

Japanese 302, What To Do?

AN EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM CHANGES IN JAPANESE 302 AT UWEC

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ABSTRACT

This student-faculty collaborative research project involves the examination of existing literature about various topics in foreign language acquisition including extensive and intensive reading, goal-setting, student performances and presentations, teaching methods, assessments, and effective strategies for creating an inclusive classroom. The literature was used to evaluate the curriculum of Japanese 302 at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Results of the evaluation show that many aspects of the curriculum are already effective at accommodating various needs, but other aspects need to change or be replaced. To accommodate for future students' diversity in their needs, interests, learning styles, and proficiency levels, potential changes to the curriculum were proposed based upon the literature, evaluation results, and previous student surveys. Research was also done regarding effective Japanese language books for the class, in terms of learning, acquisition, and assessment. These books and the changes in the curriculum will be implemented for Japanese 302 when it is next offered in the Spring 2022 semester.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the available studies on the issue of teaching to students with a variety of proficiency levels and needs, which activities, assignments, and instruction methods are appropriate/desirable for a Japanese foreign language class?



JAPANESE 302 CURRICULUM

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- One-on-One Instruction
- Extensive Reading
- Intensive Reading
- Vocabulary and Kanji Lists
- Mini Performances
- Story Writing
- Video Making
- Free Topic Presentation
- Learning Portfolio
- Self-Reflection Paper



CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Multiple authors from the literature review of existing pedagogical research found that students are likely to be successful when the following strategies are incorporated into a curriculum:

- Presentation of Content and Exercises Utilize a Multisensory Approach
- Highly Structured
- Accessible Material to All
- Creating a Context for Learning *and* Acquisition
- Using Goal Oriented Learning

We created a checklist to evaluate if these strategies were reflected in each course requirement of the current Japanese 302 curriculum. For example, we asked the question "are the students' mini performances multisensory, structured, accessible, goal-oriented, and optimized for learning *and* acquisition?" The other course requirements were assessed in a similar manner.

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DISCUSSION

Results of the evaluation found that many course requirements of the current curriculum do meet the standards of the checklist, and are appropriate for meeting the needs of diverse students. However, a few aspects can be changed to meet even more of the standards for successful learning. Mini performances can be more accessible by allowing students to perform in person or create a video instead. Goal setting can be more beneficial to students by having them select attainable goals significant to their personal interests. The vocabulary and kanji lists the students create can be more goal oriented by making sure students pick words they think will be important in their future as a Japanese speaker.

TEXTBOOKS

To facilitate students' individual learning goals, various textbooks suitable for future Japanese 302 classes were explored. The textbooks should be around the same proficiency level as the students, and encourage effective self-study. The books that were evaluated include different aspects to Japanese language learning such as grammar, reading, listening, vocabulary, assessment, and kanji:

- Nihongo So-Matome N5
- Nihongo So-Matome N4
- Marugoto A2/B1
- Marugoto B1
- Nihongo 500 Questions



FUTURE PLANS

The next step in this research project is implementing the suggested changes to the curriculum by updating the syllabus. The new textbooks should also be available to the students participating in Japanese 302 when it is next offered in the spring of 2022.