequency and Level of Spoken Japanese – Major Respondents, Second Position

In terms of frequency of use, Respondent A speaks advanced Japanese on a daily basis and Respondent J speaks basic Japanese less than once a month. Whilst Japanese language skills are not a requirement for Respondent K’s second position, she speaks Japanese at an intermediate level (without honorifics) on a daily basis. Respondents A and K not only use their Japanese speaking skills on a daily basis, they also use their Japanese reading skills daily. Respondent A also uses her written Japanese skills on a daily basis in her second position, and Respondent K uses her written skills once a week in her second/present position (Figure 8). In contrast, Respondent J uses her reading skills but does not use her writing skills in her second position.

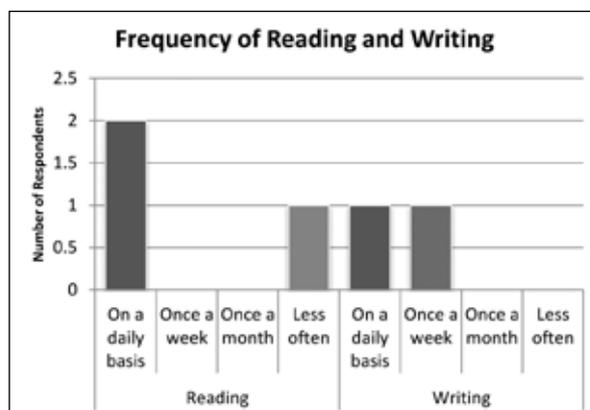


Figure 8: Frequency of Reading and Writing – Major Respondents, Second Position

The data on graduates' second positions show that a relatively high level of Japanese language skill is used in those positions. The graduates who use their Japanese speaking skills on a daily basis do so at either the intermediate or advanced level, and also employ their reading and writing skills with high frequency. Since this is a very small group of respondents, further research is needed to understand the contexts in which graduates use their Japanese skills.

RESPONDENTS IN THEIR THIRD OR SUBSEQUENT POSITION

Two respondents (A and L) indicate that they are currently employed in their third or subsequent position after graduation, while three others (Respondents E, J and P) answered questions regarding their previous employment in their third or subsequent position. Of the five respondents, only two (Respondents A and L) indicate that they use their language skills in these positions. Both respondents not only use their spoken Japanese language skills on a daily basis (Table 4) but also use their Japanese reading and writing skills on a daily basis.

Frequency	Level
On a daily basis (A, L)	Advanced (A)
	Intermediate with honorifics (L)
Once a week (nil)	
Once a month (nil)	
Less often than once a month (nil)	

Table 4: Frequency and Level of Spoken Japanese – Major Respondents, Third Position

Respondents A and L both use their Japanese language skills at a high frequency and high level of skill. Respondent L's third/present position is as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme which may account for the high frequency of her Japanese language use.

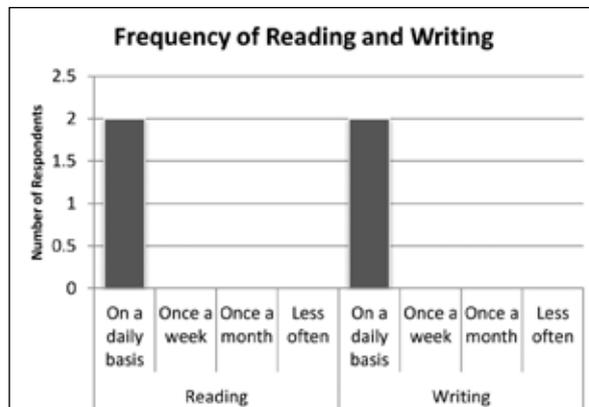


Figure 9: Frequency of Reading and Writing – Major Respondents, Third Position

GENERAL COMMENTS

While the majority of respondents who graduated with a major in Japanese used their Japanese language skills in their first or present positions, only a few have held either second or third positions, and even fewer have used their Japanese language skills in these positions. More research is needed to better understand this situation, but analysis of a number of individuals' use of Japanese in the workplace and some of the comments made by the respondents raises some interesting issues. A number of work histories of individual respondents and comments are discussed in greater detail below.

