

The Impact of Internship in Japan for A Chinese Student Of Japanese-Major

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The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of internships based on interviews with three students with internship experience coming to Japan. The internship in Japan is very valuable because in China, Japanese-major students cannot interact with native Japanese speakers easily. Although it is held by the school, students can sign up for the internship if they wish, and it is not mandatory. In order to analysis the impact of this internship on the students, in this study, the interviews would be held at the timing of four years after they return to China, reflect on their internship experience, and focus on some their lives or works situations during these four years. After interviewing one student, the impact of such internships was summarized in three main areas: "Capacity Building", "Future Planning" and "Relationships Building". The former mainly refers to the improvement of students' own Japanese language skills, especially in listening and speaking. The latter is to better adapt to the environment and understand the behavior of Japanese people when interacting with them in their work, such as faster adaptation to the Japanese workplace atmosphere. Compared with the previous studies, although the findings of "Improve language learning skills" are basically the same, the students in this study have a deeper appreciation of "Promote understanding of cultural differences" because they have had four years to practice what they have learnt from this internship.

Keywords: foreign language education, internship, interview, Japanese major, qualitative study

Introduction

1 Background

1.1 The significance of internship

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2013) defined the significance of internships as "a beneficial initiative that deepens students' university studies and stimulates their desire to learn new things, as well as providing students with opportunities to think about their own career aptitude and future plans, and to develop independent career choices and high professional awareness. Chinese Ministry of Education has also noted the significance of internships. Strengthening university students' practical skills, innovative spirit, and sense of social responsibility is an important part of enhancing the quality of higher education human resource development. It states that internships are an important way to

achieve these.

These guidelines by the education departments of China and Japan place great emphasis on university students participating in internships to experience the society and to use their language knowledge. This makes it even more important for university students to participate in internships.

1.2 Internships for students at foreign universities

1.2.1 Importance

Over the past few years, many Japanese companies have begun to focus on labor from abroad: as of October 2016, the number of foreign workers in Japan surpassed 1 million for the first time, rising to 1.66 million by 2019. One reason for this is the shortage of labor due to the decline in Japan's domestic workforce. Another reason is the increasing demand for workers who can communicate in foreign languages to cope with the current globalization and increase in the number of tourists from abroad. One way to attract such foreign labor to Japan is to accept foreign university students for internships.

In addition, Chinese universities require university students to participate in internships, regardless of where they take place. Among them, many universities especially recommend internships in Japan for students majoring in Japanese. Many foreign university students who come to Japan for internships expect to improve their own Japanese language skills and learn about Japanese culture.

Therefore, having Chinese university students majoring in Japanese come to Japan for an internship can satisfy both needs.

1.2.2 Current Status of this internship

In Japan, the lack of an adequate guidance system in recent years has led to the identification of inappropriate internships at some receiving institutions. Therefore, the Immigration and Residency Management Agency has formulated new "Guidelines for Internships (Status of Residence "Designated Activities") Conducted by Students of Foreign Universities". In it, they have stipulated the implementation system for internships conducted by students at foreign universities (hereinafter referred to as "internship in Japan"), the number of internship students, and so on. However, due to the new coronavirus infection, this internship in Japan was suspended in the same year.

1.3 Internships for Chinese students of Japanese majors

1.3.1 Current State of Japanese Language Learning in China

Japanese culture has become even more popular in China due to economic exchange and cultural communication between Japan and China. According to the results of the "2015 Survey of Japanese Language Institutions in China," the number of Chinese students learning Japanese has decreased by about 100,000 compared to FY2012, but has still reached 960,000, ranking first in the world. In addition, as many as 7.3 million Chinese tourists visited Japan in FY2017, indicating that Chinese people's favorable impression of Japan is increasing. (Li & Shu 2018)

Zhao (2021) explained the current status of Japanese language education in China in his study "Current Status and Issues of Japanese Language Education in China". According to Zhao (2021), the introduction of Japanese language education in primary education, Japanese as a second foreign language in addition to

Japanese as an examination subject in secondary school, Japanese as a compulsory second foreign language subject or an elective subject in higher education (so-called public Japanese), and Japanese as a hobby or culture for working people, etc. The "diversification of learning motives" is said to be one of the characteristics of Japanese language education in China.

