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Blended Teaching Model Development for Japanese Language Education in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

Background and Aims: This study investigates the development and implementation of a Japanese language blended teaching model specifically designed for Chinese university students, leveraging advanced digital technologies. The integration of online and offline learning modes is vital in language education as the educational landscape evolves. This research aims to address the innovative challenges faced by students and educators in the Japanese language major within Chinese universities. The study proposes a blended teaching model that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with digital learning tools.

Methodology: This study used a mixed-method approach, utilizing pre- and post-tests to assess language proficiency, surveys to evaluate student engagement and satisfaction, and learning analytics to track digital platform usage. Expert reviews were also conducted to ensure instructional quality and validate the blended teaching model's implementation outcomes

Results: The results of the study showed that there was a significant increase in student engagement, language proficiency, and overall satisfaction with the learning experience under this blended learning model. The study also highlighted the importance of flexibility, interactivity, and personalized learning pathways in enhancing language acquisition through blended learning.

Conclusion: Integrating digital technology and adopting a blended teaching model in Japanese language teaching in Chinese universities meets the language learning needs of students at different levels and improves the effect of language learning. It also cultivates students' digital literacy and learning autonomy and motivation, thus further improving the quality of foreign language learning and teaching. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on blended learning in language education and offers practical insights for educators seeking to innovate their teaching practices. Future research should examine adaptive learning or conduct comparisons with alternative language teaching models.

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Keywords: Japanese Language; Blended Teaching Model; Chinese University Students; Digital Technologies; Language Acquisition

Introduction

The blended teaching model, which integrates face-to-face instruction with online learning, has gained prominence due to advancements in educational technology and the demand for more flexible, student-centered learning environments. This approach supports diverse learning needs, enhances digital literacy, and promotes active engagement through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous methods. Its importance has grown, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, as institutions seek resilient, accessible, and scalable educational solutions. The development of effective blended models is thus essential for improving teaching practices and aligning with global educational goals (Boelens, De Wever, & Voet, 2017; Graham, 2006; Hrastinski, 2019).

The educational landscape has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Rapid advancements in digital technologies and the increasing demand for flexible, student-centred learning environments have driven this change. Blended learning models, integrating traditional face-to-face instruction with digital and online resources, have become a central feature in various disciplines. This approach has been particularly influential in language education, where the need for interactive, engaging, and accessible learning opportunities is paramount. Japanese language education in Chinese universities is unique and presents both challenges and opportunities. Japan-China relations are growing in importance in terms of trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. This means there is an increasing demand for proficient Japanese language speakers. However, traditional teaching methods, often characterised by teacher-centred instruction and limited use of technology, have been criticised for their inability to fully engage students and address their diverse learning needs. The answer is clear: the adoption of blended teaching models.

Objectives

1. To identify the current problem of teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students and its solution.
2. To develop a blended teaching model for teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students.
3. To implement the blended teaching model for teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students.

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4. To evaluate the blended teaching model for teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students.

Literature Review

Blended Learning: The Key to Effective Language Education

Blended learning, which combines traditional classroom instruction with digital tools, has been increasingly applied in Japanese language education to address specific challenges in grammar acquisition and speaking proficiency. Recent studies have explored the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing learners' grammatical understanding and oral communication skills.

Sato and Suzuki (2022) conducted a mixed-methods study involving 120 university students to assess the impact of a blended learning program on Japanese grammar acquisition. The program integrated online grammar exercises with in-class discussions. Quantitative analysis of pre- and post-tests revealed a significant improvement in students' grammatical accuracy. Qualitative feedback indicated that the flexibility of online components allowed for self-paced learning, while face-to-face sessions provided opportunities for immediate clarification of doubts.

Challenges in Japanese Language Education Based on Digital Technologies

Digital platforms have expanded opportunities for self-directed learning, but they also present challenges such as high dropout rates and varying levels of student engagement. Li and Chen (2023) conducted an empirical study on the impact of digital and hybrid learning models on Japanese language education in China in the post-pandemic era. Their study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys (n=500) with qualitative interviews (n=30) across multiple universities. Their findings indicate that while digital learning tools facilitate accessibility and flexibility, they also introduce challenges such as technological adaptation difficulties, reduced motivation, and inconsistent engagement levels. Specifically, their data analysis revealed that 62% of students reported difficulties in maintaining concentration in online settings, while 47% expressed concerns regarding the lack of real-time feedback compared to traditional classroom interactions. Additionally, Li and Chen's (2023) research highlights the necessity of integrating adaptive learning technologies to enhance student outcomes. Their study suggests that the implementation of AI-driven personalized learning pathways can address disparities in student engagement by providing tailored instructional content. However, their findings align with Brown's (2021) argument that blended learning platforms must reconcile the structured nature of traditional classroom instruction with the flexibility of digital alternatives. This reinforces the need for a well-designed hybrid approach that balances technological affordances with pedagogical structure to maximize learning effectiveness. Blended learning has proven effective in addressing diverse learner needs in Japanese language education by combining

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traditional classroom instruction with digital tools (Saito et al., 2021). The use of AI-driven personalized learning to tailor content for students with varying skill levels, improving engagement, and adapting instruction for listening and reading comprehension (Huang & Li, 2024)

Gaps in Existing Literature

While existing studies have explored the application of blended learning in Japanese language education, several research gaps remain. First, although Sato and Suzuki (2022) demonstrated the effectiveness of blended learning in grammar acquisition, their study focused primarily on quantitative improvements without an in-depth analysis of long-term retention and learner autonomy. Additionally, their research did not specifically address the contextual challenges faced by Japanese language learners in Chinese universities.

