

Motivations, Hopes, and Expectations of Untrained Japanese Teachers and Implications for Future Online Teaching of Japanese as a Foreign Language

訓練を受けていない日本語教師の動機、希望、期待、
および将来のオンライン日本語教育への影響

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Abstract

This mixed methods research investigates Japanese native speakers' motivation, hopes, and experiences as online teachers of Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) during the COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 and thereafter. The data allow for deep qualitative analysis of native speakers and focus on the reasons for becoming a language teacher, circumstances forcing them to shift work and opportunity to continue or quit online teaching after the restrictions abate. Quantitative data ($N = 51$) and qualitative data from a sub-sample ($N = 10$) were collected from Japanese L1 speakers living in Japan, England, Canada, Italy, Germany and Spain. The main questions discussed are (1) the reasons for becoming an online JFL teacher (2) the motivation to continue with Japanese online teaching even when returning to a prior position was possible, (3) experiences, feelings, hopes and motivations while working as a JFL online teacher (4) and implications for future change in online FLT, and digital work. The findings suggest, that despite initial difficulties untrained JFL may face, they can succeed in their online teaching activities and thus become a competition for professionally trained JFL teachers, i.e., in the development of community teaching.

Keywords:

online teaching; Japanese as a foreign language; teacher's attitudes and motivations; personality traits and teaching Japanese; untrained versus trained teachers of Japanese

先生が教育を受ける事はどのくらい大切か。
訓練を受けていない日本語話者がオンライン環境で日本語外国語（JFL）教育を開始し、
継続する動機

この研究では、日本語話者の、オンラインで教育を開始し、継続する動機を分析しています。なお、今回の分析の対象は日本語話者は外国語の教育を受けてない方たちです。JFL の教師になるための敷居が、語学学習のオンラインプラットフォームの増加と同時に大きく下がったため、正式な教育を受けていない日本語話者も教えやすくなってきました。ただし、長期的に教えるにはその教師の動機や選択能力や状況などによります。これらの要因が、訓練を受けていない JFL 教師がオンライン教育で成功するかどうかを左右し、訓練を受けた JFL 教師との競争になる可能性も出てきます。JFL 教師の動機と授業に対する姿勢を調査するために、定量的データ ($N = 51$) とサブサンプルからの定性的データ ($N = 10$) が、日本、イギリス、カナダ、イタリア、ドイツ、スペインに住む日本語話者から収集されました。この論文では、(1) オンラインの JFL 教師になった理由、(2) 以前の仕事に戻ることができたとしても、日本語のオンライン教師を続ける動機、(3) JFL オンライン教師として働いている間の経験、感情、希望、動機について説明されています、(4)と、およびその意味するオンライン FLT、デジタルワークの今後の変化。調査結果は、トレーニングを受けていない JFL が最初に直面する可能性のある困難にもかかわらず、オンライン教育活動で成功し、プロの JFL 教師をめぐる競争になることを示唆しています。最後に、この調査は、JFL 教育の変化に影響を与え、教育のコミュニティへの発展の可能性に貢献できるように行われています。

キーワード

オンライン教育、外国語としての日本語、教師の態度と動機、性格特性と日本語教育、日本語教師の訓練を受けていない人と訓練を受けている人

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1. Introduction¹

This research investigates the motivations, hopes, and expectations of L1 Japanese speakers living in Canada, Europe and Japan ($N = 51$) who became online teachers around March 2020 without having a professional teaching education or license. The focus lies on the experiences the untrained teachers reported from their online teaching. Further, the correlation between the untrained JFL teachers' motivation and other personal characteristics and contextual factors relevant for their initial decision to start teaching Japanese online and the hopes, expectations, attitudes and self-confidence to continue teaching activities will be investigated. Over the past decade, digital language learning and teaching possibilities have greatly increased, including self-study options such as those offered by websites and applications for vocabulary, pronunciation and writing training and personal and group lessons through video-supported social network media, namely Skype and Zoom. Especially due to COVID-19, online teaching experienced a large increase as the primary teaching method has inevitably changed from traditional face-to-face teaching (Jon-Chao, Wei Cao, Kai-Hsin & Zhao 2021; König, Jäger-Biela & Glutsch 2020). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and worldwide restrictions in response to it forced many individuals to suddenly stop their daily activities, for example, employment, because workers were afraid of becoming ill and, to follow the recommendations of health officials, wanted to avoid contact with others. This study analyzes Japanese native speakers' motivation to start and remain teaching Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) online during this time without being educated as second language teachers (SLT).

2. Literature review

2.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and foreign language teachers' attitudes

It is time to look at the psychology (well-being, thoughts and feelings) of language teachers (cf. Mercer 2018). Work motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and SLT attitudes are crucial in SLA research. However, since Gardner (1985) the main body of research concentrates on the second language learner (SLL) motivation (e.g., Al-Hoorie et al. 2022; Burgh-Hirabe 2019; Dörnyei 1998; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2010; Dörnyei et al. 2015; Mahmoodi & Yousefi 2021). Still less prominent is the language teacher motivation (e.g., Dörnyei & Kubanyiova. 2014).

