

Direct and Indirect Language Learning Strategies in Japanese Language Acquisition

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Abstract

Learning Japanese is a complex and diverse process, encompassing not only characters, vocabulary, and grammar, but also pronunciation and intonation. Proficiency in one of this world's most popular languages demands adept application of various techniques and strategies. As an educator, I am deeply inspired by the strategies my students employ in mastering the Japanese language, and I strive to leverage these insights for optimal teaching and learning outcomes. This study aims to explore undergraduate students' perceptions regarding their use of learning strategies through a quantitative approach. A cohort of 176 respondents from a public university in Malaysia participated in the study. The survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale adapted from Oxford (1990); Wenden and Rubin (1987), organized into three sections: Section A covering demographic trends, Section B comprising 19 items concerning direct strategies, and Section C focusing on 22 items related to indirect strategies. The findings revealed that students extensively employed memorization, organization, elaboration, and critical thinking, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to learning the Japanese language. Moreover, students exhibited proactive behaviour by revisiting confusing material and utilizing self-questioning and goal-setting strategies. The research also unveiled a significant and strong positive correlation ($r=.723^{**}$) between direct and indirect strategies in Japanese language learning, emphasizing their interconnected nature. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies to track the evolution of language learning strategies (LLS), expand cross-cultural investigations, and explore the impact of emerging technologies such as augmented or virtual reality. Furthermore, examining variations in LLS across proficiency levels will inform tailored instructional approaches.

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning, Learning Strategies, Direct Strategies, Indirect Strategies, Japanese Language

Introduction

Background of Study

To acquire new knowledge, it is essential to adopt a suitable and effective strategy, and this principle applies to learning a foreign language as well. Developing a strategy that suits one's comfort is important to help in learning and mastering the language quickly in one's own way. Learning strategies refer to the actions, steps, and methods employed by language learners in the process of language acquisition (Rubin, 1987). According to Oxford (1990), LLS are divided into two approaches: direct and indirect. Direct strategies use mental processes to directly impact the target language, encompass memorization, cognitive, and compensation strategies, while indirect strategies support and manage learning efforts without directly engaging with the target language, and involve metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Oxford (1990) states that students with excellent achievement levels not only use various learning strategies but also employ them more frequently compared to students with moderate or weak proficiency.

As per Gan (2023), Japanese has emerged as the favoured foreign language among Malaysian learners. Gan (2023) contends that this linguistic preference is shaped by the abundance of resources and support offered by educational institutions, fundamentally influencing the dynamics of Japanese language education in Malaysia. The development of Japanese language education in Malaysia has been progressing, with an increasing number of students studying Japanese totaling 39,247 individuals. Additionally, 485 Japanese language teachers have been recorded, as reported by The Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur in 2018 (Rashid et al., 2022).

A total of 3,677 students registered for Japanese language courses for the October 2023-February 2024 Semester (UiTM, n.d.). This represents approximately 9% of the total number of individuals learning Japanese in Malaysia. The significant enrolment underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of Japanese language education, particularly in relation to both direct and indirect learning strategies. Consequently, it is intriguing to explore how students in this institution employ effective learning methods and strategies. This exploration prompts instructors to adjust their teaching approaches to accommodate diverse individual learning styles, as learners may prefer guidance from instructors when learning a language (Matsumoto, 2011). This underscores the dynamic relationship between learner practices and instructor responsiveness in optimizing language learning experiences.

Statement of Problem

Learning strategies differ among individuals and are shaped by various factors, including the education system, accessible resources, teaching methodologies, and individual preferences. LLS, as described by Sukying (2021), encompass purposeful and conscious behaviours chosen to accomplish specific language-related tasks, with their utilization being task-dependent and commonly applied to activities like memorizing, processing, storing, retrieving, and applying new information in real-life situations. It's crucial to recognize that the effectiveness of these strategies can be significantly influenced by personal preferences and learning styles. Direct and indirect learning strategies, though distinct, complement each other. Therefore, to identify learners' learning strategies in the Japanese language, it is essential to study their utilization of both direct and indirect methods.

Research findings on the use of LLS through reciprocal determinism by Zubbir et al. (2023) revealed that students utilized both direct and indirect strategies. In a separate study that found students using direct learning strategies, Zakaria et al. (2017) observed that students generally employ LLS at a moderate frequency. Conversely, in a study by Yunus et al. (2022), students exhibited moderate adaptation to metacognitive categories, with lower utilization of strategies in the affective categories, both of which are labelled under indirect learning strategies.

