

## REVIEW

# A Scientometric Exploration of Japanese Language Teaching and Learning Research: Patterns, Hotspots, and Emerging Frontiers

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## ABSTRACT

This study provides a comprehensive scientometric mapping of global research on Japanese language teaching and learning over the past 25 years. Using the Scopus database as the sole data source, a total of 299 relevant articles published between 2000 and 2025 were retrieved and analyzed. Bibliometric techniques were applied using VOSviewer and Biblioshiny to examine publication trends, geographical distribution, prolific authors and institutions, collaboration networks, keyword co-occurrence, and emerging research themes. The results reveal a consistent upward trajectory in publication output, with a marked surge in the last decade and a peak in 2024. Japan emerges as the most productive country, followed by Australia and the United States, while universities in Asia and Oceania, such as Monash University, UNSW Sydney, and Hiroshima University, are identified as key research hubs. Author collaborations tend to occur in small groups, with limited cross-institutional or international partnerships. Keyword mapping highlights dominant themes such as learning motivation, learner identity, and technology integration, alongside the rise of newer topics including collaborative learning and the pedagogical use of popular cultural media, such as anime. These findings underscore both the maturity and diversification of research in this field, while also pointing to gaps in global collaboration. The study offers strategic insights for researchers, educators, and policymakers to foster more inclusive, innovative, and interdisciplinary approaches to Japanese language education in the future.

**Keywords:** Japanese Language Teaching; Japanese Language Learning; Motivation; Identity; Educational Technology

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# 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, Japanese language teaching and learning have developed into a dynamic, multicultural field within global education<sup>[1,2]</sup>. This growth is closely linked to rising global interest in Japanese culture, economy, and technology, which has increased demand for Japanese language competence across education, business, tourism, and diplomacy<sup>[3,4]</sup>. In formal education, Japanese is now taught in thousands of institutions worldwide, from elementary and secondary schools to higher education<sup>[1,5]</sup>.

International initiatives, such as student exchange programs, Japanese government scholarships (e.g., MEXT), and cross-country academic collaborations, have played a key role in expanding Japanese language education abroad<sup>[6,7]</sup>. Interest in learning Japanese extends well beyond East Asia to Southeast Asia, the United States, Australia, Europe, and Africa<sup>[8,9]</sup>. This is reflected in the steady growth of Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) participants and the proliferation of Japanese language learning communities, both online and offline<sup>[10,11]</sup>.

The inherent complexity of the Japanese language presents both challenges and opportunities. Its unique writing system combining hiragana, katakana, and thousands of kanji characters requires distinctive teaching approaches<sup>[12]</sup>. Beyond linguistics, learning Japanese involves engaging with cultural norms and social etiquette that may differ markedly from learners' own contexts<sup>[13,14]</sup>. Research frequently discusses difficulties with kanji acquisition, grammatical differences, and the need for culturally responsive pedagogy in multicultural classrooms<sup>[15,16]</sup>.

Technological advances have also transformed language education. The integration of language learning apps, anime and popular media, blended learning, and e-learning platforms has accelerated, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>[17-19]</sup>. Recent studies have increasingly addressed psychological and social dimensions, such as motivation, anxiety, learner identity, and multilingual classroom interaction<sup>[20-22]</sup>. These developments show that Japanese language education is not merely about transferring linguistic knowledge, but also about fostering intercultural competence and global understanding<sup>[23,24]</sup>.

Despite this diversity, few comprehensive studies have systematically mapped research developments, collaboration patterns, and thematic hotspots in this field. Most previous

reviews are narrative or focus narrowly on specific topics, offering limited quantitative insight into the global research landscape. Scientometric analysis can address this gap by identifying key trends, prolific contributors, collaboration networks, and emerging research frontiers<sup>[25]</sup>.

Therefore, this study aims to map the research landscape of Japanese language teaching and learning from 2000 to 2024 using a scientometric approach. It examines publication trends, research hotspots, collaboration patterns, and frontier topics that have emerged in recent years. Specifically, it seeks to answer:

1. What are the trends, patterns, and main contributions in Japanese language teaching and learning research in terms of authors, institutions, and countries?
2. What are the main research topics and newly emerging areas (hotspots and emerging frontiers) that have developed over the past two decades?

The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the field's development and offer strategic recommendations for researchers, educators, and policymakers.

# 2. Materials and Methods

## 2.1. Study Design

This study employed a bibliometric (scientometric) approach, which is a quantitative method for analysing scientific literature and mapping developments, collaboration patterns, and major topics within a scientific field<sup>[26]</sup>. Bibliometric analysis is highly relevant for providing a comprehensive overview of research trends, leading contributors, and topic dynamics in Japanese language teaching and learning research<sup>[27]</sup>. Through the mapping of collaboration networks and thematic visualization, this study aims to identify the knowledge structure and research evolution in the field on a global scale.

The study design is descriptive-exploratory, with a primary focus on mapping publication trends, geographical distribution, author and institutional collaboration, as well as identifying research hotspots and frontier areas in Japanese language teaching and learning. All processes were conducted systematically using secondary data, without intervention on research subjects. Analyses were performed using specialized bibliometric software to ensure the objectivity,

accuracy, and reproducibility of the results.

## 2.2. Data Source

The main data source for this research was the Scopus database (Elsevier), one of the largest and most comprehensive scientific databases in the world. Scopus was selected due to its extensive coverage, including thousands of internationally reputable journals across various disciplines, and its provision of rich and structured bibliographic metadata, such as author information, institution, country of origin, keywords, and citation counts. This database is also widely used in bibliometric studies due to its reliability in supporting trend analysis, collaboration network mapping, and scientific topic visualization.

