

The Challenges of Chinese Students Working Part-time in Japan

by

Haimei Xie

A Master's Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Osaka Jogakuin University
Graduate School of International Collaboration and Coexistence in the 21st Century,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Advisor: Professor Scott Johnston

February 16, 2022

Abstract

International students in the Japanese part-time labor market are a large group that cannot be ignored. Among them, the largest population of international students in Japan are Chinese students (Japan Student Services Organization, 2020). Studying at school, simultaneously working part-time, little attention has been paid to their part-time working challenges in the service areas, such as convenience stores, restaurants, supermarkets, drug stores, and etc. This study examined the challenges of Chinese students working part-time in Japan and how they grapple with these challenges. It revealed that (1) the main challenges the Chinese students experienced in their part-time jobs were linguistic challenges (eg. listening, speaking, dialects) and working cultural challenges (eg. bowing, greeting even though no one is there); and (2) the strategies the Chinese students adopted were internal learning (eg. take notes, memorize frequently used phrases) and external learning (eg. learn and imitate Japanese coworkers) strategies. The results of this study could be helpful for Chinese students to develop working cultural and language skills. More importantly, it may help the students find a way to integrate into the Japanese part-time workplace.

Acknowledgement

Throughout the research and writing process, I have received a great deal of feedback, assistance and support from many people, without whom I would not have been able to complete this research.

I would first like to thank my advisor, Professor Scott Johnston, whose research guidance throughout my research was invaluable in structuring every step of my thesis. Your patience and kindness eased my anxiety, your insightful comments helped me put pieces together and sharpen my writing skills.

Moreover, my appreciation goes to Professor Richard Miller and Professor Hitoshi Mabuchi, for your valuable suggestions and feedback that helped me make my thesis clearer and more logical.

Furthermore, I am so grateful to Osaka Jogakuin University Graduate School for the scholarship, which financially supported me to complete my research. Especially in this coronavirus pandemic, the scholarship greatly eased my financial burden.

In addition, I would also like to thank my class fellows: Izumi Sando and Ha Ngoc Dung Dzung. We helped and encouraged each other.

Many thanks to all participants in my survey and interview, who have willingly shared their experiences with me.

Finally, I cannot forget to thank my best friend Ron and my mother, who have supported me and had to put up with my stresses for the past two intense years. You are always there for me and making me laugh.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	vi
List of Tables.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review	3
International Students in Japan	3
The Motivation of Chinese Students Studying in Japan.....	6
The Motivation of Chinese Students Working Part-time in Japan.....	9
Challenges Chinese Students Face in Japan.....	11
Intercultural Competence.....	14
What Is Intercultural Competence?.....	14
The Model of Intercultural Competence.....	15
Research Questions.....	17
Methodology.....	18
Research Design.....	18
Respondents and Participants.....	19
Online Survey.....	20
Individual Semi-structured Interview.....	21
Coding and Analysis	22
Participants' Privacy	23
Results and Analysis.....	24
Online Survey Results and Analysis.....	24
Japanese Proficiency.....	24
Part-time Workplace.....	27
The Motivation of Chinese Students Working Part-time Jobs.....	28
The Challenges Students Experienced in Part-time Jobs.....	29
Linguistic Challenges.	30
Speaking.	32
Listening.	34
Dialect.	34
Honorifics.	35
Vocabulary.	36
Working Cultural Challenges.	37

Inflexibility.	38
Always Keeping Busy.	39
Overtime Working.	39
The Reason for Quitting a Part-time Job.	40
Interview Results and Analysis.	43
Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in Part-time Work.	43
Linguistic Challenges.	44
The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the First Phase.	45
The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the Second Phase.	50
Part-time Workplace’s Cultural Challenges.	53
Verbal.	54
Non-Verbal.	55
Other Challenges.	57
Slow Reaction.	57
Work Independently.	58
The Students’ Coping Strategies for Grappling with Challenges.	59
Internal Learning.	60
External Learning.	63
Discussion.	70
Suggestions and Limitations.	75
Suggestions.	75
Students.	75
Organizations.	76
Limitations.	76
Conclusion.	78
References.	80
Appendix A: Survey Questions.	86
Appendix B: Interview Questions.	88

List of Figures

Figure 1 Process Model of Intercultural Competence.....	16
Figure 2 Japanese Proficiency of Chinese Students in Survey.....	25
Figure 3 Do You Need to Use Japanese in Your Part-time Jobs?	26
Figure 4 Question: Speaking Poor Honorific Language Always Bothers Me.....	26
Figure 5 Part-time Workplace of Students.....	27
Figure 6 Part-time Workplace vs Use Japanese at Part-time Work.....	28
Figure 7 The Reason of Working Part-time Jobs.....	29
Figure 8 Reasons Chinese Students Think Cause the Challenges in Part-time Jobs.....	31
Figure 9 The Period of Stay in Japan vs The Linguistic Challenges Experienced.....	32
Figure 10 The Interviewees' Test Japanese (JLPT) Levels Obtained.....	44
Figure 11 The Students' Relationship with Japanese Coworkers.....	65

List of Tables

Table 1 Types of Part-time Jobs in Which International Students Are Employed.....	5
Table 2 Hourly Wage for Part-time Job.....	6
Table 3 Number of Inbound International Students by Country/Region.....	9
Table 4 Attitudes and Feelings on Academic and Social Life.....	12
Table 5 Attitudes and Feelings on Language and Communication.....	13
Table 6 The Basic Profile of the Interviewees.....	20
Table 7 The Challenges Survey Students Experienced in Part-time Jobs.....	30
Table 8 The Working Cultural Challenges Survey Students Experienced in Part-time Jobs	38
Table 9 The Reasons for Making Chinese Students Quit a Part-time Job.....	41
Table 10 The Interviewees' Self-evaluation on Practical Japanese as "Very Good".....	45
Table 11 The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the First Phase.....	46
Table 12 The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the Second Phase.....	51
Table 13 Part-time Workplace's Cultural Challenges.....	54
Table 14 The Students' Coping Strategies for Grappling with Challenges.....	60

Introduction

According to The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 2019), the Japanese government is promoting the “300,000 international student plan”, which aims to accept 300,000 international students by 2020. However, Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO, 2020) survey results indicate that the number of international students in Japan has already reached 312,214 in 2019. Of these, around 40% (124,436) of the students are from China. It is worth noting that 96% (299,453) of the total number of international students studying in Japan are studying at their own expense (JASSO, 2020). Therefore, quite a number of international privately-financed students, particularly from developing countries, work part-time jobs to alleviate financial pressure. This actively promotes the hiring of international students in the Japanese part-time labor market.

I am a Chinese student, though I have a scholarship, fortunately. I also work part-time since the living cost in Japan is very high. I need to work part-time to cover my basic living expenses as much as possible, like many Chinese students. I would like to share some observations that deeply concern me.

When I was studying in a Japanese language school, many Chinese students there worked two or three part-time jobs. I knew that they worked such part-time jobs mainly because of financial issues. Whenever I asked them, “Are you all right with the part-time jobs?” The answers were different every time. For example, “I got scolded by a Japanese colleague because I misheard him”, “my Japanese colleagues speak so fast that I could not follow, so my response is always ‘Hai’ (means Yes), but actually I do not know what they are saying.”

Another Chinese student said, “Today, a customer came to the store, and was very rude and

angry, threw the fork at me, asked me to give him the chopsticks because he bought a cup of noodles and I gave him a fork. Afterwards, I found that most Japanese people use chopsticks for cup noodles, but in China, cup noodles come with a fork.”

Some even cannot stand the part-time job one more minute, as one said, “I want to quit now.”

In my view, simply from these answers, they are having hard times in their part-time jobs. I wondered if the hard time comes from lack of Japanese language proficiency, culture, custom, or social manners, which may cause them to have challenges and difficulties when working part-time jobs.

Therefore, I wanted to get closer to more Chinese students in order to understand what challenges they are having right now, and how they deal with these challenges in their part-time jobs. In addition, many of the students work in service areas, such as restaurants, convenience stores, supermarkets and drugstores, so they interact a great deal with customers.

The purpose of this study is to examine what challenges Chinese students have when working part-time and how they address these challenges. In addition, this research verifies the current part-time working environment. The findings may help the international students and especially those Chinese students who are going to work part-time to better understand the challenges of working part-time in Japan. Students may become aware of how to improve themselves and it is helpful for the students integrating into the Japanese part-time workplace.

Literature Review

My objective is to examine the challenges of Chinese students working part-time in Japan and how they handle these challenges in their part-time jobs. Therefore, a review and summary of the works and findings related to this topic is indispensable.

There are five sections in the Literature Review: (1) International students in Japan; (2) The motivations of Chinese students studying in Japan; (3) The motivations of Chinese students working part-time in Japan; (4) Challenges Chinese students face in Japan; and (5) Intercultural competence.

International Students in Japan

According to the JASSO's survey report in 2020 & 2021. There were 312,214 international students accepted to graduate school, university, junior college, professional training college, university preparatory course and Japanese language institutes in Japan as of May 1, 2019 (JASSO, 2020 & 2021).

Of these, 93.6% were from Asia, such as China, Vietnam, Nepal. These are the top three countries that have the largest number of international students in Japan.

This data suggests that the international students in Japan are mostly from Asian developing countries. Furthermore, around 96% of the international students are privately-financed students, except for a small number of foreign government sponsored students and Japanese government scholarship students (JASSO, 2020).

International students need to work. This is because international students, many of whom originated from developing countries, should be allowed, within specified limits, to help pay for

tuition and living expenses through working part-time (Hennings & Mintz, 2015; Ishikawa, 2006).

Before starting part-time work, students must get the permission of Engaging in Activities other than Status Qualification and strictly follow the rules of no more than 28 hours per week, up to 8 hours per day during extended school vacations (Japan Study Support, n.d.). On the other hand, Gracia Liu-Farrer (2009), a professor at Waseda University who has studied international and Chinese students in Japan for many years, points out that the majority of international students fund their own education abroad by working part-time. Especially for those privately-financed students, 75.8% of them have part-time jobs (JASSO, 2019). This suggests that international students become a major labor supply to the Japanese part-time job markets.

It is important to understand the experiences of some international students in the intercultural context of studying abroad and at the same time doing a part-time job (Sasaki, 2012). On the other hand, for the international students in Japan, there are other problems, as Ikeguchi (2012) suggests, “More importantly, problems within the context of increasing international understanding, difficulties in being accepted in Japan’s often rigid and closed society” (p. 176). Thus, these students have useful experiences, yet they face numerous challenges.

According to a survey result from Liu-farrer (2009), it reveals that “over half of Chinese students had worked in restaurants, a third in factories or other manufacturing places, one-sixth in construction sites. One-sixth of the respondents had worked in retail and convenience stores or supermarkets” (p. 189).

This suggests that Chinese students mainly work in the service area, such as, convenience stores, restaurants, supermarkets, factories, and etc.

The students engage in lower-skill job areas, such as a cashier, waiter or waitress, kitchen staff, jobs which have flexible working schedules and do not require high professional skills. That is perfectly suitable for most international students, as well as it allows them to be able to study at school and simultaneously work part-time.

However, the hourly wage normally would be at the minimum which varies depending on the city you stay. A survey conducted in 2017 by JASSO, the survey “A Lifestyle Survey of Privately Financed International Students in Japan” suggests that among the international students, 70.8% work in the service area at the minimum wage, such as food service and retail sales service. 81.8% earn an hourly wage ranging from 800 yen to 1,200 yen. See Table 1 & 2 for the types of part-time employment and hourly wages (JASSO, 2019).

Table 1

Types of Part-time Jobs in Which International Students Are Employed

Category	Ratio
Food and beverage	41.9%
Sales and marketing	28.9%
Teaching and research assistant	7.3%
Translation and interpretation	6.7%
Language instructor	6.2%
Cleaning	5.5%
Hotel receptionist / Service staff	5.3%
General clerical work	4.7%

Table 2*Hourly Wage for Part-time Job*

Hourly wage	Ratio
Less than JPY 800	5.4%
JPY 800 to less than JPY 1,000	42.4%
JPY 1,000 to less than JPY 1,200	39.4%
JPY 1,200 to less than JPY 1,400	6.9%
JPY 1,400 or more	4.8%
Unknown	1.0%

Note. JPY means Japanese yen.

The Motivation of Chinese Students Studying in Japan

In developing countries, very few families could afford to pay for their children's further education abroad. However, with the rapid development of China's economy, working-class families have been able to send their children to study abroad in recent years. It seems the motivation for Chinese students to study abroad has shifted.

Up until 2013, motivation research focused on ideas below (Bodycott, 2009; Hung et al., 2000):

1. Possibility of future migration opportunities after graduation. The students care about the future prospect.
2. Higher quality of education. The students pursue overseas higher education.
3. Competitive lower tuition fees and cost of living. The students expect the lower expenses of studying abroad.
4. International/intercultural experiences. The students value intercultural interactions.

Furthermore, Zwart (2013) found that the ranking of the university and cost of living & tuition fees are the two factors that most influence the students to study overseas which partly supports the research findings of Bodycott (2009) and Hung et al. (2000).

Recently, the motivation of Chinese students studying abroad has changed. Wang and Crawford (2021) conducted a large sample of students both in China and abroad in 2017 to further explore the motivations of Chinese students studying abroad, extending the broad overview of research results of Bodycott (2009), Hung et al. (2000) and Zwart (2013). The results indicate that the Chinese students are more motivated by these four key aspects (Wang & Crawford, 2021):

1. Academic reputation. This supports the findings of Bodycott (2009), Hung et al. (2000) and Zwart (2013), the students would like to further their study abroad in a higher level school.
2. Social and cultural environments. The students value the cultural atmosphere and social activities in the host country.
3. Financial and economic outcomes. The students expect to have economic returns from studying abroad, such as being able to land a better-paid job in the host country.
4. Recommendations. The students get recommendations to study abroad from their classmates, families, friends with previous study abroad experience and teachers.

It is worth noting that in the research of Wang and Crawford (2021), the tuition fees and cost of living abroad are not the students' main concerns.

This research considers the motivations of Chinese students studying abroad in general. In Japan's case, it is somewhat different. Japan's geographic proximity, relatively low tuition fees, and flexible student-visa system attracts Chinese students studying in Japan (Coates, 2015).

Furthermore, Liu-Farrer (2014) found that working-class family support makes it possible for Chinese students to study in Japan. Therefore, family support could allow more and more Chinese students to be able to study in Japan.

With the expanding scale of Chinese students in Japan, JASSO (2020) reports that 39.9% (124,436) of international students are from China which is the largest population among the international students in Japan. It is around 1.7 times more than the population of Vietnamese students (73,389) which is the second largest one. See Table 3 below.

Data suggests that a significant number of Chinese students are accepted to different types of educational institutions, such as Japanese language schools, vocational schools, colleges, universities and graduate schools (Clavel, 2015; Mainichi Japan, 2016; Sawa, 2019).

On the other hand, according to a research on the intentions of Chinese, Vietnamese and Nepalese students in in Japan, 31.7% (58 students out of 183 students), they want to further their study in Japan with the purpose to find a good job in a big company after graduating from school (Wang & Zhang, 2017).