In recent research, Zubbir et al (2023) underscored the need for developing a teaching model based on identified LLS, particularly in the context of Japanese language acquisition. They recommended further exploration to understand the dynamics between face-to-face and online language learning. Grainger's (2012) findings then highlighted the significant influence of cultural background on the strategy choices of Japanese language learners in Australia. The findings of this research indicate that Asian learners employ a greater variety of strategies, utilizing different approaches compared to their Australian counterparts. Additionally, Gan (2023) emphasized the effectiveness of digital learning strategies over traditional approaches and proposed further investigation into contemporary strategies for learning foreign languages, specifically advocating for the integration of digital tools in Japanese language learning.

Japanese LLS among higher education students in Malaysia remain underexplored. Given the limited available information, there is an urgent need to investigate these strategies to offer valuable insights to both students and instructors. Understanding these strategies not only facilitates the development of effective teaching methods but also empowers students to excel in Japanese. Therefore, this study aims to fill the existing knowledge gap and provide significant insights into Japanese language education in Malaysian higher education.

Objective and Research Questions

This study is conducted to investigate how students use different learning strategies to learn Japanese. The research aims to address the following research questions:

- How do direct strategies influence the Japanese language learning?
- How do indirect strategies influence the Japanese language learning?
- Is there a relationship between direct and indirect strategies in Japanese language learning?

Literature Review

Direct and Indirect Learning Strategies in Language Learning

Oxford (1990) defines learning strategies as behaviours or actions employed by students to attain success, maintain focus, and enhance the enjoyment of learning. This definition includes observable behavioural outcomes but may also include unobservable cognitive behaviours. According to Oxford (1990), learning strategies are divided into two categories (direct and indirect), as shown in Table 1. Direct learning strategies involve mentally processing language and adopting a straightforward approach to learning, consisting of memory strategy, cognitive strategy, and compensation strategy. On the other hand, indirect learning strategies include metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, and social strategy.

Table 1

Classification of Learning Strategies (Oxford, 1990)

DIRECT STRATEGIES		INDIRECT STRATEGIES	
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Forming mental connections · Using images and sound · Reevaluating well 	Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Focusing · Arranging and planning learning · Assessing learning
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Practicing · Getting and sending messages · Examining and reasoning · Forming structure for input and output 	Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reducing anxiety · Encouraging oneself · Taking emotion temperature
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Predicting intelligently · Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing 	Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Asking questions · Cooperating with others · Empathizing with others

Recent research in LLS has consistently examined both direct and indirect approaches in foreign language acquisition. For instance, Naeimi and Chow (2015) investigated the efficacy of direct and indirect strategies in vocabulary acquisition. Their study involved teaching one group using direct strategies and another using indirect methods. Through pre- and post-vocabulary tests, they found that the group employing direct strategies demonstrated superior performance. Naeimi and Chow (2015) argued that learning materials should be tailored to suit students' preferred learning strategies. Similarly, Subrayan et al (2020) explored the utilization of direct and indirect strategies by English language students during group discussions. Analysing survey data collected from students enrolled in English language courses using SPSS, they observed that social interaction primarily involved indirect strategies such as metacognitive and affective approaches. Subrayan et al (2020) emphasized the crucial roles of instructors and curriculum developers in providing learning materials aligned with students' learning styles. These findings underscore the importance of adapting instructional approaches to accommodate diverse learning strategies and preferences.

Past Studies on LLS

Numerous studies have investigated LLS in foreign language studies, indicating their extensive use over time. Lensun et al (2019) conducted a study on the implementation of direct strategies in learning Japanese through songs, specifically among respondents who experienced Japan's occupation in Minahasa from 1942 to 1945. Their research utilized a qualitative descriptive method with a historical approach, employing content analysis. They collected 31 songs from 1942-1945, including three with Japanese lyrics, and utilized methods such as observation, interviews, and introspection to focus on language use. The findings revealed that the predominant learning strategy during the Japanese occupation in Minahasa was a direct approach, comprising three main groups of strategies: memorization, cognition, and compensation.

