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# Trends In Innovation In Japanese Language Teaching Methods In The Context Of Digital Transformation At Vietnamese Universities

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**ABSTRACT**
The digital transformation era has profoundly reshaped higher education, driving the need for innovative approaches in foreign language teaching. In Vietnam, Japanese language education plays a crucial role in fostering human resources for economic and cultural cooperation with Japan. This study aims to examine trends in innovation in Japanese language teaching methods at Vietnamese universities under digital transformation. Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines secondary data (policy reports, international literature, and statistical data) with primary data from a survey of 100 students and 20 Japanese language lecturers across three major universities. The findings reveal that blended learning, flipped classrooms, gamification, and artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools are increasingly applied to improve teaching effectiveness and student engagement. However, challenges remain, including limited digital infrastructure, financial barriers, and teacher resistance to technological adoption. The study proposes policy directions and practical solutions to strengthen the integration of digital tools in Japanese language education. By doing so, universities can enhance the quality of teaching, personalize learning experiences, and prepare students for the demands of global integration.
**Keywords**: Japanese language teaching; Innovation; Digital transformation; Higher education; Vietnam.

## INTRODUCTION:

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has accelerated the integration of digital technologies into higher education, reshaping pedagogical practices and institutional strategies across the globe. Nations are compelled to reform teaching and learning environments in response to technological advances, shifting labor market demands, and global connectivity [24].

Vietnam has recognized this imperative by adopting the *National Digital Transformation Program to 2025 with Orientation to 2030*, approved by the Prime Minister in 2020, which positions education as a key sector for digital transformation. Foreign language instruction occupies a strategic role within this context, with Japanese language education gaining particular significance due to the strength of economic partnerships and cultural exchanges between Vietnam and Japan [1].

Traditional Japanese language instruction at Vietnamese universities has emphasized teacher-centered delivery, grammar-translation methods, and memorization. Such approaches often fail to equip students with communicative competence and self-directed learning abilities, creating a gap between academic preparation and labor market expectations. Employers require graduates with strong intercultural communication skills, adaptability, and digital fluency. In the absence of pedagogical innovation, the effectiveness of Japanese language education risks stagnation [19].

The shift toward digital transformation has introduced opportunities to restructure language teaching by incorporating blended learning, flipped classrooms, gamification, and AI-based systems. Blended learning offers flexibility and interaction between in-person and online formats, while flipped classrooms allow greater classroom engagement through pre-class digital content. Gamification increases learner motivation by embedding game mechanics into lessons, and AI-powered tools provide adaptive feedback, pronunciation support, and data-driven assessment (Haga, 2023). These approaches demonstrate potential for addressing the shortcomings of traditional practices while fostering a more engaging and personalized learning environment.

International experiences illustrate the transformative power of digital education. In Russia, the competence-based approach to digital higher education has highlighted the capacity of innovation to reshape teacher roles and student engagement (Anna, Tatyana, Oxana, Vladimir, & Elena, 2018). Similarly, research on digital pedagogy emphasizes that transformation extends beyond technology adoption, requiring shifts in cultural, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions [4]. Such perspectives underscore that innovation in language education must be systemic rather than superficial, ensuring alignment between technological tools, curriculum design, and institutional policies.

This paper examines how Japanese language teaching at Vietnamese universities adapts within this broader transformation. Through surveys and interviews with students and lecturers, the study investigates current trends, challenges, and prospects for innovation. Empirical evidence contributes practical recommendations for aligning Japanese language

education with the digital future of higher education in Vietnam.

## 2. PAPER AND TEXT FORMAT

### 2.1 Theoretical Background

Innovation in foreign language pedagogy is defined as the integration of new methods, strategies, and digital technologies designed to enhance teaching effectiveness and improve learner outcomes. The global shift in higher education has emphasized student-centered approaches, supported by interactive platforms and technological resources. This transformation reflects the growing demand for flexible, adaptive, and engaging learning models capable of preparing students for an interconnected world.