The exclusive use of Scopus was also a deliberate methodological choice to ensure consistency of metadata format, facilitate standardized processing, and minimize duplication of records across multiple sources. However, we acknowledge that this approach may have excluded some relevant publications indexed in other databases (e.g., Web of Science, ERIC, regional indexes). As such, the findings should

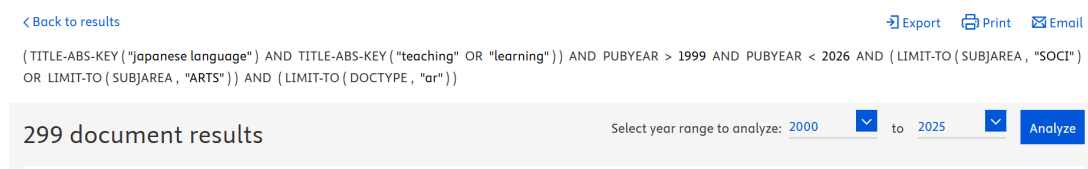
be interpreted within the context of Scopus-indexed literature, and future studies could benefit from multi-database integration to enhance coverage.

Data collection was conducted in June 2025. All documents meeting the search criteria were exported in Comma-Separated Values (CSV) format for further processing using bibliometric analysis software such as VOSviewer and Biblioshiny.

## 2.3. Search Strategy

The search strategy in this study was designed to identify all scientific publications relevant to the topic of Japanese language teaching and learning. The search process was carried out in the Scopus database using a structured combination of keywords to obtain specific and comprehensive results. The search query used is presented in **Figure 1**. The search was performed in the title, abstract, and keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY), so only articles that explicitly discuss the Japanese language in the context of teaching or learning were included in the search results.

### Analyze search results



< Back to results

Export Print Email

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("japanese language") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("teaching" OR "learning")) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "ARTS")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar"))

299 document results

Select year range to analyze: 2000 to 2025 Analyze

**Figure 1.** Search result display and filter settings in the Scopus database.

In the selection process, this study only included original research articles published between 2000 and 2025 and originating from the fields of Social Sciences or Arts. All documents analysed had to directly address the topic of Japanese language teaching or learning. In contrast, articles such as reviews, conference proceedings, editorials, letters to the editor, and non-article documents were excluded from the analysis. In addition, publications that were not available in full text or deemed irrelevant to the study's focus were also not included. The final search and selection process resulted in 299 articles meeting all criteria and being exported for further analysis.

## 2.4. Data Extraction and Processing

All bibliographic data obtained from the Scopus search were exported in Comma-Separated Values (CSV) format to facilitate subsequent processing and analysis. The extracted data included key information such as article titles, author names, institutional affiliations, publication years, journal names, keywords, abstracts, and citation counts. The data export was conducted directly using the export feature provided by Scopus to ensure the completeness and accuracy of each document's metadata.

The next step was data cleaning and standardization.

This process involved checking for duplicates, standardizing author and institution names, and harmonizing keyword terms to avoid variations in spelling that could affect network analysis results. Data cleaning was also performed to ensure that every analysed article fully met the established inclusion criteria.

Once the data were ready, all information was analysed using the VOSviewer and Biblioshiny software. VOSviewer was utilized to build and visualize collaboration networks among authors, institutions, and countries, as well as to conduct keyword co-occurrence analysis. Biblioshiny was used for descriptive statistical analysis, word cloud generation, trend topic analysis, and visualizing publication trends and keyword distribution. The analysis process was conducted systematically and iteratively to ensure the validity of the results.

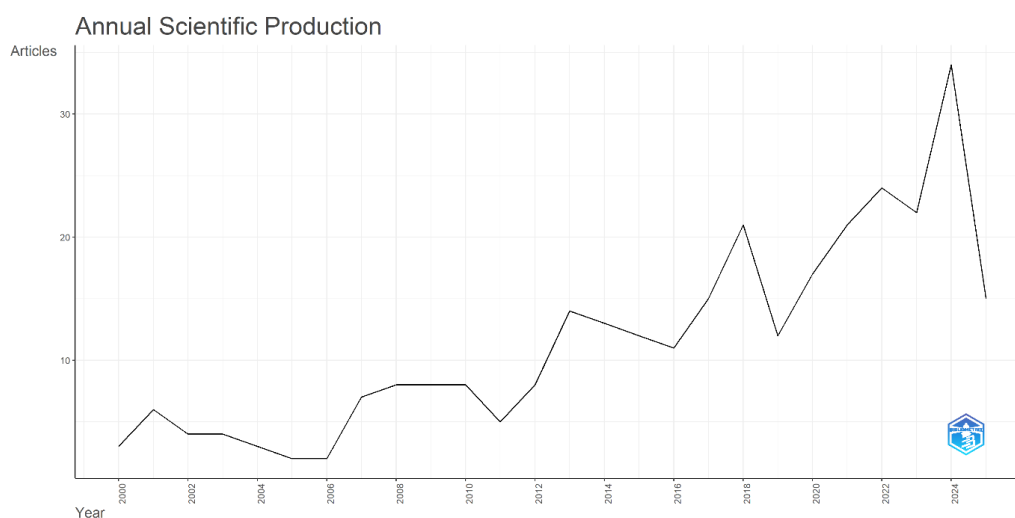
In addition, several basic descriptive visualizations, such as "documents by country," "documents by affiliation," and "documents by author," were generated directly from the built-in analytics features in Scopus. These charts provided an initial overview of the distribution of publications by country, institution, and most productive authors prior

to further network and thematic analysis using bibliometric software.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. General Characteristics of the Publications