For this reason, Chinese students study hard in order to enter a high level university that could be an advantage for job hunting in giant companies after graduating in Japan. Furthermore, Wang and Zhang (2017) claim that foreign students should engage more in highly-skilled work after graduation. Therefore, having a Japanese college or vocational school graduate certification would be more advantageous than those who do not have it when it comes to job seeking.

Table 3*Number of Inbound International Students by Country/Region*

(As of May 1, 2019)

Country/Region	Number of International Students
China	124,436
Vietnam	73,389
Nepal	26,308
Republic of Korea	18,338
Taiwan	9,584
Sri Lanka	7,240
Indonesia	6,756
Myanmar	5,383
Thailand	3,847
Bangladesh	3,527
Others	33,406
Total	312,214

The Motivation of Chinese Students Working Part-time in Japan

As mentioned in the last section, many Chinese families have the financial support for their children to study abroad (Liu-Farrer, 2014). However, among those privately financed students, the majority received initial support from their families in China, but ended up trying to find work soon after arriving in order to ease the burden of their costs on their parents (Coates, 2015). Apparently, the work could only be part-time as the visa status is student instead of employment.

Employment growth in Japan is largely being achieved through increased hiring of part-time workers, such as students who take temporary and low-skilled part-time jobs for financial matters (Cavcic, 2019; Sasaki, 2012), many of whom are on temporary contracts (Gaston & Kishi, 2007). Generally speaking, most of the part-time jobs do not need professional knowledge and have flexible shifts, some even do not need good Japanese language skills, so students can apply for the jobs according to their qualifications and class schedule. In addition, foreign part-time workers share the same hourly wage and welfare package as Japanese part-time workers.

Liu-Farrer (2009, 2011 & 2014) conducted research to investigate the motivation of Chinese students working part-time in Japan. Four motivations are outlined from the research:

1. Provide financial resources. The most important motivation is to make money to support life in Japan, to achieve financial independence.
2. Better understanding of Japanese work ethics and social organization. This allows Chinese students to have more chances to access the Japanese workplace and observe the Japanese way of working and the manners at work.
3. Hone linguistic skills, gain cultural and social experiences which are unavailable to receive in the classroom. This gives Chinese students more possibilities to practice Japanese, especially improve their speaking and listening, and grasp more about the Japanese working culture and Japanese society outside the classroom.
4. Cultural and linguistic training. By working side by side with Japanese employees, learning to use honorific language at the workplace, Chinese students gain more important knowledge of Japanese work ethics, which benefits them in their future career in corporate Japan.

Challenges Chinese Students Face in Japan

Ikeguchi (2012) conducted research on 100 Chinese students in different Japanese universities in regard to their adaptation issues in Japan's life. The results (see Table 4) suggest that 81% of the students believe that Japanese is difficult to understand and use. Many students (67%) feel that it is not easy for Asians to get a part-time job in Japan, as they are often rejected. Seventy-five percent of the students do not understand Japanese people's real feelings, so they do not have a good relationship with them. In addition, 55% believe that Japanese people do not like foreigners.

Table 4*Attitudes and Feelings on Academic and Social Life*

Questionnaire Items	Percentage of Negative Responses
1. Foreigners are disliked in Japan. Japanese like foreigners.	55%
2. Japanese don't show their true feelings. It's hard to make friends w/ them. It is easy to make friends with Japanese people.	75%
3. I feel a profound sense of disappointment in many aspects of life in Japan. I am generally happy with my life in Japan.	56%
4. I have persistent difficulties in understanding and using the language. The Japanese language is easy to understand.	81%
5. Asian students were often rejected in part-time jobs. It is easy to get a part-time job in Japan.	67%
6. Japanese people don't see things from another point of view. Japanese people understand foreign students' point of view.	78%
7. I am disappointed with classes; they are boring; students don't study hard. Classes are interesting, fun and enjoyable.	77%

- Statements are opposite items on a scale.
- Items with the opposite choice receive the complementary percentage(%).
- No blank responses were left.

Note. Adapted from *Internationalization of Education & Culture Adjustment: The Case of Chinese Students in Japan*. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 21(2), 178.

Furthermore, results (see Table 5) indicate that the students think Japanese people are (a) hard to understand; (b) difficult to interact with; and (c) they do not directly say what they really feel. These are the top three most frequent responses in Ikeguchi's questionnaire towards the Chinese students' attitudes and feelings on language and communication in Japan.

Table 5*Attitudes and Feelings on Language and Communication*

1	“Japanese are hard to understand.”
2	“I do not know how to interact with them.”
3	“Communication style: They don’t say what they really feel and think.”
4	“I feel they are not honest.”
5	“I have lived here many years, but I can’t understand them yet.”
6	“They tell me I’m self-centered & opinionated when I honestly express my feelings and opinion.”

Note. Adapted from *Internationalization of Education & Culture Adjustment: The Case of Chinese Students in Japan*. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 21(2), 178.

In Ikeguchi’s research, the majority of students (63%) agreed, “There should be more classes that teach Japanese Culture” (2012, p.179). This shows that students have a desire to learn Japanese culture for better adaptation to Japanese society.

In addition, the major challenges Chinese students are facing in Japan are identified: Language barrier and lack of cultural knowledge. Similarly, Lee (2017) indicated in his research about the challenges of international students in Japanese universities, that Chinese student interview participants experienced the same challenges.

On the other hand, lacking cultural knowledge, Ikeguchi (2012) suggested in his research that intensive culture training is important for international students, as it will help the students understand the differences in communication style and build good interpersonal relationships with Japanese people.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is important because of interpersonal relationships and communication. Intercultural competence is connected to language.

What Is Intercultural Competence?

There are different understandings of intercultural competence. “There are countless definitions and frameworks published on intercultural competence” (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66). For instance, Hammer et al. (2003) defined intercultural competence as, “the ability to think and act in intercultural appropriate ways” (p. 422). In addition, Johnson et al. (2006) identified intercultural competence as, “an individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad” (p. 530). Similarly, “complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini, 2009, p. 458).

According to Leung et al. (2014), there is a consensus that intercultural competence refers to the personal characteristics and the ability to adjust oneself across cultures. Three personal characteristics are identified by Leung et al. (2014):

1. Intercultural traits, refers to “enduring personal characteristics that determine an individual’s typical behaviors in an intercultural situation” (p. 490).
2. Intercultural attitudes and worldviews, focus on “how individuals perceive other cultures or information from outside their own cultural worlds” (p. 491).
3. Intercultural capabilities, emphasizes on how individuals interact effectively with people from different cultural identities in intercultural context.

The Model of Intercultural Competence

There are many models of intercultural competence that have been used (Deardorff, 2011). Deardorff (2006) created a process model (see Figure 1) to determine the outcomes by the development of an individual's intercultural competence. This process is an ongoing development process which contains four major components:

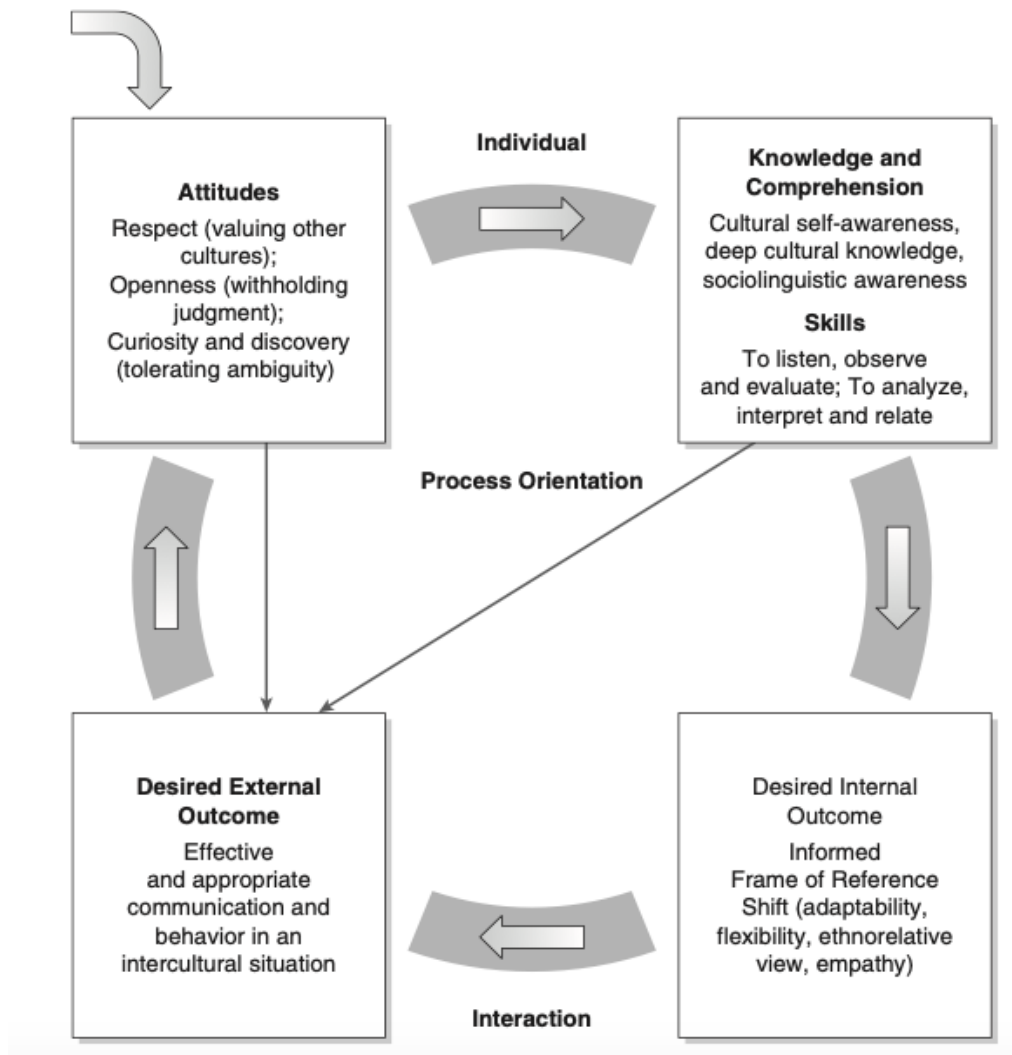
1. Attitudes, to develop respect for different cultural groups, beliefs, values, as well as to be open-minded, serve as the basis of this model and have an impact on all other aspects of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2011).
2. Knowledge and skills, to develop contextual understanding of a culture, a deep understanding of how one's culture influences their behavior and way of thinking, such as some Japanese cultural concepts, Honne vs Tatamae, Sempai vs Kohai, Keigo, etc.

However, Fantini (2009) pointed out that "language proficiency is frequently ignored in many models of intercultural competence" (p. 459). Sociolinguistic awareness should be regarded as one of the crucial roles. For example, "grappling with a second language causes us to confront how we perceive, conceptualize, express, behave, and interact" (Fantini, 2009, p. 459).

In addition, critical-thinking skills allow individuals to acquire and evaluate knowledge (Deardorff, 2011).

3. Desired internal outcomes, to internalize yourself with the knowledge and skills.
4. Desired external outcomes of intercultural competence "based on development of specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills inherent in intercultural competence" (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66).

In this process model, all of the components are connected, from attitudes all the way around to desired outcomes.

Figure 1*Process Model of Intercultural Competence*

Note. Adapted from Deardorff, 2006 & 2009 & 2011.

This process model starts with attitudes which serve as the basis, moving forward from individual level (attitudes) to interaction level (outcomes). The degree of one's intercultural competence depends on the degree of attitudes, knowledge, comprehension, and skills.

Research Questions

The literature review depicts the motivations why Chinese students work part-time jobs and the challenges Chinese students are facing in Japan. Financial problems and language barriers are identified as the major reasons that Chinese students work part-time jobs and major challenges they face respectively. However, there are few studies on the situation of Chinese students working part-time in the service area. This study examines the challenges, and Chinese students' strategies to these challenges in their part-time jobs. Thus, the research questions posed are as follows:

1. What challenges do Chinese students experience when working part-time in the service area?
2. How do they deal with these challenges in their part-time jobs?

Methodology

As the type of research questions posed with “what” and “how”, and data mainly focuses on narrative discussion, the qualitative method was selected for this study. The research aims to understand these students and their ideas about challenges. This research follows the ideas of Patton (1982, p. 7), “The point of using qualitative methods is to understand naturally occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states.”

The qualitative method allows us to understand subjective experiences and how these experiences are shaped by personal factors. Though survey is often not included in the category of qualitative method, Jansen (2010, para 7) argues that the survey can be a qualitative research tool, and states “The qualitative survey is the study of diversity in a population”. My research focuses on revealing beliefs, opinions, experiences, and narratives.

Research Design

Data collection is designed for examining the research questions. Of that, data is the evidence to support the findings for research questions. In order to obtain a higher level of reliability of the data, I collected two sets of data for analysis which are from the survey and the interview. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), researchers need to collect and analyze data in response to research questions, combine the two sets of data and their results for seeking patterns, organize the patterns into specific ones which will be broken down into findings, and frame these patterns and findings within theory.

Thus, my research design uses a two-phase style. The first phase involves participants completing an online qualitative survey, to gather the general ideas and information towards the challenges they have in their part-time jobs. The second phase involves individual

semi-structured interviews (Adams, 2015) with a small sample-size of participants, which allows me the time and opportunity to have extensive interactions with the participants, to reach out to the in-depth information from their sharing.

Shah and Corley (2006) explain about the meaning of interviews:

Interviews, interviewing presumes that one can understand how the world is known by asking information to answer open-ended questions about their experiences. Interviews differ in the degree to which informants set the agenda, but in all instances informants describe their own experiences at length, including personal narratives or life histories (p. 1828).

Interviews allow you to hear about the individual's actual experiences, personal feelings which are not touched on in the survey section.

Respondents and Participants

Respondents for the online survey were Chinese students now studying at Japanese language schools, vocational schools, colleges, universities, and graduate schools in Japan. Participants for the individual interviews were selected due to their answers on the online survey. I set a column at the end of the survey and asked the participants if they were interested in my research topic and willing to accept my interview invitation. If so, they left their contact information, so that I could reach out to them. See Table 6 for the brief information of my interviewees.

Table 6*The Basic Profile of the Interviewees*

Name	Gender	Age	Studying at	Duration in Japan	Japanese proficiency	Part-time job
Chen	Male	24	University	2 years	N1	-Convenience store's staff
Cai	Male	28	University	5 years and a half	N2	-Convenience store's staff
Zhang	Male	25	Graduate school	6 years	N1	-Hotel front staff -Donkihotei's staff
Wang	Female	29	Vocational school	2 years	N2	-Convenience store's staff
Guo	Male	24	University	2 years	N1	-Izakaya's staff -Convenience store's staff
Lin	Female	27	Graduate school	3 years and a half	N1	-KFC's staff -Convenience store's staff
Wu	Male	25	University	5 years	N1	-Takoyakiya's staff -Restaurant's staff
Tong	Female	26	Graduate school	2 years and a half	N1	-Convenience store's staff
Huang	Female	23	Graduate school	2 years	N1	-Convenience store's staff
Liu	Female	23	Vocational school	2 years	N1	-Clinic's staff -Hospital's staff

Note. The names are not interviewees' real names.

