

Report on New Senior Secondary Japanese Curriculum and Current Situation of Japanese Language Education in Hong Kong Secondary School 2010-11

Working Group on NSS Japanese Curriculum & Current Situation of Japanese Language Education in HK Secondary Schools Survey

1. Introduction

In recent years, the education system in Hong Kong has been undergoing significant changes among which the implementation of the New Senior Secondary School (NSS) Curriculum in September 2009 is one of the most important areas of changes. Within the framework of the NSS Curriculum, apart from the four core subjects (Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies), students can choose two to three elective subjects. Foreign Languages (six languages including Japanese, French, German, Spanish, Hindu and Urdu) are being offered as one of the elective subjects¹.

2. Background

In order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the teaching of Japanese language in Hong Kong's secondary schools after the implementation of the NSS curriculum, the Society of Japanese Language Education, Hong Kong² had conducted a large scale survey among local secondary schools in November 2009. A report had already been published summarizing the situation of Japanese language education in secondary schools in Hong Kong with particular focus on the

¹ Education Bureau. Introduction of New Academic Structure. Retrieved 27 March 2012 from <http://334.edb.hkedcity.net/EN/intro.php>.

² The Society of Japanese Language Education, Hong Kong was established in 1978 by a group of Japanese language and Japanese studies scholars from the various educational institutions (including the University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong and the then Hong Kong Polytechnic) and language schools in Hong Kong (including the Japanese Language School attached to the Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong). As of 2011, the Society has more than 300 members including full time or part time Japanese language teachers or Japanese Studies scholars.

(Website: <http://www.japanese-edu.org.hk>)

senior years³ (Senior Secondary: F4 ~ F6).

As the 2009 survey is a preliminary investigation of the current situation of the newly implemented NSS Japanese language programme in Hong Kong's secondary schools, in order to contribute to the future development and enhancement of Japanese language education in Hong Kong's secondary schools, the Society of Japanese Language Education, Hong Kong deems it essential to conduct a longitudinal survey among schools administrators, teachers and students continuously. The second survey of the teaching of Japanese language in Hong Kong's secondary school was conducted in November 2010.

This paper will report and summarise the November 2010 survey result of the current situation of Japanese language education in secondary schools in Hong Kong. The main focus of the survey includes how the school management prepares their students to participate in the NSS Japanese language examination, the challenges and difficulties they are facing and have to handle at present. In order to understand the position of Japanese language in students' studies and future career, questions about articulation and further studies had also been asked.

In the summary of our report, some suggestions and recommendations will be made to both the management and teaching staff of the schools concerned. Moreover, one of our Society's missions is to contribute to the promotion of Japanese language education and the enhancement of Japanese language standard among students, we will briefly report on our Society's current endeavours and plans to contribute to the promotion of Japanese language education at secondary school level.

3. Survey Methodology

The Society of Japanese Language Education, Hong Kong (the Society) sent out a total number of 457 questionnaires (43 questionnaires for #101 and 414 questionnaires for #102) written in Chinese to local secondary schools by post on 22 November 2010⁴. For the purpose of collecting comments from the perspectives of the school management and the teaching staff, the

³ 2009 Survey report by Society of Japanese Language Education.

⁴ The questionnaires are divided into two sets (#101 and #102). #101 is a follow up questionnaire for 2009 respondents who reported that they had offered Japanese language programme to their students. #102 is for those local secondary schools that have no record in our database.

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questionnaires were sent to both the principals and the Japanese language teachers. In order to facilitate the collection of replies, responses could be returned through post, email or telephone.

4. Result of the Survey

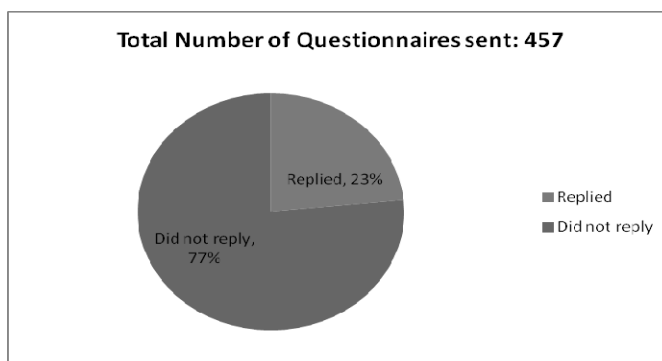


Figure 4.1

A total of 107 schools (23.4%) have replied to our questionnaires. The responses rate of #101 is 65% (28/43) and that of #102 is 19% (79/414). The result shows that there are 24 local secondary schools offering Japanese language programme to their students among which 9 schools offer the NSS Japanese programme with a total of 361 students studying the subject. The other 15 schools offer Japanese language as extra-curricular activity or elective subject with a total of 1819 students. Three schools indicated that they are planning to offer Japanese language programme in the future.

5. Schools with the NSS Japanese Language Programme

5.1 Number of Schools

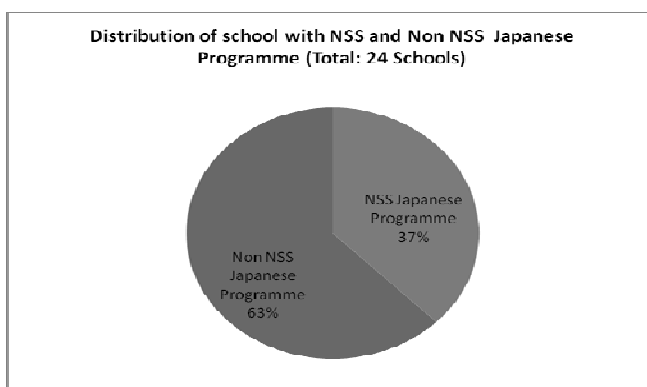


Figure 5.1

The survey shows that Japanese language programme is being offered in 24 local secondary schools among which 9 of them are offering NSS Japanese language programme. 2 of these schools are offering Japanese Language both as NSS programme and extra-curricular activity or elective subject to students. Thus, Japanese language is being offered only as extra-curricular studies or elective subjects in the remaining 15 schools. 13 schools that offered Japanese language programme in the academic year 2009 had cancelled their Japanese class in the academic year 2010.