This bibliometric analysis covers 299 scientific articles on Japanese language teaching and learning published between 2000 and 2025. Over the past two decades, the number of publications in this field has shown a consistently increasing trend, reflecting the growing interest and attention of researchers in this topic globally. As shown in **Figure 2**, the early phase (2000–2010) was characterized by a relatively low and fluctuating number of publications, averaging fewer than ten articles per year. However, beginning in 2012, there was a marked surge, signalling the onset of more rapid growth. A more significant increase is evident in the last five years, with the highest number of publications occurring in 2024, exceeding 35 articles. Following this peak, a sharp decline is observed in 2025, which is most likely due to the limited time available for data collection within the current year.



**Figure 2.** Annual publication trends on Japanese language teaching and learning.

This upward trend can be interpreted as an indication of the increasing attention paid by academics, educators, and policymakers to issues related to Japanese language teaching and learning. Moreover, this dynamic development may also reflect responses to global changes, such as the rise in student exchanges, advances in educational technology, and

the growing interest in Japanese culture across various countries. These findings are consistent with global reports on the increase in Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) participants and the expanding integration of Japanese language into school and university curricula outside Japan. The marked growth over the past decade sets the stage for

examining how research topics, collaboration networks, and thematic priorities have evolved alongside this expansion.

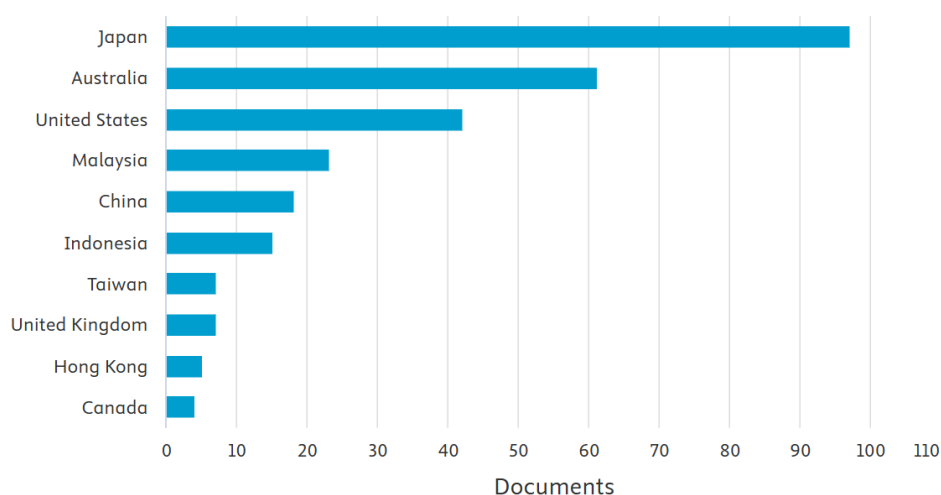
### 3.2. Distribution of Publications by Country, Institution, and Author

The distribution of publications by country (**Figure 3**) shows that Japan is the dominant contributor, producing nearly one-third of all articles in the dataset. This dominance

is unsurprising, given that Japanese language teaching is a major domestic academic discipline supported by substantial government funding, specialized teacher training programs, and strong research traditions in applied linguistics. The prevalence of Japanese-based research is also reinforced by the country's role as both the origin of the language and the primary source of pedagogical materials, assessment frameworks, and language policy development.

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of documents by country.

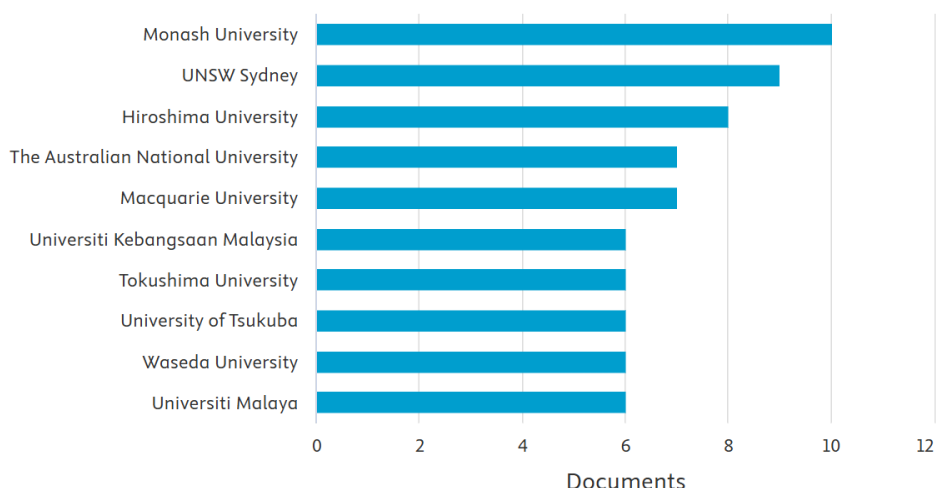
Australia and the United States rank second and third, respectively, as the most productive contributors outside Japan. Australia's strong position is linked to its long-standing academic and cultural ties with Japan, high numbers of Japanese language learners in schools and universities, and active professional networks such as the Japanese Studies Association of Australia. The United States' output reflects its extensive higher education infrastructure, diverse immigrant communities, and interest in Japanese culture, particularly through popular media such as anime and manga, which has driven demand for language study. Malaysia, China, and Indonesia also contribute significantly, highlighting the growing popularity of Japanese in Southeast and East Asia, often driven by government-led educational initiatives, student exchange programs, and regional economic partnerships with Japan. Other active countries, including Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and Canada, show that research on Japanese language teaching and learning extends across mul-

iple continents, albeit with smaller publication counts.