Respondent A has used her spoken Japanese at either the intermediate with honorifics or advanced level in her first, second, third and present positions after graduation. She used her spoken Japanese language skills on a daily basis in her first, second and third positions, but uses her spoken skills less than once a month in her present position (although still at an advanced level). Respondent A was the only one to use advanced spoken Japanese language skills in her present position in Public Relations. That is, only one domestic graduate has used their linguistic skills on an ongoing basis after graduation. This respondent was relatively positive about initial job opportunities in both Sydney and Japan based on Japanese language skills, but noted that "as you get older it is more challenging developing a career around Japanese

language skills” (Respondent A). This view reflects a common theme raised by respondents regarding the employability of those with Japanese language skills. For instance, Respondent R notes that Japanese skills are a “unique selling point”, whilst another recommends combining Japanese language skills with other technical or professional skills in order to develop a career (Respondent H). Other respondents recommend either undertaking an international exchange to further enhance both language and cultural awareness skills (Respondent M) or sitting the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) to gain a further, more internationally recognised Japanese language qualification (Respondent Q).

Two respondents were negative in their comments about their level of employability after majoring in Japanese. The comments not only have implications for how graduates are prepared for the workplace but also indicate a need for students (and graduates) to be made more aware of language learning as a lifelong activity. The first of these, Respondent J, states that although she had gained a “basic knowledge” during her studies, she had needed to learn a significant amount of new vocabulary and spoken language patterns when she started work. The second, Respondent L, comments that the language skills she had learnt at university had not adequately prepared her for living and working in Japan, and a greater focus on the development of spoken language skills is required.

In terms of the position currently held, only three of the “major” thirteen respondents voluntarily provided data relating to their current employment position. Respondent A states that she is in a Public Relations role in the Services industry whilst Respondent L works as an ALT on the JET Programme. Respondent J currently works as a Sales Assistant.

“MINOR” RESPONDENTS

In this section, discussion focusses on the experiences of the four respondents (D, F, S and U) who completed a minor in Japanese. Unfortunately, due to the way that the questions were framed, it is unclear whether these graduates completed a beginner level minor (where students begin their language studies at university) or an intermediate level minor having completed HSC (or similar) studies prior to entering university. This information may affect a graduate’s responses, and hence questions addressing this issue should be included in any further studies.

All four respondents were female, domestic students. Respondent D graduated in 2009, Respondent F in 2010, and Respondents S and U both graduated in 2012. Respondent D graduated with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in History, while Respondent F graduated with a Bachelor of Computer Science. Respondent S majored in Spanish and graduated with a combined Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of International Studies degree; Respondent U graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with “several minors rather than a major”.⁸

PRESENT POSITION

Respondents D, S and U are presently employed, while Respondent F was previously employed but is not currently employed. Of the three respondents currently working, Respondents S and U state that Japanese language skills were a requirement of their positions, while Respondent D states that even though Japanese language skills were not a requirement for her position, she uses her Japanese language skills. This situation contrasts with Respondent S who, even though Japanese language skills were a requirement for her present position, does not use her Japanese speaking, reading or writing skills in that position.

Frequency	Level
On a daily basis (U)	Intermediate without honorifics (U)
Once a week (nil)	
Once a month (D)	Basic (D)
Less often than once a month (nil)	

Table 5: Frequency and Level of Spoken Japanese – Minor Respondents, Present Position

⁸ This respondent may have misunderstood the question, as all students are required to have at least one major to graduate.

Table 5 summarises how often the graduates who minored in Japanese use their spoken Japanese language skills in their present position. Respondent U speaks intermediate Japanese (without honorifics) on a daily basis, whilst Respondent D speaks basic Japanese once a month but does not use her Japanese reading or writing skills. Respondent F,

on the other hand, does not use her spoken skills, but does use her reading and writing skills. Respondent U is the only “minor” respondent to use all three skills in her present position. In addition to using her speaking skills on a daily basis, Respondent U uses her reading skills on a daily basis and her writing skills once a week. The frequency of use by “minor” respondents of their reading and writing skills in their present position is summarised in Figure 10.

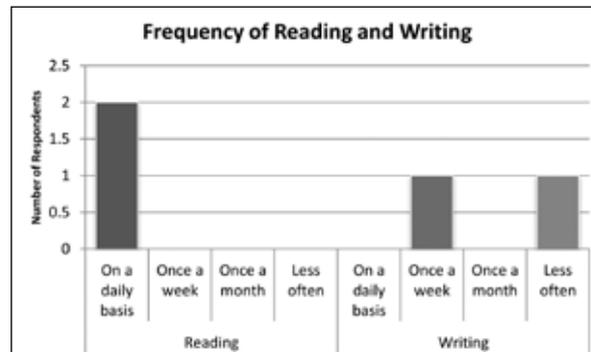


Figure 10: Frequency of Reading and Writing – Minor Respondents, Present Position

RESPONDENTS IN THEIR FIRST POSITION

Only Respondent F states that she uses her Japanese language skills in her first position after graduation. Respondent F is the respondent mentioned above who does not use her spoken Japanese language skills but uses her Japanese reading skills on a daily basis. Respondent F also uses her Japanese writing skills less than once a month.