1.3.2 Prior Research

Students majoring in Japanese who participate in this internship program will receive three months of training at a designated Japanese company. During these three months, students will not only receive a salary, but will also experience life in Japan and improve their Japanese language skills. Students will have the opportunity to speak Japanese with native speakers in a Japanese-speaking environment.

There are numerous studies on such internships. When Sun (2018) conducted a study on overseas internships that provide cross-cultural experience in Japanese language specialties, he found that from the two perspectives of cultural and language education, "improving students' adaptability to employment," "presenting new requirements for Japanese language teaching modes," and "creating innovative educational platforms." Focusing on three areas, the study analyzed the effectiveness of internships conducted in Japan. It has become clear that cultural and language education can promote each other, and since a combination of both is important, it is necessary to also focus on both cultural and language education when innovating Japanese language education.

Mi and Xie (2019) conducted a study on the connection between intercultural communication and Japanese language education. Mi and Xie pointed out that although the development of human resources with cross-cultural communication skills is an important goal for Japanese language specialists, various differences in history, values, and national identity between Japan and China inevitably create barriers and misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication when Japanese speakers communicate with Japanese people. The Japanese language specialist pointed out an existing communication problem that inevitably causes cross-cultural communication barriers and misunderstandings when Japanese speakers communicate with Japanese due to various differences in history, values, and nationality. To solve this, it is important to provide learning opportunities that allow students to practice and improve their Japanese language skills in a Japanese language environment (Mi and Xie 2019).

However, this research so far has analyzed their impressions of the internship and what they learned, based on questionnaires or interviews twice, just before their arrival in Japan and just after their return. In this way, the memories and thoughts of the participants were certainly clear. However, there was no time for practice, and no time to test whether what they had learned in Japan was really useful. Therefore, the author believes that the problem exists that the students' evaluation of the internship at that point cannot be trusted. To solve this, it was believed that it is necessary to provide participants with time to confirm the practicality of what they have learned. Therefore, the interviews in this study will be conducted with three participants who have internship experience four years after their return to China.

2 The purpose of research

The purpose of this study is to reflect on the internship experience of three students with internship experience in Japan, based on interviews conducted four years after their return to China, and to clearly analyze the impact from the internship, focusing on various learning, work, and other life situations during

these four years.

Methods

1 Qualitative Analysis

In this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted to gain a better understanding of the participants' perspectives on the impact on the participants from the coming internship in Japan, and qualitative analysis will be conducted. In order to better understand the participants' thoughts, the interview is an effective data collection technique (Rubin, 1995). And it was believed that qualitative analysis, which follows the interview data, is an effective way for participants to identify what impact their internship had on them.

2 Targets Person

Because this paper focus on the impact from the internship from a retrospective perspective, the interviews are not conducted immediately after the internship is over. The participants will return to their home countries, graduate from college, consider whether to continue to higher education or find a job, and live out their chosen career path. For this reason, the subjects of this study participated in the internship program when they were in their third year of college and had already been back home for about four years by the time of the interview. Two were in their third year of college and one was in his fourth year of college at the time of participation in the internship.

Table 1 *Basic situation of the three students*

Name	G	T	K
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Years of Japanese language study (Until participated in the internship)	Two and a half years	Three and a half years	Three years
University	A university in Shanghai	A university in Zhejiang Province	A university in Shandong Province
Duration of internship	2017.12~2018.03	2017.12~2018.02	2018.07~2018.10