Online Survey

The online survey was conducted in April, 2021 by using Tencent survey application for data collection. I sent the survey out to some Chinese groups on social media, WeChat, and

called other Chinese students to ask them to fill out the survey. Most Chinese students have WeChat accounts and they are very active on WeChat. I chose WeChat platform as the only one to collect data, since I tried and could not find one more online platform which could gather a large number of active Chinese students.

The survey (see Appendix A) consists of single-choice questions, multiple-choice questions, and five Likert scale questions of agreement (range from 1 to 5, 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree).

These questions were designed to elicit general ideas for the Chinese students' Japanese proficiency, the cause of challenges from their perspectives, working environment and their relationships with Japanese colleagues.

The survey was written in Chinese for collecting data. Both survey and data were translated into English before moving forward to coding and analysis.

Individual Semi-structured Interview

After the data collection for the online survey, I looked at survey answers and selected the participants for their significant answers. The individual semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone and tape recorded in August and September, 2021. Some questions on the survey were also asked in this telephone interview in order to find details. Each of the participants were asked to answer around 10 open-ended questions for 30-60 minutes (see Appendix B).

The telephone interviews were recorded with a recorder application. The data from the taped telephone interviews was transcribed and collated. All telephone interviews were conducted in Chinese and Cantonese.

Coding and Analysis

According to Miles et al. (2013), “Coding is analysis” (p. 72). Once the data are gathered, they are coded, analyzed, and organized or categorized according to the themes and patterns that emerge (Bui, 2009). Before the themes and patterns are identified, coding and analyzing are necessary for pattern seeking. The main issue here is how to organize, summarize, and interpret the data.

McMillan (2008) indicates that reading through the data carefully, looking for words, phrases, or events that seem to stand out, which are connected to your research questions, and then creating codes for the data is necessary. Codes should be broken down from major codes into sub-codes, step by step to narrow down the subject. When we get codes and subcodes, we can use them for analysis and discussion to examine the research questions.

For the online survey, the responses were utilized for revealing the respondents’ general ideas towards challenges and general attitudes towards how they think of challenges in their part-time jobs. The further in-depth findings needed to be analyzed from the interviews.

For the interviews, participants’ answers were used to examine the research questions: (a) What challenges do Chinese students experience when working part-time in the service area? and (b) How do they deal with these challenges in their part-time jobs?

The participants’ answers were analyzed by descriptive coding (summarize data in a word or a short phrase) and vivo coding (uses words, short phrases from the participant’s own language) (Miles et al., 2013). The answers were analyzed for the key ideas and coded. These were analyzed again, codes and sub-codes were created according to participants’ own words.

Participants' Privacy

For the online survey, I asked for each participant's permission before entering the online survey section since I put the consent form in the first page of my survey. When participants clicked the button, "I agreed", they acknowledged and permitted me to use their data.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, I had to do interviews by telephone, rather than face to face. On the phone, I read my interviewees through the consent form and asked for his or her oral permission before we started the interview. Therefore, all of my participants knew about my research and understood the purpose of my interview.

Both oral and "clicking" permissions were received from my participants. I guaranteed that the personal information would be protected and safe. In addition, their names and school names remain anonymous.

Results and Analysis

Results are organized into two parts: Online survey results and analysis, and interview results and analysis. The first part describes the findings from the survey data. It presents the students' general perspectives toward the challenges they experienced in part-time jobs. The second part summarizes the main findings from interview data. It explicitly examines the students' challenges and how they deal with them in their part-time jobs.

In each chapter I describe the results and analyze the data. Analyzing during the presentation of the results, leads to a clearer and more coherent understanding of the data.

Online Survey Results and Analysis

Japanese Proficiency

The majority of students have a high level of Japanese language proficiency certification. Data (see Figure 2) suggests that 86.1%(99) of students obtained N2 or N1 certifications. Of these, 47%(54) of students passed N1 certification. Only 13.9% of students hold N3 certification or below.

In addition, though students study and live in Japan, their part-time jobs may not be related to Japanese language use. Figure 3 shows that 91.3% of students are required to use Japanese, including speaking and listening in their part-time jobs. Very few (8.7%) do not need Japanese in their jobs.

From the data, the high level of Japanese language proficiency enables the students to work part-time jobs in a Japanese workplace. This implies that the students are expected to experience fewer challenges related to Japanese language in their part-time jobs since most passed the high

level (N1 & N2) of Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), and they honed their speaking and listening skills at their jobs.

However, honorifics seem difficult to master. Figure 4 shows that 46 out of 115 students (40%) agree that they speak poor honorific language, and only 11 students (9.57%) strongly disagree. Service areas involve using appropriate honorific language under different circumstances, especially when interacting with customers, senior colleagues or managers.

Figure 2

Japanese Proficiency of Chinese Students in Survey

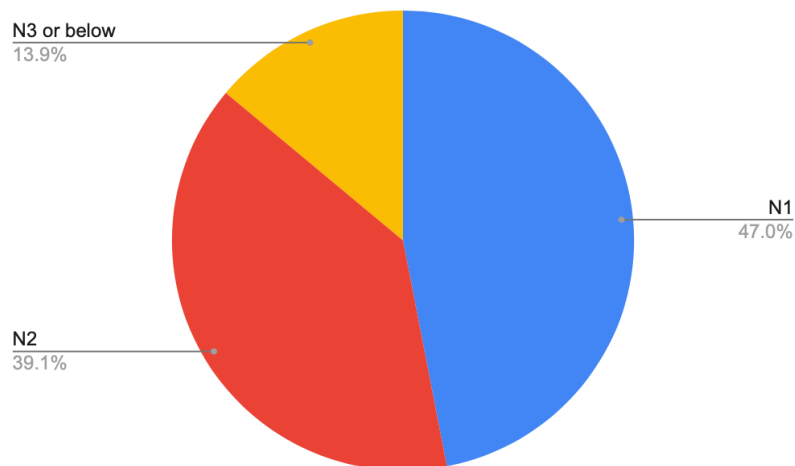


Figure 3

Do You Need to Use Japanese in Your Part-time Jobs?

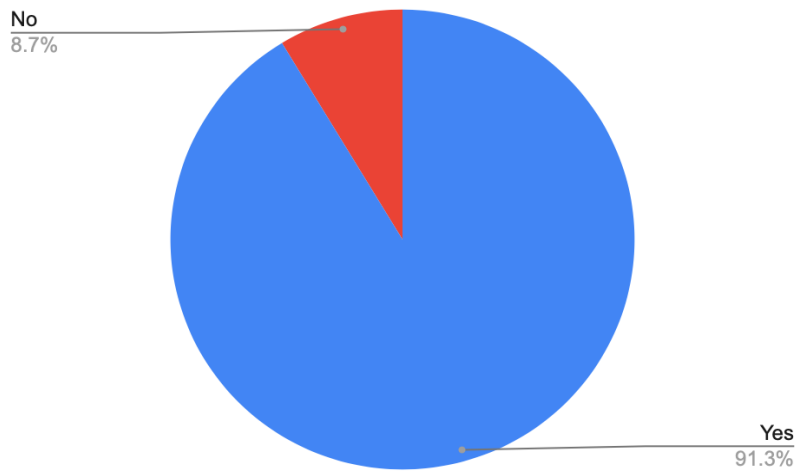
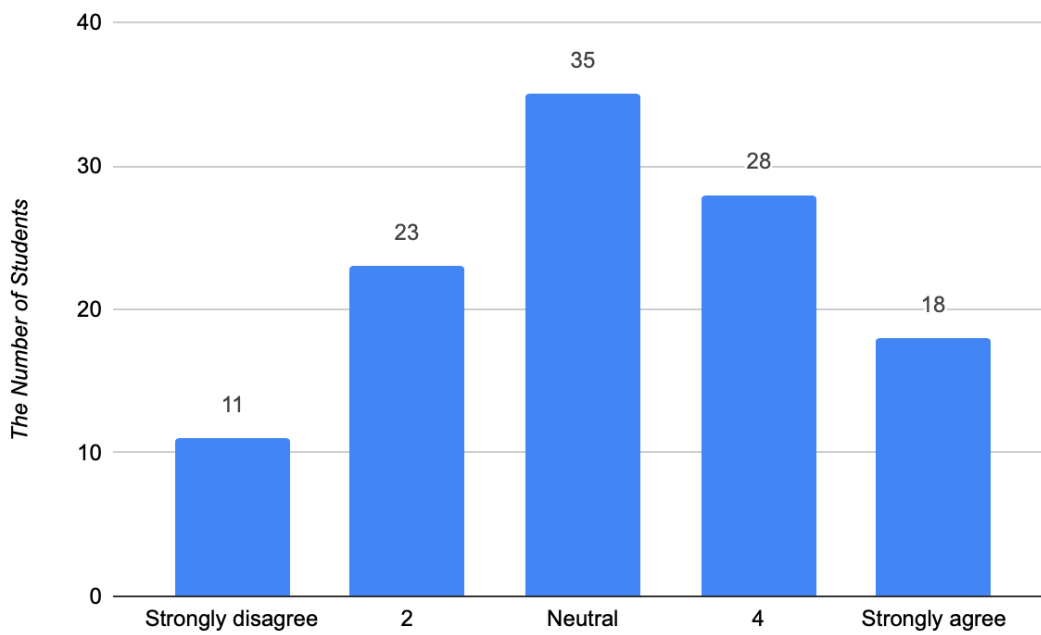


Figure 4

Question: Speaking Poor Honorific Language Always Bothers Me

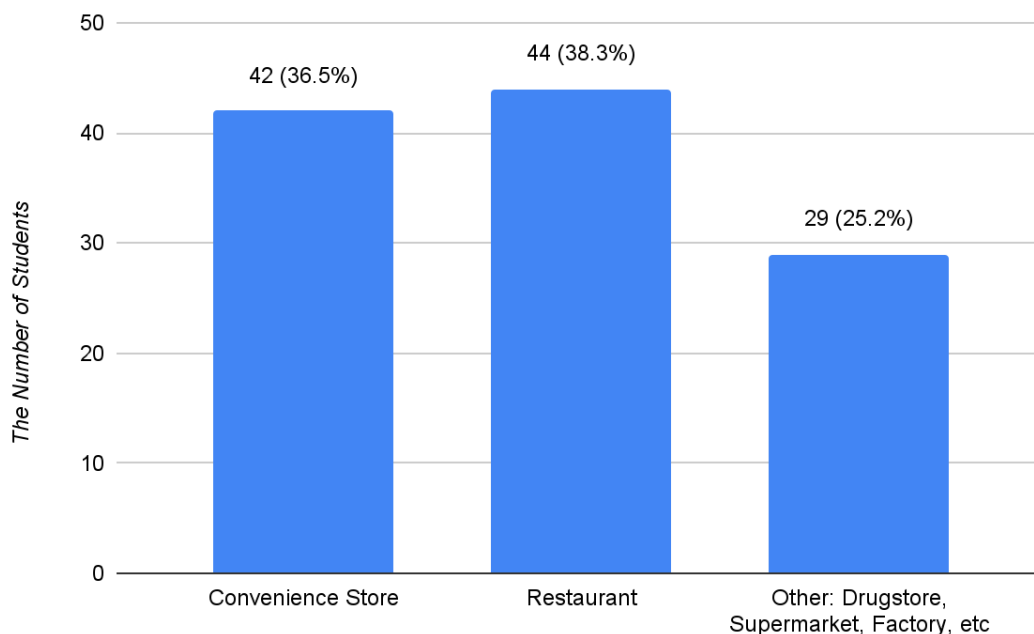


Part-time Workplace

More than two-thirds of the students work in the service area, such as convenience stores, restaurants, drugstores, and supermarkets. This finding is supported by other research (JASSO, 2019), in which the majority of international students work part-time in the service area. Specifically, data (see Figure 5) indicates that 38.3% of students work at restaurants and 36.5% of students work at convenience stores, while the remaining 25.2% work at drugstores, supermarkets, factories, etc.

Figure 5

Part-time Workplace of Students

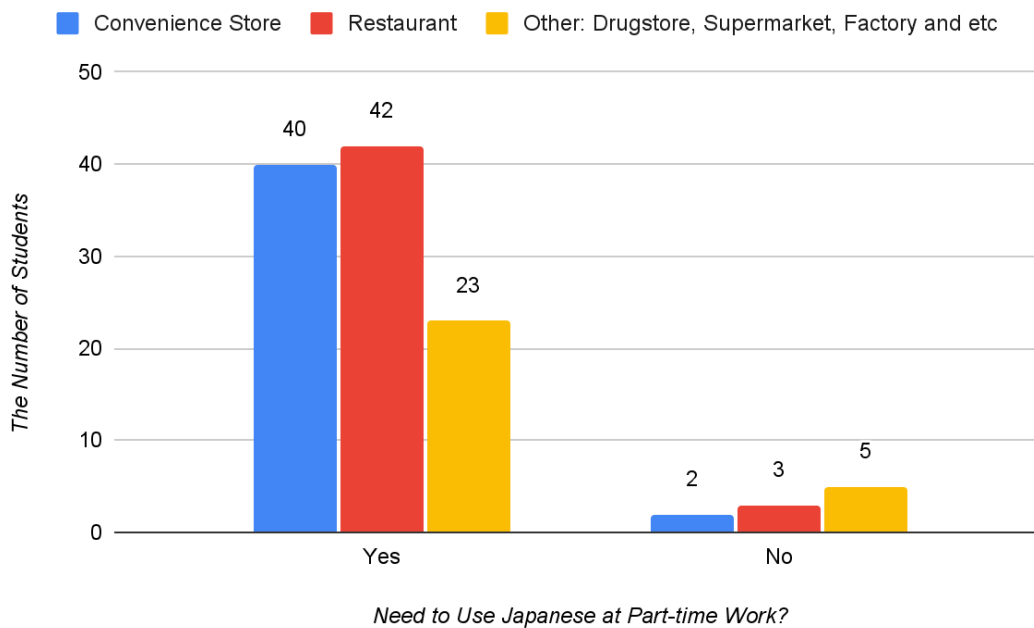


Working in the service area requires extensive interactions and communication with customers or colleagues to get a job done, which requires the students to have good command of Japanese language and Japanese social manners. Figure 6 reports that 105 out of 115 (91.3%) students need to use Japanese at work, whereas only 10 students do not need Japanese at all to

finish their work. In sum, over 90% of students work in the service area and use Japanese at work.