RESPONDENTS IN THEIR SECOND POSITION

Two of the four “minor” respondents (Respondents D and U) state that they use their Japanese language skills in their second position. For both of these respondents, their second position is their present position. The first, Respondent D, is the respondent discussed above who uses basic spoken Japanese once a month, but does not use her reading or writing skills in her second position. Japanese language skills were not a requirement of this position.

The second respondent, Respondent U, is the respondent discussed above who uses all three language skills in her second (present) position. Respondent U speaks intermediate Japanese without honorifics on a daily basis, reads Japanese on a daily basis and writes Japanese once a week as part of her second (present) employment position. Japanese language skills were a requirement of her position.

RESPONDENTS IN THEIR THIRD POSITION

Only Respondent S states that her present position is her third position after graduation. Respondent S states that although Japanese language skills were a requirement for her third position, she does not use her Japanese speaking, reading or writing skills in this position. Respondent S is the only one of the four “minor” respondents to voluntarily provide data relating to her present employment position. She states that she works as an “Educator/Trainer” but does not specify whether she is working in Australia or, like “major” Respondent L, is working as an ALT in Japan.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Only one of the four respondents who graduated with a minor left a comment on the employability of Japanese language skills. Respondent U notes the importance of not taking long breaks during study if one intends to use Japanese language in employment, “as it is easy to forget quickly”.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this pilot study show a great diversity in the use of Japanese in the workplace by graduates. Japanese language skills are most commonly used in the respondents' first positions after graduation. Nine of the twenty-one (43%) total respondents are currently employed in their first position after graduation, while the remaining twelve respondents (57%) are in their second or later position. In their first position after graduation, six of the thirteen (46%) respondents who majored in Japanese and only one of the four minor respondents (25%) used any Japanese language skills. The most commonly used skill in a graduate's first position after graduation is their spoken language skill. This skill was used in their first position by all six of the 13 respondents who majored in Japanese but not by any of those who undertook a minor. With seven respondents – including one who graduated with a minor – indicating that they use their Japanese reading skill, reading is the second most commonly utilised skill in a graduate's first position. The least commonly utilised skill by respondents in their first position was their writing skill.

The results of this survey indicate that graduates tend to either use their Japanese skills in the workplace in their first position after graduation, or do not use their Japanese skills at work at all. Only two of the twenty-one respondents (Respondents K and U) did not use any Japanese in their first position but use them in any subsequent positions. Respondent D uses basic spoken Japanese once a month in her second position after graduation, but did not use any Japanese language skills in her first position.

The relatively low proportion of graduates using their language skills – less than 50% for graduates with a major and 25% of those with a minor – has implications for language policy, analysis of government initiatives such as the *Asian Century White Paper* and for the information given to current and future students about the potential for use of their language skills in the workplace. In the latter case, it would be highly problematic to promote language studies to future or current students on the basis that they will be able to use their language skills in the workplace after graduation when the reality is that few do.

The comparative frequency of spoken Japanese use in the workplace indicates the importance of gaining this skill prior to graduation. This was supported by comments by respondents relating to the employability of candidates with Japanese language skills. For instance, Respondent R states that she “was asked to speak Japanese during the interview” for her first position after graduation. Several other respondents indicate that speaking Japanese is important in their work, although they note that they often initially lacked the specialised vocabularies needed for those positions. Interestingly, whether language skills are to be used in the workplace or not is not necessarily clear before beginning a position. For example, Japanese language skills were a requirement for Respondent S's position but were not being used, whilst language skills were not a requirement for Respondent D's position even though she now uses her Japanese skills at work.

One issue that was made clear by respondents' comments is the need for students to work to improve their Japanese language skills by undertaking study abroad (Respondents C, L and M) or demonstrating their skills by taking the JLPT (Respondent Q). Although the JLPT does not test speaking skills, which this survey demonstrates is the most commonly used skill, it does provide employers with a somewhat objective means to judge potential employees' likely Japanese language ability.