Furthermore, while Li and Chen (2023) provided valuable insights into the post-pandemic adaptation of digital and hybrid learning models in China, their study highlighted key issues such as low engagement levels and technological adaptation challenges. However, their research did not propose a concrete pedagogical framework for mitigating these issues. The absence of an empirically tested blended learning model tailored specifically for Japanese language learners in Chinese universities further underscores the need for a structured and adaptable approach.

This study aims to bridge these research gaps by developing a blended learning model specifically designed for Japanese language learners in Chinese universities. By integrating digital technologies and interactive strategies, the proposed model seeks to enhance learning effectiveness, student motivation, and overall proficiency gains. Unlike previous studies, empirical data will be collected to assess not only linguistic outcomes but also learner engagement and motivation, providing a more holistic understanding of blended learning's impact in this context.

This research aligns with global trends in digital education by integrating blended learning models that combine online and offline instruction, personalized learning pathways, and digital tools to enhance student engagement and autonomy.

Research Theories

This study integrates five key theories to construct a digital technology-based blended learning model for Japanese language education in Chinese universities.

1. Personalized Learning Theory (Keefe & Jenkins, 2002) supports adaptive instruction, allowing students to engage with customized digital content that aligns with their proficiency levels and learning styles.

2. Blended Learning Theory (Graham, 2006) underpins the integration of online and offline learning, optimizing engagement and accessibility while enhancing communicative competence in Japanese.

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3. Instructional System Design (ISD) Theory (Gagné et al., 1992) guides the systematic development of instructional materials through the ADDIE model, ensuring effective sequencing, multimedia integration, and iterative evaluation.

4. Teaching Quality Assessment Theory (Marsh, 1987) provides a framework for evaluating instructional effectiveness using learning analytics, peer review, and expert evaluations, ensuring data-driven improvements in teaching quality..

Conceptual Framework

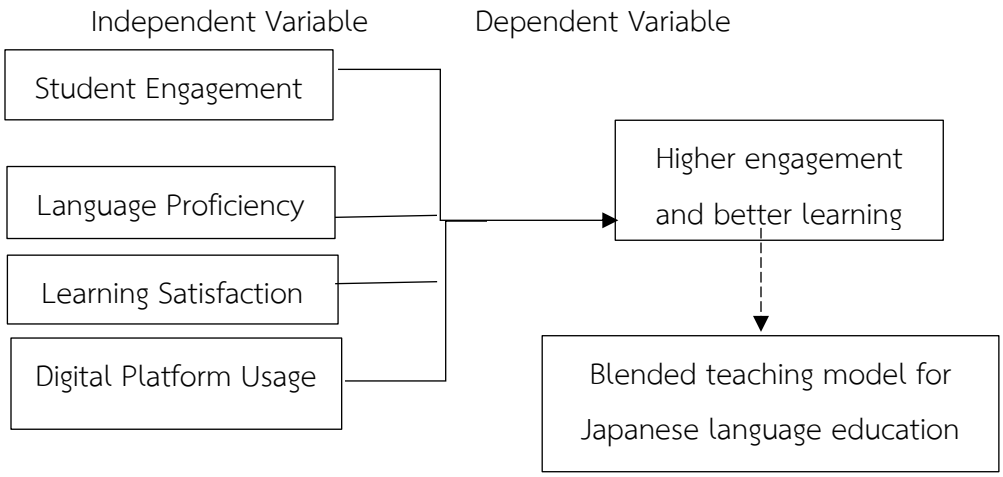


Figure 1 Research Framework

Methodology

The population / Sample Group

The population of this study is Japanese language major students at Liaoning University of International Business and Economics. And the sample groups consist of:

1. The experimental group, which consisted of 75 students in the Japanese language major at Liaoning University of International Business and Economics, took part in the blended learning model.

2. The control group, which has 75 students in the Japanese language major grade 1 at Liaoning University of International Business and Economics, used the traditional teaching method.

Time-frame

The time frame of this study spans 20 weeks, aligning with the standard semester length at Liaoning University of International Business and Economics. This duration ensures that the blended teaching model is fully integrated into a complete course cycle within the second year of the Japanese language major program. The experiment was conducted in a foundational

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Japanese language course, introduced after students had attained JLPT N4 proficiency, allowing them to effectively engage with both traditional and digital learning components.