5.2 Number of Students

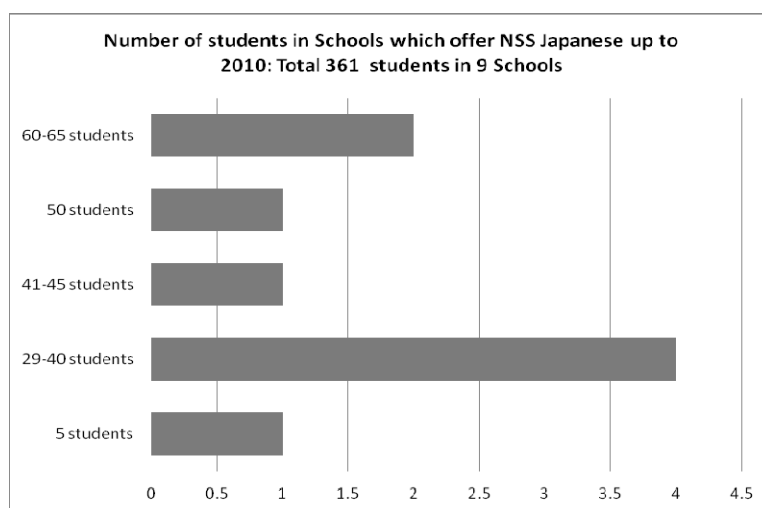


Figure 5.2

Replies received from schools responding to our #101 survey showed that there are a total of 306 students taking NSS Japanese language programme. Among which, 4 schools have about 29-40 students; 1 school has around 41-50 students and 2 schools have around 60-65 students. As for schools that responded to our #102 survey, 1 school has 50 students whereas another which offers Japanese as extra-curricular studies has 5 students.

5.3 Total Number of Teaching Hours Per Academic Week

Five schools that have been teaching Japanese language since 2009 are offering 3 teaching hours per week. One school teaches 4.5 hours and another offers 5.5 teaching hours per week.

5.4 Relation between Learning Japanese and Entering Universities

For schools that have been offering Japanese language programme up to 2010, 13 schools believed that offering Japanese language programme was beneficial to students for entering local and overseas universities. 18 schools believed that offering Japanese language programme is beneficial to students for entering universities in Japan. On the other hand, 8 schools indicated that offering Japanese language would not have direct connection to students' entering either local or overseas universities. 4 schools did not think that offering Japanese language course could help students to enter universities in Japan.

Among those 13 schools that had cancelled their Japanese language programme in 2010, 11 schools believed that offering Japanese language programme would be beneficial to students for entering universities in Japan. However, 12 schools stated that offering Japanese language would not have direct connection to entering either local or overseas universities. Another 2 schools did not think that offering Japanese language course could help students to enter universities in Japan.

As for those 3 schools that are planning to offer Japanese language programme in the future, 1 school believed that offering Japanese language programme would be beneficial to students for entering local and overseas universities. 2 schools believed that offering Japanese language programme would be beneficial to students for entering universities in Japan. 2 schools stated that offering Japanese language programme would not have direct connection to entering either local or overseas universities. 1 school did not think that offering Japanese language course could help students to enter universities in Japan.

5.5 Support and Assistance to Overseas Study or Further Study

Among those schools that have been offering Japanese language programme since 2009, 13 schools provide support and assistance to students regarding overseas or further study. 1 school does not provide any support to students.

As for those schools that are offering Japanese language programme since 2010, 5 schools provide support and assistance to students regarding overseas or further study. 3 schools do not provide any support to students.

As for those schools that had cancelled their Japanese language programme in 2010, 8 schools had provided support and assistance to students regarding overseas or further study while 3 schools did not provide any support to students. For those schools that are planning to offer Japanese language programme in the future, 3 schools indicated that they would provide support and assistance to students regarding overseas or further study.

5.6 Knowledge of International Japanese Language Examinations

Among the schools that have been offering Japanese language programme since 2009, 2 schools know about SAT, 1 knows about AP, 10 know about CIE. 15 schools know about JLPT which indicates that it is the most well-known among the schools. For those schools that have been offering Japanese language programme since 2010, 2 schools know about SAT, 1 knows about AP, 3 have knowledge of CIE and 5 know about JLPT.

For those that had canceled their Japanese language programme since 2010, 2 schools knew about SAT, 2 knew about AP, 5 knew about CIE and 8 had knowledge of JLPT.

As for those schools that are planning to offer Japanese class in the future, only one of them has heard of SAT and JLPT. But they do not have any knowledge of AP or CIE.

