

## Japanese Language Teaching: historical milestones

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**ABSTRACT – Japanese Language Teaching: historical milestones.** This article presents the historical evolution of Japanese language teaching in the West, based on “waves of Japonism”. The bibliographic and documentary study revealed that the First Wave (19th century) resulted in the development of Japanese studies as a new academic area, suffering from the restricted number of students and teachers, limited access to teaching materials. The Second Wave (1960-1970) led to the expansion of Japanese language teaching in Europe, and the resumption of teaching for the Japanese immigrant community on the American continent, with support from government agencies such as JICA and the Japan Foundation. The Third Wave (from 1980 onwards), brought the diversification of the student profile, and the renewal of the teaching methodology.

**Keywords: Japanese Language Teaching. Japonism. Japanese Government Agencies. Japanese Culture.**

**RESUMO – O Ensino de Língua Japonesa: marcos históricos.** O presente artigo apresenta a evolução histórica do ensino de língua japonesa no Ocidente, com base em “ondas de Japonismo”. O estudo bibliográfico documental revelou que a primeira Onda (século XIX) resultou no desenvolvimento dos estudos japoneses como nova área acadêmica, sofrendo com o número restrito de alunos e professores, acesso limitado a materiais didáticos. A Segunda Onda (1960-1970) levou à ampliação do ensino de língua japonesa na Europa, e à retomada do ensino para a comunidade imigrante japonesa no continente americano, com apoio de agências governamentais como JICA e Fundação Japão. Já a Terceira Onda (a partir de 1980) trouxe a diversificação do perfil do aluno e a renovação da metodologia de ensino.

**Palavras-chave: Ensino de Língua Japonesa. Japonismo. Agências Governamentais Japonesas. Cultura Japonesa.**

## Introduction

This article aims to present the historical evolution of Japanese language teaching, focusing on developments in the West, understood as the European and American continents. It is part of a doctoral research developed in the Postgraduate Program in Education (PPGE) of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM). It is a bibliographic, qualitative study, based on research and publications in the area of history and education of Japan, Europe, the United States and Brazil.

The need for this research is justified in the global and regional geopolitical context, characterized by the growth of interest in the study of the Japanese language by learners without Japanese ancestry and by the efforts made by the Japanese government and local governments to promote the Japanese language and culture.

According to reports from the Japan Foundation (2018), until the Covid-19 Pandemic, Japanese language teaching recorded a constant expansion, reaching more than 3.84 million students, and Brazil was located in the 14th position with more than twenty-six thousand students<sup>1</sup>. Japanese teaching began in regions with a large concentration of immigrants and Japanese descendants, such as São Paulo, and expanded to areas with smaller descendant communities, but which maintain strong economic ties with Japan, strengthened by the training of a workforce with knowledge of the Japanese language and culture, as is the case of Amazonas, where the first degree course in Letters-Japanese in the North Region of Brazil emerged (Federal University of Amazonas, 2011), and the first Japanese-Portuguese bilingual public schools in Brazil, of Elementary Education (Djalma da Cunha Batista Full-Time State School, in 2016) and High School (Jacimar da Silva Gama Full-Time State School, in 2019) (Quintino et al., 2023).

In each country, local-level historical studies were developed, and in Brazil, the works of Moriwaki (2008), Tachibana (2017), Morato (2011) on Japanese language teaching aimed at the Japanese immigrant community, and of Suzuki (2000) and Pereira (2000) on higher education for the general public stand out. However, there was a lack, in Brazilian publications, of a study presenting a global view of Japanese language teaching, which this article aims to fill.

We adopt a temporal approach here, considering as the unit of analysis the “wave of Japonism”, that is, a longer period of interest on the part of the West in relation to Japan (Arnaud, 2009), as it is believed that this approach better explains the development of Japanese language education in relation to the global historical and economic context. From the 19th century to the present, it is considered that there have been three waves of Japonism: the first at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century; the second in the 1960s, when Japan experienced a period of great economic growth, called the “Japanese Miracle”; and finally, the third, from the 1980s, which continues to this day (Arnaud, 2009).