To enhance the accuracy and reliability of the findings, future iterations of this experiment are planned across consecutive academic cycles. This extended approach will enable a more comprehensive assessment of both short-term and long-term effects, ensuring a deeper understanding of the model's impact on language proficiency and student engagement.

Research Procedure and Processes

This study used a multi-phase, mixed-method research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. The study was divided into four steps.

Step 1: To identify the current problem of teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students and its solution.

In this step, we engaged a purposive sample of 21 Japanese language instructors and experts. These experts were specifically chosen based on their extensive experience, with each having over 5 years of professional involvement in Japanese language teaching at Chinese universities. The selection ensured that participants possessed in-depth contextual knowledge of the educational challenges and opportunities within this domain. They were tasked with identifying current challenges in traditional Japanese language teaching methods and proposing potential solutions.

Step 2: To develop a blended teaching model for teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students. The design phase of the blended teaching model followed the ADDIE framework, ensuring a structured and systematic instructional approach through Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The key steps were as follows:

(1) Blended Teaching Model Development. A customized blended learning model for Japanese language education was designed using the ADDIE model, ensuring pedagogical effectiveness and structured implementation.

(2) Selection and Design of Teaching Content. Japanese language materials were selected and designed in alignment with the JF-Standard for Japanese Language Learning (based on CEFR), integrating them into the curriculum to support the blended approach.

(3) Expert Evaluation and Refinement. The finalized model and course content underwent expert evaluation to assess their scientific rigor and suitability. Necessary modifications were made based on expert feedback to enhance the model's effectiveness.

Step 3: To implement the blended teaching model for teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students. The study used a controlled experimental design, implementing the blended teaching model with a selected group of Japanese language students at a Chinese university. The key implementation steps were as follows:

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(1) Pre-test and Post-test Analysis. The pre-test assessed students' initial language proficiency, while the post-test measured learning outcomes after implementation. The comparative analysis evaluated students' progress under the blended model.

(2) Learning Monitoring. Student engagement, completion rates, and digital resource usage were tracked through online learning platform analytics and observational checklists, providing real-time insights into participation and interaction.

Step 4: To evaluate the blended teaching model for teaching the Japanese language to Chinese Undergraduate students. In this step, A panel of 5 experts was assembled to conduct the peer review to ensure they had substantial qualifications and professional experience in the field of Japanese language education. They possessed a significant background in curriculum development, particularly in the context of foreign language education. The peer review process involved the use of a detailed rubric, allowing for a systematic evaluation of the course model from an instructional perspective.

Results

Key Problems in Japanese Language Education in Chinese Universities

The data came from 21 experts in Japanese language teaching and educational technology, and the questionnaire survey and feedback yielded the current problems in the teaching of Japanese language majors in Chinese colleges and universities.

Table 1 Problems in Japanese Language Education in Chinese Universities (Based on Delphi Survey Results)

Problem No.	Problem Category	Specific Feedback from Experts	Expert Mention Percent (%)
1	Lack of Motivation and Engagement	Students show low enthusiasm for learning, passive participation, and difficulty maintaining long-term motivation.	85%
2	Difficulty in Mastering Pronunciation and Intonation	Students struggle with distinguishing similar sounds, lack effective pronunciation training, and have limited practice opportunities.	78%

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Problem No.	Problem Category	Specific Feedback from Experts	Expert Mention Percent (%)
3	Challenges in Reading Comprehension	Students find it difficult to grasp sentence structures, understand implicit meanings, and analyze complex texts.	72%
4	Struggles with Vocabulary Acquisition	Memorization is ineffective, contextual usage is unclear, and word retention rates are low.	69%
5	Limited Exposure to Native Speakers	Insufficient interaction with native speakers, lack of immersive language environments, and difficulty developing natural conversational skills.	65%
6	Difficulty in Understanding Cultural Nuances	Students lack cultural awareness, struggle with indirect expressions, and misunderstand Japanese social norms.	62%
7	Problems with Listening Comprehension	Difficulty distinguishing fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and low ability to infer meaning from context.	60%
8	Writing Challenges	Inconsistent grammar application, difficulty in structuring logical essays, and limited opportunities for written output.	55%
9	Inadequate Teaching Methods	Traditional lecture-based methods dominate, with limited interactive teaching and insufficient use of modern pedagogical approaches.	53%
10	Limited Use of Technology in Language Learning	Lack of digital learning resources, low integration of technology in teaching, and limited use of AI-based learning tools.	50%