At the institutional level (**Figure 4**), Australian universities particularly Monash University and UNSW Sydney lead in productivity. These institutions have well-established Japanese language programs, dedicated research centres, and long-standing academic exchange agreements with Japanese universities. In Japan, Hiroshima University, Tokushima University, the University of Tsukuba, and Waseda University emerge as leading contributors, all of which host specialized departments or research groups focusing on language pedagogy and intercultural communication. Malaysian institutions, notably Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Malaya, demonstrate remarkable productivity in Southeast Asia, often collaborating with Japanese partners on curriculum development and teacher training programs. This distribution underscores the presence of regional centres of excellence, with Asia and Oceania emerging as the primary hubs of Japanese language research.

## Documents by affiliation

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.



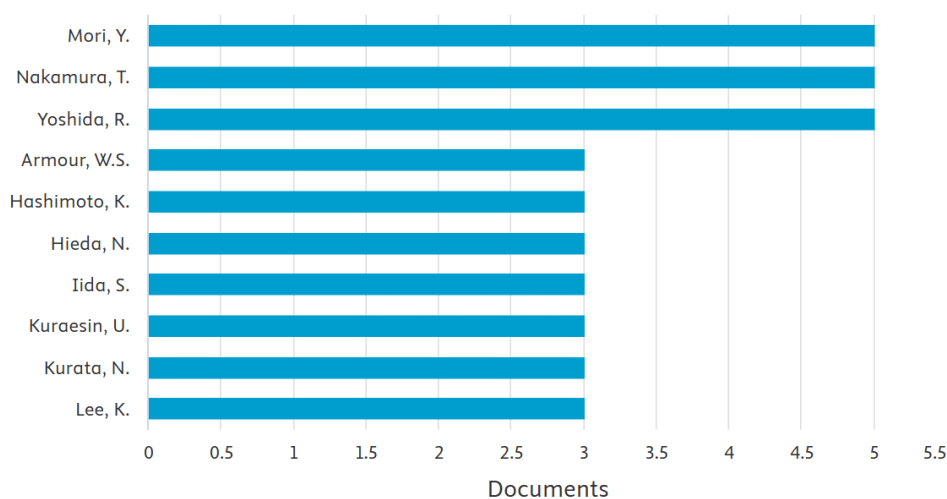
**Figure 4.** Distribution of documents by institution.

At the author level (**Figure 5**), productivity appears relatively evenly distributed, with no single researcher dominating the field. Notable contributors include Mori Y., Nakamura T., and Yoshida R., each with five publications, alongside numerous other authors producing consistent outputs over time. This even spread of authorship suggests that Japanese language teaching and learning is a highly col-

laborative and interdisciplinary research domain, attracting contributions from linguists, educators, psychologists, and cultural studies scholars. The diversity of authorship also indicates that the field benefits from a variety of methodological perspectives, ranging from classroom-based empirical studies to large-scale curriculum evaluations and technology integration research.

## Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.



**Figure 5.** Distribution of documents by author.

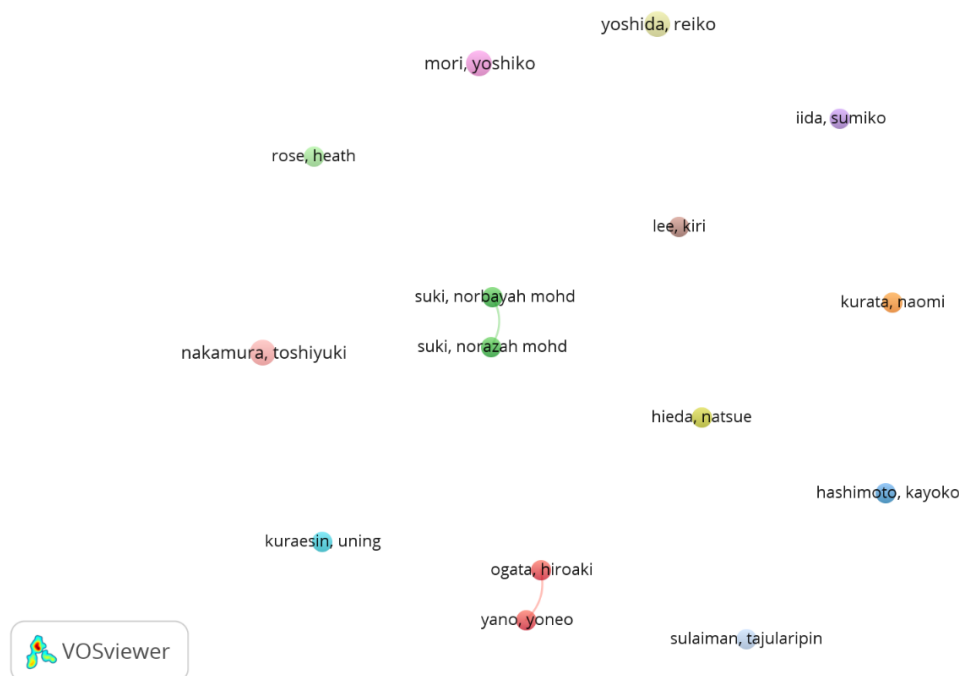
Taken together, these patterns highlight the global and collaborative nature of Japanese language teaching and learning research. The presence of multiple geographic and institutional hubs, combined with distributed authorship, suggests an academic ecosystem that is both dynamic and inclusive. These findings naturally lead to a deeper exploration of how researchers connect and collaborate across national and institutional boundaries, which is examined in the next section on collaboration networks.