Since McClelland (1988) scientists try to understand why we do what we do (Heckhausen & Heckhausen 2018; Kehr 2004; Kehr et al. 2018; Macmullen 2014). In general, motivation is important for long-term success in a field and for employee performance (Chien et al. 2020). This research analyzes Japanese native speakers' motivation to start and remain teaching JFL online without being trained as a SLT instead of choosing another kind of work.

¹ This research is further developed and expanded work, based in part on research done in 2020 (Siebenhütter (2021).

2.2 Digital education, online language teaching and digital language learning tools

The resources for digital language learning have been increasing in all areas of social media and online channels, for example, mobile applications, podcasts and other online self-study materials. Additionally, the market for online private lessons increased. One of the worldwide acting platforms, *italki*, produced by a Hong Kong-based company (starting in 2006), offers teachers and students a platform for teaching and studying online. Notably, most students and teachers use Skype as a platform for private online language lessons after having contacted via *italki*. In February 2023 *italki* lists more than 500 community, i.e., untrained teachers without a teacher education teaching JFL and living currently in Japan or abroad.

The future of digital learning was described as ‘the application of technology to the learning and teaching process’ by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Carrier et al. 2017, p. 1). Thereafter, digital learning has enabled students ‘to grasp concepts more quickly and fully, to connect theory and application more adeptly, and to engage in learning more readily’ (Carrier et al. 2017, p. 1). Digital technologies will continue to enable the experience of learning in new and improved ways and allow for possibilities beyond the limits of current imagination (Carrier et al., 2017). While digital education describes the innovative use of digital tools and technologies during teaching and learning, also referred to as Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) or e-Learning, there are several forms of education making use of digital technologies. Besides forms which take place exclusively online, there are blended approaches that use multiple methods to deliver learning by combining face-to-face interactions with online activities. One example is the flipped classroom where online activities are completed outside the classroom providing an opportunity for more in-depth discussion during face-to-face time in class. This paper investigates only fully online teaching in a one-on-one format.

The use of digital technologies gives not only educators the opportunity to design engaging learning opportunities in the courses they teach, and these can take the form of blended or fully online courses and programs. Online learning also offers several benefits for students, including the chance to study on their own schedule and from a location that suits them. For teachers and students in the Japanese language teaching context, private online lessons might as well eliminate some of the most common demotivational factors of in-person group classes, such as a fixed teaching method, a large classroom size and substantially differing abilities (Sugino, 2010) within one class. Though, this paper focuses on the expectations, experiences and motivations of Japanese language teachers.

Since the 1980s, interview-based research on the teaching of JFL has increased (Park, 2018). However, no research has investigated online teaching using platforms such as *italki*. If research thematizes online learning, the focus on teaching and application of digital technology for teaching and learning in the context of learners’ attitudes and output (Sato et al., 2015) can increase, balancing the dominance of teachers’ perspectives in the literature.

According to Hockly and Dudeney (2017), digital technologies have fundamentally changed, and it will further disrupt teaching. Research on the theory and practice of digital learning has investigated the benefits for learners and teachers, trends and implementations for further development (Carrier et al., 2017). In addition, the advantages of individual learning include precise

adaptation to the needs of the student and significantly greater benefits than language learning in an inhomogeneous group, especially for advanced learners.

As the threshold for becoming a JFL teacher has significantly decreased simultaneously with the increasing number of online platforms for language learning and teaching, also Japanese L1 speakers without prior formal education are able to teach. The transformation to digital teaching has eroded the traditional role of the ‘expert’ in teaching (Hockly & Dudeney, 2017) and opened the field of language teaching (and many other fields) to semi-professionals and laypersons, namely, the so-called ‘community teachers’ on the platform *italki*. This research analyses these ‘community teachers’, meaning teachers without specific education in language teaching, using the platform *italki* to offer online lessons on Skype.

Objective and research questions

This research aims to gain insights into the motivations, hopes and expectations of new Japanese teachers. This objective is made possible by capturing obvious contents with direct questions and triggering unconscious contents with indirect questions, projections and analogies described in more detail in below.

The research questions the author aimed to answer by assessing the data collected from the untrained JFL online teachers were as follows:

- RQ1:** Why did participants choose JFL online teaching over performing a different type of work from home or something else?
- RQ2:** What were the participants main reasons for this decision (e.g., financial reasons, boredom at home and fear of contagion)?
- RQ3:** Were participants motivated to continue JFL online teaching even when could return to their former position or find another work?
- RQ4:** What were the advantages and challenges of teaching their L1 as JFL?
- RQ5:** How did participants experience themselves while teaching JFL online (e.g., more or less confident than before performing this job)?