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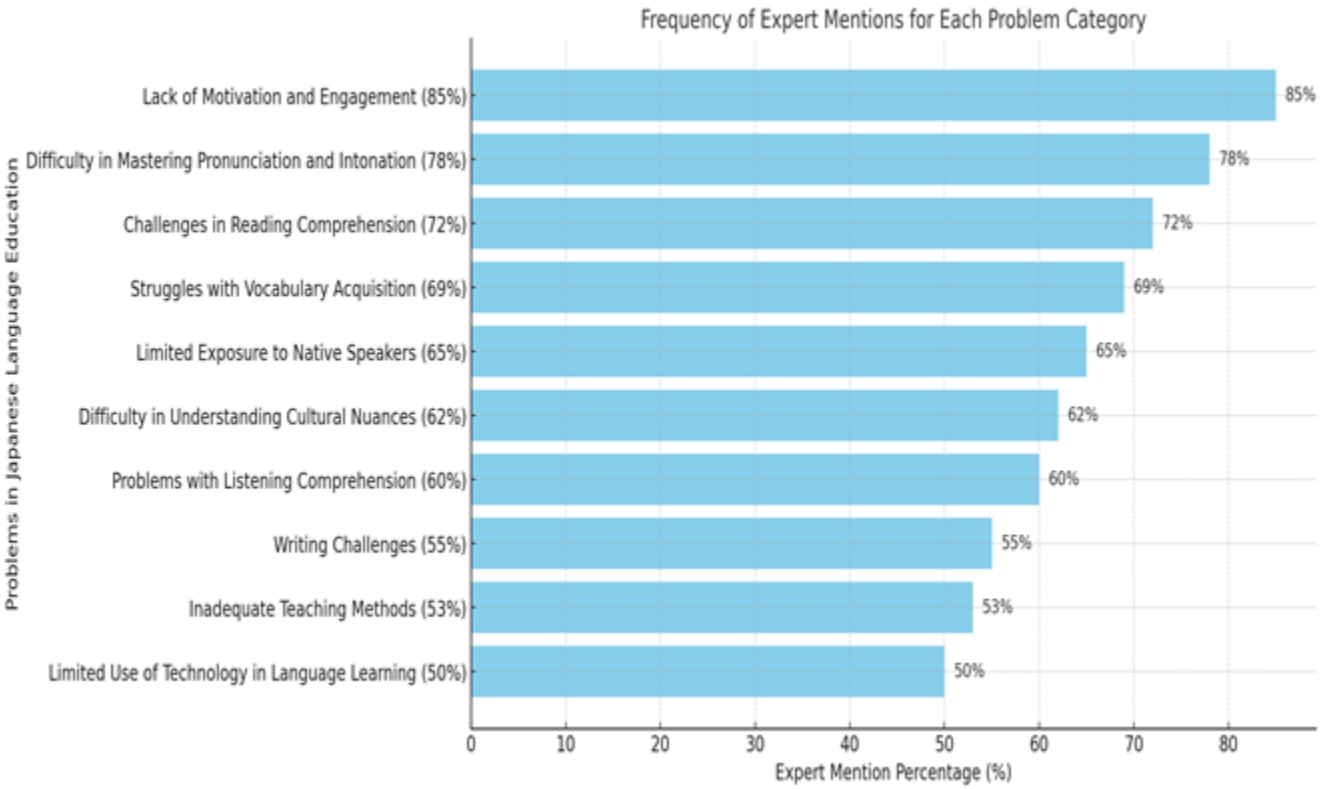


Figure 2 Frequency of Expert Mentions for Each Problem Category

Japanese language Blended Teaching Model based on techniques

The instructional design is framed using the ADDIE model as a guiding framework, while learner assessment is aligned with the JF Standard established by the Japan Foundation for International Exchange.

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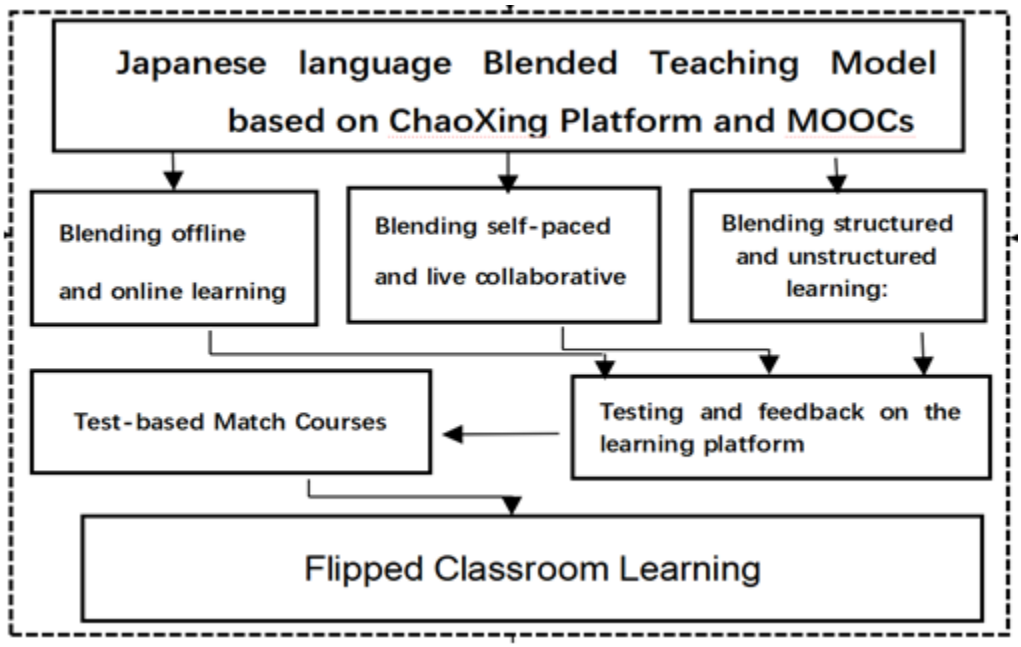


Figure 3 Japanese language Blended Teaching Model based on the platform

Survey results

The quantitative data in this study were derived from the pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys, language proficiency tests, and learning analytics. This section presents the findings from these data sources, analyzing the impact of the blended teaching model on student engagement, language proficiency, and overall satisfaction.