### 3.3. Collaboration Analysis and Research Network Patterns

The analysis of author collaboration networks (**Figure 6**) reveals that research in Japanese language teaching and learning remains largely characterized by individual scholarship or work within small, tightly connected groups. The co-authorship visualization displays numerous isolated nodes,

indicating that many researchers publish without direct collaboration beyond their immediate institutional or regional circles. Even among the most prolific authors such as Yoshiko Mori, Toshiyuki Nakamura, and Reiko Yoshida collaborations are often confined to co-researchers within the same university or established academic partnerships. This pattern suggests that, while the field is active and diverse, the integration of its research communities is relatively modest compared to more heavily networked disciplines.

Such a pattern may stem from several factors, including the localized nature of language education research, the importance of context-specific pedagogical environments, and the tendency for researchers to focus on their own institutional programs or national curricula. Moreover, funding structures and institutional priorities may reinforce domestic or regional projects rather than large-scale, cross-border initiatives. This could limit the cross-pollination of ideas and best practices that broader collaborative networks might facilitate.

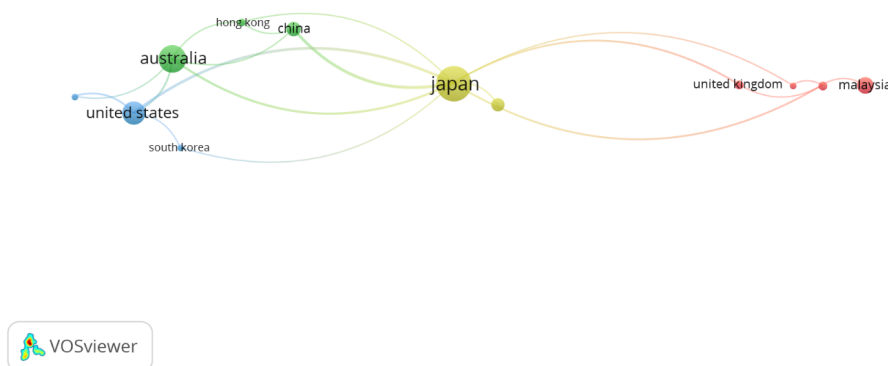


**Figure 6.** Co-authorship network of authors.

In contrast, the analysis of inter-country collaboration networks (**Figure 7**) paints a more interconnected picture at the national level. Here, Japan occupies a central position, acting as the primary hub linking multiple other countries. The strongest and most sustained partnerships are observed between Japan and Australia, a relationship likely supported

by long-standing academic exchange programs, bilateral educational agreements, and active participation in regional professional networks. Other notable connections include Japan's collaborations with the United States, China, and Malaysia, which also show significant productivity in this research domain.





**Figure 7.** Country co-authorship network.

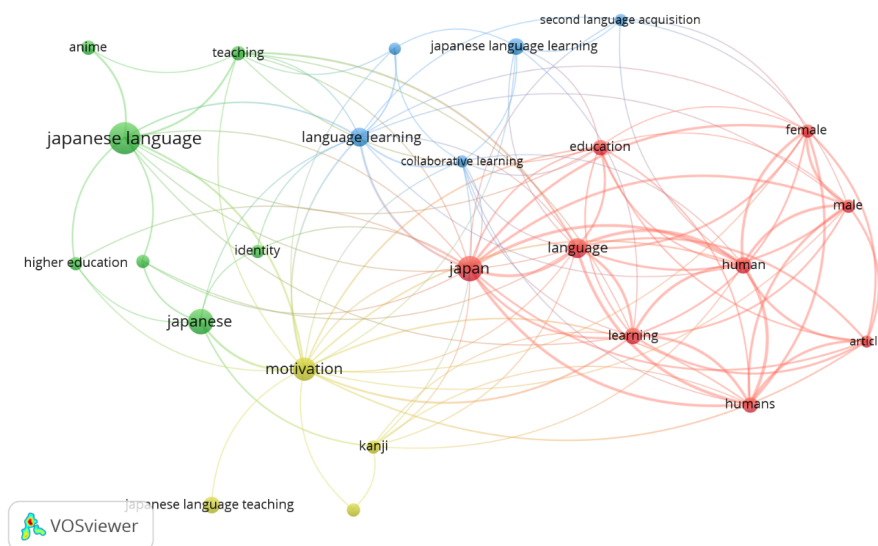
Australia emerges as a secondary hub, linking with not only Japan but also with Hong Kong, China, and other Asia-Pacific nations. Malaysia, in turn, shows active connections with both Japan and the United Kingdom, suggesting its growing role as a regional collaborator in Japanese language education research. These links, though promising, are still relatively sparse in the global network, indicating untapped opportunities for greater academic integration.

While individual-level collaboration remains fragmented, country-level collaboration patterns suggest an emerging foundation for a more interconnected research community. Strengthening these links through joint research projects, multinational grant applications, and participation in international conferences could accelerate knowledge sharing, promote methodological innovation, and enhance the global visibility of Japanese language teaching and learning scholarship. Encouraging broader participation from

underrepresented regions, such as Africa and parts of Latin America, could also diversify perspectives and contribute to a more inclusive global research network.