By analyzing online teaching, the paper provides implications for further changes in language teaching towards digital work and further areas of digital education. These developments also concern the individuals responsible for transforming university and school curricula to include digital education. Research on public school teachers’ education and learning opportunities pertaining to digital teaching and learning is to improve and does not yet include much professional information and communication technologies tools, particularly digital teacher competence and teacher education opportunities to learn digital competence (König et al. 2020).

Purpose and originality

Investigating the correlation between the untrained JFL teachers’ motivation and personal and context variables relevant for their initial decision to start teaching Japanese online and the hopes, expectations, attitudes and self-confidence to continue teaching activities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection instruments, process and participants

Data was collected through a qualitative guideline interview evaluated it using content analysis and supported by a quantitatively evaluated self-report questionnaire. The mixed methods research design was developed to expand the understanding of complex issues and corroborating the qualitative findings through triangulation (Dörnyei 2007).

Quantitative Research

The self-report questionnaire was answered by participants and returned to the author. The first part of the questionnaire addressed the initial motivations and asked for reasons relevant for the choice to become a JFL teacher and the second part addressed the attitudes and experiences during teaching Japanese online and a third part addressed the motivation to continue teaching after 4-5 months of teaching and the reasons for their decision. The first part of the questionnaire was handed to the participants in May 2020, about two months after participants had started to teach online. The second part of the questionnaire was given to participants in December 2020. A follow-up third questionnaire was handed in August 2022 and in March 2023. The questionnaire was answered by italki community teachers (untrained JFL teachers) living in Japan, Europe and Canada ($N = 51$, Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of Japanese L1 starting JFL online teaching in 2020

Participants	N	Age	Gender	Current residence
	51	25-38: 18	male: 18	Europe: 17
		39-48: 21	female: 33	USA/Canada: 4
		49-58: 9		Japan: 30
		59-65: 3		

The questionnaires and the interviews included the motivations of the untrained JFL-teachers, and personal and context variables influencing the participants experience of self-determination, attitudes, self-confidence and motivation to become and continue teaching their L1 in the online setting. Personal variables included personality, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and executive functions (e.g., the teachers adaptable thinking, self-monitoring and self-control; time management, planning and organizational skills). Context variables included financial aspects (i.e., the need to teach for financial reasons versus teaching mainly for other rather intrinsic reasons), social and living situation (i.e., living with family members, partners or alone). This includes also the ideal or monetary support from others that some of the participants received. The items could be rated on a six-point-scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Qualitative Interview

The qualitative guideline interview, developed for this study was held from March to December 2020 with a subsample of 10 Japanese L1 speakers (three males and seven females, aged 25–65 years) were conducted in the Japanese language, namely, the author interviewed each participant for 45 to 60 min once per week or every second week. The interview-lessons with two Japanese teachers

were held once a week and one interview-lesson were held every second week with the rest of the teachers over ten months (March-December 2020). All interviews were held on Skype in the Japanese language.² All participants were directly recruited through italki and paid for one normal lesson through the platform's credit-based payment system.

In advance, each participant signed a data protection information sheet and a declaration of consent. They were also asked to fill in a short questionnaire requesting demographic data such as sex, age, language skills, place of residence, stays abroad, schooling and current occupation. Four of the L1 Japanese speakers interviewed in this research were residing in Japan (in Tokyo, Yokohama, Chiba and Fukuoka) and six in Europe (in Belfast, London, Frankfurt, Berlin, and Halle in Germany). Before switching to Japanese online language teaching, the participants' occupations were department store worker, tourist guide, homemaker, piano teacher, translator, illustrator and university student.

All interviews were recorded using a digital recording device (audio) for subsequent evaluation. To understand the speakers' unconscious attitudes, questions on their personal biography and everyday experiences with teaching online were mainly triggered by narrative impulses, as well as analogies and projections (a–c), during the interviews and by direct questions. Indirect triggers for receiving unconscious content were

- a) Direct impulses: 'Today let's talk about "topic x"'. 'How do you think about "x?"'
- b) Narrative impulses: 'When I was a child...', 'How did you experience...?'
- c) Analogies, projections and associations: 'If I think about success...', 'What does success means for you?' and 'Which animal do you like best and why?'

By starting to discuss topics directly related neither to the process of teaching nor potential existential problems because of the exceptional situation in 2020, the participants provided insights into teachers' thoughts. After 9 months of teacher interviews, no substantially new topics were observed during the interviews. Therefore, in December, the author began choosing the relevant parts of the audio recordings and preparing the raw data for analysis and data evaluation.

After two years in October 2022 a post-research follow-up interview was held for another 45 minutes with eight of the interviewed teachers. Two research participants from the initial interview-period in 2020 could no longer be contacted or did not answer the follow-up request for another interview appointment.