Among the numerous cultural and artistic movements recorded since the 19th century, as a consequence of the intensification of intercultural contact, the artistic movement of Japonism stands out, which values and seeks inspiration in the art of Japan, first defined in 19th-century France (McKenzie, 2004), but present, in the same period, in other countries as well, such as England and Holland. Its emergence originated in the appreciation of luxury artisanal products imported from China and Japan, such as porcelain, fabrics and clothing, furniture, etc., by wealthy families of the newly created bourgeois class, seeking to strengthen their identity, as a social class that had the financial means to acquire these products and less resistance to the exotic than the old nobility (McKenzie, 2004; McAdams, 2016). Harvey (1992) states that:

The ideological labour of inventing tradition became of great significance in the late nineteenth century precisely because this was an era when transformations in spatial and temporal practices implied a loss of identity with place and repeated radical breaks with any sense of historical continuity.

However, Western interest in Japanese culture was not limited to the 19th century, with periods of intensification being observed later, in the 1960s and 1970s and again, from the 1980s onwards. To explain this interest, this article uses Harvey's theory (1992), which establishes a connection between insecurity in periods of economic crisis and the search for identity on a global level, marked by the search for art and cultural production, due to the loss of confidence in the notion of value that existed until then, whether financial, cultural and ideological.

This work begins by presenting the effects of the first contacts between the West and the Japanese language, continues by dealing with the 19th century and the first wave of Japonism, passing through the imperialist period of Japan and, upon reaching the mid-20th century, presents the development of Japanese language teaching after the Second World War under the influence of the second and third waves of Japonism (Arnaud, 2009).

## **The Beginning of Japanese Language Study Outside Japan**

As expected due to geographical proximity, the study of the Japanese language outside Japan began in countries such as Korea and China, due to the need for translators and interpreters for their respective governments and to carry out commercial activities. The oldest teaching materials and encyclopedias for the study of the Japanese language and culture in East Asia appear from the 15th century in China and from the 17th century in Korea (Seki, 1997).

In the West, the study of the Japanese language experienced its first period of development during the 16th century (1543-1639) with the arrival of the Portuguese in Japan (Seki, 1997; Henshall, 2005). Jesuit priests learned the language in order to spread their faith, and dictionaries and books with grammatical explanations were published,

such as *De Institvtione Grammatica Libri Tres* (1594), *Dictionarium Latino-Lusitanicum ac Iaponicum* (1595), the dictionary of ideograms *Racuyoxu* (1598), the *Vocabulario da Lingoa de Iapam* (1603), the *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam* (1608) and the *Arte Breve da Lingoa Iapoa* (1620) (Tashiro-Perez, 2012, p. 31-32).

However, in the mid-17th century, under the threat of Japan being colonized and having its citizens enslaved, Japanese political leaders banned Christianity, closed the borders to the entry of foreigners and prohibited the departure of Japanese people from the national territory, which interrupted, with few exceptions, Western contacts with Japanese culture and language until the 19th century (Henshall, 2005).

Despite this, the influence of Japanese culture left its mark on the European academic and artistic world. Kreiner (1984, p. 38) explains that

Japan was seen as a part of Europe and was included in the criticism of Europe by Europeans just beginning. It was used as the most suitable model in focusing on European contradictions and weaknesses. Jesuit-drama of the counter-reformation in Middle Europe used Japanese themes, as did novels and fiction in the Baroque period. Only with the beginning of the era of enlightenment, was China depicted as a model of reason, and Japan seen in a more negative way. (Kreiner, 1984, p. 38).

However, the scope of Western contacts with the Japanese remained very limited for almost a century (from 1543 to 1639), which did not lead to a widespread diffusion of the Japanese language in the West, with published materials being disseminated and used in a restricted manner by the Catholic clergy and the few scholars with knowledge of Latin and Portuguese, who had access to a rare copy, found either in some private collection or in libraries with restricted access, such as the Vatican Library (Tanaka, 2014).

## **The 19th Century and the First Wave of Japonism**

Until the mid-19th century, accidental contacts between Japan and the West continued to occur, mainly by sea. There are reports of Japanese shipwreck survivors who arrived on Russian soil and were taken to Saint Petersburg, where they became Japanese language teachers under the supervision of the Czar, as part of the Russian policy of advancing south and establishing relations with Japan. However, Russia's attempts to establish trade and diplomatic relations with Japan proved unsuccessful, and the study of the Japanese language was not widely disseminated, being carried out by a few individuals in the service of the Czar. There are also cases of travelers such as the German physician and naturalist Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), who worked in Japan and who, upon his return, brought back to Europe a large quantity of objects and materials useful for the study of the Japanese language (Seki, 1997).

