

Profile of Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Japanese at SMAN 1 Sawan

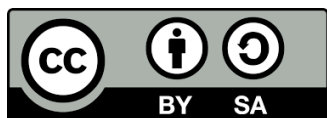
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Keywords:

Learning Strategy, Project Based Learning, Drill, Direct Method, Q&A, Assignment, Discussion, Lecture.



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Abstract

This study aimed to describe the learning strategies and methods used in teaching Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, which were analyzed and presented descriptively. The results indicated that teachers implemented several learning strategies, including (1) Student-Centered Learning (SCL), which emphasizes students' active participation in constructing knowledge, developing independence, and collaborating during the learning process; (2) Project-Based Learning, which engages students in meaningful projects through active and contextual learning experiences; and (3) contextual learning strategies, in which teachers connect learning materials with students' real-life situations. In addition, the learning methods applied included (1) drill practice to strengthen vocabulary (kotoba) retention and grammatical mastery (bunpou) through intensive and repetitive exercises; (2) the direct method, which emphasizes the use of Japanese as the target language without translation to improve communication skills; (3) question-and-answer activities to encourage interaction between teachers and students; (4) assignments to reinforce students' understanding through independent practice; (5) discussion activities that facilitate collaborative vocabulary learning; and (6) lectures used to introduce vocabulary, sentence patterns, and explain learning materials. These findings demonstrated that various student-centered strategies and interactive methods were applied to support effective Japanese language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning has become an important component of modern education systems because cross-linguistic communication skills are increasingly required to address globalization, international mobility, and the development of international relations (Guo et al., 2024; Sakamoto & Roger, 2023). Language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for understanding cultures, expanding access to knowledge, and enhancing individual competitiveness (Eide et al., 2023). In the context of secondary education, foreign language proficiency has become part of efforts to develop 21st-century competencies, including communication, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Shadiev & Wang, 2022; Zhou et al., 2025). Therefore, the success of foreign language learning is strongly influenced by the instructional strategies implemented by teachers to create effective and meaningful learning processes (Huang, 2023).

The development of foreign language learning has demonstrated a paradigm shift from teacher-centered learning toward approaches that position students as active participants in the learning process (student-centered learning). Modern language teaching approaches emphasize active student involvement through communication practice, social interaction, and contextual

learning experiences. Richards and Rodgers (2014) explained that Communicative Language Teaching positions language use as a means of authentic communication rather than merely focusing on grammatical mastery. This indicates that foreign language teachers need to be able to select appropriate strategies and methods so that students can actively use the language in various contexts (Achieng, 2023; Biletska et al., 2021; Horwitz, 2020; Tanjung, 2018).

Japanese is one of the foreign languages widely taught at various educational levels in Indonesia, particularly in senior high schools (Haristiani et al., 2022). Japanese language learning has unique characteristics because it involves not only speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills but also an understanding of Japanese writing systems (hiragana, katakana, and kanji) and Japanese culture (Masitoh et al., 2023). However, Japanese language learning often faces various challenges, including complex language structures, limited vocabulary among students, insufficient opportunities for communication practice, and the need for learning strategies that can enhance learning motivation (Haristiani & Christinawati, 2024; Yamashita, 2023). Therefore, teachers' competence in selecting appropriate learning strategies is an important factor in achieving Japanese language learning objectives (Haththotuwa Gamage, 2026).

In the Indonesian context, several previous studies have examined Japanese language learning strategies at various educational levels. Research by Antara, Hermawan, and Suartini (2020) on Japanese language learning strategies at SMA Negeri 1 Busungbiu showed that teachers employed various strategies to support students' understanding of Japanese. Furthermore, studies by Armini, Mardani, and Hermawan (2018) and Aryadi, Mardani, and Adnyani (2019) also examined Japanese language learning strategies at elementary and secondary school levels by highlighting the use of specific instructional methods. These studies demonstrate that variations in learning strategies play an important role in improving the effectiveness of Japanese language learning processes.