3.2 Data Evaluation

Quantitative Data analysis and evaluation

The self-reported questionnaires were evaluated quantitatively in Excel.

² The author, not an L1 speaker of Japanese has advanced Japanese proficiency and therefore being able to conduct the research independently in Japanese. A L1 Japanese research assistant helped during the transcription process by assisting in the research and data analysis.

Qualitative Data analysis and evaluation

After all participants had shared their experiences, relevant statements of the audio recordings were selected, transcribed (basic transcription) and analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2018; Mayring, 2014; Mayring & Fenzl, 2019; Schreier, 2014). The data were analyzed in terms of content in the text analysis program MAXQDA 2020. Data was coded according the research questions to evaluate participants experiences, hopes and motivations and their perceptions about advantages and disadvantages of online teaching and working from home. This allowed for the formulation of core statements and patterns that help in determining the self-assessment and rating of the Japanese teachers. All codes have been grouped thematically. To visualize teachers' statements, central quotations were selected and included in the results and discussion sections.

4. Findings

4.1 Core themes and findings from qualitative evaluation

The core topics evaluated from the qualitative interviews were (1) *enjoy teaching* versus *struggling with teaching*, (2) *mental preparedness and confidence while teaching* versus *rejection of the current situation*. In addition to the topics targeted by the research questions, the following repetitive themes emerged during coding: the participants social situation paired with (3) *hopefulness* and *future-orientation* versus *desperation and frustration* and (4) dependencies between the participants general social integration and living conditions and their persistence in teaching JFL online. Connections were found between the teacher's social position before starting to teach and experiences, feelings, and attitudes regarding online teaching. The findings are illustrated by suitable text passages (coding units) from the data material in the following sections.

4.2 Participants reasons to start JFL online teaching

The participants' specific reasons for teaching Japanese online instead of performing a different type of work from home or something else differed, but two main reasons were observed: financial support while their former profession was suspended and the feeling of doing something useful instead of merely sitting at home waiting for the situation to change. The fear of becoming ill and fear of becoming infected while performing their prior job were mentioned once by one participant who had worked in a shop. Additionally, increasing social contacts and staying in contact with others while being restricted to their homes were reported.

Most of the participants quickly shifted to online teaching without thinking too much about whether they were prepared well as setting up a profile and starting to teach was very easy. The main reason was the minimal effort necessary to start teaching online: after uploading a short self-introductory video, they could start teaching immediately after approval from the platform operator. Other reasons for the quick decision were a difficult financial situation, existing low satisfaction with their former workplace or the fear of becoming ill:

'Otto ga bunbōgu-ten de hataraitte iru toki ni kenkō ga shinpaidattanode, shigoto o yamete nihongo no onrain ressun o hajimemashita'. 'My husband was worried about my health while working in the stationery store; thus, I quit my job and started Japanese online lessons'. [N35f01]

4.3 Participants motivation to remain or stop teaching online

The quantitative analysis delivered information on participants motivation to start and continue JFL online teaching. More than one reason could be selected.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of reasons to start online teaching in 2020 as an untrained JFL teacher

Item	Number (N = 51)
Communicative: I wanted to increase social contact	29
Situational Context: I wanted to work beside caring for children / I was worried about my health	16
Financial: I needed the income / lost my former job	32
Personal Context: I wanted to challenge myself trying something new	31

4.4 Follow-up results August 2022 and March 2023

In August 2022 and March 2023 each time a short follow-up questionnaire was sent out to the participants from the research in 2020. Except from two participants from 2020 who could no longer be contacted or did not answer the follow-up questions in 2022 and 2023 all participants of the first research 2020 answered the short follow-up questionnaires.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of untrained JFL teachers' experiences, attitudes and motivations concerning online JFL teaching

Item	2020 (N = 51)	Follow-up 2022 (N = 42)	Follow-up 2023 (N = 40)
Teaching my first language Japanese is/was fun	25	36	36
I am (still) I (still) enjoy teaching	25	36	36
teaching, I need the money	38	32	31
because ... I do not want to disappoint my students	-	5	4
I think that I am/was quite a good teacher	27	35	34
I want to continue JFL online teaching	32	36	36
I miss/ed my former work while online teaching	37	17	16
Online teaching is sometimes challenging	42	25	25
I did not enjoy teaching/missed 'real' social contact during work	-	14	12
I stopped teaching I do not need the money (anymore)	-	3	3
online, because ... I did not find enough teaching options/ students	-	8	7
I am/was not a very good teacher	19	27	26