Chanderan and Hashim (2022) researched to explore the preferred LLS among private university students aiming to enhance their English proficiency. They collected data using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning Questionnaire (SILL), developed by Oxford in 1990. The questionnaire comprises 50 items covering six learning strategies: cognitive, memory, metacognitive, compensation, social, and affective strategies. The study involved 200 freshmen undergraduates from a private university in Selangor, Malaysia. Analysis of the responses revealed that students primarily favoured metacognitive and social strategies, while memory, cognitive, compensation, and affective strategies were utilized to a moderate extent. Chanderan and Hashim (2022) suggested that this preference might be influenced by students' attitudes toward the language they are learning. Additionally, they attributed the level of LLS usage among students to the examination-oriented learning system prevalent in Malaysia.

The study by Nejad et al (2022) delved into LLS, with a focus on their relationship with critical thinking abilities (CTA) among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Unlike Chanderan and Hashim (2022), who examined LLS preferences, Nejad et al (2022) explored how CTA mediated the link between EFL learners' writing performance and their use of LLS. Similar to Chanderan and Hashim (2022); Nejad et al (2022) utilized the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire, supplemented by the Critical Thinking Dispositions Questionnaire developed by Ricketts in 2003. Data were collected from 235 male and female EFL learners in Zanjan, Iran, selected through convenience sampling. The findings revealed that utilizing subsets of cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, social, affective, and compensation strategies correlated with high performance in writing tasks. However, Nejad et al. (2022) noted that while CTA did not directly mediate the relationship between LLS and writing performance among intermediate EFL learners, there existed an interconnectedness between these factors. The studies discussed underscore the significant impact of LLS on the performance of foreign language learners. Moreover, the choice of LLS by learners appears to be strongly influenced by the type of evaluation they face. Both lines of research highlight a notable preference for social strategies among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Conceptual Framework

Learners employ various strategies in their foreign language learning, and as highlighted by Rahmat (2018), the selection of strategies can either facilitate or hinder their learning outcomes. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework, which is grounded in Oxford's (1990) direct and indirect strategies, as well as Wenden and Rubin's (1987) learning strategy model. In this study, the assessment of direct strategies encompasses cognitive components, including sub-components such as (i) rehearsal, (ii) organization, (iii) elaboration, and (iv) critical thinking. On the other hand, indirect strategies are measured through metacognitive self-regulation and resource management. Resource management involves aspects such as (i) environment management, (ii) effort management, and (iii) help-seeking.

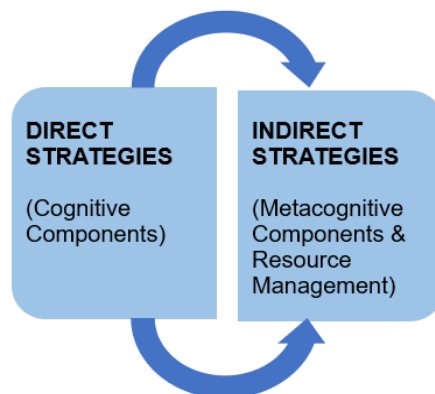


Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework of the Study - Indirect and Direct Learning Strategies

Methodology

This quantitative study aims to investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students regarding the utilization of learning strategies for studying Japanese. A purposive sample of 176 participants responded to a survey employing a 5-point Likert scale. The survey instrument draws upon the frameworks proposed by Oxford (1990); Wenden and Rubin (1987) to identify the variables presented in Table 2 below. The survey comprises four sections: Section A includes items on demographic profiles, Section B contains 19 items focusing on direct strategies, and Section C consists of 22 items addressing indirect strategies.

Table 2
Distribution of Items in the Survey

	TYPE OF STRATEGY (Oxford, 1990)	LEARNING STRATEGY (Wenden and Rubin, 1987)		SUB-STRATEGY		
B	DIRECT STRATEGIES	COGNITIVE	(i)	Rehearsal	4	19
			(ii)	Organization	4	
			(iii)	Elaboration	6	
			(iv)	Critical Thinking	5	
C	INDIRECT STRATEGIES	METACOGNITIVE SELF-REGULATION			11	11
		RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	(i)	Environment Management	5	
			(ii)	Effort Management	4	
			(iii)	Help-Seeking	2	
TOTAL					41	

Table 3
Reliability of Survey

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.941	41

Table 3 displays the reliability analysis results of the survey instrument, indicating a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .941. This high value signifies excellent reliability, validating the effectiveness of the instrument used. Subsequent analysis utilizing SPSS is conducted to present findings addressing the research questions posed in this study.