However, from the beginning of the 19th century onwards, the weakened Japanese political leadership had less and less power to prevent Japan from contacting Western travelers and traders whose ships established routes close to Japan and pressured the country to allow contact (Henshall, 2005). And in 1853, pressured by the United States, Japan reopened its doors to the entry of foreigners, as well as allowing its citizens to leave.

The opening of Japan facilitated access to Japanese products and cultural elements and increased contact between Westerners and Japanese. Thus, during the first half of the 19th century, Japanese diplomatic missions were sent to Europe by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the hope of bringing new learning and reforming the country (Lima, 2013), and in the second half of the same century, International Exhibitions<sup>2</sup> were organized in England and France, where Japan participated first as a visitor and later as an exhibitor<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, interest in the Japanese language increased, and Japanese language studies at higher education levels developed. The first Japanese language courses were opened in 1855 at Leiden University in the Netherlands, followed in 1863 by courses in Paris (France) and Florence (Italy) (Ogawa, 2019, p. 459). Among the Japanese language scholars who stood out during this period, Seki (1997) cites Johann J. Hofmann (1805-1878) in the Netherlands, Leon de Rosny (1837-1914) in France, and August Pfizmaier (1808-1887) in Austria.

In Russia, the teaching of Japanese that had begun with the Japanese castaways was temporarily interrupted due to lack of funds, but in 1870 a Japanese language course was opened at the University of Saint Petersburg<sup>4</sup>, which excelled in linguistic studies. In Germany, the first course was opened in 1873 at the School of Oriental Languages affiliated with the University of Berlin (Seki, 1997). Refsing (1992) indicates that the German model of university studies in Japanese became a reference in Europe in this area. This school also had guest professors from Japan, and most of those who attended were law students aspiring to a career in diplomacy.

The influence of the European Japonism movement reached the American continent, albeit in a limited and belated way, also driven by the development of diplomatic relations. According to Seki (1997, p. 93), the first higher education Japanese language course in the United States was opened in 1900 at the Berkeley School associated with the University of California. Until 1934, Japanese language courses were also implemented at other universities, such as Yale, Columbia, Washington, Stanford, Michigan, Hawaii, and Harvard, where the Harvard-Yenching Institute was created in 1928 (Seki, 1997; Suzuki, 2000).

Initially, Japanese teaching materials aimed at children were used, which did not meet the needs of university students, but later specific teaching materials for higher education were also published, focusing on teaching grammar and vocabulary<sup>5</sup>. However, the field of Japanese studies had an annexed status, without prestige, the number of students was very small, and some students began their studies out

of curiosity, not with the seriousness with which they took other specialties (Seki, 1997, p. 96). Consequently, the number of Japanese language scholars without Japanese ancestry in the United States remained low until World War II.

When analyzing the characteristics of Japanese language teaching developed in the 19th century in the context of the First Wave of Japonism, it is observed that it has a philological character, being focused on the study of language and literature (especially classical literary productions, with already established prestige), having a very restricted number of students and teachers, extremely limited access to materials and dictionaries, as well as contact with native speakers, an extended duration of language study, until proficiency is achieved, in comparison with other foreign language courses, and an extremely low prospect of employability, limited to diplomatic circles or to the continuation of academic careers and replacement of teachers themselves, upon their retirement. In other words, it was a new and not very prestigious academic area, developed by a few enthusiasts, together with their disciples.

## Japanese Language Teaching until World War II

At the beginning of the 20th century, in addition to the West's fascination with Japan, other factors began to drive the development of Japanese language teaching abroad, such as Japanese immigration, mainly to the American continent, Japan's imperialist attitude and the reaction to this by the United States and England, as a result of the Second World War.