5. Discussion

5.1 Dependencies between motivation and personal and context variables

Analyzing correlation is a proven tool to investigate the relationship between motivation and other characteristics (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda 2021; Gardner & Lambert 1959). The relationship between two categories such as feelings of confidence while teaching and the wish to continue or quit online

teaching after the restrictions abate. High confidence while teaching and enjoying teaching most of the time correlated positively with longer participation of the students and led to many long-term students booking lessons regularly for more than 4 or 6 months, which is in line with earlier research that could show the interrelationship or synergy of teacher and student motivation (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda 2021; e.g., Lamb 2017; Pinner 2019). Despite starting to teach JFL on *italki* (setting up their own profile as a teacher, uploading self-introductory video, receiving teaching requests from students, scheduling etc.), nearly all of the reviewed cases, teachers reported the feeling of being lost during teaching at least in the beginning, being in a spiral of decreasing confidence, feeling frustrated, having difficulties ‘holding’ students and enjoying the lessons. However, not all of them wanted to quit teaching online therefore. Two teachers could enjoy working as a Japanese teacher and felt even more confident in doing so.

Another correlation was found between the inner willingness to start something new (in one case, the participant planned to continue teaching Japanese online) at the time of the start of the measures to reduce contacts and the satisfaction with the new challenge of teaching online. This adds to other research which found a shift in teachers’ perceptions of their determination to use technology in their classrooms in a post-corona era when they got used to it after one-month online teaching (Van der Spoel, Noroozi, Schuurink & van Ginkel 2020). The results of this research show that teachers got used to the new work conditions and in many cases even start to enjoy it. Two teachers even decided to keep online teaching Japanese language as their main profession even if they could go back to the work places they filled before the start of contact restrictions.

Further, basic inner stability and the will to make something positive out of the situation correlated positively with relaxed online teaching and the feeling of being in control of the situation. Current world events and news are often topics in online lessons, especially for advanced students. One teacher, during lessons, often focused on self-empowerment as an alternative to being frustrated and depressed even in a difficult situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic:

‘Dekiru koto wo yaru koto nitsuite’ ‘About things that can be done, things to do’

‘jibun ga dekiru koto wo yaro’ ‘Let’s do things one can do by himself’ [U39m01]

He even explained that society is lucky to live in a time with the possibility to study, read, watch and enjoy many things from home because of the possibility of using the internet, which he explained was not available to individuals in crises before 1990:

‘Sekai wa taihen desune, dakedo kiboo wo motte, mainichi benkyou wo shimashou’ ‘The world is in a bad state, but let’s have hope, let’s study every day’ [U39 m01]

‘bokutachi wa hontoni lucky (...) sanju nen mae dattara intanetto ga nakatta (...) ima dattara dekirukoto takusan arimasu (...) so kangeamashou’ ‘we are really lucky (...) thirty years before there was no internet (...) nowadays there are lots of things that we can do (...) let’s think this way’ [U39m01]

His lessons also had strong future orientation; for example, he created thought experiments such as answering whether individuals who cannot work in their profession during the crisis should quickly choose a new job to avoid further suffering. He further explained that Japanese individuals are

prepared for extraordinary situations such as earthquakes and typhoons. This goes in line with Jon-Chao et al. (2021) who found that extraversion can positively predict Internet and academic self-efficacy while according to their results, higher rates of Neuroticism can negatively predict Internet and academic self-efficacy.

5.2 Social situation and perception of the new situation

Overall, the participants who were unhappy with their job before the start of the restrictions were more likely to shift quickly, stay longer and be more satisfied with the overall teaching experience. Two participants had to change their life drastically, namely, they returned to Japan only because of the restrictions abroad and intensified their teaching of Japanese in Japan, to return travelling and work abroad again. The freedom possible with teaching online was experienced as an advantage over most other types of work (except Information Technology).

The motivation to continue with Japanese online teaching even with the possibility to return to their former work was high. However, except for one woman, all of the teachers felt unsure regarding what work would look like if they returned and could imagine doing something different. The teachers who felt more confident and relaxed during teaching retained more new students and more positive experiences. These teachers tended to plan to continue teaching online on italki.

The merits of rising to the challenge of teaching their L1 were observed in the freedom in lesson planning, for example, the content. Further, the opportunity to speak with individuals worldwide from their home was perceived positively by all of the participants.

'Nihon no kaisha to nihon no shakai ni hairu mae ni ne sore wa jibun no naka ni moo motte ita shinnen mitai na mono attandesu kedo sore wa ne, jappari wa boku wa magetakunakatta' 'Before entering a Japanese company and Japanese society, I had something I wanted to see, but that's it, I didn't want to give up'. [N26m02].