Previous research has also shown that strategies such as the direct method, drill practice, discussions, assignments, and communicative approaches can help students develop foreign language skills. Ellis (2003) explained that interaction in second-language learning plays an important role in developing communication skills because students have opportunities to use language in meaningful contexts. Meanwhile, Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theory emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through experience and social interaction. These findings reinforce the importance of implementing learning strategies that actively engage students in the language learning process.

Although various studies have discussed Japanese language learning strategies, most previous research has focused on identifying specific methods or strategies without providing an in-depth description of how these strategies are implemented throughout the entire learning process. In addition, each school has different learning environments, student characteristics, and educational needs; therefore, strategies that are effective in one school may not necessarily be effective in another. Consequently, research that specifically examines teachers' strategy profiles in teaching Japanese within a particular school context is needed to understand how teachers adapt strategies to meet learning needs.

SMA Negeri 1 Sawan is one of the schools that provides Japanese language learning at the senior high school level. Based on preliminary observations and interviews, the Japanese

language teacher at the school applied various learning strategies for different learning materials, including the preparation of teaching modules and the selection of methods based on learning outcomes. The strategies used included lectures, small-group discussions, cooperative learning methods, the direct method, games, songs, and the use of learning media such as PowerPoint, Japanese language learning videos, and songs. These practices indicate diverse learning approaches that are valuable for further investigation.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand how Japanese language teachers implement learning strategies that can improve student engagement and support the achievement of language competencies. Research on teacher strategies can provide an overview of effective instructional practices that may serve as references for other Japanese language teachers. Furthermore, this study is relevant to educational curriculum changes that encourage active, contextual, and competency-oriented learning. By understanding strategies implemented in authentic learning environments, the quality of Japanese language learning can be improved according to students' needs.

The novelty of this research lies in presenting a comprehensive profile of the combination of learning strategies, teaching methods, and their implementation within the context of Japanese language learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan. Unlike previous studies that tend to identify specific methods, this research describes the integration of Student-Centered Learning, Project-Based Learning, contextual learning strategies, and supporting methods such as drill practice, the direct method, discussions, question-and-answer activities, assignments, and lectures. The findings demonstrate that Japanese language learning at the school applies various strategies oriented toward student engagement, authentic experiences, and meaningful communication.

Based on this background, this study aimed to describe the learning strategies and methods used by teachers in teaching Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Japanese language education research, particularly regarding foreign language learning strategies at the secondary school level. Practically, this research may serve as a reference for Japanese language teachers in selecting and developing appropriate learning strategies, provide considerations for schools in improving the quality of foreign language learning, and serve as a foundation for future research on the development of Japanese language learning strategies with broader scopes.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore teachers' strategies and methods in teaching Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan. A qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of teaching practices, instructional strategies, and classroom activities implemented by the Japanese language teacher. The research participant was selected purposively, focusing on one Japanese language teacher who taught Grade XI. The participant was considered relevant because of direct involvement in the Japanese language learning process and the ability to provide information related to the implementation of teaching strategies.

The research instruments consisted of observation guidelines, interview protocols, and documentation sheets. Non-participant observations were conducted to identify teaching strategies, learning methods, classroom interactions, and instructional activities during

Japanese language lessons. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Japanese language teacher to obtain information regarding lesson planning, strategy selection, teaching methods, learning media, and challenges encountered during the teaching process. Documentation was collected to complement observation and interview data, including teaching modules, learning materials, and supporting documents. Data validity was ensured through triangulation by comparing observation results, interview responses, and documentation data.

Data collection was conducted through preliminary observation, classroom observations, interviews with the Japanese language teacher, and documentation collection. The observation process was conducted five times during Japanese language learning activities to obtain comprehensive data regarding the implementation of teaching strategies. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques involving data reduction, categorization, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of teaching strategies, classifying learning methods, and interpreting their implementation in Japanese language learning. The findings were presented descriptively to explain the strategies, methods, and practices applied by teachers in Japanese language instruction at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Research Results Data

Japanese language learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan uses the Merdeka curriculum. Non-participant observations of the learning process were carried out five times, namely on February 18, 2025, February 20, 2025, March 6, 2025, March 18, 2025, and March 20, 2025. Observation of the learning process includes three stages, namely the opening of learning, the core learning activities, and the closing activities of the learning. The results of the observation of the learning process are presented in a summary of the observation results as follows.