Findings

Findings for Demographic Profile

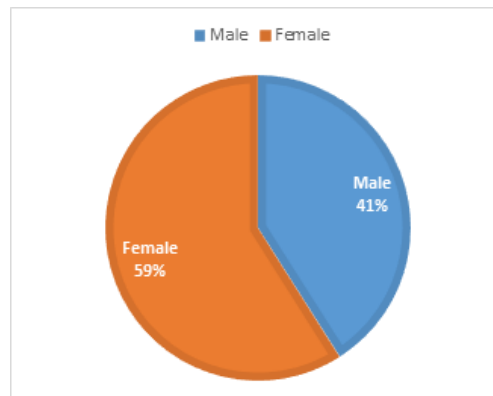


Figure 2 - Percentage for Gender

Figure 2 portrays the gender distribution among participants, with females comprising 59% and males 41% of the total sample. Thus, females constitute the majority of participants in the study.

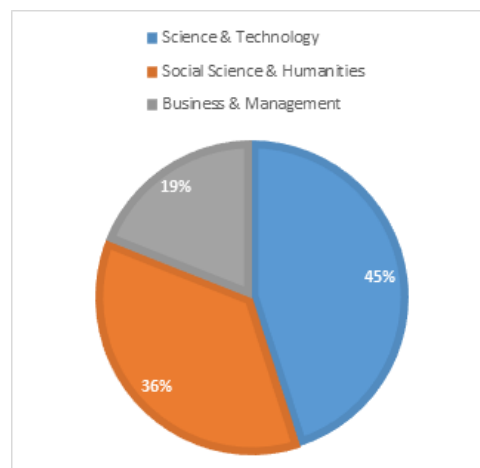


Figure 3 - Percentage for Cluster

Figure 3 indicates the distribution of participants across various clusters. The results reveal that 45% of participants are from the Science & Technology cluster, 36% from Social Science & Humanities, and 19% from Business & Management.

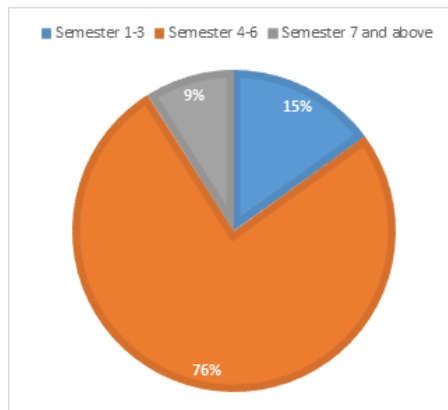


Figure 4 - Percentage for Current Semester

Figure 4 depicts the distribution of participants according to their current semester. The majority (76%) are in Semesters 4-6, followed by 15% in Semesters 1-3, and only 9% in Semesters 7 and above.

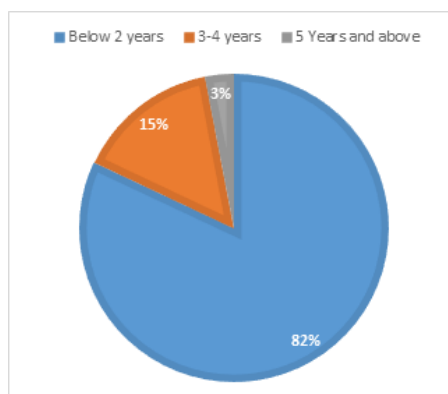


Figure 5 - Percentage for Years of Learning Japanese

Figure 5 provides the distribution of participants based on their years of learning Japanese. The majority (82%) have been learning for less than 2 years, followed by 15% with 3-4 years of learning experience. Only 3% of participants have been learning Japanese for 5 years or more.

1.1 Findings for Direct Strategies

This section presents data aimed at addressing research question 1 (How do direct strategies influence their foreign language learning?). In this study, direct strategies encompass cognitive components, specifically (i) rehearsal, (ii) organization, (iii) elaboration, and critical thinking.