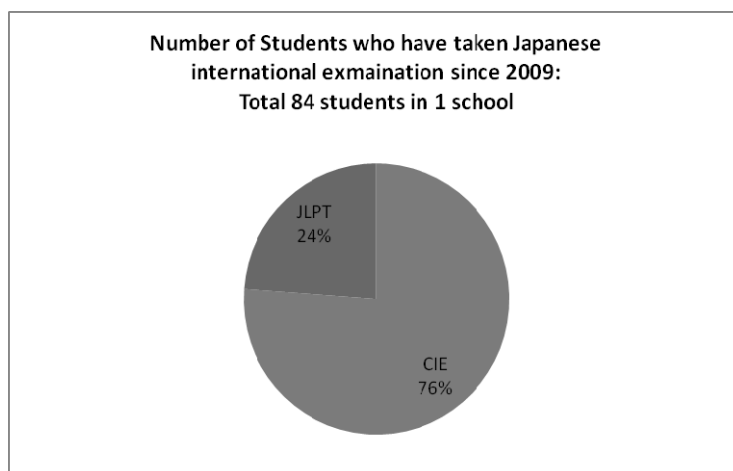


Figure 5.6

Regarding the number of students participating in international Japanese language examination, only one school has 67 students taking CIE. Another school responded that they have 20 students participating in the JLPT examination.

5.7 Difficulties and Supports in Japanese Learning

For those schools that had been offering Japanese language programme up to 2010, 5 schools did not have clear understanding of the content and examination requirement of CIE that students studying NSS Japanese language programme may sit for at the final year of their senior secondary school studies. 6 schools indicated that they are lack of financial support. 7 schools stated that they do not have suitable textbook and teaching material. 3 schools are lack of teachers. 5 schools considered the CIE examination too difficult for their students.

Moreover, for those schools that had cancelled Japanese language programme since 2010, 2 schools were facing lack of financial support and lack of suitable teachers. 1 school considered the CIE examination too difficult. One school that is planning to offer Japanese language programme in the future pointed out that lack of suitable teaching staff is one of their major concerns.

Regarding support, for those schools that had been offering Japanese language programme up to 2010, 11 schools would like to have support in preparing textbook and teaching material. 6 schools pointed out that the provision of proper teacher training is essential. 12 schools would like to have more online teaching material support. 6 schools mentioned that scholarship is important to stimulate students' learning motive.

As for those schools that had cancelled Japanese language programme since 2010, 2 schools pointed out that the provision of proper teacher training is essential. 1 school would like to have more online teaching material support. 1 school mentioned that scholarship is important to stimulate students' learning motive.

6. Schools with Non NSS Japanese Language Programme

6.1 Number of Students in School

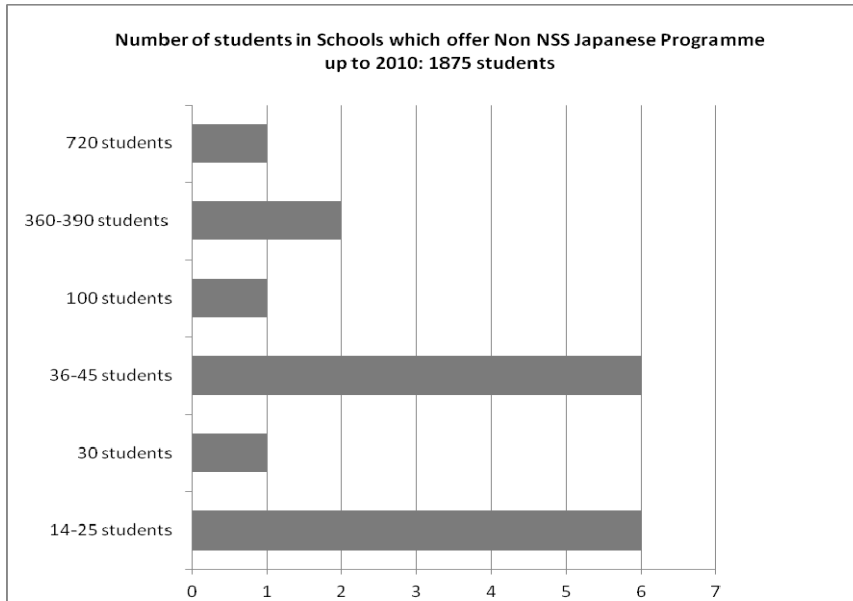


Figure 6.1

There are 1719 students taking Non NSS Japanese language programme in schools that have been offering Japanese language class since 2009 among which 2 schools have about 12-25 students, 5 have around 36-45 students and 2 have around 360-390 students. One school has 720 students.

As for those schools that have been offering Japanese language class as extra-curricular studies since 2010, there are a total of 156 students. 3 schools have 20 students, 1 has 25 students, 1 has 30 students and 1 has 40 students. One school that has been offering Japanese language as elective subject since 2010 reported that they have 100 students.

6.2 Number of Teaching Hours per Week

Among those schools that had been offering Japanese language class as extra-curricular studies up to 2010, 3 schools were offering 35mins-1 hour's teaching per week, 5 offered 1 hour 15 mins-1 hours 30 mins, 2 offered 2 hours, one offered 3 hours, one offered 4 hours, one offered 6 hours. Two schools offered 10-12 hours and one offered 15 hours per week.

Textbooks used included, 《みんなの日本語》、《日本語 GOGO》、《みんなの日本語初級 I》、《新日本語基礎教程 I》 and teaching materials designed by the teachers.

7. School not offering Japanese Language Programme in both 2009 and 2010

414 sets of #102 questionnaires were sent to schools that did not provide Japanese language programme in 2009 as indicated in the result of our Society's 2009 survey. 67 schools responded that they had not offered Japanese language programme in both 2009 and 2010. 47 schools indicated that they have no plan to offer Japanese language programme.

7.1 Relation between Learning Japanese and Entering Universities

15 schools agreed that learning Japanese is beneficial to students' entering local and overseas universities. However, 39 schools responded that there is no direct relationship between entering local or overseas universities and their students' study of Japanese language.

57 schools regarded studying Japanese language is beneficial to students' entering universities in Japan. Only 1 school said there is no direct relationship between entering universities in Japan and learning Japanese language.

7.2 Support and Assistance to Overseas Study or Further Study

56 schools provide support and assistance to students regarding overseas or further study. Only 1 school did not provide any support to students.