Table 1. Summary of Learning Observations

Stages	Observations				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Opening Activities	1. Saying greetings and prayers, checking attendance, and asking questions related to objects in class. 2. Material: Objects in the Class 3. Learning Objectives: Students can express objects in class	1. Saying greetings and prayers, checking attendance, conveying sparker questions related to the location of objects. 2. Material: Placing Objects in the Class 3. Learning Objectives: Students can borrow and lend class objects	1. Saying greetings and prayers, checking attendance, submitting sparking questions related to school uniforms. 2. Material: School Uniform 3. Learning Objectives: Students can state the school	1. Saying greetings and prayers, checking attendance, and asking questions related to school uniforms in ASEAN countries. 2. Material: School Uniforms of ASEAN Countries 3. Learning Objectives:	1. Saying greetings and prayers, checking attendance, conveying spark questions related to the number of people in a group. 2. Material: Number of People in a Group 3. Learning Objectives: Students are able to

	Stages				
	I	II	III	IV	V
		and mention the location of objects.	uniform used on the day Certain	Students can declare the color of a country's school uniform	understand and use vocabulary about the number of people in simple sentences
Activities Core	Activities carried out: (1) Vocabulary Exploration and Concept Reinforcement, (2) Comprehension and Pronunciation Exercises, (3) Fun and musical activities, (4) Simple Vocabulary and Sentence Games, (5) Speaking and Collaboration Exercises, (6) Formative Evaluation Strategy focus: <i>Direct method</i> and drill method in learning	Activities carried out: (1) Exploration of Vocabulary and Initial Comprehension, (2) Reinforcement Through Songs and Games, (3) Sentence Making and Speaking Exercises, (4) Conversation Exercises and Group Work, (5) Evaluation and Assessment Strategy focus: <i>Direct method</i> and drill method in learning	Activities carried out: (1) Material and Vocabulary Exploration, (2) "My Uniform in a Week" Project Activity, (3) Project Results Presentation, (4) Digital Reinforcement and Evaluation. Strategy focus: Drill methods in learning	Activities carried out: (1) Repetition and Advanced Presentation, (2) ASEAN Country Color and Uniform Materials, (3) Project Activities "School Uniform Survey in ASEAN", (4) Training and Reinforcement Strategy focus: <i>Grammar Translation Method</i> (GTM) and drill method in learning	Activities carried out: (1) Knowledge <i>Sharing</i> , (2) Elaboration (<i>Practice & Creation</i>), (3) Confirmation (<i>Feedback & Reflection</i>). Strategy focus: <i>Direct method</i> , drill method, SLC in learning
Closing Activities	The teacher gives feedback, and closes the lesson with a fun atmosphere through the songs that have been learned together.	The teacher invites students to reflect on the activities that have been carried out, and conclude the learning material.	The teacher guides students to reflect by reviewing what has been learned. Teachers provide positive feedback on students' work.	The teacher guides students to reflect on learning by reviewing what they have learned, and discussing the difficulties they are experiencing.	The teacher and students together concluded the learning results of the day, namely how to call the number of people and their use in simple sentences.

Source: Primary research data based on observations of Japanese language learning activities at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan (2025).

The data from the interview results are summarized as follows: (1) the characteristic of learning Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan is to produce each product at the end of each topic and practice talking to native speakers; (2) The objectives of learning Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan are: (a) dramatizing the expressions of greeting, saying goodbye, saying thank you,

apologizing, asking for permission, giving instructions (aisatsu), (b) expressing expressions related to self-introduction (jiko shoukai) and self-identity, (c) expressing information regarding giving and requesting information about dates, months, and years (jikan), (d) making short and simple discourses about exposure to family (kazoku), characters, and things they like, (e) use expressions that express abilities (dekiro koto), and (f) produce short and simple discourses about school life (gakkou no seikatsu); (3) the textbooks used as a guide in learning Japanese are the Nihongo Kira-Kira book in accordance with the independent curriculum, and the Minna no Nihongo-1 book to understand Japanese more deeply and can be used after graduating from high school; (4) the media used when teaching Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan are gamabar, posters, PPT, mind maps, songs; (5) the preparation carried out before teaching Japanese is that the teacher carries out a diagnostic test, then prepares a teaching module; (6) Strategies that are usually used in teaching Japanese are drill strategies, lectures, assignments, discussions, direct methods, student center learning.