Finally, further research on the use of language in the workplace by graduates is needed. The diversity of responses to this pilot survey has in some ways raised more questions than answers. While the results indicate that all linguistic skills are used by graduates to some degree, a longitudinal survey which covers more universities and / or other languages and graduates' attitudes to their use (or non-use) of their language skills, and how language skills are used in the workplace, is needed. It would also be useful to include a question on whether graduates had hoped to use their language skills in the workplace. Future research should incorporate interviews where possible. In conjunction with the results of this survey, the results of future research would provide the background to develop the measures which can be used to evaluate the success of government initiatives such as the *Asian Century White Paper* and provide more accurate information to current and potential Japanese language learners.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE (in online format)

1. Sex: female male

2. Student type: Domestic International

3. Graduated: 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012

4. Japanese: major minor

5. Japanese: major (answer Q5A) minor (answer Q5B)

5A. Did you do a double major? Y N (to Q6)
If yes, what was your other major? (optional)

5B. What was your major(s)? (optional)

6. Did you study Japanese for your HSC? Y (Continuers / Extension) N

7. Degree (these include Deans Scholar / Advanced programs):
 BA BCMS BIS BCom
 BScience BEng Combined (indicate) Other

8. Are you employed full-time or part-time at present? Yes No
If no, are you undertaking full-time study? Yes No

9. Have you undertaken further study since Graduation? Yes No
If yes, at what level? TAFE Grad Dip Honours
 Masters/PhD Other

10. Were Japanese language skills a requirement for the position you **presently** hold?
 Yes No

11. Do you use your spoken Japanese language skills in your **present** position?
 Yes (go to Q11A and Q11B) No (go to Q12)

11A. If answer to Q8 is Yes, how often? On a daily basis At least once a week
 Once a month Less often

11B. And to what level? Basic Intermediate without honorifics
 Intermediate with honorifics Advanced

12. Do you use your Japanese reading skills in your present position?
 Yes No
If yes, how often? On a daily basis At least once a week
 Once a month Less often

13. Do you use your Japanese written skills in your present position?
 Yes No
If yes, how often? On a daily basis At least once a week
 Once a month Less often

14. Is your present position the **first** position you held **after** graduating with a minor or major in Japanese?
 Yes (go to Q15) No (go to Q14A)

14A. If answer to Q14 was No, were Japanese language skills a requirement for your first position?
 Yes No (go to Q15)

14B. If answer to Q14 was No, did you use your spoken language skills in your first position?
 Yes (go to Q14B1 and Q14B2) No (go to Q14C)

14B1. If answer to Q14B was Yes, how often?
 On a daily basis At least once a week Once a month Less often

14B2. And to what level? Basic Intermediate without honorifics
 Intermediate with honorifics Advanced

14C. If answer to Q14B was No, did you use your Japanese reading skills in your first position?
 Yes No (go to Q15)

14C1. If answer to Q14C was Yes, how often?
 On a daily basis At least once a week Once a month Less often

14C2. If answer to Q14C was No, did you use your Japanese written skills in your first position?
 Yes No (go to Q15)
 If answer to Q14C2 was Yes, how often?
 On a daily basis At least once a week Once a month Less often

15. Which industrial sector are you employed in?
 Education & Training Services (includes Tourism, Communications, Finance)
 Medical/ Scientific Government IT and Telecommunications
 Engineering / Construction Manufacturing Other

16. Have you used (in any position you have held) the cultural awareness skills you developed studying Japanese in your workplace? Yes
 No

17. How would you describe your position?
 Educator / trainer Administrative Technical / Specialist Management
 Self-Employed Student Other (please specify)

Please provide your position title (optional question):

18. Do you have any comments for students presently studying Japanese language about their employability using their Japanese language skills?
 (optional response)

(Space provided for comments.)

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 2

Demographic Data

Respondent	Sex	Student Type	Graduation	Degree	Major
A	Female	Domestic	2008	BA/BCom	Japanese/Economics
D	Female	Domestic	2009	BA	History; Japanese minor
E	Male	Domestic	2010	BA	Japanese
F	Female	Domestic	2010	BCS	Computer Science; Japanese minor
G	Female	Domestic	2010	BA	Japanese/Politics
H	Female	Domestic	2010	BA & MEd	Japanese/Linguistics
J	Female	International	2010	BA	Japanese
K	Female	Domestic	2011	BA/BCA	Japanese/Creative Writing
L	Female	Domestic	2011	BA/BCMS	Japanese
M	Female	Domestic	2011	BA/BCMS	Japanese
N	Female	Domestic	2012	BA/BCA	Japanese
O	Female	Domestic	2012	BA Hons	Japanese/Asia Pacific Studies
P	Female	Domestic	2012	BCom	Japanese
Q	Female	Domestic	2012	BA/BSc	Japanese/Biological Science
R	Female	Domestic	2012	BA/BCom	Japanese/Asia Pacific Studies
S	Female	Domestic	2012	BA/BIS	Spanish; Japanese minor
U	Female	Domestic	2012	BA	Japanese minor