A. COGNITIVE

- (i) Rehearsal (4 items)

Table 4

Mean for Rehearsal

ITEMS		MEAN
LSCCRQ1	When I study for the classes, I practice saying the material to myself over and over.	3.7
LSCCRQ2	When studying for the courses, I read my class notes and the course readings over and over again.	3.7
LSCCRQ3	I memorize keywords to remind me of important concepts in this class.	3.9
LSCCRQ4	I make lists of important items for the courses and memorize the lists.	3.8

Table 4 delineates the mean scores for rehearsal within the cognitive components. The highest mean score of 3.9 (LSCCRQ3) indicates that students predominantly engage in memorizing keywords to recall important concepts discussed in class. Following closely is a mean score of 3.8 (LSCCRQ4), suggesting that students compile lists of essential items from their courses for memorization. Similarly, both LSCCRQ1 and LSCCRQ2 have a mean score of 3.7. LSCCRQ1 reflects students' practice of repeatedly reciting course materials, while LSCCRQ2 indicates their habit of repeatedly reading course notes and readings.

(ii) Organization (4 items)

Table 5

Mean for Organization

ITEMS		MEAN
LSCCOQ1	When I study the readings for the courses in the program, I outline the material to help me organize my thoughts.	3.6
LSCCOQ2	When I study for the courses, I go through the readings and my class notes and try to find the most important ideas.	4
LSCCOQ3	I make simple charts, diagrams, or tables to help me organize course materials in this program.	3
LSCCOQ4	When I study for the courses, I go over my class notes and make an outline of important concepts.	3.7

Table 5 describes the mean scores for organization within the cognitive components. The highest mean score of 4 (LSCCOQ2) suggests that students primarily engage in reviewing notes to identify key ideas while studying for their courses. Following closely is a mean score of 3.7 (LSCCOQ4), indicating that students create outlines of important concepts based on their class notes. Additionally, a mean score of 3.6 (LSCCOQ1) indicates that students organize their course readings by outlining the material to clarify their understanding. The lowest mean score of 3 (LSCCOQ3) suggests that students utilize simple charts, diagrams, or tables to organize course materials.

(iii) Elaboration (6 items)

Table 6

Mean for Elaboration

ITEMS		MEAN
LSCCEQ1	When I study for the courses in this program, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions.	3.7
LSCCEQ2	I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in other courses whenever possible.	3.3
LSCCEQ3	When reading for the courses, I try to relate the material to what I already know.	4
LSCCEQ4	When I study for the courses in this program, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes.	3.4
LSCCEQ5	I try to understand the material in the classes by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures.	3.9
LSCCEQ6	I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lecture and discussion.	3.6

Table 6 presents the mean for elaboration regarding the cognitive components. LSCCEQ3 displays the highest mean of 4, indicating that students attempt to relate the materials to their existing knowledge. LSCCEQ5 has the second-highest mean at 3.9, where students make connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures to understand the class materials better. At 3.7 (LSCCEQ1), students indicate that they pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions, when studying for the course. At 3.6 (LSCCEQ6), students apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lectures and discussions. At 3.4 (LSCCEQ4), students write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and class notes while studying the course program. The lowest mean for elaboration is 3.3 (LSCCEQ2), indicating that students relate ideas in one subject to those in other courses whenever possible.

(iv) Critical Thinking (5 items)

Table 7

Mean for Critical Thinking

ITEMS		MEAN
LSCCCTQ1	I often find myself questioning things I hear or read in the courses to decide if I find them convincing.	3.7
LSCCCTQ2	When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in classes or in the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence.	3.4
LSCCCTQ3	I treat the course materials as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it.	3.6
LSCCCTQ4	I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in the courses.	3.8

LSCCCTQ5	Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion in the classes, I think about possible alternatives.	3.5
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Table 7 unveils the mean scores for critical thinking concerning cognitive components. The highest mean score, 3.8 (LSCCCTQ4), indicates that students actively engage in exploring their own ideas related to course content. Following closely, at 3.7 (LSCCCTQ1), students frequently question the information they encounter in courses to assess its persuasiveness. At 3.6 (LSCCCTQ3), students use course materials as a springboard to develop their own ideas further. Additionally, at 3.5 (LSCCCTQ5), students habitually consider alternative perspectives when presented with assertions or conclusions in class. The lowest mean score for critical thinking is 3.4 (LSCCCTQ2), suggesting that students evaluate the presence of robust supporting evidence when theories, interpretations, or conclusions are introduced in class or readings.

Findings for Indirect Strategies

This section presents data to answer research question 2 (How do indirect strategies influence their foreign language learning?)