### 3.4. Keyword Mapping and Research Hotspots

The keyword co-occurrence analysis (**Figure 8**) identifies several major thematic clusters in Japanese language teaching and learning research. The central cluster is anchored by “Japanese language”, which connects pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic aspects of the field. Closely related clusters focus on “motivation” and “language learning”, reflecting sustained scholarly interest in the psychological and cognitive dimensions of second language acquisition. The prominence of “identity” suggests increasing attention to sociocultural perspectives, where language learning is understood not only as skill acquisition but also as a process of identity negotiation.



**Figure 8.** Keyword co-occurrence network.



The keyword “kanji” appears as a distinct thematic node, underlining ongoing challenges in mastering the Japanese writing system. Research in this area frequently explores orthographic literacy, cognitive load, and effective instructional strategies, confirming its status as a long-standing research hotspot.

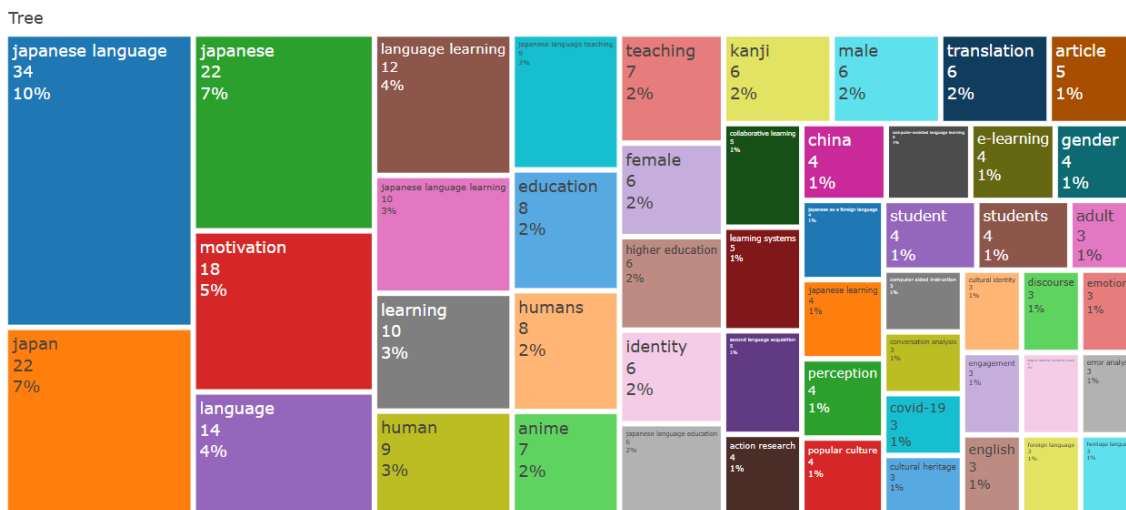
Emerging topics such as “collaborative learning” and “anime” signal diversification in research directions. Collaborative learning studies align with global pedagogical trends toward interactive, technology-assisted classrooms, while anime-related research reflects the pedagogical use of Japanese popular culture to enhance learner engagement

and motivation. These developments point to a growing openness toward integrating non-traditional and culturally embedded learning resources.

The word cloud (**Figure 9**) and tree map (**Figure 10**) further illustrate the dominance of classical topics while highlighting the rising frequency of keywords related to digital learning, intercultural competence, and informal learning environments. Collectively, these patterns suggest a research landscape that balances continuity in core themes with innovation in response to technological, cultural, and educational shifts providing a foundation for identifying emerging frontiers discussed in the following section.



**Figure 9.** Word cloud of research keywords.



**Figure 10.** Tree map of keyword distribution.

The combination of these three visualizations confirms that research on Japanese language teaching and learning continues to develop dynamically, addressing not only classical issues but also adapting to advances in technology, popular culture, and the evolving needs of today's learners. These findings also highlight opportunities for the development of interdisciplinary studies, in line with the increasing richness of topics being explored in this field.

### 3.5. Topic Trends and Emerging Frontiers

The analysis of topic trends (Figure 11) illustrates the progressive evolution of research themes in Japanese language teaching and learning over the past two decades. In

the early years (2000–2010), core terms such as “Japanese language,” “motivation,” “language learning,” and “Japan” consistently appeared, indicating the enduring centrality of these topics in the literature. These terms also dominated the keyword co-occurrence network (Figure 8) and word cloud (Figure 9), confirming their role as foundational themes in the field.

From 2011 onwards, a diversification of focus becomes evident, with the growing presence of keywords such as “collaborative learning,” “kanji,” and “higher education.” This expansion signals a shift toward addressing broader pedagogical strategies, learner contexts, and the integration of cognitive and cultural dimensions in teaching practice.