The dominant learning strategy used at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan is student center learning (SCL), which is learning that places students at the center of the learning process, where they actively build knowledge, be independent, and collaborate. The use of student-centered learning strategies shows a shift from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. Students are given space to interact, ask questions, and express ideas using Japanese according to their abilities.

Methodologically, this strategy reflects the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which emphasizes the use of language as a means of communication, not just the mastery of grammatical structures (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT requires learners to actively use the target language in a real context. This can be seen from the practice of talking to native speakers and the assignment of producing a product at the end of each topic. According to Littlewood (2007), communicative activities like this are effective in improving communicative competence because students are directly involved in the meaningful use of language. The implementation of the student-centered learning strategy shows a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to active learning. Methodologically, this approach is based on the theory of constructivism, which states that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through social interaction and learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of learning Japanese, discussion and speaking practice allow students to build the meaning of the language through collaboration and negotiation of meaning. Research by Ellis (2003) shows that this kind of interaction is very effective in second language acquisition because it helps learners recognize mistakes and improve language use naturally.

In addition to the SCL strategy, the characteristic of learning Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan is characterized by the practice of talking with native speakers. This approach reflects the application of project-based learning and experiential learning, where learners not only passively receive material, but also actively construct knowledge through real practice. Talking to native speakers is an authentic strategy to increase confidence, pronunciation, and understanding of the Japanese cultural context. The objectives of learning Japanese which include aisatsu, jiko shoukai, jikan, kazoku, dekiro koto, and gakkou no seikatsu show that learning is directed at mastering functional language in daily life. This demands the use of strategies that emphasize communication and direct use of language. Thus, the selection of

learning strategies is not only oriented to the cognitive aspect, but also the affective and psychomotor aspects of students.

The contextual strategy can be seen during the observation, namely the teacher emphasizes examples related to daily life in Bali. The teacher always suggested sentences from students that had to do with life in Bali. Teachers do not accept sentences from students that are not related to life in Bali, for example the sentence I went to school on an electric train, *densha de gakko he ikimasu*. The teacher did not accept the sentence not because it was wrong, but because in Bali no one used an electric train. In Sawan District, students only use motorcycles or walk to school, so students are asked to make an example sentence that is in accordance with the actual life in Bali.

The contextual learning strategy used by teachers at the time of learning is to relate the material taught to the student's real-world situation and encourage students to make connections between the knowledge they have and its application in their lives as members of society. This is in line with what was expressed by Umbara (2006), namely teachers are seen trying to connect the content of teaching materials with real-world situations and their application in daily lives carried out by students at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan. Based on the results of observation, the implementation of contextual strategies in the Japanese language learning process in grade XI of SMA Negeri 1 Sawan, it can be seen that before the teacher tells students to make an example of a sentence pattern that is in accordance with daily life in Bali, the teacher first gives an example of the sentence pattern and practices it. The teacher also directly asks the students and if there are students who answer with sentences that have nothing to do with life in Bali, the teacher cannot accept the sentence and tells the students to repeat the answer until the sentence made by the student is in accordance with daily life in Bali.

Japanese Language Learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan applies a combination of drill, direct method, discussion, assignment, lecture, and question and answer methods. The drill method is used to strengthen the mastery of vocabulary, sentence patterns, and pronunciation, which is very important in learning a foreign language. The lecture method serves as an introduction to a new language concept or structure, while assignments encourage students to practice independently and be responsible for their learning process. Teachers teach using basic Japanese learning stages. The first stage is *Dounyuu* using Indonesian. The steps taken by the teacher are to repeat the previous lesson material to find out the students' memory of the material. Then, after all the students remember and understand, the teacher continues to the new subject matter.