This participant explained the freedom that he experienced with teaching online as travelling without leaving his flat in Tokyo. After he returned to Japan because of the restrictions in March 2020, he began online training to become a certified Japanese teacher, which he abandoned a few months later. His dreams of travelling the world were suddenly destroyed by the worldwide travel restrictions, and he was forced to return to Japan. In the interviews, topics such as life planning and the meaning of life, especially concerning the high pressure experienced as Japanese in a Japanese society, were often discussed. Strong indecision was observed in many of the conversations. Indecision on the place of residence, personal relationships, work opportunities and goals in life overall were also discussed. During the interviews, one participant started (in addition to starting a Japanese podcast for students and stopping again and working as a farmer) another job for a company in Australia, which he could also perform online. This biographical excerpt, suggests that a stable social environment made it easier for the teacher to cope with the new situation and to persevere longer. Participants who had not established stable relationships or living conditions were the most lost and least persistent in their online teaching activities (e.g., breaking off early, frequent cancellations or the teacher postponing lessons). These findings are in line with evidence that a strong and stable teacher identity relates positively with their emotional well-being (Hanna et al. 2019; Zembylas 2013)

The disadvantages of teaching were constantly speaking for a long time and the students' need for a high level of attention, especially beginner students. In addition, the teaching times, which are often being late in the evening because of different time zones, were a problem for many teachers.

5.3 Japanese L1 experiences during JFL online teaching

Few unexpected experiences were reported. However, all of the teachers explained that they learned something new about themselves while teaching, namely, small insights into their specific character traits such as the desire to work independently and be self-determined. Further, almost all of the participants were surprised by the many inquiries from the students that they reached (up to 8 or 10 hours every day if they wished) within a comparatively short time (within just a few weeks or months after starting to teach between March and November 2020) and without specific education in teaching Japanese:

'Konnani takusan no hito ga, nihongo o benkyō shitai to omotte iru koto ni bikkuri shimashita'. 'I was surprised that so many individuals wanted to study Japanese'. [N35f01]

The participants expected that they would not find so many Japanese learners willing to pay for online lessons:

'Jibun jishin wa, son'nani takusan no seito ga mitsukaru to omotte imasendeshita'. 'I didn't expect to find so many students'. [N35f01]

As the motivation to teach and the general motivation to work in this specific job - which includes more than the teaching process itself – are not necessarily overlapping (Mercer 2018). Some participants of this study felt challenged by the situation of online teaching or rather found themselves overall more or less confident than before teaching their L1 as a foreign language. This suggests for interdependencies between the service of teaching JFL and the self-perception of the participants which was described in earlier research with “teacher identity” and is related to in-service satisfaction (e.g., Hanna et al. 2019). One female teacher experienced the Japanese online lessons as something she did for herself in addition to writing her doctoral thesis and organizing family life with a 2-year-old daughter. She felt that teaching was something that she consciously decided to do and not so much a means to earn money. While her husband cared for their young child, she enjoyed the freedom to do something she had decided to do. The ability to teach without leaving home was another reason she enjoyed teaching online classes.

A majority of the participants were surprised about the difficulties experienced during language teaching, especially when teaching beginners. The challenges distance language teachers are faced with, was pointed out by White (2007). This is even more the case for the participants of this research as they had to cope with SLT specific challenges as well: They found it especially difficult to handle lessons when “the student did not say much”, “did talk the whole lesson only English” and were not able to “include language learning exercises”. However, some participants of this study also struggled with similar challenges than public school teachers or other trained teachers did during COVID-19 when they had to teach online (e.g., König et al. 2020). Challenges related to technical adapting to online teaching and preparing teachers for the digitalization in schools (König et al. 2020). The pedagogical education to handle language teaching relevant challenges might be an

advantage of trained professional teachers but overall, the participants of this study reported the specific situation of teaching online as a difficulty. This is perhaps also because most of them started as career changers and could not compare the online teaching situation with a classroom setting.

While other research (e.g., van der Spoel et al. 2020, König et al. 2020) emphasize the need for future research to should focus on constructing and testing educational design principles for the effective professionalization of teachers in adopting technology in their educational practices, the Japanese teachers analyzed in this paper did not mention technical problems or their lack of abilities to handle the process of online teaching. The only mentioned technical issue that was mentioned regularly was low internet quality or stopping video or audio transmission due to low data volume.

Participants also realized that beginner students are prone to quit lessons early probably because they notice the missing confidence of the L1 speakers who felt that they were insufficient as language teachers because they had not undergone any special teacher training. With increasing teaching experience (e.g., for four or more months full time) and a high level of empathy allowing the teachers to sense the needs of their students, the teachers could enjoy the lessons more and teach them with more confidence, which was supported by the quantitative data results showing increased enjoyment even fewer participants answered the follow-up questionnaires in 2022 and 2023 than the ones in 2020 (s. Table 3). Other research on online language-teaching revealed low confidence of former classroom setting teachers that were forced to shift to online lessons as well. This was the case, even if they reported well-designed courses (Moser, Wei & Brenner 2020).

With advanced students, there was a good possibility of performing authentic Japanese conversational training. These advanced students were more likely to remain with the teachers even though they were less experienced than professional teachers were in explaining grammatical details. Overall, the beginner students preferred teachers who explained grammar well and structured the lessons for an optimal experience while for advanced students' grammatical advice was less important during each lesson. Prospective online (language) teachers should focus on their pedagogical practice besides the effort for the effective professionalization of teachers in introducing technology into their pedagogical practice (cf. van der Spoel 2020, White 2007).

