



THE TRANSFORMATION OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN 2019-2025 YEARS UNIVERSITY-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 26 th October 2026 Accepted: 24 th November 2026	<p>In this research paper, the transformation of Japanese language education in Uzbekistan is examined within the broader framework of evolving Uzbek–Japanese relations. Since 2019, relations between Uzbekistan and Japan have entered a new strategic phase marked by intensified political dialogue, expanded economic cooperation, and strengthened institutional collaboration. Although significant attention has been directed toward labor mobility mechanisms, a deeper and more sustainable transformation is unfolding within the higher education sector. Japanese language education in Uzbekistan has progressed from a narrowly defined philological specialization into a strategically important academic field closely linked to international cooperation, research advancement, and university modernization. This study analyzes the development of Japanese language education between 2019 and 2025, taking into account recent bilateral agreements, high-level political initiatives, and academic partnerships. Particular emphasis is placed on the institutional role of universities and the leadership of the Uzbekistan State World Languages University in establishing and maintaining national standards in Japanese studies.</p>
Keywords: <i>Japanese language education, higher education reform, Uzbekistan Japan cooperation, academic mobility, curriculum modernization, Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Japanese studies development, Uzbek–Japanese cooperation, intercultural competence.</i>	

INTRODUCTION

The trajectory of Japanese language education in Uzbekistan cannot be separated from the broader development of Uzbek–Japanese relations over the past decade. A decisive turning point occurred in 2019 when formal cooperation frameworks between the two countries were strengthened through intergovernmental agreements. Although many of these agreements focused on economic and labor collaboration, they indirectly stimulated demand for advanced Japanese language proficiency within academic institutions. At the same time, internal reforms in Uzbekistan’s higher education system, aimed at internationalization and quality assurance, created additional incentives to modernize foreign language instruction, including Japanese studies. Between 2019 and 2025, bilateral cooperation expanded significantly.

According to a 2025 Euronews report covering high-level talks in Tokyo, Uzbekistan and Japan agreed on new cooperation projects exceeding 12 billion US dollars in value. These agreements extended across

infrastructure, energy, investment, and humanitarian exchange. Such expansion inevitably increased the need for specialists capable of operating in Japanese linguistic and cultural environments. Universities therefore became central actors in preparing academically trained and linguistically proficient graduates who can participate not only in economic projects but also in research collaboration and intercultural dialogue. In parallel with political and economic engagement, academic cooperation intensified through rector-level forums, institutional partnerships, and mobility initiatives. These developments positioned universities as strategic platforms where language education intersects with national development goals. Japanese language programs increasingly serve as gateways to broader regional studies, innovation exchange, and scholarly collaboration with Japanese institutions. Japanese language education is no longer confined to translation studies or basic language acquisition. It now functions as a strategic academic field that supports diplomatic,



technological, educational, and economic partnership, while simultaneously contributing to the modernization and international integration of Uzbekistan's higher education system.

METHODOLOGY

This research applies a qualitative analytical methodology combining policy document analysis, institutional review, and comparative educational

The agreements signed in 2019 laid the institutional groundwork for systematic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Japan. Although many of these frameworks focused on professional mobility and certification pathways, they also introduced standardized expectations for Japanese language proficiency within higher education.

By 2020, additional arrangements facilitated structured testing systems and formal mechanisms for



evaluation. Primary sources include bilateral agreements signed between 2019 and 2025, official university reports, public statements from academic forums, and international media coverage of Uzbek-Japanese cooperation and employs a descriptive-analytical approach to examine how macro-level cooperation frameworks influence micro-level curriculum reform within universities. Conceptual analysis is also used to interpret the integration of Japanese pedagogical principles such as 学習者中心教育 *gakushūsha chūshin kyōiku* (learner-centered education) and 実用的言語能力 *jitsuyōteki gengo nōryoku* (practical language competence) into Uzbek academic programs.

Rather than relying on quantitative statistical modeling, this research prioritizes structural interpretation and institutional dynamics. The objective is to assess how Japanese language education has been reshaped by international cooperation and internal educational reform.