Figure 6

Part-time Workplace vs Use Japanese at Part-time Work



The Motivation of Chinese Students Working Part-time Jobs

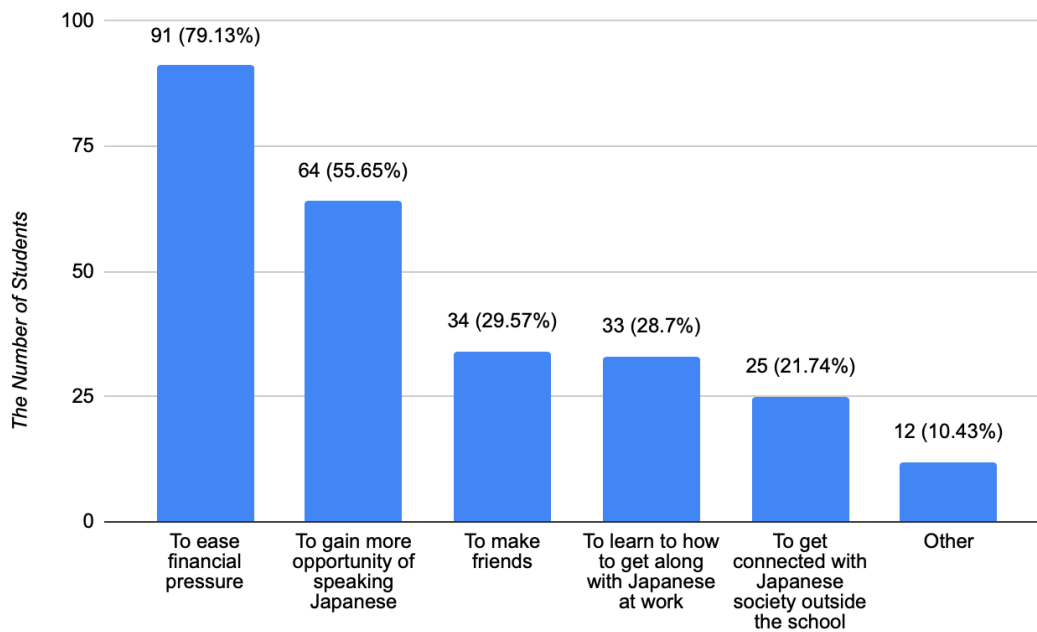
Financial issues are the most important factor for the students working part-time. Previous research (JASSO, 2020; Liu-Farrer, 2009), indicated that around 96% of international students are privately-financed students and the majority of them funded their own education by working part-time.

Figure 7 reveals that “To ease financial pressure” is the major reason they worked part-time. Having more opportunities to speak Japanese is their second major reason. This suggests that the students do part-time jobs in order to earn money to alleviate the financial

pressure and use Japanese language at work to improve their Japanese skills in a real Japanese working environment outside the classroom.

Figure 7

The Reason of Working Part-time Jobs



Note. This was a multiple-choice question in which no more than four options could have been selected.

The Challenges Students Experienced in Part-time Jobs

Table 7 shows the results from the survey's short answers about the challenges students experienced. It indicates that students experienced two kinds of challenges in their part-time jobs: linguistic and cultural challenges at work. Specifically, speaking, listening, dialect, honorifics and vocabulary are the main challenges identified for linguistic challenges.

Inflexibility, always keeping busy, and overtime working are the major specific challenges recognized for cultural challenges at work.

Table 7

The Challenges Survey Students Experienced in Part-time Jobs

Category	Specific Challenges	Number of Mentioned Students (N=115)
Language	Speaking, listening, dialect, honorifics and vocabulary	65
Culture	Inflexibility, always keeping busy, overtime working	12
*Inappropriate answers could not be for analysis		38

Note. Inappropriate answers, for example, “It is boring”, “Nothing special”.

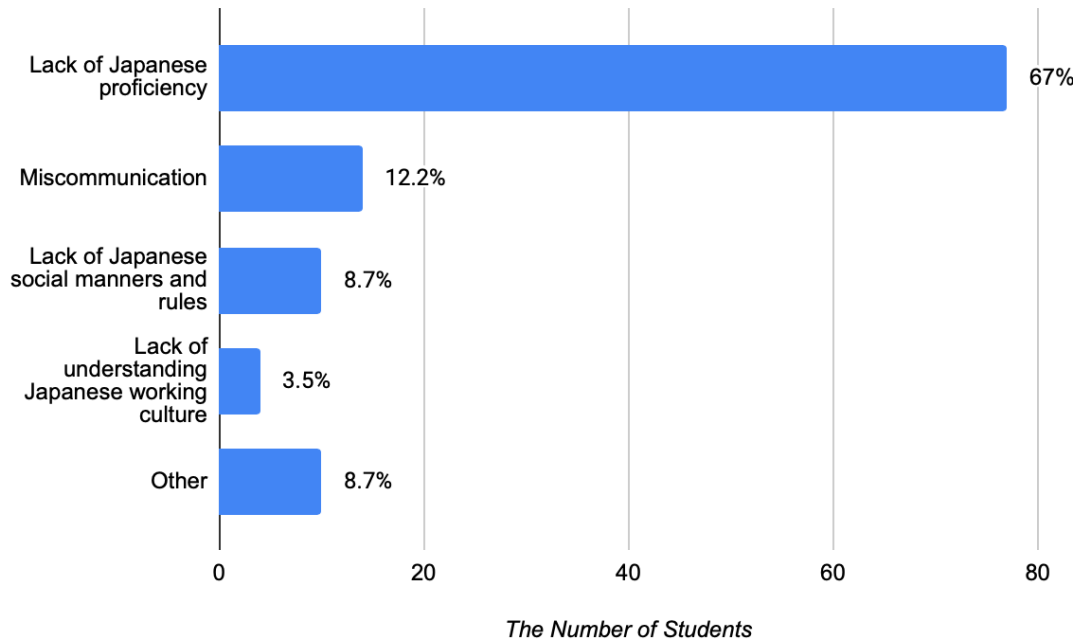
Linguistic Challenges.

From the survey results, though the majority of students have passed the difficult level of Japanese Language Proficiency Test (N1 & N2 test), the Japanese skills they have may not be enough or practical for their part-time jobs.

Moreover, Figure 8 indicates that 67% of the students believe that lack of Japanese proficiency is the cause of the challenges in their part-time jobs. In contrast, a small proportion of the students suggest miscommunication (12.2%), lack of Japanese social manners and rules (8.7%) and lack of understanding of Japanese working culture (3.5%) are important.

Figure 8

Reasons Chinese Students Think Cause the Challenges in Part-time Jobs

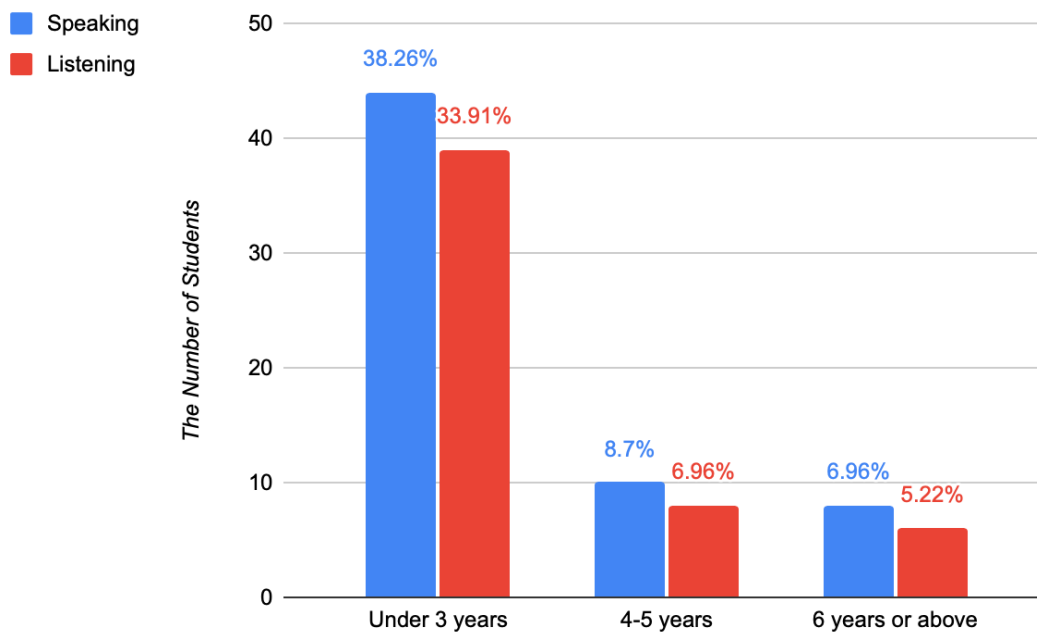


On the other hand, the period of stay in Japan influences the linguistic challenges the students experience (See Figure 9). The students staying in Japan under three years (72.17%) have listening and speaking challenges, while these challenges dramatically dropped for the students who live in Japan for four-five years (15.66%), and six years or above (12.18%). This indicates that the longer you stay in Japan, the less the linguistic challenges there are, as it allows the students to have extensive time to hone their practical Japanese skills.

In this survey, speaking, listening, dialect, honorifics and vocabulary have been identified as the main linguistic challenges for Chinese students working part-time jobs in Japan. Furthermore, students reported some examples from their part-time job experience to demonstrate these challenges.

Figure 9

The Period of Stay in Japan vs The Linguistic Challenges Experienced



Speaking.

Students are often struggling with speaking appropriate Japanese at work. They are afraid of Japanese people who get confused or misunderstand their Japanese. Here are some comments from students' part-time job experiences:

I cannot clearly express things I want to say in Japanese. In addition, I am afraid to bother people. (S7)

When trying to explain something, I have to use the body gesture to help better explain. (S35)

Because I am not familiar with native Japanese ways of expression, it is easy to get Japanese people confused with my Japanese. I have to explain many times for people to understand me. (S45)

Though I can speak good Japanese, I have no idea on how to speak appropriate Japanese on different occasions. (S60)

Basically I can understand, but just do not know how to express myself. When I speak Japanese, I often feel that this is different from what I mean. (S80)

When a customer asks me to recommend some delicious dishes, I do not know what to say. (S110)

Additionally, when customers find you cannot communicate with them, some will complain about you. For instance, one student wrote, “A customer complained about my poor Japanese expression” (S38). Similarly, another student shared:

I work at a convenience store, and a customer asked me to microwave the bread when he checked out. I needed to cut the packaging polybag a little bit before microwaving it or it would get blown up, I suddenly do not know how to say it in Japanese. So, I did not tell the customer and cut the polybag and microwaved it. When the customer found out the polybag was being cut out, he asked me why I cut the packaging polybag. I had to ask my Japanese colleague to help me out since I could not explain clearly to the customer in Japanese. (S46)

On the other hand, some students feel frustrated about their Japanese speaking performance when they cannot fix a problem. A student stated, “I cannot communicate to solve problems because of my poor Japanese. I feel sorry for my colleagues and customers. Sometimes, I question myself whether I am qualified for the job” (S23).

Listening.

Students always feel at a loss when they cannot understand what Japanese colleagues or customers say. Some of the students would make a guess, and some feel stressed. However, these are normal reactions to their Japanese listening challenge. Some students commented below:

I work at a convenience store. Sometimes, I really do not understand what my Japanese coworkers are saying. All I can do is to try my best to guess what they say. (S1)

Sometimes, I could not understand well what Japanese people ask me to do. (S79)

I work at a coffee shop. Sometimes, I can not hear what the customer says clearly. The customers would get very impatient and angry when I ask if they could repeat. (S72)

I cannot figure out what they are saying because they speak too fast, plus my slow reaction to their speaking. It is really stressful. (S83)

Because of my poor Japanese listening, I gave the wrong cigarettes to a customer when I was working at the convenience store. (S91)

I worked at a convenience store. The coffee machine was broken, so I called my manager and asked how to fix it. Because of my poor Japanese listening, it was difficult to get it solved. (S108)

Thus, through these examples, the listening challenge is a barrier for students to understand colleagues and customers. It brings students troubles at work, creates more difficulties to their jobs, and lowers their enthusiasm for the part-time jobs.

Dialect.

Generally, international students study standard Japanese at school. However, dialects are commonly spoken. Dialects are not only more difficult to master, but also the population of

speaking a certain dialect is small. In addition, standard Japanese can be understandable in most areas of Japan, but dialects are more limited to a specific area.

In other words, dialect is more like another language. It is difficult for most students to understand different dialects in part-time jobs. Students talked about dialects and their part-time jobs in the following statements:

I completely do not understand the Kansai dialect. (S96)

I cannot understand when Japanese people speak a dialect. (S100)

The dialects are difficult to understand. (103)

However, these statements only reflect that students do not understand Japanese dialects. They do not specifically show if there are some troubles that dialects bring to their jobs or affect their relationships with colleagues and customers.

Honorifics.

Honorifics mean *Keigo* in Japanese. It is an expression of showing respect for people, the highest level of politeness in Japanese, to reflect the relationship or social status, as most relationships are not relatively equal in Japanese society, especially in the workplace (Cook & Shibamoto-Smith, 2018). There is a large difference between normal Japanese and honorific Japanese.

One student stated, “I cannot use honorifics skillfully. I always use it with the wrong expression, so my customers and my senior Japanese do not understand it” (S101). It reveals that some students cannot use honorifics proficiently at work. Generally, it is using different words and grammar structures to express the same thing; one is the standard form and the other is the honorific form. On the other hand, Rear (2020) indicates that “The senpai - kohai (senior - junior) relationship still remains strong in many contexts at work”; the senior one (senpai)

usually has more experience than the junior one (kohai), and standard Japanese and honorific Japanese can be reflected by the interactions between the senpai (senior) and kohai (junior). To master the honorifics requires students to have a comprehensive understanding of Japanese culture and hierarchy. For example, (Japanese) よろしくおねがいします (Yoroshikuonegaishimasu) = nice to meet you (one of the meanings in English). You (kohai) may need to speak honorific Japanese よろしくおねがいをいたします (Yoroshikuonegaiitashimasu) to your manager (senpai), and your manager can just speak normal Japanese よろしく (Yoroshiku) to you. Furthermore, it definitely cannot be done in reverse.

Another student commented, “I could not handle the honorific language and always got it wrong at work. I need to learn to speak and understand it in the conversation with customers. I usually do not use honorifics in my part-time jobs nor in the classroom” (S55). That indicates some students seldom use honorifics in the classroom. When they go to work part-time, they need to learn to use and understand the honorifics in a real situation in the workplace.

Vocabulary.

As Chinese students are familiar with Chinese characters, it is easy to understand most Japanese Kanji. However, some words are not often used in students’ daily lives, so they can not understand unusual words, such as product names, or some special vocabularies in the conversation at work because of their poor vocabulary.

Just as one student wrote, “I could not get it when customers just said the product name to me. I always need my Japanese colleague to help me out because I am not familiar with Japanese product names, for example, 爪切り(Tsumekiri) = nail clipper” (S61). Another student’s statement agreed, “For example, a customer is looking for something and telling me the thing he

wants me to get for him, and I do not understand what that thing is that the customer is looking for. It is really depressing. I work at a supermarket” (S104).

These two examples illustrate that poor vocabulary has been a crucial challenge for their communication with customers. Especially working at the supermarkets and outlet stores with a large variety of products on sale, the chances of being asked to bring customers to the corner of the products they are looking for are more than other part-time workplaces. On the other hand, students easily get depressed when they can not follow their customers in the conversation.