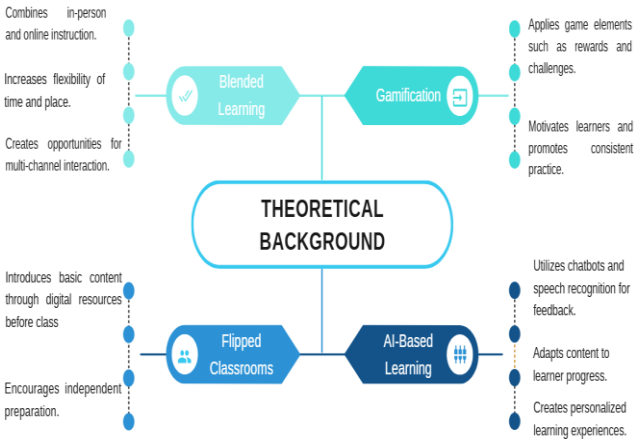


**Figure 1. Innovative Teaching Approaches in Japanese Language Education**

Blended learning represents a key trend, merging face-to-face instruction with online components. This approach introduces flexibility in scheduling, supports a wider range of learning materials, and enables greater interaction between instructors and students. By complementing classroom activities with digital tasks, blended learning provides opportunities for more dynamic participation [8] [11].

Flipped classrooms extend this innovation by restructuring the role of class time. Core content is introduced through online resources in advance, while in-class sessions emphasize practice, problem-solving, and collaborative interaction. Such a model promotes learner autonomy and maximizes valuable classroom engagement [3] [15].

Gamification has further transformed language education by embedding game mechanics into instructional design. Rewards, competitions, and interactive challenges foster motivation and encourage consistent learning behavior. This method aligns with the psychological principle that enjoyment enhances cognitive retention [13] [16] [18].

AI-based learning introduces personalized pathways through tools such as chatbots, speech recognition systems, and adaptive platforms. These technologies deliver immediate feedback, assist with pronunciation, and adjust instructional content based on individual progress, contributing to tailored learning experiences [2] [7].

International practice offers valuable examples. In Japan and Korea, universities have adopted mobile applications, virtual classrooms, and AI-driven systems in Japanese language instruction. These applications illustrate how innovation reshapes not only the mode of delivery but also the quality of engagement between learners and instructional content. Such experiences provide critical insights for Vietnam as higher education institutions deepen their commitment to digital transformation and explore sustainable strategies for foreign language pedagogy.

### 2.2 Objectives and Scope of the Study

*The objectives of this study are:*

- To identify current trends in innovation in Japanese language teaching at Vietnamese universities.

- To analyze the integration of digital technologies and their impact on teaching and learning.

- To evaluate benefits and challenges of digital transformation in Japanese language education.

- To propose strategies for effective adoption.

*Scope of the Study:* The study focuses on universities in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang where Japanese is taught as a major. Data collection emphasizes both teachers' and students' perspectives.

### 2.3 Research Methodology

#### 2.3.1. Literature analysis method

This part focuses on collecting and analyzing academic sources, government reports, and international studies related to innovation in foreign language education. Research documents, books, and previous studies provide both theoretical and practical foundations for understanding digital transformation in higher education. Special attention is given to Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) guidelines and comparative studies on blended learning, flipped classrooms, gamification, and AI applications in Japanese language teaching. The analysis highlights implemented models, reported outcomes, and international practices that may inform the Vietnamese context.

#### 2.3.2. Survey method

A structured questionnaire was designed and distributed to 100 undergraduate students and 20 lecturers specializing in Japanese language education at universities in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang. The survey examined learning method preferences, frequency of digital tool use, and perceptions of challenges in adopting technology-supported teaching. Responses were collected through both online and paper-based formats to ensure diverse participation. The data were processed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequency distributions, to identify patterns of digital adoption and learner attitudes.

#### 2.3.3. Interview method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five experienced lecturers in Japanese language education.

The interviews explored perceptions of digital transformation, barriers to technology adoption, and institutional support mechanisms. Interview transcripts were analyzed through thematic coding, allowing the identification of recurring themes related to opportunities, constraints, and practical strategies for innovation in teaching.

2.3.4. Data integration and analysis

Quantitative findings from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews were combined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current situation. The integration of both data sources enabled cross-validation of results, offering a balanced view of trends, challenges, and opportunities in applying innovative teaching methods to Japanese language education under digital transformation.

2.4 Current Situation of Japanese Language Teaching in Vietnamese Universities

Japanese has become the second most studied Asian language in Vietnam after Chinese, with demand driven by Japanese companies and cultural exchange programs. However, traditional teaching methods remain dominant.