The increase in engagement levels could be linked to Graham's (2006) blended learning model, which emphasizes the role of structured online-offline integration in fostering motivation.

Table 2 Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Survey Results

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Measure	Group	Pre-Intervention Mean (SD)	Post-Intervention Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
Engagement	Experimental	45% (±5)	72% (±4)	3.65	<0.001
	Control	47% (±6)	55% (±5)	1.89	0.065
Satisfaction	Experimental	60% (±7)	80% (±5)	2.89	<0.01
	Control	55% (±6)	65% (±7)	1.76	0.085

a. Student Engagement

The survey results indicate a significant increase in student engagement in the experimental group following the implementation of the blended teaching model. Engagement levels were measured based on students' self-reported frequency of participation in class activities, time spent on homework, and interaction with peers and instructors. The pre-intervention survey showed that 45% of students in the experimental group were regularly engaged in learning activities, while the post-intervention survey revealed an increase to 72%.

The control group, which continued with traditional face-to-face instruction, showed a smaller increase in engagement, rising from 47% to 55%. A paired t-test analysis of the engagement scores confirmed that the increase in the experimental group was statistically significant ($t(74) = 3.65$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the blended teaching model had a positive impact on student engagement.

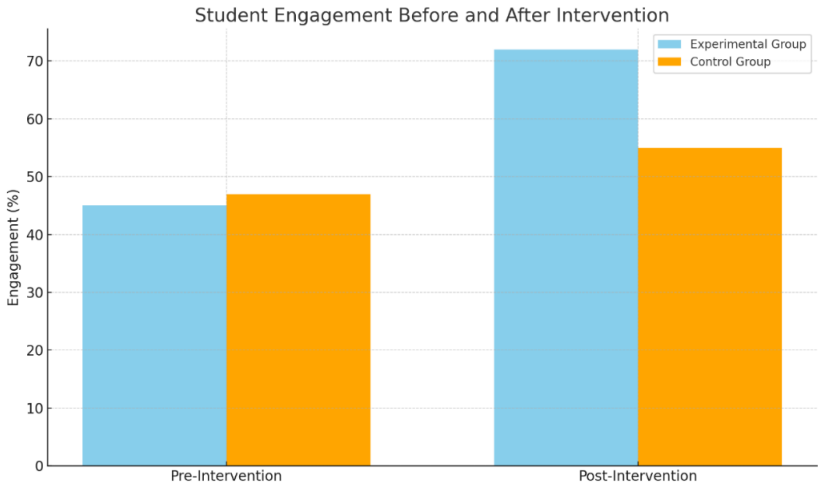


Figure 4 Student Engagement

b. Student Satisfaction

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Student satisfaction with the learning experience was notably higher in the experimental group. 80% of students expressed satisfaction with the flexibility and accessibility of online components, compared to 65% reporting overall learning satisfaction. Meanwhile, in the control group, only 60% of students found traditional methods satisfactory. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant difference ($t(74) = 2.89$, $p < 0.01$, $d = 0.75$), supporting the effectiveness of blended instruction in improving students' learning experiences.

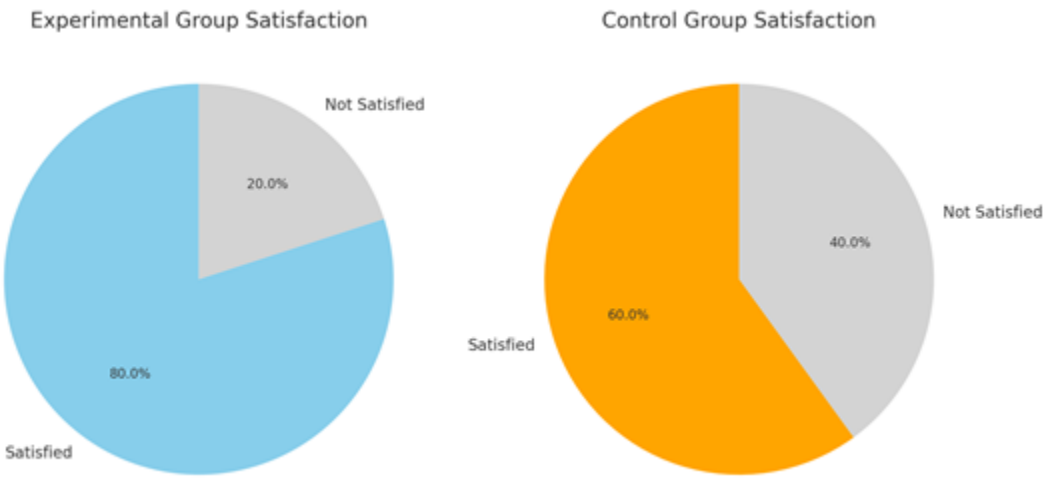


Figure 5 Student Satisfaction

Language Proficiency Tests

The impact of the blended teaching model on students' language proficiency was measured using standardized tests aligned with the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) levels. The tests assessed students' skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Table 3 Language Proficiency Test Results