3 Internship Overview

These internships include activities that provide opportunities to speak Japanese in Japan. Japanese language majors who participate in the internship stay in Japan for about three months, working and engaging in activities to learn about Japanese culture and society. They also have the opportunity to visit hot springs and go skiing on their rest. Internships in Japan usually take place during summer or winter vacation. Although the school sponsors the internship, students can apply for an internship if they wish, and it is not mandatory. 3 months is more than the length of a vacation, and although the intern will miss one or two weeks of classes, it is not recorded as an absence for the intern, and the intern can do the internship for as long as possible without worry. The internship can be done for as long as possible with peace of mind. Of course, the internship period is only 3 months, but during that time, the interns can work with Japanese people for 6 to 8 hours almost every day, which gives them plenty of time to practice their Japanese language skills. In addition to experiencing Japanese culture and practicing Japanese, the internship also allows the intern to receive a salary, making it possible for the intern to become self-sufficient in Japan without placing a financial burden on their family.

The following is a case study of one incoming internship in Japan.

One of the student K was able to participate in this internship when she was a third-year undergraduate student; she worked at KRR Hotel in Hokkaido for about three months, from July 18, 2018, to October 18, 2018.

The job description is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *Internship Details*

Duration	Place	Content	Number of interns (Chinese)
2018/7/18~2018/8/15	buffet restaurant	Preparation, cleaning	6
2018/8/16~2018/9/15	frond	Translation, reservations, directions, snow cleaning	2
2018/9/16~2018/10/18	House keeping	Room cleaning, Replenishing consumables	4

4 Data Collection and Analysis

For data collection, the three students will be briefed on the survey and interviewed individually. Consent to conduct and record the interviews and analyze the data will also be obtained in advance. Interviews will be conducted at a distance using ZOOM to prevent coronary transmission.