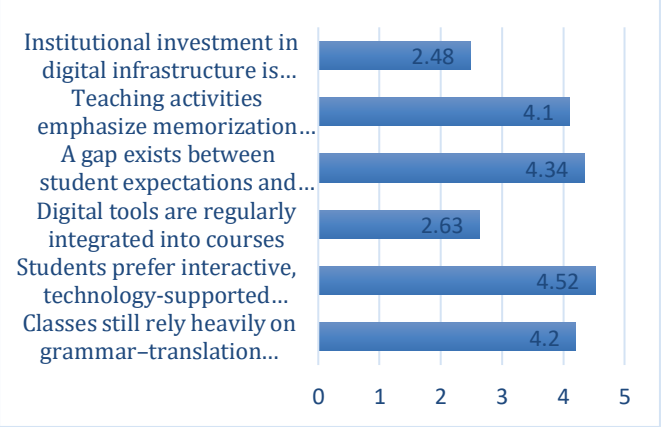


**Figure 2. Current Situation of Japanese Language Teaching in Vietnamese Universities**

2.5 Trends in Innovation in Teaching Methods

In recent years, Vietnamese universities have explored a variety of innovative approaches to Japanese language education in response to digital transformation. Both students and lecturers have expressed views on the effectiveness, benefits, and challenges of these methods. Survey data and qualitative interviews highlight several prominent trends, ranging from blended learning and flipped classrooms to gamification, AI-based learning, and project-based approaches.

**Table 2. Trends in Innovation in Japanese Language Teaching**

| **Teaching Method** | **Key Findings** |
|---|---|
| Blended Learning | 55% of students agreed that blended courses improved motivation; lecturers noted flexibility but also mentioned infrastructure challenges. |
| Flipped Classrooms | 60% of students favored recorded lectures with class time for discussion; teachers emphasized improved speaking practice. |
| Gamification and Mobile Apps | 70% of students used Quizlet, Duolingo, or Memrise for vocabulary learning; gamification linked to higher engagement, especially in first- and second-year students. |
| AI-based Learning | 35% of students used AI tools for translation or pronunciation; teachers recognized benefits for assessment and feedback but warned of overreliance and accuracy concerns. |
| Collaborative and Project-Based | Universities increasingly assign projects connected with Japanese companies; students reported enhanced teamwork and communication skills. |

2.6 Benefits and Challenges of Innovative Approaches in Japanese Language Teaching

2.6.1. Benefits

The adoption of innovative teaching methods in Japanese language education has generated a range of significant benefits for students, lecturers, and institutions.

*Personalized and flexible learning pathways.* Digital platforms and AI-based applications allow learners to progress at an individualized pace, receiving tailored feedback and support. Such flexibility helps accommodate different learning styles and schedules, making Japanese language study more accessible to diverse student groups.

*Increased motivation and engagement.* Approaches such as blended learning and gamification create more interactive environments that sustain interest and reduce dependence on rote memorization. Survey results revealed that students responded positively to activities that combined classroom participation with online challenges, reporting higher levels of enthusiasm for language learning.

*Enhanced communication practice through interactive platforms.* Flipped classrooms and collaborative projects encourage students to use Japanese in real-life scenarios, moving beyond grammar drills to active communication. Online discussion forums, video conferencing tools, and project-based tasks provide opportunities to develop speaking and teamwork skills essential for academic and professional success.

*Stronger connection to global educational trends.* By adopting innovative practices, Vietnamese universities align their Japanese language programs with international standards. This global orientation not only enhances the competitiveness of graduates in the labor market but also supports academic collaboration and cultural exchange with Japanese institutions.

2.6.2. Challenges

Despite the advantages brought by innovative teaching methods, several challenges continue to hinder effective

implementation within Japanese language education in Vietnamese universities.

*Limited digital infrastructure, particularly in regional universities.* Many institutions outside major urban centers lack stable internet connections, modern computer labs, and adequate access to licensed software. These shortcomings restrict the consistent use of blended and online platforms, thereby limiting the scope of digital transformation in language teaching.

