

Japanese Language Studies at Sri Lankan Universities: How Important is Subject Benchmarking?

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Japanese is the foreign language with the highest demand in both the secondary and higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. The two countries: Sri Lanka and Japan have a long history of friendly relations and similarities in their culture, religion and language. The Japanese language education boom which started in the nineteen eighties, took the Asian sub-continent with a storm and the language was introduced to the Sri Lankan education field approximately two decades ago. So far, it has attracted the attention of many academics and researchers.

This paper focuses on Japanese Language studies at Sri Lankan universities and aims to discuss how important subject benchmarking is. Subject benchmarking is the identification of reference or criterion against which something can be measured, where it will facilitate comparison and evaluation. Since Japanese is the language with the highest demand in the foreign language education field, it will be immensely important to evaluate and compare the standards achieved by various tertiary level education institutions: where prominence will be placed on Sri Lankan universities which offer Japanese as a foreign language. This research paper is an extension of a previous study, which focused on the history, the present, and the future perspectives of Japanese Language Education in Sri Lanka.

Hence this study focuses on the programmes, curricula, teaching material and methodology and the standards achieved by the universities, which offer Japanese as a foreign language. Thereby a comparative study will be carried on the proficiency levels of the graduates who complete their degree. Special attention will be placed on the four skills in language learning: listening, speaking, writing and reading. Simultaneously, this study will throw light on the potential of the outcome of the local universities to cater to the high demand in the current job market.

***Key words:* Japanese language, Japanese as a foreign language, subject benchmarking**

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