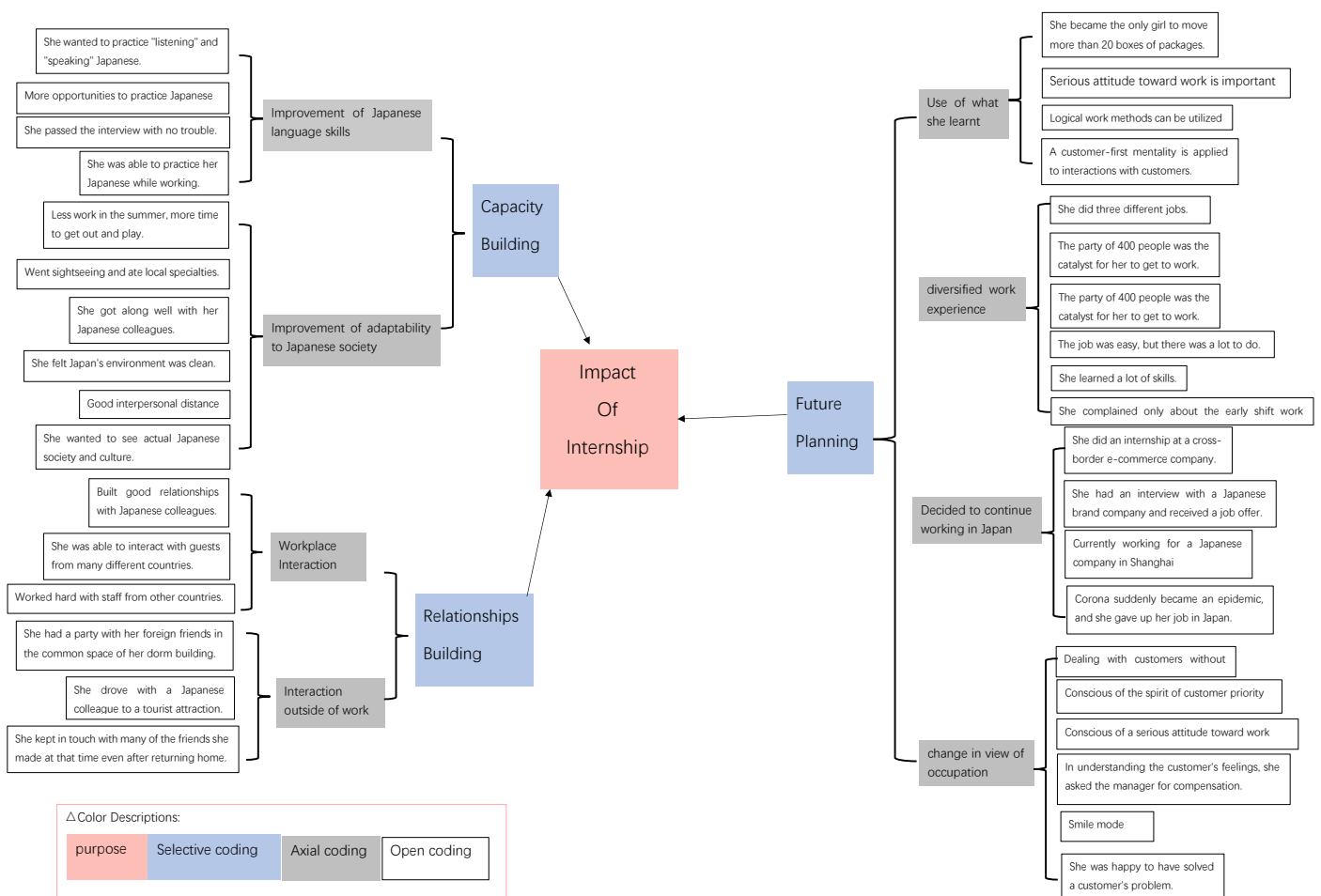
Table 3 *Interview Questions*

- 1、 What were your reasons for participating in the internship?
- 2、 Reflecting on your internship experience
- 3、 In the past four years, what career path have you been living?
- 4、 During the past four years, were there any moments or situations in your daily life or at work where you remembered that internship and thought it was useful? Or did you think it had no impact at all after it was over?

For data analysis, based on the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) method, the work included fragmenting the interview data to be transcribed, coding it, comparing it with other fragments and materials, categorizing the data with common themes, naming the categories, and forming and conceptualizing super categories while considering relationships among the categories (Corbin- Straus, 2014).

Result

Figure 1 The analysis of student K’s internship



Interviews were conducted twice between May and June 2022. The results are roughly shown in the Figure 1. From this interview, the influences from the internship can be divided into three categories: “Capacity Building”, “Future Planning” and “Relationships Building”.

When student K first came to Japan for her internship, she did not understand Japanese society, and she was not confident in her own Japanese, but the “party with 400 customers” was an opportunity for her to get into the job. As time went by, communication with Japanese and Vietnamese colleagues at work gradually deepened, and her Japanese language skills improved more and more. In the process, she became good

friends with her Japanese colleagues, which facilitated her communication with the Japanese and improved her ability to adapt to Japanese society. Thus, the first conclusion is “Capacity Building”.

Throughout the three-month internship, she was able to experience three different types of work, and her Japanese improved because she often practiced speaking and listening to Japanese. And she was impressed by Japanese people's attitude toward work, such as “smile mode” and “customer-first spirit”, which changed her view of profession. Therefore, she decided to “continue working in Japan” even after her internship was over and she returned to China. After much preparation, she received a job offer from a certain luxury brand company in Japan. However, because of Corona, she was unable to travel to Japan, and her employment in Japan was also suspended. Instead, she joined a Japanese company in Shanghai. There, too, she was able to put to use the things she learned from her internship, such as a “serious attitude” and “customer-first spirit”. Therefore, the second conclusion was “Future Planning”.

And she was able to take a lot of "workplace interaction" because this hotel had not only guests from all over the world, but also staff from different countries. And since all the staff lived in the same dormitory building, after work every day, she was able to play and talk with people from different countries and was exposed to many cultures. In the process, she became good at communicating with people and made many friends. So, the third conclusion was “Relationships Building”.

Discussion

According to the interview with student K, the impact of internship can be summarized into three points: “Capacity Building”, “Future Planning” and “Relationships Building”. This will be followed by interviews with two other students. Finally, the data from the three will be integrated in order to finally come up with the impact of this type of internship.

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