*Financial constraints for both institutions and students.* The adoption of advanced technological tools requires substantial investment in hardware, software, and maintenance. Universities often face budget limitations, while students may struggle to afford personal devices or high-speed internet access. Such financial barriers slow down the process of integrating digital methods into everyday learning.

*Teacher resistance due to lack of training in digital tools.* Some lecturers express hesitation in adopting new methods because of limited digital literacy or insufficient professional development opportunities. Without targeted training programs, instructors remain dependent on traditional teaching strategies and may perceive digital tools as additional burdens rather than supportive resources.

*Inequality in access among students.* Differences in socioeconomic background, geographic location, and digital literacy create unequal opportunities for participation in technology-enhanced learning. While urban students often benefit from stronger digital exposure, peers in disadvantaged contexts encounter greater obstacles, deepening the educational divide.

2.7 Proposals for Enhancing Japanese Language Teaching in the Digital Era

In order to address existing challenges and strengthen the effectiveness of Japanese language education in the context of digital transformation, several proposals can be considered. These initiatives aim to improve teaching quality, reduce barriers to adoption, and ensure alignment with international standards.

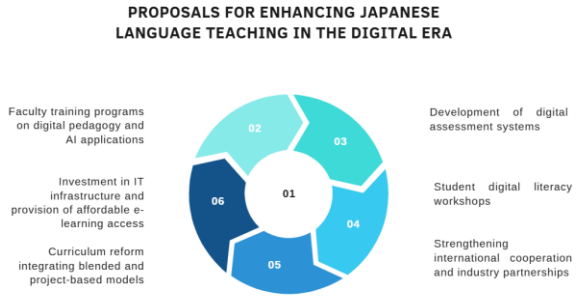


**Figure 3. Proposals for Enhancing Japanese Language Teaching in the Digital Era**

***Faculty training programs on digital pedagogy and AI applications.*** Professional development opportunities should be organized to equip lecturers with the skills required to use digital platforms and AI-supported tools effectively. Training workshops would reduce resistance to technology adoption and promote innovative pedagogical practices.

***Investment in IT infrastructure and provision of affordable e-learning access.*** Universities should allocate resources for upgrading digital facilities, including high-speed internet, multimedia classrooms, and licensed learning platforms. At the same time, free or low-cost access to online tools should be provided for students to minimize inequality in digital participation.

***Curriculum reform integrating blended and project-based models.*** Program design must incorporate a balance of online and in-person learning, while also embedding project-based assignments that connect language education with real-world applications. Such reforms would better prepare students for professional contexts requiring both linguistic competence and problem-solving abilities.

***Development of digital assessment systems.*** Online testing platforms and AI-driven evaluation tools should be introduced to ensure fairness, efficiency, and transparency in measuring student performance. Digital assessment also allows for timely feedback, enhancing the learning process.

***Student digital literacy workshops.*** Orientation programs and skill-building sessions should be conducted to guide students toward responsible and effective use of online resources. By improving digital literacy, universities would empower learners to take full advantage of available technologies without overreliance or misuse.

***Strengthening international cooperation and industry partnerships.*** Universities should expand collaboration with Japanese institutions and companies to integrate authentic materials, guest lectures, and internship opportunities into the curriculum. Such partnerships not only expose students to real-world contexts but also ensure that language training is aligned with industry needs and cross-cultural competencies required in global workplaces.

Together, these proposals form a comprehensive strategy for modernizing Japanese language teaching in Vietnamese universities and ensuring its sustainability in the digital era.

3. Discussion

3.1. Adaptation of Teachers and Students to Innovative Methods

The adaptation of both students and lecturers to innovative methods reflects differing levels of readiness. Survey results indicate that students responded enthusiastically to interactive approaches such as blended learning and flipped classrooms. These models allowed them to access content before class, participate more actively in discussions, and engage in communicative practice beyond traditional grammar-based exercises. Gamified applications further supported motivation by transforming repetitive vocabulary learning into enjoyable challenges.

In contrast, lecturers demonstrated a more cautious approach. While many acknowledged the pedagogical benefits of digital tools, concerns emerged regarding limited digital literacy, the additional workload required

for preparing online content, and the challenge of shifting from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered model. Senior instructors, in particular, expressed difficulty adapting to platforms that demanded video editing, quiz design, and online assessment.