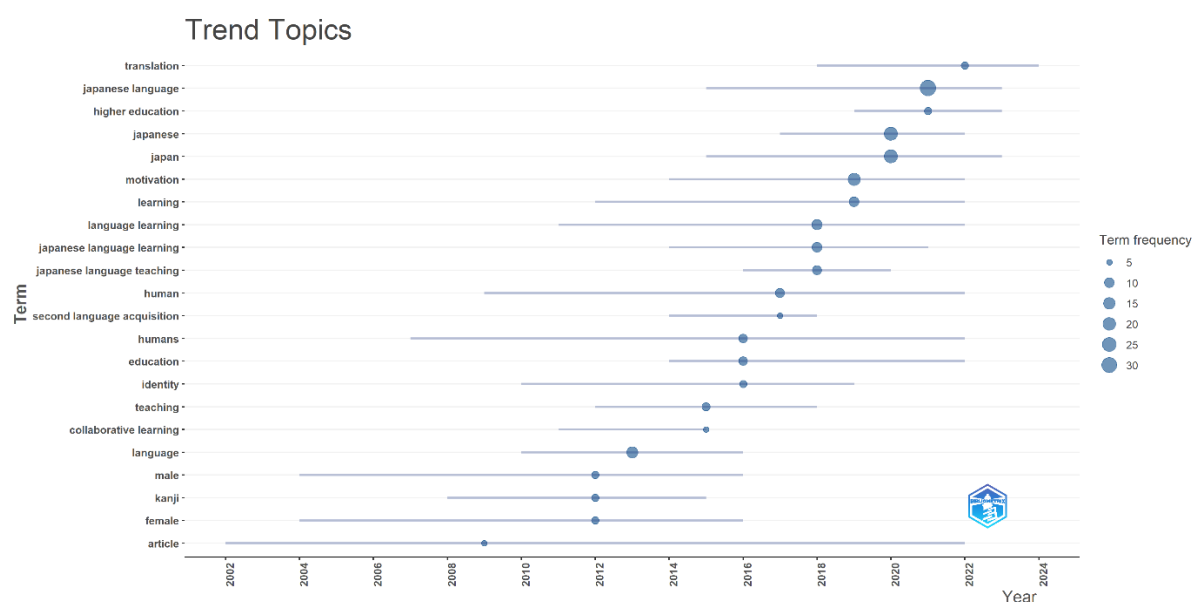
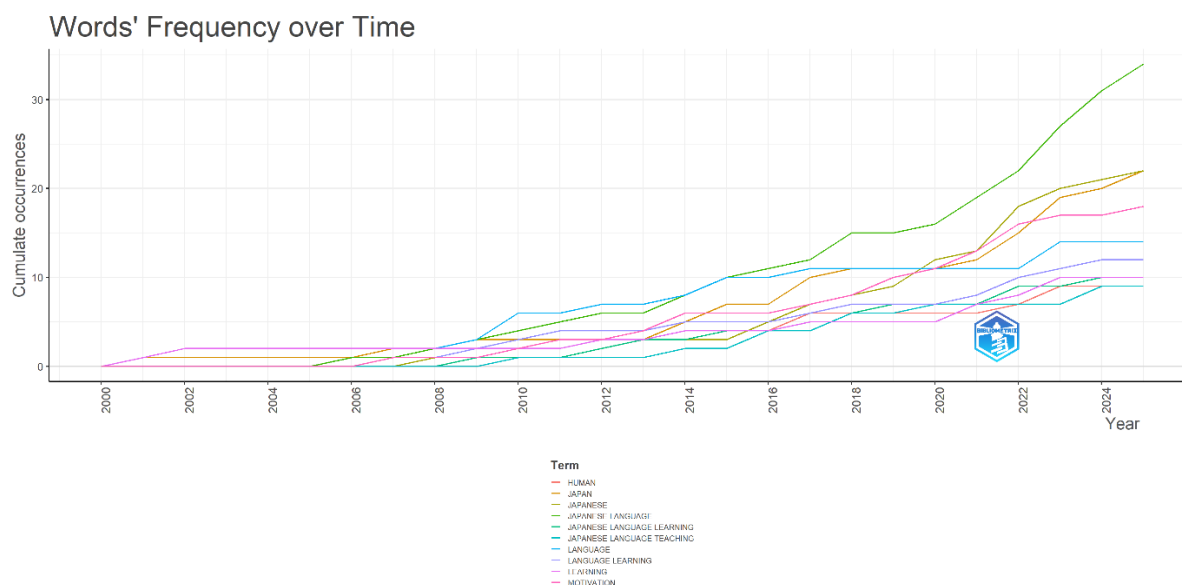


Figure 11. Research topic trend chart based on keywords.

The keyword frequency-over-time chart (Figure 12) reinforces these patterns, showing marked growth after 2020 in terms like “motivation” and “identity,” which reflect a heightened interest in the psychological and sociocultural aspects of learning. There is also a notable surge in keywords related to digital technology, including online learning, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), and virtual platforms as educators adapted to the demands of remote and blended learning environments, especially during the

COVID–19 era.

In parallel, collaborative learning has emerged as a pedagogical frontier, often intersecting with technology to support peer interaction, group projects, and intercultural exchanges. Furthermore, the integration of popular culture, particularly anime and other Japanese media, has gained increasing scholarly attention for its potential to enhance learner engagement, cultural competence, and authentic language exposure.