7.3 Knowledge of International Examination

Do you know that student can take the followings Japanese international examination in HK?

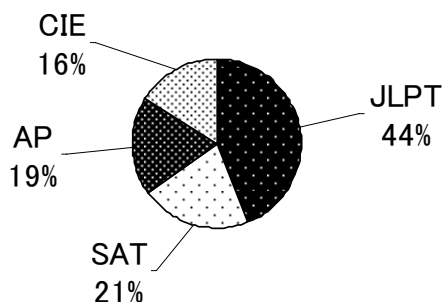


Figure 7.3

18 schools know about SAT, 16 know about AP, 14 know about CIE and 37 know about JLPT.

7.4 Difficulties and Supports in Japanese Language Teaching

Difficulties in Teaching Japanese in School

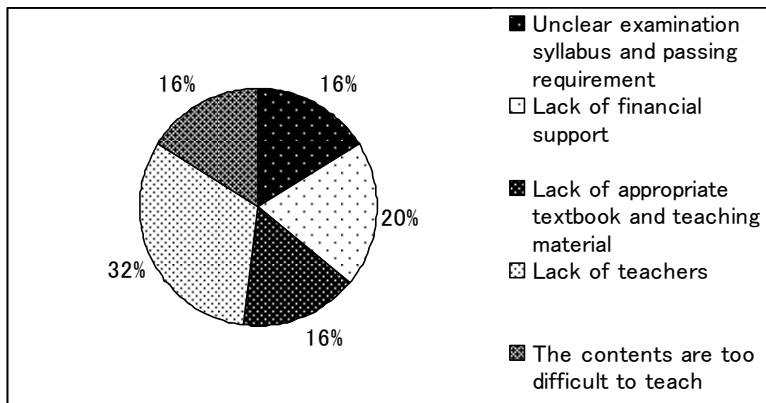


Figure 7.4.1

4 schools responded that they do not have clear understanding of the content and requirement of the CIE examination. 5 schools are lack of financial support. 4 schools stated that they do not have suitable textbook and teaching material. 8 schools are lack of teachers. 3 schools regard the CIE examination to be too difficult to follow.

Which aspects of support in teaching is necessary

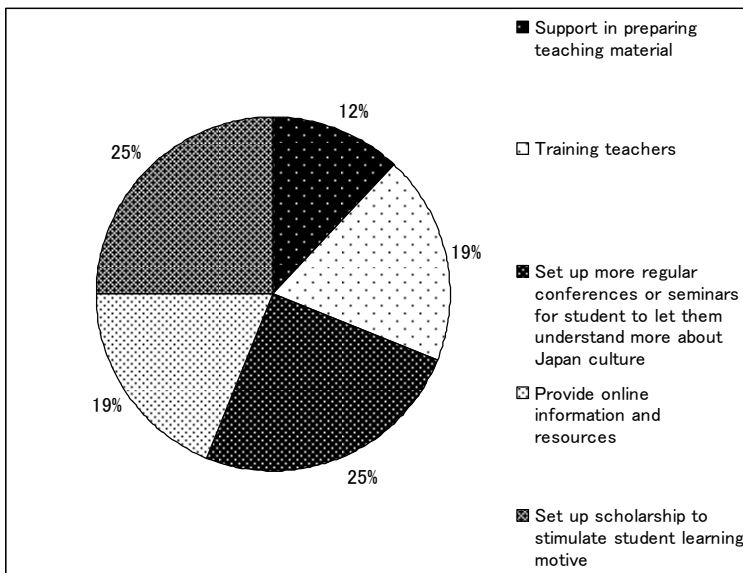


Figure 7.4.2

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Regarding support, 2 schools hope that they can have support in preparing textbook and teaching material. 3 schools pointed out that the provision of proper teacher training is necessary. 4 schools believe regular seminars and promotion activities can help students to understand more about Japanese culture. 3 schools would like to have more online teaching material support. 4 schools indicate that scholarship is important to stimulate students' learning motive.

8. Survey of Students Studying Japanese Language

8.1 Student Profile

8.1.1 Class

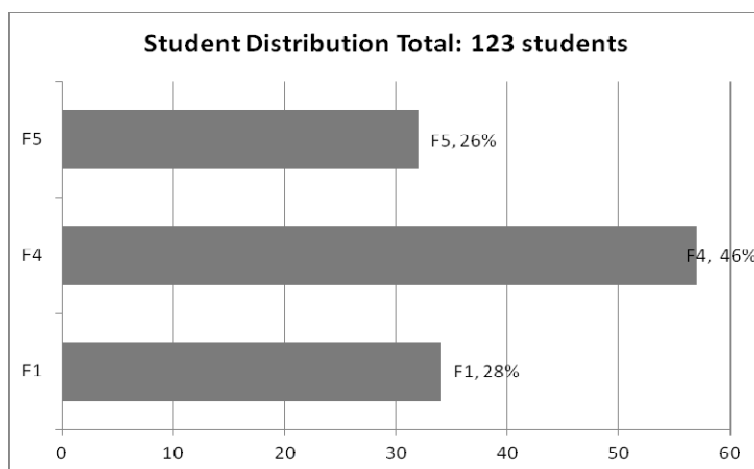


Figure 8.1.1

There are 123 students from 3 different local secondary schools responding to the questionnaires. 34 students are F1, 57 are F4, and 32 are F5 students.