Another situation about the vocabulary challenge is that students usually forget the word they want to use to express their ideas. They learned the word but forgot it when there was a chance to use it. Simultaneously, students feel bad about their poor memories when they forget the word they intend to use.

A student wrote, “I always forget the word I want to say and stuck with that. If only I could remember” (S114). This reflects that students want to make the best use of what they have learned at school in their part-time jobs. They blame themselves and become frustrated if they fail to use what they have learned.

Working Cultural Challenges.

In this survey, students provided some examples from their part-time job to explain the cultural challenges they experienced at work. Three major challenges were found for the distinctive aspects of Japan’s work culture: inflexibility, always keeping busy, and working overtime. See below Table 8.

Table 8*The Working Cultural Challenges Survey Students Experienced in Part-time Jobs*

Category	Specific Challenges	Mentioned Students (N=12)
	Inflexibility	S1, S16, S17, S30, S53
Cultural challenges	Always keeping busy	S10, S22, S46, S90
	Overtime working	S44, S69, S109

Note. Total 115 answers, 65 answers for linguistic challenges, 12 answers for working cultural challenges, and 38 answers for inappropriate answers (unable for analysis), for example, “It is boring”, “Nothing special”.

Inflexibility.

Some Japanese coworkers are so focused on standard processes that they have no flexibility at work. They would like the students to follow every step of the process, as that is how the Japanese people learned to do their work.

One student commented:

The senior is like a boss, I have to follow every step as the senior said, even though some steps could be simplified and have the job done easier and efficiently. Furthermore, every senior has their own steps, you have to follow the one who works with you on that day, it is exhausting when working with them. (S16)

Similarly, another student reported, “A suggestion to have a job done efficiently got ignored and turned down. Since then, I stopped making suggestions to the owner. I feel like they do not believe me, not even try to see if it works or not.” (S17)

These two responses suggest that some Japanese workers are not willing to try new ideas, they are comfortable with keeping things as they always are, and students find it difficult to have a smooth conversation with some Japanese coworkers on the improvement of the working process.

On the other hand, students are struggling to work at a different pace according to their coworkers, which causes students to be nervous if they make mistakes. More importantly, students' suggestions are not being taken seriously, which discourages them from working energetically and expeditiously for their jobs.

Always Keeping Busy.

The students find it difficult to accept that they need to keep busy at work even though the work is done, as their colleagues stay busy all the time. It reveals the fact that the students need to keep their hands full at work whether there is work or not, which is influenced by their coworkers. Additionally, the students feel constrained to do the same as their colleagues in this intense working environment.

Some students provided examples to explain, "When I have my job done, I am often asked to find other things to do, even though the peak hour is just gone, and the restaurant is not busy anymore. Actually, I could not find more work to do. That is embarrassing" (S10) and "I am working at Matsuya (a Japanese fastfood chain restaurant), like anyone else, I always need to have my hands full. Besides that, I am often asked to do things that are not part of my job" (S90).

Overtime Working.

According to the students' experiences, it shows that working overtime is not because of the heavy workload but the working atmosphere. The students tend to follow the overtime rules

for maintaining a good relationship with coworkers in order to integrate themselves into the workplace.

For example, one student commented, “I can finish my work at 10 p.m., but I have to work overtime until 11 o’clock like everyone does, though the extra hours get paid, I still do not want to do that” (S44). Another student wrote, “When my coworkers work overtime, I would struggle if I should do the same” (S69). This reflects that the students work overtime as they are concerned about whether they can integrate into the part-time workplace.

The Reason for Quitting a Part-time Job

In this survey, the students have quit part-time jobs mainly because of the poor relationship with coworkers. They could not blend into the working environment and feel isolated from colleagues. Language (efficient communication) and culture (understanding Japanese work culture) are still the essential challenges for the students to overcome.

In Table 9, 70.4% of the students state that they will quit a part-time job when they could not get along with colleagues, could not integrate into the Japanese workplace’s environment or strongly feel excluded.

Moreover, the content of work and poor self-performance are not the students’ key concerns about quitting a job. Data shows that 20% of the students believe that they would consider quitting when they cannot stand the work anymore, and only 9.6% of the students would quit because of their poor performance at work.

Table 9*The Reasons for Making Chinese Students Quit a Part-time Job*

Items	Number of students (N=115)	Proportion
Could not get along with colleagues, could not blend into the Japanese workplace's environment, strongly feel excluded	81	70.4%
Can not stand the content of work	23	20%
Disappointed at the poor performance of myself	11	9.6%

In sum, from the results of this survey, students seem to suffer more from the linguistic difficulties, such as speaking, listening, honorifics, dialect, and vocabulary challenges, than the working cultural ones. Particularly, the students who obtain the Japanese Language Proficiency N1 and N2 tests do not seem to have fewer linguistic challenges. However, the period of staying in Japan greatly influences the linguistic challenges the students experience. The longer the students stay in Japan, the less linguistic challenges there are.

At work, cultural problems occur involving inflexibility, always keeping busy and overtime working. The workplace enables the students to work side by side with Japanese coworkers to gain more knowledge of Japanese work ethics; yet, simultaneously they struggle about following the rules, which are not written in the employment contract though, they follow the rules in order to adjust themselves into the workplace and Japanese colleagues' expectations.

To conclude, the survey results overall demonstrate:

1. The majority of Chinese students' Japanese proficiency at a high level with N1 or N2 certifications. However, the result does not suggest that the students who have a high

level of Japanese proficiency test certification experience less challenges in their part-time jobs.

2. Part-time workplaces for Chinese students mainly are convenience stores, restaurants, drugstores, supermarkets as such service areas.
3. Financial issues are the biggest motivation to drive Chinese students to work part-time. The second biggest motivation is to improve Japanese skills.
4. The challenges Chinese students face in their part-time jobs are categorized into linguistic challenges and working cultural challenges. Speaking, listening, dialect, honorifics and vocabulary issues are examined as the main challenges for linguistic challenges; Inflexibility, always keeping busy and overtime working are identified as primary challenges for working cultural challenges.
5. Three factors are indicated for Chinese students considering quitting a part-time job: The relationship with colleagues (get along well or not), working atmosphere (friendly and comfortable atmosphere or not) and whether the students feel accepted (being isolated or not).

The survey results suggest the commonality and tendency of the students' responses.

However, the survey questionnaire is a close-ended questionnaire, with some open-ended responses. It cannot provide details for the choices the students select. Thus, interviews with participants enabled me to ask for more details and look for more perspectives. The next section, the interview section, presents the individual experiences through extensive interactions with interviewees and deeply explores what challenges they experienced and how they deal with them in their part-time jobs.

Interview Results and Analysis

This chapter includes two parts. The first part presents the frequent challenges the students experienced in their part-time jobs in the service areas. The second part examines how the students deal with these challenges.

Moreover, the interview results expand on the understanding of the students' challenges in part-time jobs and coping strategies the students take to improve their skills through considerable communication with participants in the interview.

Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in Part-time Work

Some challenges happen many times, and the students still were not able to overcome them at that time. I call these challenges frequent challenges.

The frequent challenges the students experienced are organized into linguistic challenges, part-time workplace's cultural challenges and other challenges.

One of the key questions I asked in the interview was: "What challenges have you experienced in your part-time jobs up till now?" All participants mentioned that once one challenge is resolved another one comes; challenges are evolving as time goes by. Furthermore, linguistic ones are more obvious. Therefore, linguistic challenges are divided into two phases accordingly. In the first phase, the students just started to work part-time (unfamiliar with part-time). In the second phase, the students had worked part-time for a long period of time (get used to part-time routine work). The students have different challenges in these two phases.

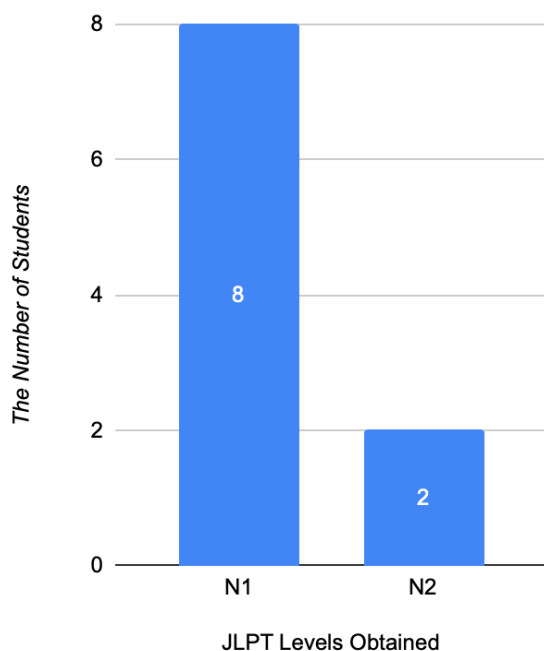
Linguistic Challenges.

In the last section, the survey results suggested that 86.1% of the students passed N1 and N2. In Figure 10, the interview results show that all interviewees obtained N1 and N2, eight of

ten students are N1 levels, the other two students are N2 levels. The interview results further strengthens the survey results on the students' higher level Japanese proficiency which is verified by a test.

Figure 10

The Interviewees' Test Japanese (JLPT) Levels Obtained



Note. The JLPT has five levels: N5, N4, N3, N2 and N1; the easiest level is N5 and the most difficult level is N1.

However, the Japanese test result does not represent the actual Japanese skills. The participants were asked to self-evaluate their practical Japanese four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and indicate which one they are best at.

As shown in Table 10, the participants are more confident in their reading and writing skills. Specifically, five of ten participants are good at reading and three participants are proud of their writing. On the contrary, only one student picked listening, and one student chose speaking.

It reveals that good listening and speaking in practical Japanese are very difficult for most participants.

However, among four skills, listening and speaking proficiencies of foreign part-time staff are required by part-time work employers in the service area due to interactions with coworkers and with customers at work.

Table 10

The Interviewees' Self-evaluation on Practical Japanese as "Very Good"

Japanese four skills	Very good (N=Mentioned times)	Students
Listening	1	Zhang
Speaking	1	Guo
Reading	5	Chen, Cai, Wang, Huang, Liu
Writing	3	Lin, Wu, Tong

Note. The total number of students is 10 and each student only has one response.

The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the First Phase.

All of my participants have studied Japanese before coming to Japan. The part-time job most students work in is in the service area. Seven of ten participants are working as a convenience store's staff.

In the first phase, when the students start to work part-time, they do not get used to the complete Japanese working environment. It is difficult for the students to quickly blend into the Japanese workplace as they have different cultural backgrounds from Japanese people and speak

their language, Japanese, which the students are studying. The results of the students' frequent challenges in the first phase are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11

The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the First Phase

Code	Breakdown of code	Challenge items	N=Mentioned times	Students
Linguistic challenges	Listening challenges	Speak too fast to understand	5	Cai, Huang, Tong, Wu, Zhang
		Accent	3	Liu, Wang, Lin
		Kansai dialect	1	Chen
		Voice is too small to follow	1	Guo
	Speaking challenges	Cannot compose a complete sentence	6	Huang, Wu, Guo, Cai, Lin, Chen
		Speak written Japanese	3	Wang, Tong, Liu
		Nervous	1	Zhang

Note. The total number of students is 10 and each student has one response for listening and speaking challenges respectively.

First, listening challenges that the students experienced include Japanese speaking speed, accent, dialect and volume of the voice. Among these, speaking speed is the top challenge for the students. One students shared:

Though I majored in Japanese in a Chinese university, I got a high score in N1 of JLPT before I came to Japan. I was confident with my Japanese when I got hired as a convenience store's staff. However, when I got to work, not only coworkers but also customers spoke too fast for me to understand. Actually, When I asked coworkers to speak slowly for me, I could completely understand them. (Huang)

Another student, Cai, added, "The speaking speed is totally different from Japanese teachers; it is difficult to catch Japanese people speaking speed."

Moreover, student Chen complained about his coworkers speaking Kansai dialect and he could not follow, which made him stressed and alone. He lives in Osaka which is the center area of Kansai dialect. Chen said, "Well, let me give you some very simple examples. ほる (Kansai dialect [Horu]) = すてる (standard Japanese [Suteru]); it means throw away in English. なおす (Kansai dialect [Naosu]) = しまう (standard Japanese [Shimau]); it means put something away in English. Kansai people use the former one. However, I study standard Japanese and have no idea of the Kansai dialect; it sounds like another foreign language to me."

Regarding the volume of voice. Student Guo shared his experience:

You know, I always speak clearly and loudly. Most of my customers speak at a very low volume. I have to ask them to repeat. Then I lean forward a little bit to try to hear them. If I still could not hear clearly, I would ask them if they could speak a bit louder. But, I can feel their displeasures and impatience. And at the same time, they would look at my name card.

In addition, accent as the second major challenge, confused some students. Several students mentioned, "Sometimes, when customers or my coworkers speak, I know it is Japanese, but it sounds not normal Japanese to me. I always get lost in their accents." (Lin)

Another student indicated, “Such as the stress on the first syllable or on the middle one, that changes the tone completely; it takes time to get used to it.” (Wang)

Second, the speaking challenges the participants experienced mainly are: six students mentioned they speak key words in many situations, three students stated they speak text-book style Japanese very often. Less but still a challenge, one student claimed he is afraid to speak Japanese.

Some students have the same experience using keywords. They have short speaking length, using some key words. Here are some relevant examples.

“I just say, toilet. My coworkers can immediately respond and nod to me that I can go to the toilet. That’s interesting.” (Wu)

“It is always difficult for me to explain things, to compose a complete sentence to clarify. I give some key words; some of my coworkers can understand, some cannot.” (Tong)

Another student added:

Every time I speak, I need to think a lot on how to make a proper sentence, even struggle with which preposition is the right one to express my ideas and which grammar is the best way to have people understand what I really mean. But I always end up with some key words, no preposition, no grammar. Maybe I think too much to compose a sentence.

(Huang)

On the other hand, some students speak written Japanese, like some Japanese conversation dialogue or articles written in the textbook, standard and correct. However, Japanese people may be confused about it because they do not speak that way in normal life or they speak in a more simple way. For example, two students stated the following:

Sometimes, my coworkers do not understand my Japanese. They can get it when I explain to them. When they finally understand what I mean, they normally say we do not speak like that; few people would speak in that way, because that is too formal for a daily conversation. (Tong)

One of my Japanese coworkers told me a more natural way to express the same thing. For instance, when customers settle by electronic payments, usually we are asked to inform the customers that we have receipt of their payments when the payments are confirmed. I usually inform customers that お取引が完成しました (Otorihikigakanseishimashita); it means the transaction has been completed successfully in English. She told me that normally they do not say that way, as it sounds a bit weird. They generally say いきました (Ikimashita), I finally figured out that one of its meanings is that it is done in English.

Very simple and concise. But, I would never think that way. (Huang)

These experiences suggest that directly using the sentences from textbooks in daily life does not help the students have a smooth communication with Japanese people, as the Japanese the students learn from textbooks is different from what native Japanese people speak in real life. In other words, the students have difficulties in using practical Japanese. Thus, the JLPT, which is used internationally, may not be an effective measure of actual Japanese competence.