A. METACOGNITIVE SELF-REGULATION (11 items)

Table 8

Mean for Metacognitive Self-Regulation

ITEMS		MEAN
MSSRQ1	During class time, I often miss important points because I am thinking of other things.	2.8
MSSRQ2	When reading for the courses, I make up questions to help focus my reading.	3.3
MSSRQ3	When I become confused about something I am reading for the classes, I go back and try to figure it out.	4
MSSRQ4	If course readings are difficult to understand, I change the way I read the material.	3.6
MSSRQ5	Before I study new course material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized.	3.6
MSSRQ6	I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying in this program.	3.7
MSSRQ7	I try to change the way I study in order to fit any course requirements and the instructors' teaching style.	3.5
MSSRQ8	I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying for the courses in this program.	3.5
MSSRQ9	When studying for the courses in this program I try to determine which concepts I do not understand well.	3.7
MSSRQ10	When I study for the courses, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study period.	3.6
MSSRQ11	If I get confused taking notes in classes, I make sure I sort it out afterward.	3.5

Table 8 illustrates the mean scores for metacognitive self-regulation (MSSR). The highest mean, 4, is observed for MSSRQ3, indicating that students actively address confusion by revisiting material. At a mean of 3.7, MSSRQ6 and MSSRQ9 signify students' self-questioning to ensure comprehension and identification of unclear concepts. Scoring 3.6, MSSRQ4, MSSRQ5, and MSSRQ10 demonstrate adaptive reading strategies, including modifying reading approaches for difficult material and setting study goals. At 3.5, MSSRQ7, MSSRQ8, and MSSRQ11 reflect students' efforts to adjust study methods, engage in critical thinking, and organize class notes effectively. The lowest mean, 2.8, is observed for MSSRQ1, indicating occasional distraction during class leading to missed key points.

B. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (11 items)

(i) Environment Management (5 items)

Table 9

Mean for Environment Management

ITEMS		MEAN
RMCEMQ1	I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my coursework.	4.1
RMCEMQ2	I make good use of my study time for the courses in this program.	3.8
RMCEMQ3	I have a regular place set aside for studying.	3.7
RMCEMQ4	I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for the courses.	3.7
RMCEMQ5	I attend classes regularly in this program.	4.4

Table 9 reveals mean scores for environment management within the resource management component. The highest mean, 4.4 (RMCEMQ5), indicates students' consistent attendance in program classes. At 4.1 (RMCEMQ1), students typically choose study environments conducive to concentration. Scoring 3.8 (RMCEMQ2), students efficiently utilize their study time for program coursework. The lowest mean, 3.7, is shared by RMCEMQ3 and RMCEMQ4, reflecting students' tendencies to maintain regular study locations and keep up with weekly readings and assignments.

(ii) Effort Management (4 items)

Table 10

Mean for Effort Management

ITEMS		MEAN
RMCEMQ1	I have a regular place set aside for studying.	3.7
RMCEMQ2	I work hard to do well in the classes in this program even if I do not like what we are doing.	3.8
RMCEMQ3	When coursework is difficult, I either give up or only study the easy parts.	2.6
RMCEMQ4	Even when course materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish.	3.8

Table 10 demonstrates mean scores for effort management within resource management components. The highest means, both at 3.8 (RMCEMQ2 and RMCEMQ4), indicate students' perseverance in striving for success, even in challenging or uninteresting coursework. At a mean of 3.7 (RMCEMQ1), students maintain consistent study locations. The lowest mean, 2.6 (RMCEMQ3), reflects instances where students may struggle with difficult coursework, leading to a tendency to either give up or focus solely on easier aspects.

(iii) Help-Seeking (2 items)

Table 11

Mean for Help-Seeking

ITEMS		MEAN
RMCHSQ1	When I cannot understand the material in a course, I ask another student in the class for help.	4.1
RMCHSQ2	I try to identify students in the classes whom I can ask for help if necessary.	4.1

Table 11 signifies the mean scores for help-seeking regarding resource management components. Both RMCHSQ1 and RMCHSQ2 share a high mean of 4.1, indicating that students often seek assistance from fellow classmates when they struggle to understand course material and proactively identify classmates whom they can ask for help if needed.

Findings for Relationship between direct and indirect strategies in foreign language learning
 This section provides data to address research question 3 (Is there a relationship between direct and indirect strategies in foreign language learning?). Correlations between direct and indirect strategies' mean scores are analysed using SPSS, with results presented in Table 11 below.