8.1.2 Age

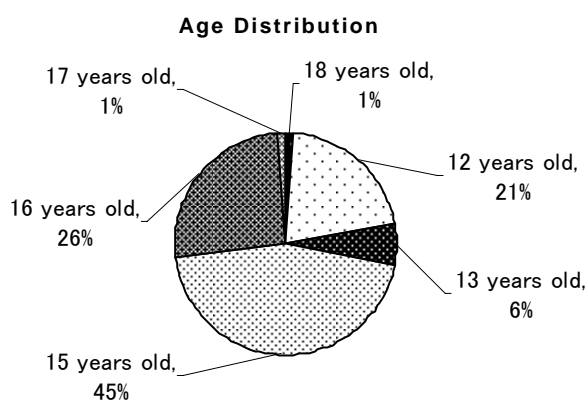


Figure 8.1.2

26 respondents are 12 years old, 8 are 13 years old, 55 of them are 15 years old, 32 of them are 16 years old, 1 is 17 years old and one is 18 years old.

The figure indicates that the majority of students learning Japanese language in the surveyed secondary schools are 15-16 years old.

8.1.3 Gender

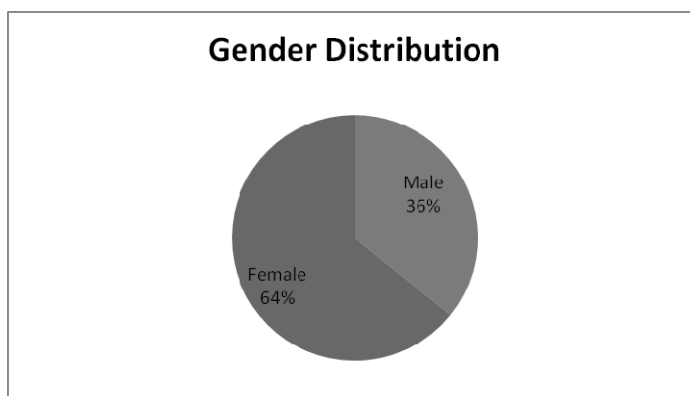


Figure 8.1.3

There are 79 female students and 44 male students studying Japanese language which indicated a relative higher proportion of female students.

8.1.4 Duration of Learning Japanese

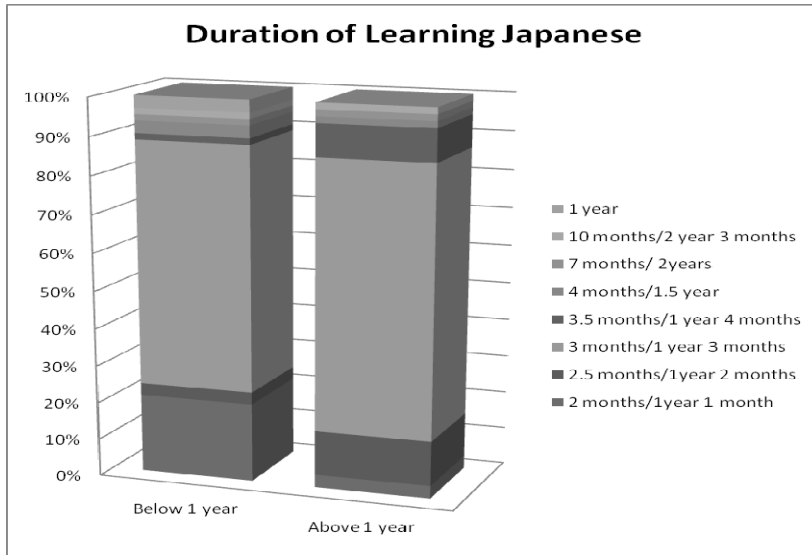


Figure 8.1.4

62 students have been learning Japanese language for less than 1 year. 59 of them have been learning for more than 1 year.

8.2 Learning Motive and Further Studies

8.2.1 Reasons of Learning Japanese Language

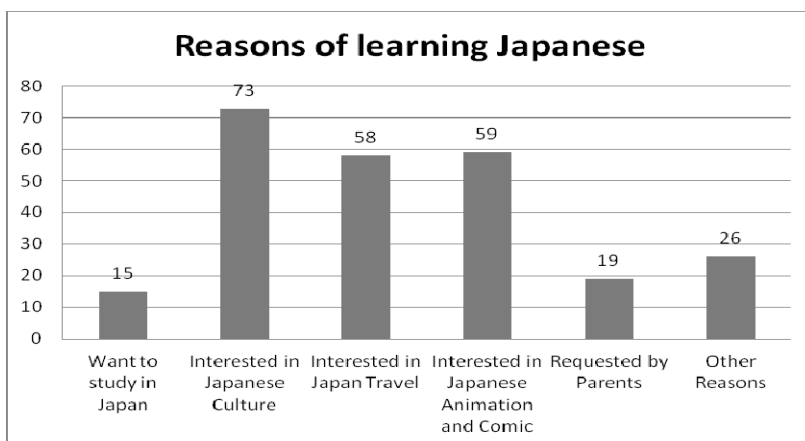


Figure 8.2.1

In responding to the reasons for learning Japanese language, 15 students replied that they would like to go to further their study in Japan, 73 stated that they are interested in Japanese culture, 58 would like to travel in Japan, 59 are interested in Japanese animation and comic, 19 of them study Japanese language under their parents' recommendation.

According to the survey, one of the main reasons for Hong Kong local students' learning of Japanese language is their interest in Japanese culture.