Apart from the above two challenges, student Zhang mentioned that he is sometimes too nervous to speak. “Especially when my coworkers speak fast and work quickly, I feel like I am not at the same pace as my coworkers, my brain is in chaos.”

The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the Second Phase.

In the second phase, the students are not new to their part-time work as they have been working for a period of time. Therefore, the students get used to their routine work flow and

frequent use of phrases. The students go through the first phase, and in the next phase, new linguistic challenges come.

The results of frequent challenges the participants experienced in the second phase are outlined in Table 12. The students struggle the most with different expressions which mean the same, and it is hard to explain things in detail. Listening and speaking on the phone are difficult for the students to handle. Moreover, it is not easy to speak proper and correct honorific language.

Table 12*The Frequent Challenges the Students Experienced in the Second Phase*

Code	Breakdown of code	Challenge items	N=Mentioned times	Students
Linguistic challenges	Listening challenges	Same meaning with different expressions	8	Chen, Cai, Wang, Wu, Zhang, Huang, Lin, Guo
		Telephone communication	2	Tong, Liu
	Speaking challenges	Hard to explain things specifically	5	Cai, Guo, Wang, Zhang, Wu
		Honorifics	3	Huang, Chen, Lin
		Telephone communication	2	Tong, Liu

Note. Each student has one response for listening and speaking challenges respectively.

First, for the listening challenges, the students think that it is difficult to follow when customers and coworkers use different expressions for the same thing. Eight of ten participants have similar situations. One student said:

Everyone has their own preferences and habits, even their choices of words. My Japanese coworkers have powerful vocabularies of course; they can easily use different words or

expressions to express what they mean. I sometimes cannot follow, and need to ask them to explain in a simple way. (Wu)

Another student added, “Customers have their own expressions for some products. Like senior people and young people, they use different expressions.” (Wang)

In addition, two students reported that they are unwilling to pick up the phone. A student commented below:

I have been working at this convenience store for over two years. Sometimes, I work with some foreign students who are new to the store, and I am the senior, so when the phone rings, I have to answer the phone. Sometimes the manager or owner calls, most are customers. It is just like a listening test for me, I need to concentrate on their speaking and quickly respond. I was very nervous during the entire phone conversation. (Tong)

Another student, Cai, shared, “I am always the one who does not want to answer the phone at work. It is hard to guess what they mean by their speaking on the phone; it is worse than face to face communication for a foreign part-time student.”

Second, for the speaking challenges, all 10 students claimed that they can handle the frequent use of phrases at work. However, five students claimed that it is difficult to explain things in detail or clearly in Japanese, some students gave their examples:

Maybe because of my limited vocabulary, I could not explain things exactly what I wanted to say. I remember that a customer forgot his change and left. I did not notice that in the beginning. When I cleaned the front table, I saw the change and suddenly realized that the customer I served just now forgot his change. But it was just ten yen, and I was not sure if the customer did not care about the ten yen or he really forgot. I wondered if I should keep the change and wait for the customer to come back. So, I handed this ten yen

to the senior coworker and just said, I found it on the front table. I did not explain the whole situation. I guess it would make it more complicated. (Zhang)

I once had things get more complicated because I did not explain clearly. A customer asked me why the cigarette's price had increased? I answered that maybe because the material cost went up. And the customer kept asking me questions after I answered him.

In the end, I had to ask my senior Japanese coworker to help me out. (Cai)

On the other hand, some students said that they speak poor honorific language, and they are not confident in their speaking performance over the phone. One student said, "Every time I pick up the phone, I need to take a deep breath. My coworkers all speak honorific language with customers during the phone conversation. It is difficult for me to speak in a smooth way, I try my best but still fail, because customers do not understand my honorific Japanese." (Chen)

Part-time Workplace's Cultural Challenges.

In the interview, the participants talked about linguistic challenges more than the cultural ones, so they felt that the cultural challenges did not bring as many troubles or difficulties to their part-time jobs as much as the linguistic challenges did.

The results of cultural challenges at work are organized in Table 13. The cultural challenges are classified into verbal and non-verbal. Among verbal and non-verbal cultural challenges, most students do not understand Japanese communication style and why Japanese people always apologize.

Table 13*Part-time Workplace's Cultural Challenges*

Code	Breakdown of code	Challenges items	N=Mentioned times	Students
Cultural challenges	Verbal	Communication style	4	Chen, Zhang, Guo, Lin
		Apologize too much	4	Huang, Liu, Cai, Wang
		Greetings	2	Tong, Wu
	Non-verbal	Always keeping busy	3	Tong, Cai, Guo
		Smile	2	Wang, Chen
	Bow	1	Lin	

Note. The total number of students is 10 and each student may have one or more responses.

Verbal.

Some participants reported that they do not understand why their coworkers do not decline requests directly, why they always apologize even if it is not their fault and why they greet when no one is there.

(1) The communication style. Some students find that they are not working well with Japanese coworkers and find it uncomfortable. For example, long pauses during a conversation are pretty common. For some interviewees, pauses mean she or he is reflecting on what has been said. You need to figure it out yourself. Participant Zhang mentioned:

You know, I once asked a coworker if she could help me cover my shift because I had an appointment with a dentist that day. She did not say ok nor decline me. She looked embarrassed and um... I guess she could not cover my shift. So, I said, it is ok if you are not available that day. Then, she looked relieved and said, sorry. Well, she can turn me down directly, because for me, I just want an answer. Ok or not ok, is completely fine with me.

(2) Apologize too much. Several students think that apologizing too much makes the apology less important and not being taken seriously. A student gave her opinion:

“Um... I think my coworkers apologize too much. I could not even differentiate that she or he is really apologizing or keeping the harmony. In my opinion, the apology is regarded as fault and liability. If I am wrong, I definitely apologize. If not, no, I will not.” (Liu)

(3) Greetings. Japanese workers greet even if no one is there; it seems like training the staff to get used to it. One of the participants said:

It is not comfortable, you know; I once worked at a supermarket. Every time we enter the supermarket from the backdoor, we need to greet customers. I do think it is good to greet customers. But, no one is there, and you need to pretend to greet customers with a smile like everyone does. Actually, I feel embarrassed that I still need to send out my greeting when no one is there. So, who am I greeting? (Huang)

Non-Verbal.

Several students mentioned that always keeping smiling, bowing and keeping busy at work are too much for them.

(1) Smile. Some students think smiling a lot at work is not a comfortable thing. The students are requested to keep smiling at work as they directly serve customers. One student complained:

Well, before the corona pandemic broke out, I was told to smile at every customer I served at a convenience store, in order to make customers keep a good impression of our store and hope they would come back next time. Smiling is good, it is just too much. Sometimes, I need to fake a smile because it is easy to get tired. Now, I do not have to smile a lot because everyone wears a mask in this pandemic. I smile when I do want to smile. I feel great. (Wang)

Another student, Chen added:

It is difficult for me to smile when I am not in the mood for smiling. Working in the service area, a senior coworker said, smiling is the basic, and she told me I need to smile lovely. I think the real smile should be from the bottom of the heart. I smile as requested but I am not comfortable with it.

(2) Always keeping busy. Similar to the survey results, the students are requested to keep busy even though they could not find more work to do or when they get a break from peak hours.

A student complained about this below:

You know, it really frustrated me. I did not understand when my senior coworker asked me to find more work to do. He saw me just standing there and it seemed I was not working. Actually, I was very busy for a while, and I just got a minute of break. It makes me feel like working like a robot. Once I go to work, my hands must be full and work non-stop until I get off work. Oh, I do not like that. (Guo)

(3) Bow. Bowing to someone shows respect to him or her. In Japanese context, Japanese bow to show gratitude and respect (Amri, 2019). However, participant Lin stated that she does not want to bow a lot:

I started to bow because my coworkers slightly bow to me every time I came to work. I bowed back to them. But, I am not feeling good bowing a lot to customers. Although I agree that bowing shows more respect than just saying thank you, I think the nod is not bad. But, I noticed that many customers nod when I bow. You know, I suddenly understand that I need to show more respect and thankfulness than customers show us because I work in the service area; excellent service means a lot to the store. Well, I still do not want to bow unless I really want to.

Other Challenges.

In addition to the above mentioned linguistic challenges and the working cultural challenges, some students have some other challenges like slow reaction and working independently.

Slow Reaction.

Due to the lack of Japanese proficiency, social manners and rules in the Japanese workplace, some students generally have a slow reaction to coworkers and customers' conversations, behaviors and requirements. Here are some relevant examples. One participant said:

Oh, there are many cases about my slow reaction to customers or coworkers. For example, a customer once asked me if the newspaper would be unavailable on red days (Japanese public holidays). I thought for a while and when I figured it out, the customer had already left without a word. Another one is more interesting. A customer asked me if

we are selling the pocket ashtray (携帯灰皿: けいたいはいざら [Keitaihaizara]). I never heard of this thing, so I just focused on 携帯 (けいたい [Keitai]) which means mobile phone in English. I guessed the customer was looking for some phone accessories. I guided him to the phone accessories corner, but he looked at me, posed smoking cigarettes, shook his fingers as if he was shaking the ashes, and then packed the ashes, put them in his pocket. Thank god, you know, I am a smoker, I know what it is. At that time, I completely understood what he was looking for, a pocket ashtray. It really took me a long time to react. (Wang)

Another student mentioned, “Sometimes, I heard coworkers talking about something, but I just could not think of it. A few minutes passed when I recalled what it was, and by then their conversation topic was switched to another one. Actually, I wanted to join the conversation.” (Guo)

These examples reflect that the students need some time to figure out what coworkers or customers actually talk about, though the students understand their Japanese but the topics are not familiar to them. Their slow reactions are creating barriers to smooth communication with coworkers and with customers.

Work Independently.

Some students reported that they feel stressed and uncomfortable when they work alone without Japanese coworkers around. One student explained below:

I work at a convenience store. I have been here for a few months. There always are Japanese coworkers here. I can ask any questions and always get help out. One afternoon, only me and a senior coworker were in the store. She went out for her supper during her break. I was fine with that at the beginning. However, when I thought that no one was

here who could help me with customers. I started to get nervous. During her absence, two customers came and asked me something, and they repeated three times! three times! You know, I still could not figure out what the customer wanted me to do. I felt embarrassed and prayed that my coworker would come back soon. (Lin)

Similarly, another student Cai said, “Though I have been working in a convenience store for around three years, when I work alone I still worry that I could not fix the problems for customers and am anxious about bringing trouble or complaints to the store. Because we are from different cultural backgrounds, sometimes, only locals can understand. So, it is better to work together with Japanese coworkers.”

From these two students’ experiences, it indicates that they are not confident in their performances and their Japanese skills. Due to Japanese proficiency issues, limited social manners in the workplace, it is a big challenge for the students to work independently.

The Students’ Coping Strategies for Grappling with Challenges

According to students’ experiences, the coping strategies that they used to grapple with the challenges are summarized in Table 14. The strategies are classified into internal learning strategies and external learning strategies. With internal learning, the students consciously seek solutions by themselves. In other words, the students self-help themselves. On the other hand, external learning is that the students seek help from others on their own initiative.

Table 14*The Students' Coping Strategies for Grappling with Challenges*

Code	Breakdown of code	Strategy items	N=Mentioned times	Students
Strategy	Internal learning (self-training)	Prepare in advance	8	Chen, Zhang, Wang, Guo, Lin, Tong, Huang, Liu
		Take notes at work	4	Wang, Tong, Huang, Liu
		Memorize frequently used phrases	3	Cai, Wu, Huang
		Watch Japanese dramas, news, etc.	2	Chen, Zhang
	External learning	Learn from Japanese coworkers	7	Cai, Guo, Tong, Liu, Lin, Zhang, Huang
		Imitate Japanese coworkers	4	Guo, Wang, Tong, Wu
		Make Japanese friends on language exchange applications	2	Lin, Huang

Note. The total number of students is 10 and each student may have one or more responses.

Internal Learning.

Among internal learning strategies in Table 14, the students reported that they prepare themselves in advance before they go to work, which was mentioned eight times (total ten students); four times they mentioned that they take lots of note to help themselves to get used to

work as soon as possible; three times they claimed that they memorize the most-used phrases to ensure getting the routine work done efficiently; and two times they mentioned that they watch Japanese drama, news, TV programs and as such for widening their vocabulary and improving their sensitivity of Japanese listening and speaking.

First, prepare in advance before getting to work. Since some students cannot express themselves proficiently, they feel more confident when they prepare for work. Here are some cases of what they shared:

You know, I found my way to communicate with coworkers smoothly. Sometimes, the manager stops by the store when I am ready to get off from work. He would ask me to deliver the message for him to some specific coworkers who are not here. But I have a shift with these Japanese coworkers later. This happens many times. As I made the memo in Chinese, I need to translate it into Japanese. I list out the message one by one, I look up the meaning in the dictionary, even use the online translator and revise it a little bit to match with the message. I write it down and practice speaking in a natural tone. It works! My coworkers have no problem with my Japanese. I feel more confident this way. (Tong)

Another one added:

Um... honestly, I often prepare myself in advance before going to work. For example, sometimes, I ask the manager or coworkers to help me change the shift, so I prepare the reason and schedule in advance. In order to let them clearly understand my situation, I write down what I want to say. It is hard to find a proper Japanese word for some Chinese. So, advanced preparation is important, it allows me enough time to structure a potential Japanese conversation. (Chen)

“Preparing in advance makes me relax in the conversation with coworkers.” (Guo)

Second, take notes at work. Several students believe that taking notes during work could not only help them know more about work but also help themselves minimize mistakes. A student said:

When I just started to work at a convenience store, my coworkers helped me practice how to serve a customer as a cashier. I was confused about the process. My coworker simultaneously pretended to be a customer and an instructor, and he told me what I should do. I then took notes of step 1, 2, 3, 4..., everything I did very slowly, as I wanted to make sure that what I was doing was correct. Now, I do not need the notes anymore, but I still keep it as one day it may help some newcomers. (Huang)

Another student mentioned, “I would take down what customers asked me. I sometimes cannot catch what customers exactly asked, but I could write down the hiragana. Then, I look up the word in the dictionary or Google it later. This habit helps me enrich my vocabulary inventory and practice my listening skills.” (Wang)

Third, memorize frequently used phrases. When the students just start to work, memorizing frequently used phrases helps start their routine work smoothly. Cai said, “Actually, before I started my first part-time, working as a staff at a convenience store, I downloaded a list of convenience store’s frequently used words and phrases. I tried my best to memorize them, and I used them at work and it helped me go through the most difficult times as a newcomer.”

Another student stated, “Memorizing the most-used phrases may not help some urgent cases or some complicated requirements from customers, at least I can make sure that the routine work is dealt with quickly and efficiently.” (Wu)

From these two students' comments, it seems that memorizing frequently used phrases is one of the most useful ways for the students to start their part-time jobs and get the routine work done smoothly.