Table 12

*Correlation between Direct and Indirect Strategies***Correlations**

		DIRECT	INDIRECT
DIRECT	Pearson Correlation	1	.723**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	176	176
INDIRECT	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	176	176

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 12 manifests a significant association between direct and indirect strategies. Correlation analysis reveals a strong positive correlation between direct and indirect strategies ($r = .723^{**}$, $p = .000$). According to Jackson (2015), a correlation coefficient significant at the .05 level indicates a strong positive relationship, falling within the range of 0.5 to 1.0 on a scale of 0.1 to 1.0. Therefore, there is a strong positive relationship between direct and indirect strategies.

Conclusion**Discussion**

In summary, direct LLS were scrutinized across four cognitive components: rehearsal, organization, elaboration, and critical thinking. Students displayed a preference for memorization, outlining materials, connecting readings with existing knowledge, and engaging in critical thinking. Analysis of research question 1, 'How do direct strategies influence Japanese language learning?' revealed extensive use of memorization, organization, elaboration, and critical thinking, consistent with the findings of Chilkievicz (2015), which support the effectiveness of direct strategies in language acquisition. Similar conclusions were drawn by Seng et al (2023), highlighting the diverse nature of direct strategies. Additionally, Naeimi and Chow (2015) found that the group employing direct strategies demonstrated superior performance, further corroborating their effectiveness. Furthermore, research by Lensun et al (2019) reveals that the predominant learning strategy in their study was a direct approach, involving memorization, cognition, and compensation. Educators can capitalize on these insights to create a personalized and effective learning environment.

The examination of indirect LLS focused on two key components: metacognitive self-regulation and resource management. Oxford (1990) suggests that indirect strategies aim to help students develop their own study systems. Within metacognitive self-regulation, students demonstrated a proactive approach to comprehension, revisiting confusing material, engaging in self-questioning, and setting goals, indicating deliberate and reflective learning. Resource management includes environment management and effort management. Students consistently attended classes and selected conducive study environments. Effort Management reflected students' resilience, while help-seeking emphasized collaborative learning. Considering research question 2, 'How do indirect strategies influence Japanese

language learning?', it is clear that students utilize metacognitive self-regulation, resource management, and help-seeking behaviours. This aligns with Gan's (2023) findings, which highlight the dynamic nature of indirect strategies, fostering both individual agency and collaborative learning. Meanwhile, Subrayan et al (2020) observed that social interaction primarily involved indirect strategies such as metacognitive and affective approaches. A study by Chanderan and Hashim (2022) also revealed that students primarily favoured indirect strategies encompassing metacognitive and social strategies. Instructors can leverage these insights to cultivate metacognitive awareness, enhance resource management, and foster a supportive peer-learning culture.

The investigation into research question 3, 'Is there a relationship between direct and indirect strategies in Japanese language learning?' revealed a significant association. Correlation analysis ($r = .723^{**}$, $p = .000$) indicates a robust relationship, suggesting that as students engage more in direct strategies, they are also likely to employ indirect strategies, and vice versa. These findings underscore the complementary nature of the two types of strategies, emphasizing their interconnectedness in the language learning process. This corresponds with the research findings on the use of LLS by Zubbir et al (2023), which revealed that students utilized both direct and indirect strategies. Similarly, Nejad et al (2022) discovered the relationship between direct and indirect strategies utilized by their respondents, including cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, social, affective, and compensation strategies. This strong positive correlation supports the notion that students adopt a holistic approach, integrating both direct and indirect strategies to enhance their Japanese language proficiency. As instructors consider these insights, they may develop instructional approaches that capitalize on this synergy, fostering a comprehensive and effective language learning experience.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Studies

Language educators should adopt a holistic approach to instruction, blending both direct and indirect LLS to cater to diverse learner needs. Fostering metacognitive awareness through activities like self-questioning and goal setting can enhance learning effectiveness. Emphasizing resource management skills, including creating conducive environments and maintaining motivation, is crucial. Encouraging collaborative learning environments promotes peer support and community. Shen (2023) suggests a link between learner autonomy and LLS, advocating for diversified strategy use. Recognizing learner diversity, teachers should employ flexible teaching methods.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to understand strategy evolution over time and cross-cultural investigations to explore cultural influences. Assessing technology's impact on LLS, particularly with emerging technologies like augmented reality, is vital. Qualitative analyses, including interviews, can provide deeper insights into learner experiences. Examining strategy preferences across proficiency levels informs tailored instructional approaches. Addressing these implications advances effective language teaching methodologies, enhancing the learning experience for all.

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