Upon achieving sufficient economic development at the end of the 19th century, Japan embarked on an imperialist project, occupying territories in China (Manchuria), Taiwan, Singapore, and Korea, where it imposed, as part of its colonization strategy, the study of the Japanese language (Seki, 1997). On the other hand, from the beginning of Japanese immigration to other countries such as the United States (especially Hawaii), Australia, Brazil, Peru, among others, the development of Japanese language teaching began for the children of immigrants, with the aim of reintegrating them into Japanese society upon their return to Japan after working abroad, which later became heritage language teaching (*keishōgo kyōiku*). This teaching received support from the Japanese government, with the sending of specialists and financial support for community schools, as part of the imperialist expansion policy (Moriwaki, 2008; Morales, 2008; 2011).

But as the countries targeted by Japanese immigration adopted a stance against Japan during World War II, Japanese language education for Japanese descendants was banned, and was seen as an impediment to the integration of the immigrant population, and even dangerous. In the decade following the end of World War II, Japanese language education was restarted in immigrant communities as heritage education, but it did not reach the same level of prominence as before.

On the other hand, after the Japanese attack on the United States in 1941, the American government implemented Japanese language courses for senior army officers, initially in an intensive manner, aimed at developing the four skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing). In this teaching, Japanese immigrants in the United States played the role of informants, assisting, voluntarily or obligatorily, in the teaching process and in the production of teaching materials.

Donald Keene (1922-1919), known for his studies of the history of Japanese literature, and Edward Seidensticker (1921-1997), an important translator of Japanese literature, are among the Japanese scholars who completed this program. Later, the government created the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), which included teaching 27 languages, including Japanese, focused on developing oral skills using the audiolingual method, the so-called "army method" (Krashen, 1988).

However, the end of World War II resulted in a sharp decline in the scale of Japanese language teaching abroad. After Japan's defeat, Japanese was eliminated from compulsory education in the occupied territories, and the number of students studying in U.S. Army programs also decreased. In territories with a large concentration of Japanese immigrants from the American continent, Japanese language teaching had already been banned during the war, and it took more than a decade to be resumed, without the same level of coverage as before the war (Moriwaki, 2008; Morales, 2011). There was also a temporary abandonment in Axis countries, such as Italy and Germany, which first had to rebuild their economies destroyed by the war and resume diplomatic relations with other countries, including Japan (Seki, 1997).

## **Japanese Language Teaching after World War II and the Second Wave of Japonism**

The development of Japanese language education after World War II was influenced by two factors: Japan's economic power and Japanese cultural diplomacy. In the first decade after the war, the Japanese government invested in creating an image of Japan as peaceful and focused on the aesthetic aspects of traditional culture (Ogoura, 2012; Bukh, 2014), and little investment was made in the development of Japanese language education abroad, as part of efforts to forget Japan's colonialist past, when the Japanese language had been imposed on the dominated peoples, mainly in Korea and China<sup>6</sup>.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Japan's "miraculous" economic development, which had attracted worldwide attention, and the criticism received by the Japanese economy that was imposing itself against that of the United States and Europe, caused Japanese cultural diplomacy to change the image of the Land of the Rising Sun from a "peaceful Japan" to a "Japan as an economic and technological superpower", an image that was popularized during events such as the 1964 Summer Olympics, the 1970 Osaka International Exposition and the 1972 Sap-



poro Winter Olympics. Also contributing to the popularization of Japanese culture, including its traditional and historical aspects, was the prominence of Japan in international film festivals<sup>7</sup> and the promotion abroad of Noh and Kabuki theaters (Ogoura, 2012). The interest generated by these cultural manifestations in Japan was known as the Second Wave of Japonism (Arnaud, 2009).

During this period, government support for the development of Japanese language teaching abroad increased, with the establishment, in 1962, of the Association for Japanese Language Teaching to Foreigners (*Gaikokujin no tame no Nihongo Kyōiku Gakkai*) and the signing of cultural exchange treaties with eight socialist countries between 1969 and 1979 (among which Yugoslavia, East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, China) (Ogoura, 2012; Glisic, 2016), resulting in the resumption or implementation of new Japanese language courses at higher education level in Eastern Europe<sup>8</sup>. In 1972, the Japan Foundation was created, an agency linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, with the aim of promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and other countries<sup>9</sup>, and in 1974, JICA was created, from the merger of the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA) and the Japan Emigration Service (JEMIS)<sup>10</sup>.