Lastly, watch Japanese dramas, news, etc. Apart from the students' workplaces, they also improve their Japanese skills outside of workplaces. Some students believe that watching Japanese dramas, animations, news, TV programs, or even YouTube channels could be great chances to enhance their language skills and know more about Japanese culture.

One student reported, "Well, I have to say, just watching TV could help me keep in a Japanese environment completely. News reports, drama's dialogue, movie's dialogue and so on, I speak after them, imitating their tones and speaking speed. All of it keeps me close to Japanese. I feel like Japanese is not that difficult, though I still have a lot that I do not know." (Zhang)

In this regard, the students learn Japanese through TV to improve their Japanese proficiency. By this, the students are more interested in Japanese and more positive about learning Japanese.

External Learning.

External learning involves the students' Japanese coworkers a lot. They are good models for the students to hone their Japanese, and they show the students how to do and what to do in the workplace.

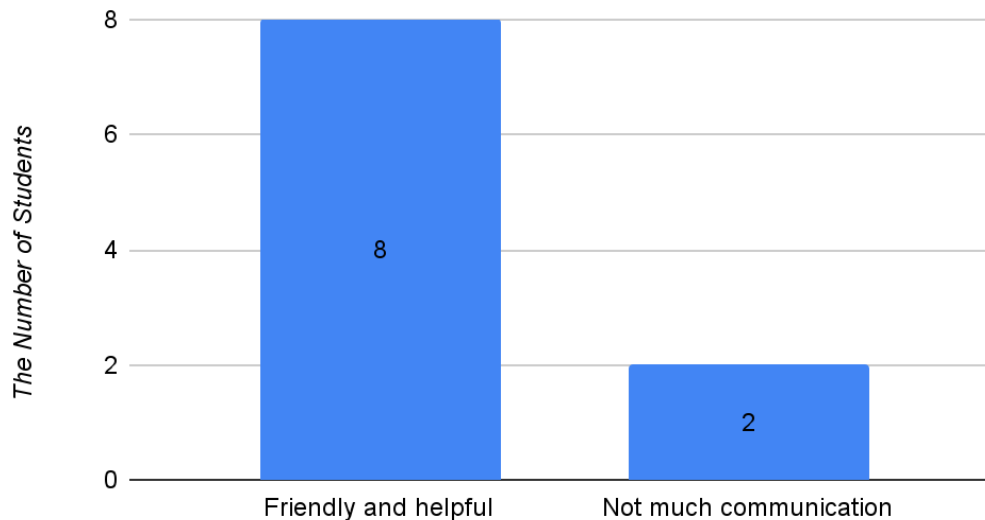
In the interview, the students gave their opinions about their relationships with Japanese coworkers. As illustrated in Figure 11 below, eight of ten students have good relationships with their coworkers. The students find their coworkers very friendly and are willing to help them at work. Some students shared, "We buy mineral water for each other", "Sometimes, we go out to eat after work", "If I ask, I always get an answer, in detail."

The students are very comfortable with their coworkers at work and outside of work. Their trusted relationships help the students build up confidence at work.

Only two students reported that their relationships with their coworkers were not satisfactory. Lack of communication is the main problem for them to build a pleasant working relationship. These two students sounded a little disappointed. One student said, “We speak only when we have to. I try to speak more, but they only reply when I ask, and reply with short answers. Eventually, I resigned.”

The other student added, “We just do our job, with not much communication. Actually, it is really frustrating.”

Good relationships cultivate the students’ learning enthusiasm and harmonious relationship; while bad relationships negatively affect the working atmosphere.

Figure 11*The Students' Relationship with Japanese Coworkers**The Students' Relationships with Japanese Coworkers in Part-time Work*

Japanese coworkers are very important to the students' external learning. As shown in Table 14, up to seven times (total ten students) mentioned that they learn from Japanese coworkers at work; four claimed that they would imitate Japanese coworkers, such as, tones, how to bow, their habit of using some specific expressions; and two reported that they like to make Japanese friends online to practice their Japanese.

There are many ways that the workers learn from coworkers and Japanese people. First of all, learn from Japanese coworkers. In the Japanese workplace, working side by side with Japanese coworkers is the best environment for the students to learn and observe. The students can practice what they observed and learned in the field. At the same time, the students can have feedback in real time. Some students gave their examples as follows. A student said:

Well, at the beginning, I was not talkative. My coworkers asked me many questions about my school, my family, my age... try to make conversations. They were very nice people. One night, I got scolded by a drunk customer without a reason. One of my coworkers apologized to the customer for me and told me to go to the backdoor to have a break. Later, she kindly explained to me that though it is the drunk customer's fault, we need to apologize first and then politely ask the customer to leave our store. In the service area, service is the core, so we try not to bring up disputes, because that would be a big loss to the store. Ever since then, when there is a problem, I always apologize first. (Guo)

Student Lin claimed that she met a group of friendly coworkers, who help her whenever she has a question:

Every time I do not figure out what they said or what customers said, I ask them for help. They always answer me patiently, and they even write down the kanji for me since I always ask if there is kanji? And they know kanji is easier for me to remember than hiragana. They really love to help as long as you are willing to ask and learn. (Lin)

Another student reported that she learnt many different expressions for the same thing through working with many Japanese coworkers in different shifts. She could never learn this at school:

Um... I have been here (convenience store) for over two years. I worked all shifts: morning shift, noon shift, night shift and overnight shift, of course not on the same day. So, I met many coworkers. They have different ways of doing things, for example, at the beginning, I did not know there were so many different phrases for 'do you need a plastic bag'?

レジぶくろはごりようですか(Rejibukurowagoriyoudesuka) ?

ふくろにおいれますか(Hukuronioreshimasuka) ?

ふくろにおつめますか(Hukuroniotsumeshimasuka) ?

ふくろはよろしいでしょうか(Hukurowayoroshiidesyoka) ?

ふくろはありで/なしで(Hukurowaaride/nashide) ?

ふくろはよろしかったですか(Hukurowayoroshikattadesuka) ?

ふくろはどうされますか(Hukurowadousaremasuka) ?

Maybe there are more, so I wrote down different phrases for the same meaning to practise during my work. Now, I can easily use the one I want and do not have to say the same phrase all the time. (Huang)

The above responses demonstrate that the students' Japanese coworkers help them a lot at work, and coworkers explain patiently to help the students understand the situation. More importantly, the students use the part-time workplace to learn and practice what they observed from their coworkers.

Second, they imitate Japanese coworkers. Before getting skillful at work, the students learn to imitate their Japanese coworkers to make progress on their accents and improve the way of doing things at work, especially their service to customers. Some students shared some interesting examples:

“One of my coworkers even encouraged me to imitate her. She never minded about it, and corrected me if I sounded weird. The imitation was very interesting.” (Wu)

Another one mentioned, “You know, when I imitate my coworkers, I imitate the way they speak, the tone they use, the way they apologize to customers, even the way they pass the products to customers. I sometimes think this is not myself, I sometimes think wow, this is amazing, I can do that!” (Wang)

One more added:

I do not want to admit it, but I never bowed in my life. Well, nodding is easy to me. But, bowing is difficult for me. Unbelievable! My Japanese coworkers' smiling or bowing, seem so natural. They helped me understand how to smile and bow spontaneously.

Customers' purchase keeps our jobs, so we are grateful for that, and customers' satisfaction is closely connected to if they would like to shop again at our store. Keeping this in mind, you can naturally smile and bow, too. I understood and tried to imitate the way they bow and smile. I now no longer think smiling and bowing are difficult for me to handle at work because I understand why I should do them. (Tong)

These students' experiences indicate that their Japanese coworkers are very pleased to help the students. By imitating their Japanese coworkers, they can handle their jobs more confidently. Moreover, by understanding why they should smile and bow, the students do them without reluctance.

Third, they make Japanese friends online, through some language exchange applications. Two students said they were shy and unexpectedly found that when they do language exchange with Japanese people, they are more open to speak Japanese with their online friends. Any questions, such as about part-time jobs, interrelationships with Japanese people, and social manners could be answered patiently. It helps the students to build up confidence in Japanese and expand their knowledge towards Japan. A student said:

You know, I spoke a lot with my online Japanese friends more than the Japanese people I met in real life! I shared some of my part-time job issues with her, and she gave me some useful suggestions. At the beginning, she spoke very slowly for me to understand, but gradually, I got used to her fast speed. Maybe this was one of the reasons I got full marks

for the JLPT listening section. In addition, she sent me a hand-written New Year greeting card (ねんがじょう [Nengajyou]) for New Years and told me about the custom of New Year greeting cards in Japan. Very happy, I learnt a lot and I really thanked her. (Lin)

One more shared:

Frankly speaking, my Japanese is not bad. I just could not put the words together quickly. Especially when my coworkers and customers talk fast to me, I always say え...ど(um...) to ease my nerves. I made some Japanese friends on a language exchange application. I did not talk much at the beginning as I needed to digest what she or he said, and then composed a sentence as a reaction. I cared about the grammar so much that it troubled me a lot. After struggling, sadly, just a few key words came out from my mouth. Well, they told me to put away the grammar, and just say what comes to my mind, they can fix it when it is wrong or tell me what locals would say. That really helped me a lot! Because we have time and no rush, we can enjoy the conversation. Around one year later, I am not much worried about Japanese people talking fast and I can speak a complete sentence instead of some key words in most situations at work. Although there are still many things I do not understand, I do not feel panic anymore. (Huang)

These two responses suggest that some students are more open to talk with online Japanese friends, through extensive conversations regularly, the students' Japanese speaking, Japanese listening and knowledge of Japanese cultures and customs can get improved.

Discussion

Previous studies have shown the motivations of Chinese students to work part-time in Japan (Liu-Farrer, 2014), and Chinese students' adaptation issues in Japan's life (Ikeguchi, 2012). My results further strengthen research on the reasons why Chinese students work part-time and it deepens the understanding of Chinese students' part-time working difficulties and challenges.

This study focuses on the challenges the Chinese students experienced when working part-time in the service area and how they deal with the challenges.

The Japanese workplace is an intercultural workplace, accommodating both Japanese coworkers and Chinese students who are linguistically and culturally different from each other to work together as a whole.

Results indicate that the challenges the students experienced are primarily divided into two categories: one is linguistic and the other is working cultural challenges. Moreover, the students' coping strategies for grappling with these challenges are presented as two aspects: internal learning and external learning.

This study found that linguistic challenges involved Japanese proficiency, such as, Japanese speaking, listening, dialect, honorifics, etc. Surprisingly, the majority of the students passed JLPT N1 or N2. However, being verified by a language proficiency test does not guarantee that they experience less difficulties on linguistic aspects in their part-time jobs. On the other hand, the data analysis suggests that the longer the students stay in Japan, the less linguistic challenges there are.

Furthermore, results indicate that the students are more confident in their reading and writing than listening and speaking. That may partly explain why the students experienced

linguistic difficulties at work as they needed to interact a great deal with customers and coworkers.

Interestingly, the analysis identifies that linguistic challenges can be separated into two phases as the students report that the challenges are not the same all the time. In the first phase, the students just start to work at their part-time jobs. In the second phase, they have worked for a long time. Challenges change with their working phase. In the first phase, the students are new to the work, and they cannot keep up with the pace of their Japanese coworkers and customers. They face difficulties such as, Japanese people speaking too fast to follow, cannot compose a complete sentence, speak textbook style Japanese, etc. In the second phase, as the students work for a period of time, they get used to routine work. However, things apart from routine work, they cannot handle without Japanese coworkers. Some students are afraid to work alone, as they believe some tasks at work only locals understand. Furthermore, the students worry about the telephone communication as it is more difficult to express themselves or explain things in detail. They are not satisfied with their performance on telephone conversation with their coworkers and with customers.

On the other hand, from the results of the working cultural challenges, I found that it is difficult for the students to follow the rules or Japanese social ethics at work, for example, always keeping busy, smiling and bowing too much, communication style (For example, Japanese coworkers often avoid direct refusals), greeting even if no one is there, and apologizing too much even if it is not their fault. The students do not understand why their Japanese coworkers do these things so much, which leads to problems integrating themselves into the Japanese workplace.

Results also suggest that communication style and apologizing too much are the biggest cultural challenges at students' workplaces. This further supports Ikeguchi's (2012) cultural adjustment research of Chinese students that the Japanese communication style is difficult for the students to understand. Interestingly enough, although the students do not fully comprehend the Japanese work ethics, in the interview, eight out of ten participants claimed that they have a good relationship with their Japanese coworkers. This reveals that good interpersonal relationships cross cultural differences. Also, this indicates that communication is not directly connected to good relationships.

In addition, results suggest that the students adopted two kinds of coping strategies to grapple with the challenges they experienced, in order to linguistically and culturally improve themselves to have a better performance at work and understand Japanese work ethics. One is internal learning and the other is external learning.

For internal learning, the students try four aspects to self-train themselves to integrate into a part-time environment. First, they prepare themselves in advance before going to work, such as, they summarize the difficulties or mistakes they had at work last time, and prepare how to handle those difficulties if they happen again, before going to work next time. The students feel more comfortable and confident at work when they are prepared. Second, they take notes at work, in order to get familiar with the whole working process quicker and to minimize possible mistakes. Third, they memorize frequently used phrases or special terms to get routine work done smoothly. Lastly, they watch different kinds of Japanese dramas, news, and etc. The students follow the dramas and news to speak Japanese. This way they can practice their Japanese listening and speaking, and widen their Japanese vocabulary. In this way, the students tend to keep themselves in a Japanese environment at home. They try to only speak and listen to

Japanese, in order to enable themselves to be comfortable with Japanese people around and learn to understand the Japanese ways of thinking and culture.

For external learning, Japanese coworkers are prominent. It mainly reflects on the students' learning from their coworkers, such as imitating them at work. As the students work side by side with their coworkers, the workplace is the best learning field for the students which enables the students to understand the Japanese work ethics. Simultaneously, the students use the workplace to practice what they observed from their coworkers, and students can receive feedback in real time. On the other hand, by imitating Japanese coworkers, such as tones, way of speaking, smiling, bowing, they can improve their accents and the way of doing things at work. This links to the conceptual theory of one of the major components in the process model of intercultural competence - develops critical thinking, knowledge and skills (Deardorff, 2011). The students attempt to acquire more understanding of their cultures and thinking in order to perform effectively and appropriately in an intercultural workplace.

One's thinking is influenced by culture and language. One seminal work of research by Whorf (1956) indicates that linguistic structure in a language is reflected by culture and habitual thinking. Furthermore, Ji et al. (2004) indicated that in cross-cultural research, "Researchers believe that culture and language are interconnected, and it is almost impossible to separate the two." This further explains that the language and culture are inseparably linked.

Similarly, my research found that linguistic and cultural challenges seem to be interconnected. The students' Japanese proficiency may be related to the lack of Japanese cultural knowledge, and Japanese culture can be reflected in the Japanese language, like keigo. Especially hierarchical relationships at work, such as senpai (senior one) - kohai (junior one) relationships. With people in the same year or some younger than you (kohai), you may use

tamego, which means informal way of speaking Japanese. However, with people more senior (senpai), you will use keigo. Therefore, the relationship is not equal. Language is formed with culture, and the form of language you use indicates the relationships between you and the other. Thus, speaking proper Japanese on different occasions requires a deep understanding of Japanese culture and proficiency in Japanese language. The students may not be aware of this, so this interconnection needs to be examined and future students need to understand the connection.