1.1. 2019 as the Foundation of Institutional Transformation

evaluating both linguistic and vocational competence. These developments encouraged universities to revise curriculum structures and align programs with internationally recognized benchmarks. In particular, certification systems related to 特定技能 (Tokutei Ginō – Specified Skilled Worker) reinforced the importance of measurable communicative ability rather than purely theoretical knowledge. This period marked a clear transition from 文法中心 (bunpō chūshin – grammar-centered instruction) toward communicative and competence-based approaches. The emphasis shifted to functional language use in academic and professional settings, reflecting global standards in foreign language pedagogy.

1.2. Curriculum Reform and Pedagogical Modernization

Following 2020, universities across Uzbekistan initiated substantial curriculum reform. Japanese language programs increasingly integrated speaking and listening alongside reading and writing, ensuring balanced skill development. Classroom methodology began to reflect the principle of 言語と文化の一体化 (integration of language and culture), acknowledging



that linguistic proficiency cannot be separated from cultural literacy.

Figure 1. Institutional Academic Cooperation Supporting Curriculum Reform in

Japanese Language Education

As shown in the Figure 1, representatives of Uzbek and Japanese academic institutions are engaged in collaborative dialogue within a university setting, symbolizing the practical implementation of curriculum reform and pedagogical modernization. The presence of both national flags and institutional leadership highlights the formal and strategic nature of educational cooperation. Such meetings reflect the transition toward internationally aligned teaching standards, the integration of communicative methodologies, and the strengthening of intercultural academic exchange. This type of institutional interaction directly supports the principle of 言語と文化の一体化 – integration of language and culture) in contemporary Japanese language education.

Authentic Japanese materials, including contemporary media, academic publications, and audiovisual content, were incorporated to enhance contextual learning. Assessment systems were revised to measure 実用的言語能力 (practical communicative language competence) rather than memorization of grammatical structures. By 2023 and 2024, blended learning environments became widespread. Hybrid instruction combined classroom teaching with digital platforms and virtual exchange sessions with Japanese partner institutions. This transformation strengthened communicative fluency and intercultural awareness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.1 Pedagogical Outcomes and Institutional Development

The analysis of developments between 2019 and 2025 demonstrates that Japanese language education in Uzbekistan has undergone measurable structural transformation within higher education institutions. The results indicate a clear shift from traditional grammar-based instruction toward communicative, competency-oriented pedagogy aligned with 実用的言語能力 -practical language competence.

First, curriculum reform has resulted in increased emphasis on speaking and listening proficiency. Universities have integrated blended learning formats and authentic materials, which improved functional language use in academic and professional contexts. This confirms the gradual

replacement of 文法中心 -grammar-centered methodology with interactive approaches grounded in 学習者中心教育 learner-centered education.

Second, institutional cooperation has expanded significantly. Academic mobility programs, rector-level forums, and joint educational initiatives have strengthened alignment with Japanese pedagogical standards. The results suggest that university-based modernization is directly linked to broader bilateral cooperation frameworks established after 2019.

Third, the role of the Uzbekistan State World Languages University has become increasingly institutionalized. The university functions not only as a teaching center but also as a methodological and research hub, reinforcing the principle of 研究と教育の連携 (integration of research and education). This institutional consolidation enhances sustainability of Japanese studies at the national level.

Digital transformation after 2020 further accelerated modernization. The integration of hybrid teaching models and virtual exchanges increased intercultural competence and supported ongoing 国際化 (kokusaika – internationalization) of higher education. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the evolution of Japanese language education in Uzbekistan is not merely a response to labor demand frameworks such as 特定技能 (Tokutei Ginō), but rather a comprehensive academic transformation rooted in university reform. The discussion suggests that long-term sustainability depends on continued curriculum innovation, research expansion, and deepening institutional partnerships.