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Skill	Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	F-value	p-value
Reading	Experimental	55.2 (±4.5)	68.7 (±5.0)	12.57	<0.001
	Control	56.4 (±4.2)	61.8 (±4.8)	2.34	0.048
Writing	Experimental	53.9 (±5.2)	70.4 (±5.1)	14.34	<0.001
	Control	54.6 (±5.3)	62.3 (±5.5)	2.78	0.037
Listening	Experimental	58.1 (±4.7)	71.3 (±4.9)	10.82	<0.01
	Control	59.3 (±5.0)	64.5 (±4.7)	1.94	0.062
Speaking	Experimental	60.7 (±5.0)	75.2 (±5.2)	13.56	<0.001
	Control	61.4 (±4.8)	66.8 (±4.6)	2.56	0.042

Reading skills: Experimental group scores improved from 55.2 to 68.7, while the control group saw a more modest increase from 56.4 to 61.8 ($F(1,148) = 12.57$, $p < 0.001$).

Writing skills: The experimental group improved from 53.9 to 70.4, compared to 54.6 to 62.3 in the control group ($F(1,148) = 14.34$, $p < 0.001$).

Listening skills: Gains in the experimental group (58.1 to 71.3) were significantly higher than in the control group (59.3 to 64.5) ($F(1,148) = 10.82$, $p < 0.01$).

Speaking skills: The experimental group showed notable improvement (60.7 to 75.2), surpassing the control group (61.4 to 66.8) ($F(1,148) = 13.56$, $p < 0.001$).

The experimental group showed the highest improvement in speaking skills, with scores rising from 60.7 to 75.2, due to several key factors rooted in the design of the blended teaching model; students engaged with audio-visual materials, the integration of peer feedback and group-based speaking tasks encouraged active participation, and digital practice platforms enabled learners to apply speaking skills. These results confirm that the blended teaching model significantly enhances students' language proficiency compared to traditional methods.

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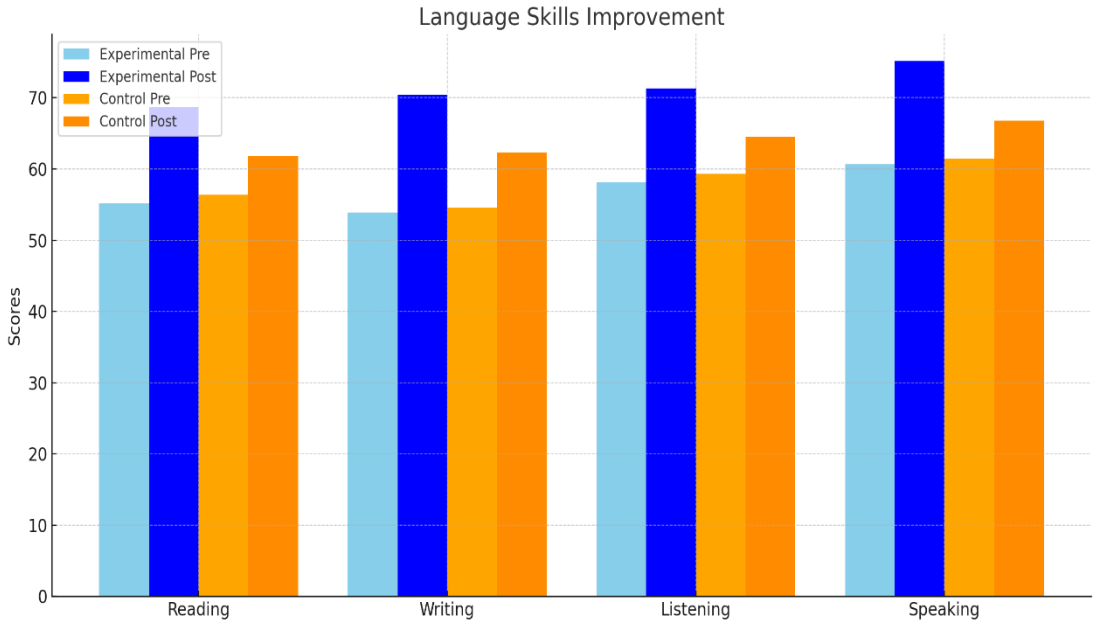


Figure 6 Language Skills Improvement

Learning Analytics

The learning analytics data provided deeper insights into students' engagement with the online components of the blended teaching model. Specifically, the key indicators were analyzed:

1. Total time spent on the learning platform – measured as the cumulative duration of students' active engagement with digital course materials, including video lectures, quizzes attempted, and interactive exercises.

