

**International Symposium of Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
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Obstacles Confronted by Japanese Learners of Sri Lanka in Studying**

Japanese Homonyms

1. Abstract

This research is to identify the problems of Japanese Language learners in Sri Lanka. Specifically the problems they face when learning homonyms in Japanese language. The goal is to carrying out a study on ,meaning and usage of Japanese homonym in order to find proper methods on learning and teaching Japanese in Universities.

This research illustrates the types of homophones, examples for homophones and word games in Japanese Language. It also explains the usage of some of them. Further it is illustrates the problems of learners according to the information collected from questionnaire and the solutions of the problems.

The study examines Japanese Language Learners of Sri Lanka from 3categories. Japanese learners study for Advanced level examination (wish to enter universities to follow Japanese Degree), Japanese learners at the university (2nd and 3rd year students those who reading for Japanese language Degree), Graduates who are majoring Japanese language.

A questioner and interviews were used to collect data about student's level of awareness and their perception towards homonyms in Japanese language. The preliminary results of the study shows that knowledge gap between 3 categories of homonyms are not much different. Which means that Japanese learners do not focus on the Japanese homonyms even in universities.

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

A homonym of Japanese is a combination of words which has different meanings and origins, although pronunciation or writing style is sameⁱ. In Japanese when it comes to the pronunciation of “Au” there are three different meanings for the same pronunciation. They are 1.meet with someone, 2.met with an accident, 3.matching or suitableⁱⁱ. According to the writing style of the letters meanings are different from each other. When the author went to study in Japan for a year, felt it was hard for international students to understand homonyms in Japanese. And the author went through the previous researches on same title. In That research Sri Lankan students were not participated. With this in mind, I thought that I would like to investigate about homonyms further and the knowledge of Sri Lankan Japanese

Learners on Homonyms. Then I ask myself “Why Japanese homonyms are difficult For Japanese learners of Sri Lanka?” And “How can I make them understand Japanese homonyms?” Mostly Japanese language proficiency test and University exams check Japanese learner's knowledge on

Japanese Homonymsⁱⁱⁱ. I think that it is necessary to accurately memorize the expression of homonyms to pass Japanese ability test and Alevel examination.

3. Research Methodology

According to qualitative research methods Primary and secondary data collecting methods were used to identify the key factors. Primary data were taken from Japanese learners in Sri Lanka. Questionnaire and unstructured interviews were conducted to gather data. Secondary data were collected by studying prior Researches, books, magazines, Newspaper articles, and websites from both Japan and Sri Lanka. The questionnaire was made around the selected 20 words. The questionnaire includes 30 questions. Questions are made to find out the Japanese homophone knowledge of the students. Questionnaires are distributed to high school students at Ferguson High School(13) and second and third year students at Sabaragamuwa University, and to graduates of Sabaragamuwa University (graduated one to three years ago from now) to collect primary information. Then we can understand which category should focus more on the Japanese Homonyms.

4. Results and findings

Japanese learners in Sri Lanka find it difficult to identify the meaning of Japanese homonym when writing and listening. They make a lot of mistakes when they answer Examinations like Japanese Language proficiency tests. Meanings of letters vary according to the writing style. Without accurate understanding about homonym students cannot select the correct word for the context. 70% of Japanese learners do not know what the homonyms are in Japanese language. Less focus towards Japanese word categories is the main reason for students to keep on making common errors. In the university syllabus and school text books, homonyms are not given in the same lesson. Therefore students find it difficult to understand the difference between the homonyms. And also without translating Japanese dictionaries to Sinhala it is difficult to understand the meaning of homonyms. Those who have achieved standard level in Japanese, have little knowledge about understanding homonyms in Japanese. Therefore we can assume to pass Japanese language proficiency test students need a deep understanding about homonyms in Japanese language.

Most of the Japanese learners do not know that homonyms are appearing in the Japanese language proficiency test. And also there are very limited researches have done about Japanese homonyms based on Sri Lankan Japanese learner's context. There is no dictionary with Sinhalese meaning to get the real meaning. Even if studying in consultation with the Japanese, it is hard to understand the meaning of homonyms because it is not taught compared with Sinhalese. In Sri Lanka it's difficult to find dictionaries about homonyms.

Homonyms are difficult words to remember. However, if you do understand the meaning without memorizing the meaning of the words, it is easier to remember. In Japanese, similes give totally different

meaning when considered it in mother tongue. Here the author has introduced five tricks to understand Japanese Homonyms. And it will help students to easily remember homonyms. When you study homonyms you have to be careful about particle and Object. Students need to know which one to use with which homonyms. However, it turned out that Sri Lankan Japanese learners did not understand that much. Collect homonyms and make them into tables and learn while understanding the differences. Remember with, opposite words, Learn with a particle, Learn with a picture card and also learn with the comparison to Sinhala.

4. Conclusions, implications and significance

Sri Lankan Japanese learners have not participated for previous researches done by Japanese researchers before. Therefore this will be a unique research which identifies obstacles faced by Sri Lankan Japanese Learners when learning homonyms in Japanese Language.

The activities like reading, using and making picture cards for homonyms, understanding the usage and understanding the difference between Sinhala and Japanese homonyms can improve the knowledge. Innovative teaching methods are more effective towards improving student's ability. Japanese teachers can motivate students towards homonyms in Japanese.

5. References (Selected)

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