

Linguistic Diversity and Challenges in Support Systems at Japanese Schools Overseas:

Japanese Language Support Managed by a Single Teacher

Research Overview

This study examines Japanese language support at a Japanese school overseas, focusing on how one support teacher assists linguistically diverse students while collaborating with homeroom teachers, administrators, and parents. It understands such support as a whole-school practice that extends beyond individual students to reshape the broader school environment.

Purpose of Study

Japanese schools overseas have been positioned as institutions that provide education based on the Japanese curriculum for Japanese children living abroad. In recent years, however, the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students enrolled in these schools have become increasingly diverse. For example, some students have limited opportunities to use Japanese at home, while others use multiple languages in their daily lives. Under these circumstances, Japanese language support has become an important educational issue at Japanese schools overseas.

However, Japanese language support at these schools does not take a uniform form. Its practices differ depending on the social context of each country or region, the characteristics of enrolled students, staffing arrangements, and school support systems. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify how such support is needed and constructed within individual schools.

This study aims to clarify how Japanese language support is constructed and implemented, based on the case of A School, a Japanese school overseas. In particular, it focuses on the practice of the Japanese language support teacher. Japanese language support is not treated here as a practice confined to a one-to-one relationship between the support teacher and students. Rather, this study focuses on how the teacher identifies students' linguistic and learning needs, collaborates with

homeroom teachers, school administrators, and parents, and works to reshape the educational environment of the school as a whole.

Specifically, this study examines how the Japanese language support teacher identifies students' needs and makes judgments about support targets and content. It also clarifies how support is coordinated with homeroom teachers and school administrators, how parents are involved, and how Japanese language support becomes an opportunity to reconsider assumptions about language, learning, and participation within the school community. Through these analyses, this study aims to contribute to discussions on linguistic diversity, inclusion, and whole-school support systems at Japanese schools overseas.

Research Methods

This study is designed as a case study of one Japanese school overseas, referred to here as A School. The main research participant is the Japanese language support teacher at the school.

This study mainly uses two methods. First, a semi-structured interview is conducted with the Japanese language support teacher. The interview explores the overall structure of Japanese language support, the characteristics of students who receive support, the process of identifying students' needs, the criteria for judging support targets, the content and methods of support, the use of teaching materials, and the teacher's professional judgment. In addition, it focuses on how the teacher shares information and coordinates support with homeroom teachers, school administrators, and parents.

Second, observations of Japanese language support practices are conducted. These observations focus not only on direct interactions between the support teacher and students, but also on the use of teaching materials, adjustments to support methods in response to students' reactions, connections with learning in regular classrooms, collaboration with homeroom teachers, and students' participation in school life.

Through these methods, this study analyzes how Japanese language support is developed through both individualized instruction and collaborative and whole-school relationships.

Results and Discussion

This study shows that Japanese language support at A School is not merely remedial instruction for students whose Japanese proficiency is insufficient. Rather, it can be understood as a practice that supports students' participation in learning and school life while responding to diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, different learning histories, and varying levels of academic Japanese proficiency.

The study also clarifies that Japanese language support does not target only linguistically diverse students, but also involves reshaping the broader environment in which those students are situated. The support teacher identifies students' linguistic and learning needs and shares this information with homeroom teachers, school administrators, and parents. In this sense, Japanese language support is developed as a collaborative practice that connects actors inside and outside the school, rather than as a one-to-one relationship between the support teacher and students.

This perspective makes it possible to reconsider the role of Japanese language support teachers. They may function not merely as additional staff responsible for individualized support, but as mediators who help the school move toward an educational environment grounded in linguistic and cultural diversity. In this process, Japanese language support also serves as an occasion to reconsider prevailing assumptions about language, learning, and participation within the school community. At the same time, when knowledge, judgment, and responsibility concerning support become concentrated in one individual, the continuity of support and the transfer of institutional knowledge may become difficult to sustain.

Keywords

Japanese schools overseas; Japanese language support; linguistic diversity; whole-school approach