8.2.2 Advantages of Learning Japanese Language

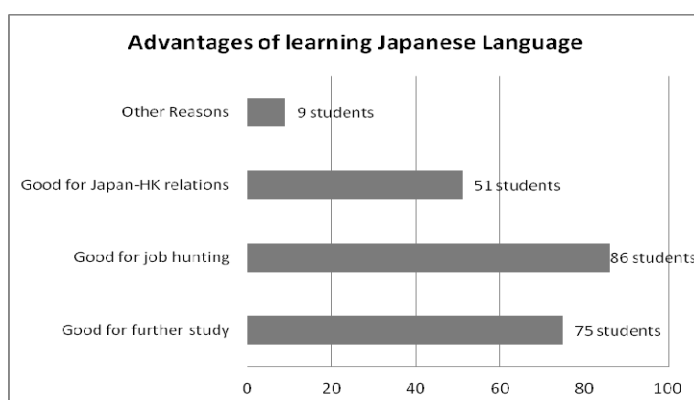


Figure 8.2.2

75 students think that learning Japanese language will be beneficial to their further study. 86 students believe that learning Japanese would help in their job hunting. 51 believe that learning Japanese can help to stimulate and promote Hong Kong and Japanese cultural exchange.

8.2.3 Any Further Plan to Study Japanese in Universities

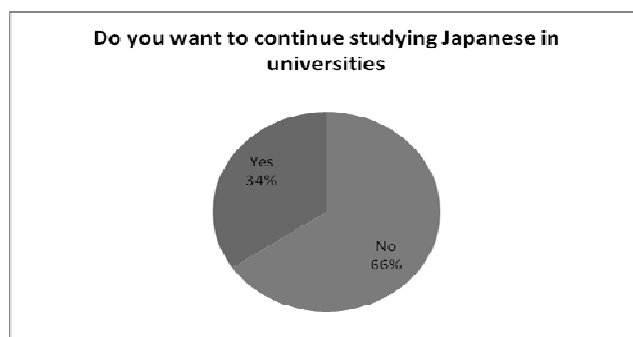


Figure 8.2.3

78 students responded that they do not plan to study Japanese after they enter universities. However, 41 students would like to continue further studying Japanese. Among them, 31 would like to continue learning Japanese in local universities. 2 of them wished to continue learning Japanese in overseas universities. 8 students would like to go to Japan to continue learning Japanese.

8.2.4 Priority on Local, Overseas and Universities in Japan

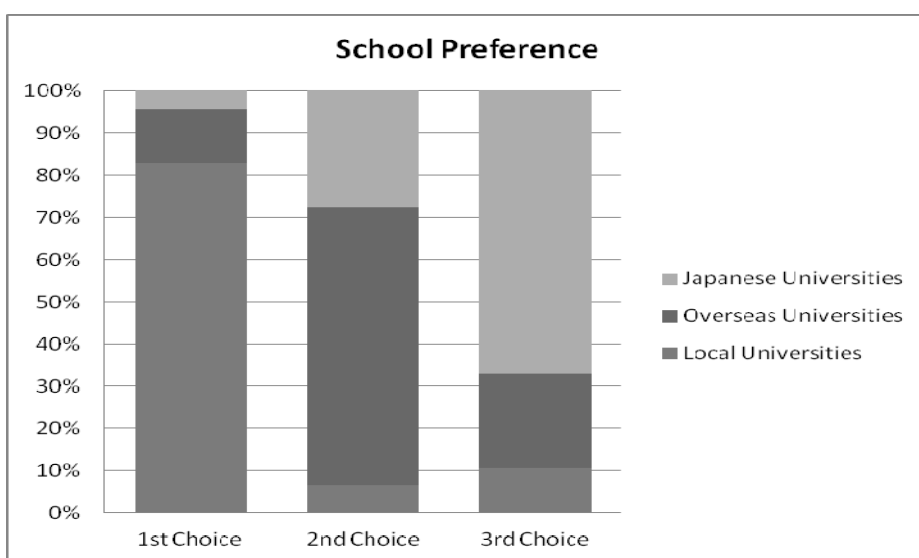


Figure 8.2.4

78 students indicated that local universities are their first choice. 6 students chose universities in Japan as their first choice. 10 students chose Japan universities as their first choice. As for second choice, 12 students chose local universities, 62 students chose overseas, and 21 students chose universities in Japan. As for third choice, 4 students chose local universities, 26 students chose overseas universities and 63 students chose universities in Japan.

As suggested by the result of the survey, local universities are still the most popular choice among Hong Kong secondary students.

8.3 Issues Relating to the Study of Japanese Language

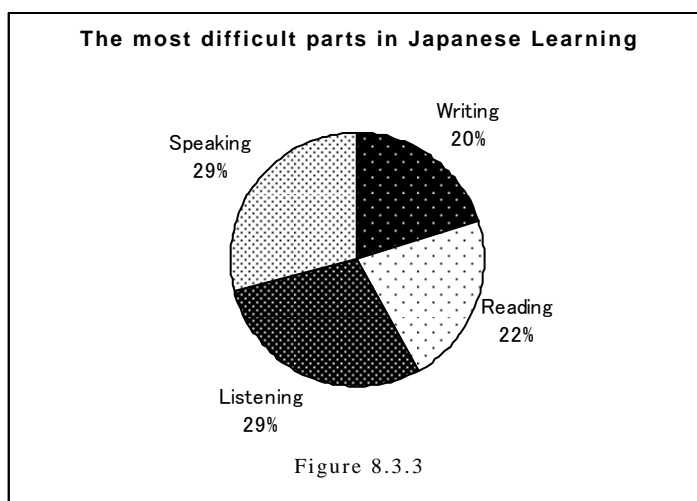
8.3.1 Compulsory or Selective

33 students reported that Japanese is their compulsory subject. The remaining 89 students study Japanese as elective subject.

8.3.2 Number of learning hours in class

34 students have one hour's class per week. 35 students have 4-4.5 hours' class per week. 55 students have 3 hours' class per week.

8.3.3 The Most Difficult Aspects in Japanese Language Study



57 students (20%) stated that writing is the most difficult. 62 students (22%) chose reading, 80 students (29%) chose listening and 82 students (29%) pointed out that speaking is the most difficult.