The second stage is *Kihon renshuu*. At this stage, the teacher trains the new vocabulary and sentence patterns to the students. In providing vocabulary exercises, the teacher applies the drill method to all students, a group of students, and one of the students. In its implementation, the teacher first introduces the vocabulary contained in the textbook to the students, then students are given pronunciation exercises with the correct pronunciation of each vocabulary.

The use of the drill method in the learning process can be seen in the first to fifth observations, where the application is in accordance with the stages of basic Japanese language learning, namely in the stage of *Kihon renshuu* (basic training). In the use of drill strategies, teachers carry out *Hanpuku renshuu* activities by providing repeated exercises for repeating vocabulary and new sentence patterns so that students can pronounce vocabulary and sentences correctly and can remember them. This is called the *Mim-Mem Method*, which is a learning

method that emphasizes imitation and then remembered and memorized by students. This is in line with what was expressed by Nuha (2012). The drill method is more often used by teachers when conducting exercises on vocabulary and new sentence patterns, so it is suitable to be applied in the Japanese language learning process in grade XI because it can develop students' speaking skills and make students more active. The drills carried out by teachers are vocabulary drills and sentence-based drills.

By using drills, students are given an understanding gradually, so that the material provided can be attached to students' minds. The drill method is more often used by teachers when conducting exercises on vocabulary and new sentence patterns, so it is suitable to be applied in the Japanese language learning process because it can develop students' speaking skills and make students more active. The type of drill that is often used is repetition drill which is an exercise to repeat what the teacher says accurately and quickly (Asih, 2007).

In addition to the drill method, the application of the direct method is also seen in Japanese language learning at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan. This method allows the Japanese language to be used directly in the learning process, so that learners get used to understanding the meaning without always relying on translation. With this method, learning Japanese emphasizes the full use of the target language (without translation) to establish active communication.

Through this direct method, the vocabulary and sentences taught are those that are often used in daily life, focusing on terms and phrases that are relevant to the daily activities around the students. This helps students build a strong understanding of the concepts being discussed. In addition, by using words and language structures related to everyday life, students can immediately apply what they have learned in the context of their daily lives. In this case, the teacher does not use the mother tongue or translation to explain the material. Instead, understanding meaning is taught through concrete examples, illustrations, or real-life situations. This approach aims to make it easier and faster for students to understand the meaning of the target language being taught. Context-related vocabulary is taught through demonstrations using objects and images, while abstract concepts are introduced by associating ideas. This method is implemented to ensure that the target language usage remains consistent in the classroom. This approach also speeds up the process of thinking in the target language and accelerates the understanding of the language itself.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher uses the assignment method. The use of the assignment method can be seen in all the observations made. Assignments are given when the learning activities have been completed and the teacher always corrects the assignments that have been given. The assignments or homework given are in the form of vocabulary and sentence patterns that have been taught before. This aims to improve students' ability to understand the material that has been studied as a whole. This finding is in line with the opinion of Roestiyah (2008) who stated that assignments are given to determine student learning outcomes and in assigning assignments it is necessary to carry out evaluations. The task is done by students individually. Assignments can stimulate students to actively learn either individually or in groups (Dharma, 2008).

The process of learning Japanese at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan also uses the discussion method. The discussion method observed during observation, the teacher tells students to create

small groups to discuss the new vocabulary to be learned. The teacher gives a picture of the vocabulary that already has the meaning of Indonesian and the teacher tells the student to listen to the audio that is played to complete the meaning of the vocabulary into Japanese that is played through audio. After that, from the material listened to by students through the played audio, students wrote the vocabulary they listened to. Then students immediately look for the meaning of the Japanese vocabulary they listen to and adjust it to the pictures in the book. It is an interaction between students and students or students with their teachers to solve problems, analyze, and debate certain topics. This is in line with what was expressed by Aqib (2014). Based on this explanation, discussion is a learning activity where the process of interaction between two or more individuals occurs to solve problems or debate certain topics. This can be seen during observation, where students are told to discuss with friends to understand a material that is quite difficult if studied on their own, then the teacher tries to tell the students to discuss with their classmates so that they can interpret a material given by the teacher.