Most of the participants who started teaching as an emergency job solution during an exceptional situation reported that they were highly likely to change to another job after the situation relaxed. 'I'd prefer a job without having to speak a lot' or similar expressions were frequently uttered. Another reason for plans for switching jobs was that teaching a language—though their L1—was more difficult than expected. This goes in line with findings of Moser et al. (2020) describing those teachers without prior experience with online teaching were least confident that instructional goals were met despite their numerous adjustments to their typical procedures in teaching. The researchers argue that despite other literature suggests it, the abrupt shift from face-to-face contexts to remote learning is fundamentally different from planned online learning. The investigation of non-trained Japanese teachers adds to Moser et al. (2020). The shift from face-to-face contexts as well as the shift from other professions and have good teaching outcome is not as easy as it is to start teaching online.

Additionally, personality—independent from teaching—substantially influenced the participants' later experiences with private online lessons. The teachers, unsure of their present

interests and future hopes, were also more likely than the privately well-settled (e.g. living with their family, having friends, did not have to move after restrictions started) teachers to have difficulties teaching. High scores in openness and the ability to stay open minded during teaching Japanese to language students had an easier start and were more likely to keep up with teaching after some months. Some (two of ten) had started an online education process to become a certified teacher as they wanted to improve their teaching skills. Some were initially excited by teaching and started recording a regular podcast in the Japanese language but quit these activities soon after starting:

'Jinsei wa keikakudōri ni ikanai'. 'Life doesn't go according to plan' [N26 m02]

On the other hand, one teacher who had started a Japanese language podcast is still uploading episodes regularly 'routine wa daiji desu ne' 'Routine is very important' and 'tsutsukeru wa daiji desu' 'Continuing is important' [U39m01] the teacher repeats to explain his idea of successful language studying and language teaching.

Some teachers were struggling with Japanese society's pressure and expectations leading into deep thought about their existence and the meaning of life. One participant who had returned to Japan 6 months earlier because of the worldwide travel restrictions reported:

'hantoshi kan nanimo shite naindesu kedo, ma italki dake ne shigoto wo shite, de ma tamani koo ma localu no shigoto (...) nogyo de (...) sore dake de ikite ikenai to iu no ga nihon kekko severe na (...). Nanka go shohi shōsō-kan, nanika go fuman (...) kimotchi mo atta (...) Jappari konna toki jinsei wa nannanda, nan no tame ni ikiteru'

'I haven't done anything for half a year, well, only worked for italki, and I happened to work something local (...) farming (...) living only with this to say in such Japan in a difficult situation (...). Feeling frustrated with expenses, dissatisfied with something (...) there was also such feeling (...) After all, what is life like at such a time? What am I living for' [N26m02]

In several quotes, such as the prior two, the author observed that the individuals who returned to Japan because of the restrictions had the most difficulty with their overall situation. This affected their motivation and success in teaching as well.

'Ano, shigoto ga nakute. Mō nandesu ka. Daitai nani Nihon ni kaete kite, (...) Tsuttoko Nihon ni inagara kangaete-sadesukedo - Nihon ni iru to ne nanka kyūkutsu naki mochi yappari suru ndesu ne, dōshitemo ne. (...) De, ma, shigoto o sagasu ni shite mo hi attoite atari (...) Dōshitemo tai guga warukattara (...) Deshi goto o sagasu no, ni shite mo, na kanji to nan. Tankide shigoto o suru koto de. Dōshitara yoi ka wakaranai baai wa, (...) De sagyō o sagashite kudasai (...) Ma, anmari boku wa sōiu tokoro ikitakunai'. 'hmm, I still do not have work. What is it already? The whole time, since I came back to Japan (...) I think about it while I'm in Japan, but - when I'm in Japan, I feel cramped, by all means. (...) Well, even if I'm looking for a job-I just hit it (...) If I really don't like it (...) I'm looking for a job, but what's the point? If I don't know what to do, look for work with (...) by working hard (...) Well, I don't really want to go to such kind of place [Japanese company]. [N26m02]

In addition to receiving information on the perception and practical implementation of digital methods in language teaching, the analysis demonstrated that the restrictions functioned as an

amplifier or enhancer for the participant's overall emotional state. If the teacher was stable and resilient before (overall confident with life) the restrictions were experienced as a difficult, frustrating and annoying but not as an unsolvable catastrophe. The participants who were satisfied with and confident in their lives found teaching online as another possibility to express themselves and contribute to society. This goes in line with findings of another research on online teaching and learning due to COVID-19: Jon-Chao et al. (2021) found that self-efficacy (Internet self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy) can positively predict practical performance anxiety. The participants with the most difficulty were those participants who had felt lost or unintegrated into society before the restrictions started. Some of those who had lost their jobs and were unhappy about it reported easier success with teaching than those with higher vulnerability and insecurity.