9. Summary

According to the survey conducted in 2010, it shows that there are 24 local secondary schools offering Japanese language programme to their students among which 9 schools offer the NSS Japanese programme with a total of 361 students studying the subject. The other 15 schools offer Japanese language as extra-curricular activity or elective subject with a total of 1819 students. The average number of students in each class is 25-40, which is bigger than that of 2009. Most schools do not have sufficient resources such as qualified full time teaching staff and most of them employ part time Japanese instructors from external institutions.

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Moreover, it is found that most of the teachers and educators for the NSS Japanese programme are encountering various difficulties in teaching. For instance, they do not have enough information and understanding on the examination syllabus, there is a lack of teaching resources and insufficient government support.

In order to enhance and strengthen Hong Kong's competitiveness under globalization, we support the idea of including foreign languages into the NSS curriculum recommended by the Education Bureau. Compare to 2009, it shows that the number of NSS students increased from 303 to 361, which accounts for an increase of 20%. This shows that there is a necessity to increase support for Japanese language education in Hong Kong.

This is the second time our Society conducts survey of NSS Japanese language programme in Hong Kong's secondary school. In order to contribute to the future development and enhancement of Japanese language education in Hong Kong, our society will continue to conduct longitudinal survey among schools administrators, teachers and students in the coming years.

10. Action and Achievement by the Society of Japanese Language Education based on Suggestions and Recommendations in the 2009 Survey Report

10.1 In 2010, the Society had achieved the followings:

10.1.1 Organise Training Programme for NSS teachers

With the human resource and financial support from the Japan Foundation, the Society of Japanese Language Education organised a Teacher Training Programme for Secondary School Japanese Language Teachers in Hong Kong from July 2010 to May 2011 which included one meeting, 2 workshops on teaching material analysis and pedagogy, a final report and presentation at the monthly seminar of our Society in May 2011.

The participants were highly satisfied with the programme. The training programme has been a very important step toward providing teachers of secondary schools with new information of teaching material, pedagogy and creating network among them.

At the same time, the Society was able to learn more about the problems and issues that the secondary school teachers are confronting in their teaching which would provide important insight for our future training projects.

10.1.2 Information of the CIE Japanese Syllabus

According to the timetable of the NSS curriculum, the first public examination for Japanese as an elective subject of foreign language is scheduled to be taken place in the academic year of 2011/12. Participating students are expected to take the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). In order to help secondary school Japanese language teachers to have a better understanding of the syllabus, with the help of Japan Foundation's Language Expert in Hong Kong, a Japanese version of the syllabus has been posted on the Society's homepage. Briefings on the NSS Japanese language programme and syllabus have been organised for local secondary schools so that interested principals and teachers can have access to more detailed information on the new curriculum.

10.1.3 For Senior Secondary Students

The Annual Speech Contest for Secondary Students organised by the Society was held in April 2010. The contest included Verse Recitation and Free Topic Speech Contest. The overall standard was high.

Award System: In 2010-11, four groups of high school students were offered Best Project Award in Japanese Studies⁵.

Scholarship System: In 2010-11, four scholarships were awarded to individual students in recognition of their outstanding achievements in learning Japanese language.

11. Suggestions and Recommendations

Foreign language education is beneficial to the enrichment of intercultural understanding among young people. Due to the easy access to things Japanese in Hong Kong, many young people are familiar with Japan which very often serves as a positive stimulation to learning Japanese language. We strongly believe that Japanese language education can provide plural-linguistic

⁵ For information of the Society's award and scholarship, please refer to

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=1467&langno=1> (link at the Education Bureau).

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perspectives and enhance multilingual and multicultural awareness of the learners in Hong Kong and equip them to become global citizens. However, as suggested by the result of our survey, we expect that at present, due to the limited teaching and financial resources available to schools and students, schools will continue to face various difficulties and challenges in supporting students' learning in foreign languages which might have negative impact both on the Japanese language teachers and students as well. Therefore, the Society will continue what we have achieved in 2010-11 and work hard towards attaining the following suggestions and plans in order to contribute to the enhancement of Japanese language education and the sustainment of students' interest and dedication in learning Japanese language.

Strengthen the Society's on-line teaching resources: With the support of the Japan Foundation, we shall further improve our website to provide more useful and updated links for teachers to access for innovative and helpful ideas of compiling and utilising teaching materials, e.g. textbooks, flashcards as well as classroom activities.

International symposium on Japanese Language Education and Japanese Studies: our Society will co-organize the 9th International Symposium with the City University of Hong Kong. We plan to organise a forum on Japanese Language Education at senior secondary school level. We also plan to invite teachers and scholars from Japan, Mainland China, Korea and Taiwan to participate and exchange various ideas with our local teachers.

Supporting Activities in Secondary Schools: our Society will support the schools' Japanese language and cultural activities in various capacities.

It is the mission of the Society to promote and support Japanese language education in Hong Kong at large and among the young people in particular. The Society will endeavour to carry out the above suggestions and plans and hope to be able to contribute to the promotion and enhancement of Japanese language education and the sustainment of students' interest and dedication in learning Japanese language.