**Figure 12.** Cumulative development of main keyword frequency over the years.

These visualizations suggest that research in Japanese language teaching and learning is transitioning from a primarily linguistic focus toward a more interdisciplinary, learner-centered paradigm. The incorporation of technology, collaboration, and culturally embedded resources not only reflects broader global trends in language education but also points to promising avenues for future research that bridge linguistics, pedagogy, and cultural studies.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Interpretation of Key Findings

The results of this bibliometric analysis reveal several important patterns in global research on Japanese language teaching and learning. Japan's dominance as the country with the highest number of publications aligns with its position as the main source of development and dissemination of the Japanese language itself. In addition, the high productivity of Australia and the United States can be interpreted as a reflection of the strength of Japanese language programs, the existence of large learner communities, and close bilateral educational and cultural relations with Japan. The significant role of Malaysia and several other Asian countries indicates that Japanese language learning has expanded widely not only as a foreign language of choice but also as part of broader efforts to strengthen economic, educational, and cultural ties in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the institutional level, leading universities such as Monash University, UNSW Sydney, Hiroshima University, and major institutions in Malaysia emerge as key research centres. This can be attributed to the presence of well-established language programs, faculty and student exchange initiatives, and research funding support from governments and related agencies. The distribution of productive authors, while relatively even, demonstrates that this field tends to be open and inclusive of contributions from researchers of various backgrounds.

Collaboration patterns among authors are still dominated by individual or small group work, with limited cross-institutional or international collaboration. This finding suggests opportunities to strengthen collaborative networks, particularly in multidisciplinary and transnational research. On the other hand, country-level collaboration networks show strong connections between Japan, Australia, the United States, and several Asian countries, indicating the growth of an increasingly solid international research network.

Keyword mapping confirms that the main dominating themes are "Japanese language," "motivation," "language learning," and "identity." The prominence of these topics reflects a strong focus on learning motivation, learner identity, and innovation in teaching approaches. The emergence of new themes such as "collaborative learning," "technology," and "anime" demonstrates the adaptation of research to contemporary developments, including the use of digital media and popular culture as part of teaching strategies.

Topic trends and the development of keyword frequencies show a shift in research focus from conventional issues to more innovative and frontier issues that are relevant to the challenges of 21st-century education. The surge of themes such as “technology” and “collaborative learning” in the past five years indicates the academic community’s quick response to the need for online learning, technological integration, and the growing importance of collaboration and creativity in Japanese language education.

## 4.2. Comparison with Previous Reviews

To date, bibliometric studies specifically addressing Japanese language teaching and learning remain very limited. Most previous studies have focused on evaluating the effectiveness of specific teaching methods or providing systematic reviews on particular topics, such as motivation or the use of technology in foreign language learning. The results of the present analysis contribute new insights by offering a comprehensive overview of the research landscape in Japanese language teaching over the past two decades.

When compared with bibliometric studies in other fields of foreign language teaching, such as English, Mandarin, or Korean, similar patterns of dominance by the language’s country of origin and countries with large learner communities are also found. Comparable studies in English language teaching, for example, also reveal an increasing trend in research on technology use, learning motivation, and the importance of international collaboration in expanding research coverage. This reinforces the finding that issues such as motivation, identity, and digital technology are indeed global topics in language education.

However, unlike the field of English language teaching which has developed stronger international research networks this study shows that cross-institutional and international collaboration in Japanese language research still has room for improvement. Therefore, the results of this study highlight the need to expand collaboration and knowledge exchange across countries, and open up opportunities for further interdisciplinary research.

## 4.3. Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study open up several opportunities and new directions for research in Japanese lan-

guage teaching and learning. First, the analysis reveals that cross-institutional and international collaboration among researchers is still limited. To enrich and broaden perspectives, future research is strongly encouraged to foster international cooperation, whether through joint research projects, faculty and student exchanges, or multilateral academic forums. Interdisciplinary collaboration for instance, with educational technology, sociolinguistics, or educational psychology can also generate more innovative findings that are relevant to the challenges of 21st-century language education.

Second, the shift and expansion of research themes from traditional issues to frontier topics such as motivation, identity, digital technology, and popular media (e.g., anime) highlight the importance of further exploration in these areas. Future studies may examine in greater depth the impact of technology use and digitalization in learning, collaborative learning strategies, as well as the influence of learner identity and cultural background in the process of Japanese language acquisition.

In addition, future research should also take into account diverse populations and different educational contexts, such as young learners, professional learners, or Japanese diaspora communities. Longitudinal studies that monitor the development of learners’ motivation and achievement over time can provide more comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

Lastly, given the dynamic changes in education and the evolving needs of learners, the development of adaptive and technology-based evaluation and assessment instruments for Japanese language learning is also a promising area for further exploration. By addressing these implications, future research in Japanese language teaching and learning is expected to make increasingly significant contributions both in academic circles and global educational practice.

## 5. Conclusions

This study has comprehensively mapped the research landscape of Japanese language teaching and learning using a bibliometric approach. The analysis reveals a significant upward trend in publications over the past two decades, with dominant contributions from Japan, Australia, and the United States. Leading universities in Asia and Oceania have emerged as major research centers, while author involvement

remains relatively evenly distributed and is primarily characterized by small-group collaborations.

The main themes dominating research are learning motivation, learner identity, and the integration of technology in Japanese language teaching. In addition, several new and frontier topics such as collaborative learning and the use of popular cultural media have begun to emerge, indicating substantial potential for further exploration in the future.

This study also highlights the still-limited international collaboration among researchers and institutions. Therefore, efforts are needed to expand collaborative networks across countries and disciplines to enrich perspectives and foster innovation in this field. The findings and recommendations from this study are expected to serve as a foundation for researchers, educators, and policymakers in designing more effective, relevant, and adaptive strategies for Japanese language teaching in response to ongoing developments.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, T.; methodology, T.; validation, I.; formal analysis, T.; investigation, R.; resources, R.; data curation, K.; writing—original draft preparation, T.; writing—review and editing, H.; visualization, H.; supervision, I.; project administration, K. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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## Informed Consent Statement

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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