Positive adaptation was observed where universities provided professional development and peer-support initiatives, which reduced hesitation and fostered confidence in digital pedagogy. Ultimately, successful innovation requires alignment: students' willingness to embrace technology must be matched by lecturers' capacity and institutional commitment to training and support.

### 3.2. The Role of Technology and Infrastructure in Implementation

Technology and infrastructure play a decisive role in determining the effectiveness of innovative methods in Japanese language education. Survey findings revealed that while universities in major cities have gradually adopted digital platforms, regional institutions continue to struggle with unstable internet connections, limited access to modern classrooms, and insufficient licensed software. These gaps create unequal opportunities for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds who often rely on personal devices and mobile networks.

The adoption of gamification and AI-based learning tools illustrates both potential and limitation. Students reported positive experiences with vocabulary apps and pronunciation software, but lecturers cautioned against overreliance on AI translation systems due to concerns about accuracy and misuse. Moreover, the absence of systematic technical support made it difficult for less digitally proficient instructors to sustain regular use of these tools.

Investment in infrastructure, affordable access to e-learning platforms, and reliable technical support are therefore essential for ensuring consistency and fairness in digital transformation. Without these foundations, innovative methods risk remaining fragmented pilot projects rather than becoming integrated, sustainable practices in Japanese language education.

### 3.3. International Comparisons and Lessons for Vietnam

International experiences in Japan and Korea demonstrate that successful digital transformation in language education requires not only the introduction of technology but also systematic coordination across policy, infrastructure, and pedagogy. In Japan, universities have invested heavily in mobile applications, AI-driven feedback systems, and virtual classrooms that create immersive learning environments. Korean institutions have emphasized large-scale e-learning platforms and government-backed initiatives, ensuring that teachers receive continuous training and students benefit from equal access to resources. These contexts show that innovation becomes sustainable when technological solutions are integrated into institutional strategy rather than left to individual experimentation.

Compared with these examples, Vietnam has made meaningful progress but still faces clear limitations. The survey results suggest that students are ready to engage with digital tools, but lecturers require stronger support, and infrastructure gaps persist outside major urban areas. This contrast indicates that Vietnam's digital transformation in Japanese language education is occurring unevenly, with advanced practices concentrated in leading universities while others lag behind.

Several lessons can be drawn from international practice. First, government and institutional policies must prioritize teacher training, ensuring that lecturers acquire both technical and pedagogical skills for digital instruction. Second, investment in infrastructure is essential to reduce inequalities in access and to prevent innovative methods from being restricted to privileged groups. Third, partnerships with Japanese universities and companies should be strengthened to incorporate authentic learning materials, internships, and cross-cultural exchanges. Such initiatives not only improve linguistic competence but also prepare students for the demands of international collaboration.

Ultimately, Vietnam's trajectory demonstrates potential but requires comprehensive strategies that address human, technological, and institutional dimensions simultaneously. By aligning national policy with global standards while considering local realities, Vietnamese universities can transform Japanese language education into a model that balances innovation with inclusivity.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Japanese language education in Vietnam is experiencing a profound shift driven by the wider agenda of digital transformation in higher education. The findings of this study confirm that innovative methods such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, gamification, and AI-based applications have begun to reshape the teaching and learning process. These approaches not only increase student engagement and motivation but also encourage more autonomous learning behaviors and enhance communicative competence—skills that are critical for both academic success and future employment in international contexts.

Despite these benefits, the research also reveals persistent challenges. Limited digital infrastructure, especially in regional universities, financial barriers for both institutions and students, and the uneven readiness of lecturers remain obstacles to large-scale implementation. Without adequate investment and support, the adoption of digital tools risks remaining fragmented and unsustainable. The success of innovation depends equally on student enthusiasm and on the capacity of lecturers to adapt, which requires systematic professional development and institutional commitment.

To move forward, Vietnamese universities must adopt a holistic strategy that combines training programs for teachers, substantial upgrades in IT infrastructure, and curriculum reform that embeds digital and project-based learning. Furthermore, closer partnerships with Japanese institutions and industries will provide authentic contexts for applying language skills while aligning with labor market demands. By addressing these interconnected dimensions, Japanese language education in Vietnam can fully harness the potential of digital transformation,

improve educational quality, and reinforce Vietnam's role in fostering deeper cultural and economic cooperation with Japan..

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