5.4 Japanese L1 long-term motivation to continue JFL online teaching

In two post-research follow-up questionnaires after two years in August 2022 and March 2023 participants were asked whether they continued teaching their first language online even when they could return to their former position. This revealed that six teachers who participated in the qualitative interview in 2020 are still teaching and even extended the number of lessons to fulltime. From the 51 participants of the quantitative research, 36 reported they were still teaching JFL online. One teacher, who switched completely to online-teaching argued “It wasn't until this year that I noticed how exhausting face-to-face events are when it was again possible to teach in groups” [N38f06]. Participants are more convinced of online teaching than two years ago when they were first surveyed and don't want to go back to face-to-face teaching: “It's also much more strenuous, I have to go there and it also causes more costs” [M35f01], “it's more stressful for me when I have to go straight to the language school, so I gave up and only teach online” [N38 f06]. Another reason to continue online teaching are personal ones: “it is much easier for me to organize it with taking care for my children when I can stay at my workplace at home” [Z32f04]. Two participants of the research interviews in 2020 did return to their former job as soon as it was possible. “I had a good experience with teaching and maybe I will continue with some lessons besides my main work” [N26m02], “however, only teaching was not the right thing for me – I prefer to leave the house for work” [N26m02]. “I missed the contact to the people and I am happy back in guiding groups” [I54f03]. Such comments remind, that school and work are not only places to complete tasks, but also places for social learning and experiencing. Many students and employees enjoy the social elements of face-to-face tasks (cf. König et al. 2020).

Results and follow-up research in 2022 and 2023 revealed a significant change in JFL teaching by opening the field to untrained JFL teachers that were able to manage the initial hardship and stay motivated for continuing the teaching JFL work. The specific situation of teaching online is still little researched, but it is known that the distance of student and teacher during online lessons influences not only the students but also the teachers experience (e.g., Hartnett 2016). If the results can be proven valid with untrained teachers of other languages as well, the research allows for predictions of further changes in language teaching, digital work and other areas of digital education. This paper investigated only one-on-one private online lessons for learning the Japanese language. Other formats of teaching and learning online such as group lessons, asynchronous learning, flipped

classroom, etc. which might receive higher attention during Covid-19 restrictions were not included in this research, but provide a rich field for further research in SLT and SLL.

6. Conclusion

This paper analyzed Japanese L1 speakers living in Europe and Japan who shifted to teaching Japanese online because of the changed situation due to the COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. The participants started teaching Japanese, their L1, from home online on the platform *italki* because of their fear of infection, financial difficulties because they could not continue in their former job (e.g., tourism) or desire to alleviate their boredom at home.

Seeking to embed the results in the description of the asked questions, the paper reviewed information on the perception and practical implementation of digital methods in language teaching. Further, the analysis demonstrated that the restrictions functioned as an enhancer of insecurity and vulnerability instead of being the main reason for an unsolvable problem.

The theoretical references, description of the evaluation and data collection methods demonstrate that qualitative interviews have a high potential for the critical examination of conscious and subconscious motivations and attitudes towards language teaching and the potential of digital technology in Japanese language education.

The results reveal areas for further changes in digital language teaching and further areas of digital education. The changes in language learning and teaching are relevant to more than discussing activities. These changes are visible in a fast-growing market of the individual and often unpaid options of the willing language learner. This concern is also relevant to universities and school teachers attempting to enhance the role of digital education in lesson plans. The role of teachers and professors as highly admirable individuals with a high level of power over students will soon become unstable and perhaps obsolete. The heads of universities and higher education planners should consider and act accordingly to such findings.

Overall, as easy as it was for the participants to teach their L1 online without training, it was as difficult to build a successful business in the long term. The majority of the participants added online teaching activities while continuing other on- and offline-activities (childcare, writing a doctoral thesis, remote-work in part-time); only in two cases did they seriously consider long-term full-time teaching of Japanese through digital media. Nevertheless, the barriers to entry for Japanese teachers are significantly reduced by online platforms such as *italki*, and the training paths for Japanese teachers (and for teachers of other languages) are about to change and will continue to change. However, long-term implementation depends on motivations, self-efficacy and context factors. These determine whether untrained JFL teachers succeed in their online teaching activities and thus become a competition for trained JFL teachers.

It could be shown, that although the threshold to becoming a JFL teacher has significantly decreased because of the online platforms, whether the untrained Japanese teachers continue their teaching activities and thus become a competition for trained Japanese teachers depends more on personal characteristics such as perseverance and flexibility. The signs of a significant change in

Japanese teaching can no longer be ignored, but pedagogical training and flexibility, as well as personal characteristics of prospective teachers are playing a role for the success of online teaching.

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