2. Frequency of interactive engagement – including participation in discussion forums, peer review activities, and live Q&A sessions.a. Login Frequency and Academic Performance.

Login Frequency and Academic Performance

Data revealed a strong positive correlation between login frequency and language proficiency improvement, with a correlation coefficient of $r=0.72r = 0.72r=0.72$ ($p<0.001p < 0.001p<0.001$). Students who logged into the platform more frequently demonstrated significantly higher gains in their language proficiency tests. Specifically:

1. Students with an average of 5–7 logins per week showed a mean improvement of 15.6 points in proficiency scores.

2. In contrast, students with fewer than 3 logins per week had a mean improvement of only 7.8 points.

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This finding underscores the importance of consistent engagement with digital learning resources. Regular platform use allowed students to access supplementary materials, review lessons, and practice language skills at their own pace, thereby reinforcing classroom learning.

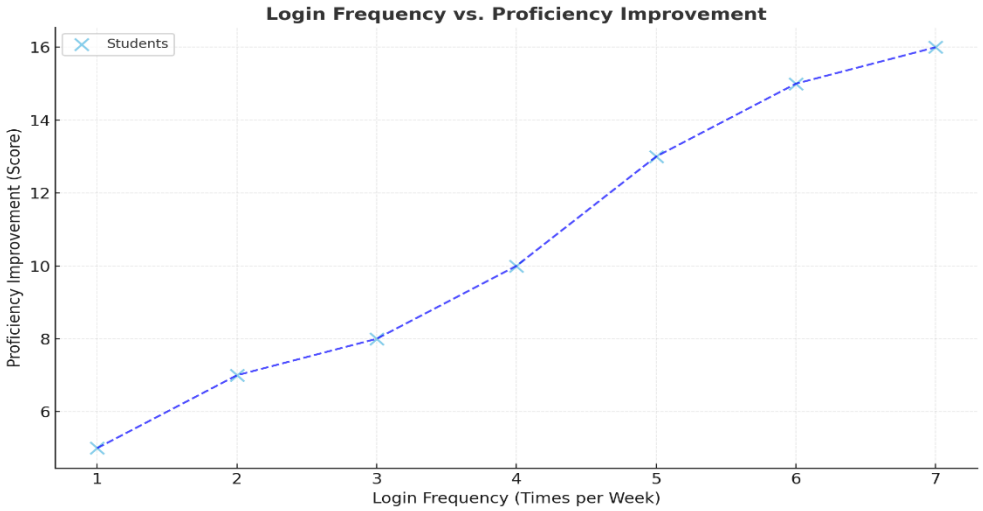


Figure 7 Login Frequency and Language Proficiency Improvement

Participation in Interactive Activities

Participation in interactive activities, such as quizzes, discussion forums, and virtual exchanges, also played a crucial role in language acquisition:

1. Students who actively engaged in at least 3 interactive activities per week achieved a mean improvement of 12.4 points in reading and writing scores.

2. Those with limited participation (<2 activities per week) demonstrated an improvement of only 5.2 points.

These activities provided opportunities for immediate feedback, peer interaction, and practical application of language skills, fostering deeper learning and retention.

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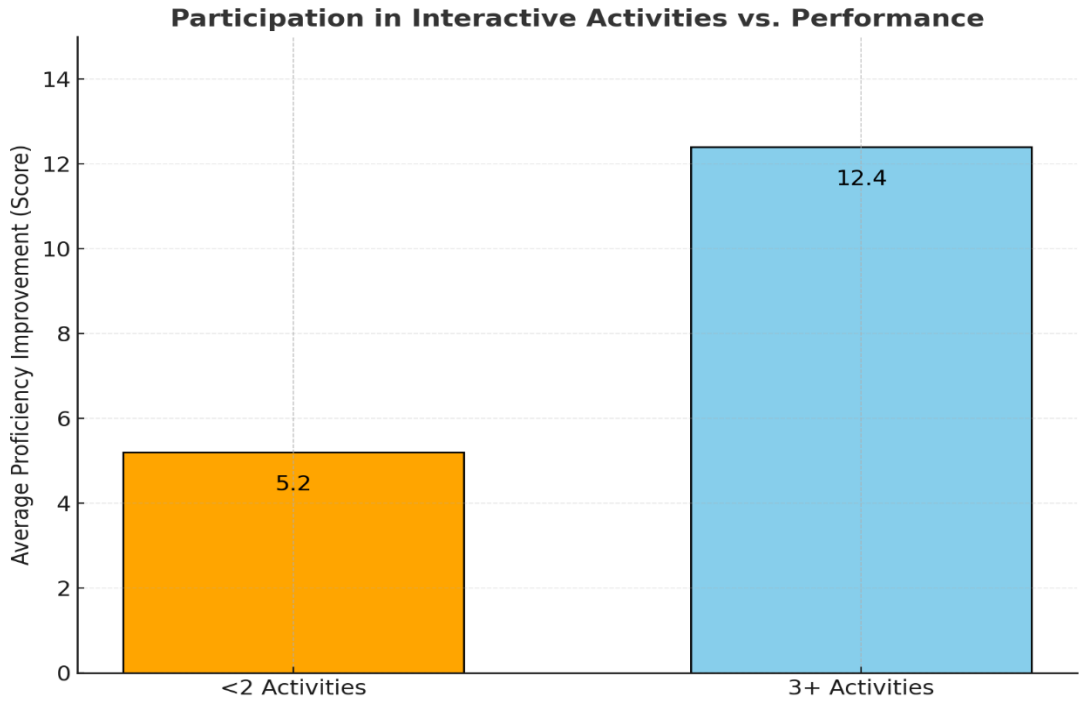