1.2. The Institutional Leadership of Uzbekistan State World Languages University

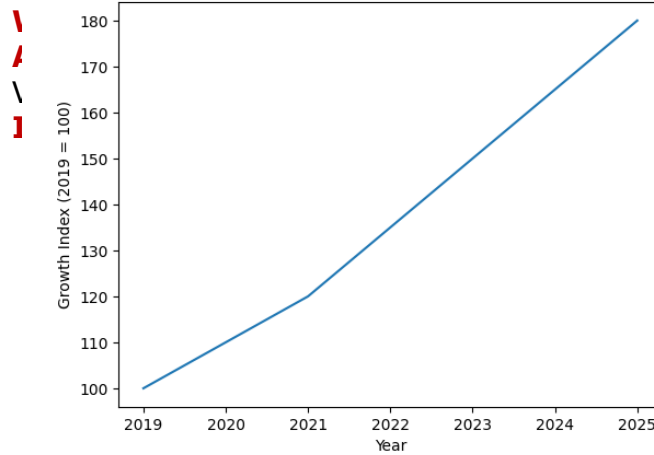
The Uzbekistan State World Languages University plays a decisive leadership role in shaping Japanese language education nationwide. As the country's principal institution specializing in foreign language pedagogy, it functions as a methodological and academic center responsible for setting national standards in Japanese studies.

Since 2019, the university has modernized its curriculum, expanded academic cooperation with Japanese institutions, and strengthened participation in international conferences and exchange programs. It prepares future Japanese language instructors who later serve across universities and schools, ensuring



systemic continuity and quality assurance. The university also promotes research in Japanese linguistics, translation studies, and regional analysis. Through

Structural Growth of Japanese Language Education in Uzbekistan (2019-2025)



postgraduate education and scholarly publication, it advances the institutionalization of Japanese studies within Uzbekistan's higher education system.

Figure 2. The Fifth Forum of Rectors of Uzbek and Japanese Universities Supporting Academic Cooperation and Institutional Development

As shown in the Figure 2, the representatives of Uzbek and Japanese higher education institutions are signing official cooperation documents during the Fifth Forum of Rectors of Uzbek and Japanese Universities. The presence of both national flags and the formal academic setting reflects the strategic nature of inter-university collaboration. Such rector-level forums play a crucial role in strengthening institutional partnerships, expanding academic mobility, and advancing Japanese language education within the broader framework of internationalization and curriculum modernization.





Figure 3. Structural Growth of Japanese Language Education in Uzbekistan (2019–2025)

As observed in the diagram, the development of Japanese language education in Uzbekistan between 2019 and 2025 demonstrates a consistent upward trajectory when measured against the baseline index of 100 in 2019. From a methodological perspective, this growth is not merely quantitative but reflects qualitative transformation within higher education institutions. The data presented in the diagram suggest that the transformation of Japanese language education is not episodic but structurally embedded within university reform processes. If institutional coordination and academic partnerships continue to strengthen, the current growth trajectory is likely to remain stable and sustainable.

CONCLUSION

The developments observed between 2019 and 2025 indicate a structural reconfiguration of Japanese language education within Uzbekistan's higher education system. Policy-level engagement between Uzbekistan and Japan created favorable conditions for academic renewal, yet the decisive transformation has occurred at the institutional level. Universities have redefined program objectives, modernized teaching practices, and strengthened international engagement mechanisms.

Instructional approaches have moved beyond theory-based models toward communicative proficiency and intercultural literacy. The integration of digital platforms, hybrid learning environments, and mobility initiatives has enhanced educational quality and expanded global connectivity. These changes reflect a broader process of 国際化 (kokusaika – internationalization) within Uzbek higher education.

The Uzbekistan State World Languages University has assumed a strategic role in shaping national standards, preparing qualified instructors, and consolidating research activity in Japanese studies. Its academic leadership ensures continuity, methodological coherence, and long-term stability.

Future progress will depend on sustained institutional investment, deeper scholarly collaboration with Japanese partners, and continued alignment with evolving global educational standards. With consistent

reform and strategic planning, Japanese studies in Uzbekistan can strengthen its academic depth, interdisciplinary relevance, and international competitiveness.

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