Appendix

Number of students who take NSS Japanese Versus Non Nss Japanese Programme : Total 2080 students

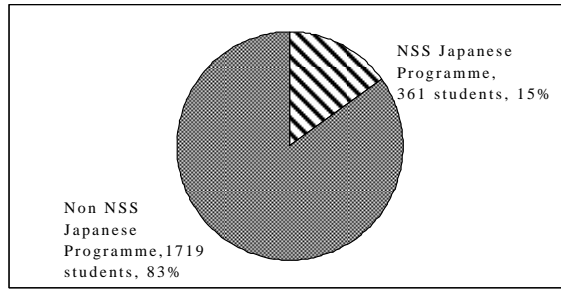


Figure 11.1

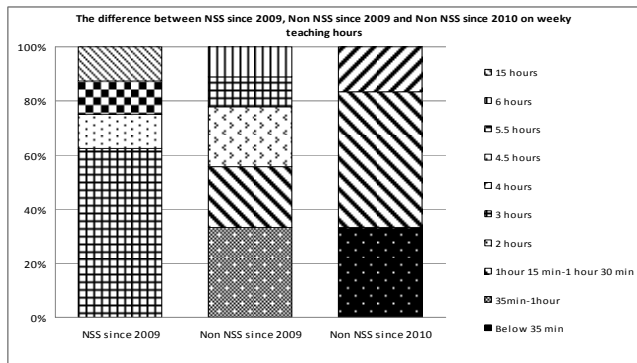


Figure 11.2

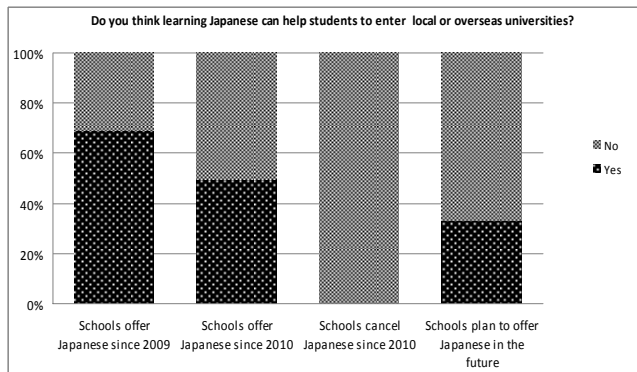


Figure 11.3

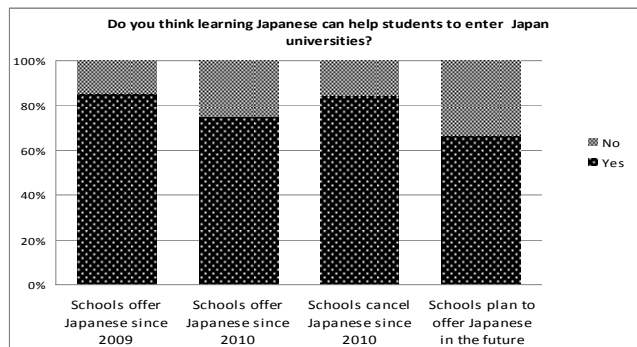


Figure 11.4

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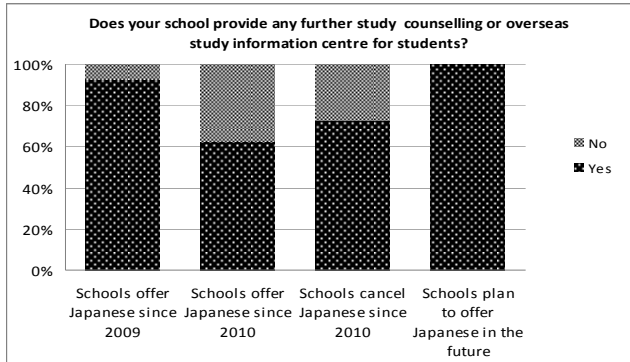


Figure 11.5

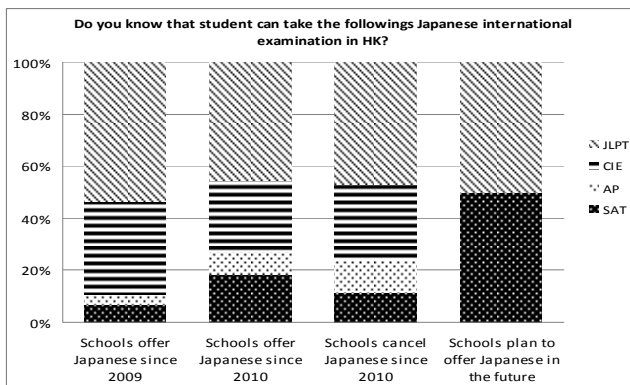


Figure 11.6

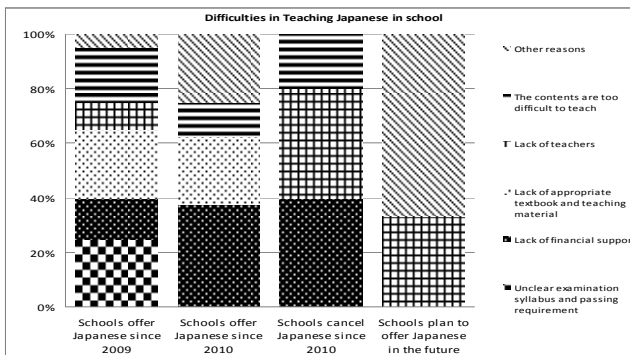


Figure 11.7

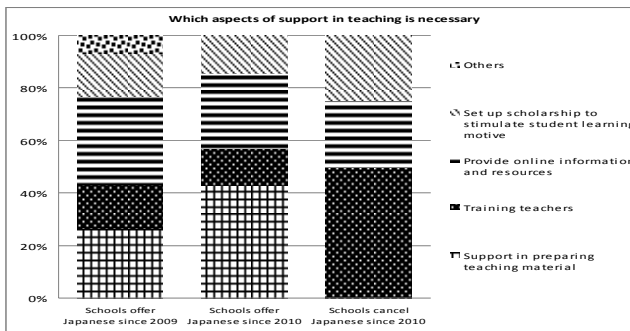


Figure 11.8