In addition to the drill and direct method, teachers also use the question and answer method to find out students' understanding of the material being taught. The question and answer method used by teachers in learning Japanese can be seen during the first observation to the fifth observation, and its application is in accordance with the stages of basic Japanese language learning, namely the stage of Kihon renshuu (basic practice). Teachers carry out Outou renshuu (question and answer) activities by conducting questions and answers between teachers and students so that the interaction that occurs between teachers and students to teachers is equally active.

The question and answer method is a learning method in the form of questions that must be answered, mainly by the teacher to the student, and can also be answered from the student to the teacher. This is in line with what was expressed by Djamarah (2013). The question and answer method can make students more active, can control the state of the class, and train students' speaking skills. In addition, teachers also provide opportunities for students who want to ask questions related to things that are not clear or understood. This question and answer activity was carried out to all students using Indonesian and Japanese about vocabulary and sentences that are still relatively simple that have been learned. This question and answer strategy aims to measure students' understanding of mastery of the subject matter and encourage students to ask questions to the teacher if there are things that are not clear or understood.

Based on the results of observations, the implementation of the question and answer method in the Japanese language learning process in grade XI of SMA Negeri 1 Sawan can be seen that the questions and answers that are carried out are no longer in the form of "yes no questions", so that students are able to respond to questions from teachers based on the material that has been taught previously. The use of this question and answer method has not reached the stage of "information gap", which is a learning strategy that forms differences or gaps in information owned by each student and these gaps can be eliminated by exchanging information in accordance with the cognitive realm of high school students, namely in the realm of knowledge.

In the Japanese language learning process, the lecture method is also used, this method can be seen during the first observation to the fifth observation, which is from the time the teacher opens the lesson until the activity closes the lesson. The teacher is seen using the lecture

method, namely when the teacher starts learning and when the teacher introduces vocabulary, sentence patterns, and when the teacher asks questions to students. Here it will be seen, if there are students who do not listen or have a busy schedule, it will be immediately known by the teacher and the teacher gives a reprimand.

Lectures are the most traditional way of teaching. The way of teaching with lectures is often referred to as a lecture technique because this strategy is used to convey information, information or descriptions about a subject matter, as well as problems orally (Roestiyah, 2008). This strategy is used to make it easier for teachers to supervise the order of students in listening to lessons. To use the lecture strategy purely is not easy, so in its implementation it needs to be combined with other learning strategies so that the teaching and learning process can take place intensively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, Japanese language learning in Grade XI at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan implemented Student-Centered Learning (SCL), Project-Based Learning (PjBL), and contextual learning strategies that emphasized student engagement in the learning process. Teachers acted as facilitators who encouraged students to ask questions, discuss, collaborate, and use Japanese in authentic communication contexts. In addition, Project-Based Learning provided students with opportunities to gain meaningful learning experiences through activities related to daily life, including speaking practice with native speakers to improve confidence, pronunciation, and understanding of Japanese culture. Contextual learning strategies were also implemented by connecting learning materials with students' real-life experiences, enabling them to understand and apply Japanese more effectively in daily situations. The learning methods used included drill practice, the direct method, question-and-answer activities, assignments, discussions, and lectures. These methods complemented one another in improving students' vocabulary, grammar, speaking skills, and comprehension through repeated practice, direct use of Japanese, interactive activities, collaborative work, and assignments aligned with learning materials.

Based on the research findings, Japanese language teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Sawan are encouraged to continue developing more varied learning strategies to increase students' motivation and engagement in learning Japanese. Teachers should also utilize more diverse learning media, such as picture cards, educational games, and digital resources, to make the learning process more engaging and support the achievement of learning objectives. Furthermore, future research is expected to examine Japanese language learning strategies at the senior high school level with broader research scopes so that the findings can serve as references for developing more effective Japanese language teaching strategies and methods.

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