Suggestions and Limitations

Suggestions

This study has preliminarily verified the challenges of Chinese students and their strategies towards their challenges in their part-time jobs. Results reveal that linguistic and working cultural challenges are the main challenges for the students. The following are some suggestions for the students to improve themselves to better integrate into the part-time workplace.

Students

- (1) Speaking and listening training. The students are encouraged to do some homework or search for the job they apply for. Especially, they should find some particular words and phrases which are only used in that job area. Particularly, they need to look for some frequently used phrases in the work they will do. Practicing these words a lot could help ease the students' anxiety before getting used to their part-time jobs. Furthermore, it may help the students build preliminary confidence in their work.
- (2) Be aware of Japanese work ethics. The students need to learn some basic Japanese social manners and work ethics, not only for starting a good relationship with their Japanese coworkers, but also for promoting effective communication with coworkers and with customers. For example, when the students want to do something at work, they better ask before they do it. Especially when the students have not gotten familiar with their job duties, this may help reduce unnecessary mistakes and misunderstandings at work.

Organizations

Other than the students' self learning and self training, the support and training from the schools (including Japanese language schools and universities), Japanese support centers and such organizations are very important for the students to improve their language skills and working cultural sensitivity. These organizations can help with learning, such as teaching the students about keigo, Japanese communication styles, Japanese work culture and the phrases of part-time work. This will not only help the students build up a good relationship with Japanese coworkers, but also lead the students to a better understanding of part-time job work ethics in Japan.

Limitations

This research has some potential limitations.

- (1) The survey was conducted with four groups of students: Japanese language school students, vocational school students, college and university students, and graduate school students. However, due to incomplete information on the surveys, such as missing numbers or letters in their IDs, I could not reach out to many of them. Thus, only students from three groups accepted my interview invitation, and none of the interviewees were Japanese language school students.
- (2) In my research, 86.1% of survey respondents and all interview participants have passed JLPT N1 or N2 tests. The 13.9% of students holding N3 certification or below were not interviewed. Therefore, the interview data does not include Chinese students with lower JLPT scores. That group may experience different challenges and difficulties in their part-time jobs.

- (3) Convenience store staff account for up to 70% of the total numbers of interviewees. The remaining 30% are working at restaurants, supermarkets, hotels, and clinics. Therefore, the interviewees for each part-time work type are not balanced.
- (4) JASSO (2020) reports that 124,436 Chinese students are studying in Japan. However, there is no official report on the number of Chinese students working in service areas. Therefore, my study with only 115 students participating, does not represent all Chinese students who work in the service areas in Japan. Furthermore, this research only examined Chinese students who I contacted through WeChat or my friends; it is unable to generalize the results to all Chinese students or other international students who work part-time in Japan.
- (5) Due to the covid-19 pandemic, it was difficult to get more students to participate in my survey and interviews.

Conclusion

Some studies related to the motivations of Chinese students to work part-time in Japan (Liu-Farrer, 2014) and Chinese students' cultural adaptation in Japan (Ikeguchi, 2012) are conducted accordingly for getting closer to understanding Chinese students' living situations in Japan. As the largest population of international students in Japan, many Chinese students are privately financed students, and they need to work part-time to alleviate their family's financial pressure (Coates, 2015). Therefore, it is worth exploring students' difficulties of working part-time in Japan and how they are trying their best to integrate into the Japanese part-time workplace.

Specifically, this research examined the challenges the students experienced and how they grappled with the challenges at part-time work in the service areas. Based on the analysis of data of 115 responses from survey questionnaires and 10 interviews, linguistic and working cultural challenges are the biggest challenges for students at part-time work, and the strategies the students adopted to deal with those challenges are internal (self-help, self-training, such as, taking notes, preparing in advance before go to work, memorizing frequently used words and phrases) and external (seek help from others, for instance, learn and imitate Japanese coworkers) learning strategies. The results indicate that the internal and external learning strategies directly and indirectly help the students understand Japanese work ethics and improve their Japanese language skills, such as, by imitating Japanese coworkers, the students speak more natural Japanese and understand Japanese ways of doing things at work.

Interestingly, while I was doing interviews, all participants mentioned that their linguistic challenges were constantly evolving in different phrases. In this study, my interview participants experienced different challenges in two phrases. For example, in the first phrase, the students just

begin to work part-time, they know little about what will happen at work, their main concerns are that they do not understand what Japanese coworkers and customers say, and do not know how to get routine work done smoothly. Japanese speaking and listening are their top difficulties.

While in the second phrase, the students had worked for quite a long time. These students can handle their routine work. However, they are vulnerable to something other than routine work, such as telephone communications, and using keigo correctly at work. Challenges seem to be upgraded the longer the students stay working part-time.

Additionally, this study only focuses on some Chinese students' challenges of working part-time in the service areas and how they address those challenges. However, since my survey respondents (86.1%) and interview participants (100%) have passed the JLPT N1 and N2 tests, they literally have a good command of Japanese. Therefore, Chinese students with low Japanese ability may have different difficulties at their part-time jobs. Furthermore, international students from other countries also may experience different challenges at their part-time jobs. Hence, further research on challenges of Chinese students with low Japanese ability and international students from other countries working part-time in Japan needs to be conducted. This type of research could lead to understanding the different challenges of international students' working part-time and their ways to grapple with the challenges in Japan.

References

- Adams, W. C. (2015). Handbook of practical program evaluation. Chapter nineteen: conducting semi-structured interviews (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19>
- Amri, M. (2019). Ojigi: The ethics of Japanese community's nonverbal language. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 380, 38-41.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/soshec-19.2019.9>
- Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(3), 349-373. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240909345818>
- Bui, Y. N. (2009). Chapter 1: overview of the master's degree and thesis. In *how to write a master's thesis* (pp. 1-20). SAGE.
- Cavcic, A. (2019). Balancing baito and benkyō: the conditions of international students in Japan. *CELE Journal*, 27, 17 - 29. <http://id.nii.ac.jp/1385/00017683/>
- Clavel, T. (2015, April 22). Culture, cost and proximity draw Chinese students to Japan. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2015/04/22/issues/culture-cost-proximity-draw-chinese-students-japan/>
- Coates, J. (2015). “Unseeing” Chinese students in Japan: understanding educationally channelled migrant experiences. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 44(3), 125-154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261504400306>
- Cook, H. M., & Shibamoto-Smith, J. S. (2018). *Japanese at work: politeness, power, and personae in Japanese workplace discourse*. Springer.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- Deardorff, D. K. (2009). Chapter 28: implementing intercultural competence assessment. In the *SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 477-491). SAGE.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2011). Assessing intercultural competence. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 149, 65-79. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.381>
- Fantini, A. E. (2009). Chapter 27: Assessing intercultural competence. In the *SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 456-476). SAGE.
- Gaston, N., & Kishi, T. (2007). Part-time workers doing full-time work in Japan. *Journal of the Japanese and International Economies*, 21(4), 435-454. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jjie.2006.04.001>
- Hammer, M. R., Bennett, M. J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: the intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(4), 421-443. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767\(03\)00032-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0147-1767(03)00032-4)
- Hennings, M., & Mintz, S. (2015). Japan's measures to attract international students and the impact of student mobility on the labor market. *International and Advanced Japanese Studies*, 7, 241-251. http://japan.tsukuba.ac.jp/research/JIAJS_Vol7_ONLINE_18_Hennings%20and%20Mintz%20FINAL.pdf
- Hung, F. S., Chung, Y. P., & Ho, E. S. (2000). To work or to continue to higher education? the choice of senior secondary students in Shenzhen, China. *Higher Education*, 39, 455-467. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004065310616>

- Ikeguchi, C. B. (2012). Internationalization of education & culture adjustment: the case of Chinese students in Japan. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 21(2), 170-184.
- Ishikawa, C. (2006). Education-oriented immigration in Japan and the legacy of the 'plan to accept 100,000 foreign students'. *Nagoya University Ryūgakusei Sentā Kiyō*, 4, 5-26. http://ieec.iee.nagoya-u.ac.jp/ja/about/pub-pdf/J_of_ECIS/Vol4/Ishikawa%20Paper.pdf
- Jansen, H. (2010). The logic of qualitative survey research and its position in the field of social research methods (1-63 paragraphs). *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 11(2). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/45194054_The_Logic_of_Qualitative_Survey_Research_and_its_Position_in_the_Field_of_Social_Research_Methods
- Japan Student Services Organization. (2019). Student guide to Japan 2019-2020. https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/study_j/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2019/05/16/sgtj_2019_e.pdf
- Japan Student Services Organization. (2020). Jasso outline 2020-2021. https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/about/organization/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2020/09/03/e2020_a4_0727s_3.pdf
- Japan Student Services Organization. (2021). Result of an annual survey of international students survey in Japan, 2020. https://www.studyinjapan.go.jp/en/_mt/2021/03/date2020z_e.pdf
- Japan Study Support. (n.d.). Living guide for international students in Japan - part-time job. <https://www.jpss.jp/en/life/5/1/>

- Ji, L., Zhang, Z., & Nisbett, R. E. (2004). Is it culture or is it language? examination of language effects in cross-cultural research on categorization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(1), 57-65. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.87.1.57>
- Johnson, J. P., Lenartowicz, T., & Apud, S. (2006). Cross-cultural competence in international business: toward a definition and a model. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(4), 525-543. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400205>
- Lee, J. S. (2017). Challenges of international students in a Japanese university: ethnographic perspectives. *Journal of International Students*, 7(1), 73-93. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v7i1.246>
- Leung, K., Ang, S., & Tan, M. L. (2014). Intercultural competence. *Annual review of organizational psychology and organizational behavior*, 1, 489-519. http://soonang.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014-AnnRev-Intercultural-competence_-Leung-Ang-ML.pdf
- Liu-Farrer, G. (2009). Educationally channeled international labor mobility: contemporary student migration from China to Japan. *International Migration Review*, 43(1), 178-204. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2008.01152.x>
- Liu-Farrer, G. (2011). Making careers in the occupational niche: Chinese students in corporate Japan's transnational business. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(5), 785-803. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2011.559718>
- Liu-Farrer, G. (2014). Tied to the family and bound to the labor market: understanding Chinese student mobility in Japan. *Emerging International Dimensions in East Asian Higher Education*, 185-206. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8822-9_10

- Mainichi Japan. (2016, March 22). Japanese higher education offers Chinese students a second chance. <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160322/p2a/00m/0na/010000c>
- McMillan, J. H. (2008). *Educational research: fundamentals for the consumer* (5th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2019). Intake of foreign students. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/people/student/index.html>
- Patton, M. Q. (1982). Qualitative methods and approaches: what are they? *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2, 3-15. https://www.academia.edu/28766660/Qualitative_methods_and_approaches_What_are_they
- Rear, D. (2020). Persisting values in the Japanese workplace: managerial attitudes towards work skills. *Japan Forum*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2020.1726434>
- Sasaki, L. (2012). Arubaito, or short-term working abroad in Japan: a case study of Brazilian university students of Japanese descent. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 7(1), 115-125. <https://doi.org/10.2304/rcie.2012.7.1.115>
- Sawa, T. (2019, April 12). Foreign student numbers don't tell the whole tale. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2019/04/12/commentary/japan-commentary/foreign-student-numbers-dont-tell-whole-tale/>
- Shah, S. K., & Corley, K. G. (2006). Building better theory by bridging the quantitative-qualitative divide. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(8), 1821-1835. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00662.x>

Wang, Y., & Zhang, R. (2017). Awareness and attitude towards working in Japan-a survey on foreign students in Japan. *International Journal of Culture and History*, 3(4), 263-269.

[https://doi.org/ 10.18178/ijch.2017.3.4.110](https://doi.org/10.18178/ijch.2017.3.4.110)

Wang, Z., & Crawford, I. (2021). Factors motivating destination decisions of Chinese study abroad students. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 35(2), 408-425.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-08-2020-0388>

Zwart, J. (2013). Study abroad choices of Chinese students: factors, influences and motivations. *Quarterly Journal of Chinese Studies*, 2(2), 68-90.

Whorf, B. L. (1956). *Language, thought, and reality*. Cambridge, MA: Technology Press of MIT.

Appendix A: Survey Questions**1. Gender:**

A. Female / B. Male

2. Age:

A. Under 21 / B. 21-25 / C. 26-30 / D. 31 and above

3. Period of staying in Japan:

A. Under 1 year / B. 1-3 years / C. 4-5 years / D. 6 years or above

4. Educational background:

A. Japanese language school student / B. Vocational school student / C. College or University student / D. Graduate student / E. Other____

5. Your current Japanese proficiency:

A. Cannot speak Japanese at all / B. N3 or under / C. N2 / D. N1

6. Do you need to use Japanese at your part-time job?

A. Yes / B. No

7. What kind of part-time jobs are you working at now? (Multiple choices are acceptable)

A. Convenience store / B. Restaurant / C. Drug store / D. Supermarket / E. Other____

8. What is your purpose of working part-time?

A. To ease financial pressure / B. To gain more opportunities to speak Japanese / C. To make friends / D. To learn how to get along with Japanese people at work / E. To get connected with Japanese society outside the school / F. Just for experience / G. Other____

9. What reasons do you think cause challenges at work?

A. Lack of Japanese proficiency / B. Lack of Japanese social manners and rules / C. Miscommunication / D. Lack of understanding of Japanese working culture / E. Other____

10. Please give a specific example for the reasons that you have chosen for question# 9.

Short answer is fine: _____

11. Speaking poor honorific language always bothers me.

1=Strongly disagree / 2=Disagree / 3=Neutral / 4=Agree / 5=Strongly agree

12. What reasons might make you want to quit?

A. Could not get along with colleagues / B. Can not stand the content of work / C. Disappointed at the poor performance of myself / D. Could not blend into the Japanese workplace's environment / E. Strongly feel excluded / F. Other____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Could you tell me what are the frequent challenges (difficulties) you have been experiencing in your part-time jobs?
2. How did you grapple with these challenges in your part-time jobs?
3. Do you think you have overcome the challenges (or part of them) that you had in your part-time jobs? If yes, what have you done to overcome them?
4. What is the biggest challenge in your part-time jobs?
5. How do you rate your Japanese proficiency: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Which part are you best at?
 - a. Do you think the weakest part brings you more challenges in your part-time jobs?
 - b. Has the weakest part improved from your part-time job experiences? If yes, how? If not, why ?
6. Survey results suggest that 38.2% respondents quit their part-time jobs because they “can not get along with colleagues” and “strongly feel excluded”. What do you think? Did you have the same experience? Could you give some examples.
7. Have you ever quit a part-time job for some difficulties you experienced? Why?
8. How is your relationship with Japanese co-workers in part-time jobs? Please give some examples.
9. Do you think fluent Japanese can basically overcome all challenges you have in part-time jobs?
10. Do you think Japanese language and culture overlap?