Figure 8 Participation in Interactive Activities

Student Perceptions

Students emphasized the flexibility of time and space, and the adaptability of language level as the main advantages of the blended model, and they were interested in being able to learn to review the material at their own level. Many students also found that the multimedia resources (videos, quizzes, interactive tasks) made learning more engaging and improved their kanji comprehension and grammar memorization skills. However, some students had difficulties with self-discipline and time management, suggesting that the development of sensible and effective support mechanisms, such as progress tracking and structured learning plans, may improve the effectiveness of blended learning.

Instructor Feedback

Faculty participating in this blended learning experiment reported that the blended model provided greater instructional flexibility and increased student engagement, especially in online discussions. However, there were some challenges to the implementation of the instruction, such as digital technology issues and the additional work hours required for faculty to manage the digital curriculum that needed to be adjusted and considered。

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Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study confirm that a blended teaching model, integrating digital technologies and traditional instruction, significantly enhances student engagement, language proficiency, and satisfaction in Japanese language education at Chinese universities.

Impact of Blended Learning on Student Engagement and Satisfaction

The effectiveness of blended learning in enhancing student engagement and language skill development can be understood through the perspectives of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1994). Learning is fundamentally a social process, shaped by interaction, collaboration, and mediated tools. Blended learning environments foster these conditions by integrating face-to-face instruction with digital platforms that promote peer collaboration, scaffolded support, and social interaction through forums, group projects, and real-time discussions. Survey results demonstrate higher engagement and satisfaction among students in the blended learning group, consistent with prior research on digital education (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019). Access to multimedia resources and interactive activities was a contributing factor. However, some students reported difficulties with self-regulation and time management, suggesting that structured learning plans, gamification, or peer accountability mechanisms would further enhance engagement.

Improvements in Language Proficiency

The findings are clear: the blended learning approach is effective in supporting Japanese language acquisition. This is in line with previous findings that digital storytelling, flipped classrooms, and online interaction enhance second-language learning (Zhang, 2020; Wang, 2018). However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent participation in online components. Future strategies must include adaptive learning technologies that provide personalised content based on students' progress.

The Role of Digital Learning Analytics

The learning analytics data showed a strong correlation between online engagement and language proficiency gains, reinforcing the importance of frequent platform usage. However, variations in students' digital literacy and access to technology may impact these outcomes. Further research should explore how to bridge digital disparities and ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Conclusion

Previous studies offered conceptual or theoretical models; this study implements the blended model in a real classroom setting using a controlled experimental design. It uses pre- and post-tests, surveys, and learning analytics to systematically evaluate its impact on student

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engagement, satisfaction, and language proficiency. The authors collect and triangulate data from multiple sources: quantitative language assessments, student feedback, expert peer review, and learning analytics, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how blended learning affects language development and student behavior. The combination of flexible digital resources, interactive activities, and structured in-person instruction fosters higher engagement and better learning outcomes. However, to fully optimize this model, several factors require attention: Self-regulated learning support – Incorporating progress tracking, learning reminders, and motivational incentives could help students maintain consistency. Instructor training for teachers – Educators need continuous professional development to effectively integrate technology into language instruction. Policy and institutional support – Universities should provide robust digital infrastructure, technical assistance, and structured evaluation frameworks to sustain blended learning success.

Recommendations

1. Systematic Integration of Blended Learning

Institutions should formally incorporate blended models into language programs, ensuring a balance between online and offline components.

2. Enhanced Teacher Training Programs

Universities should offer workshops on digital pedagogy, platform management, and online student engagement strategies.

3. Learning Analytics for Personalized Support

Using real-time data tracking, educators can identify students at risk of disengagement and provide targeted interventions.

4. Gamification and Peer Learning Strategies

Implementing reward-based systems, discussion forums, and collaborative projects can sustain long-term student motivation.

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Further Studies

While this study contributes to the growing literature on blended language education, further exploration could be the comparative studies across language programs. Future research could compare blended teaching models for different language programs (e.g., English, Korean, German) to determine whether the effectiveness of blended learning varies by language structure and learning difficulty. The area of study may encompass linguistic complexity, syntactic structure, or cultural implications in language acquisition.

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