However, despite the expansion to other countries, Japanese language teaching in Europe is still carried out on a reduced scale, for a low number of students, and there is a lack of teaching materials and contact with native speakers (Refsing, 1992; Waniek, 1995), which is partially met by sending employees of the Japan Foundation or volunteers from JICA to work as teachers.

In the United States, after World War II, there was a continuous and exponential growth in Japanese language teaching, which was based on the following factors: the existence of a large number of teachers trained during World War II in army institutions; the development of the Japanese economy and the transformation of Japan into a key economic partner of the United States since the beginning of the Cold War; the development of American tourism to Japan and Japanese tourism to the United States; the increased interest of the American public in Japanese arts such as judo, ikebana, etc., indirectly leading to an interest in learning the Japanese language (Asakawa, Nakatsu, 1998).

Japanese language teaching also experienced a new period of development in South America, to serve non-descendants in higher education and descendants of the Japanese immigrant community, who wanted to study the heritage language of their ancestors. Thus, the first undergraduate Japanese language course at higher education level in Brazil was opened at the University of São Paulo in 1963 (USP, 2022), and the Center for Japanese Studies at USP (USP, 2023), and Japanese government investment in schools for the immigrant community and in the process of training Japanese language teachers through JICA<sup>11</sup> increased (Gaudio, 2019).

It was noted that the Second Wave of Japonism was influenced by the image that Japan developed of itself after the Second World War,



both as a peaceful country, open to new diplomatic relations and to the dissemination of its culture, and as a great economic power, and in the creation of this image the Japanese government actively contributed, through the organization of international events and the creation of government agencies with support functions for the teaching of the Japanese language abroad.

### **The Third Wave of Japonism and Japanese Language Teaching – New Perspectives**

From the 1980s onwards, there was a new global increase in interest in Japan, or the Third Wave of Japonism, which was driven by the expansion of Japanese companies outside of Japan and the popularization of Japanese cultural media products intended for entertainment, such as electronic games, comic books, manga, and animation, anime, pop music and dance, among others (Joko; Sekino, 2012; Groot, 2018). Both factors have their roots in the new global economic situation of flexible capitalist accumulation (Harvey, 1992). This type of economy encompasses periods of growth and periodic crises of capitalism, with layoffs and economic recession, increased competition among workers, precarious work and job insecurity.

Flexible accumulation emerged as a response to the energy crises of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the need for new markets and cheap labor to maintain corporate profits increased (Harvey, 1992). Japan took advantage of the period to reorganize itself and achieve new development worldwide (Ivy, 1989, p. 42), and Japanese companies expanded to countries with cheap labor, such as China and Southeast Asia, or Brazil. As a result of the presence of Japanese companies, the study of the Japanese language flourished, with knowledge of the language being considered a differential for obtaining a well-paid job.

On the other hand, in the context of flexible capital accumulation, there has been a global increase in interest in cultural products, both American and Japanese, especially pop culture, such as comics, animations, and electronic games. Harvey (1992, p. 298) explains that:

[...]the growth of the art market (with its concern for authorial signature) and the Strong commercialization of cultural production since Around 1970 have had a lot to do with the Search to find alternative means to store value under conditions where the usual money forms were deficient.

Under these conditions, Japan conquers the world through the “alternative” character, different from what already existed in the Western market, of its cultural and entertainment products. Groot (2018) explains that: “Animé and manga with their different aesthetics and themes provided an alternative to mainstream Western, American-dominated mass culture [...]” (Groot, 2018, p. 20-21).

Some consumers of these media products end up wanting to delve deeper into the language of the country that produced them (Morales, 2011). This is the case of middle-class youth (Joko; Sekino, 2012), who enroll in Japanese language courses after coming into contact with

Japanese films and animations, initially through open, public TV channels, which began showing these cultural productions in the 1980s and 1990s, due to their relatively low cost compared to productions from American studios (Sato, 2007).

With the development of cable TV, and, from the 2000s onwards, with the popularization of the internet, access to this type of media grew exponentially. Regarding the relationship between Japanese cultural export and interest in the language, Groot (2018, p. 29), citing the reports of the Japan Foundation, specifies:

What is notable about the growth in interest in Japanese since 1979 is that while it began during Japan's high economic growth period, it has continued despite the subsequent economic problems and loss of economic and technological leadership (to Korea, and China in particular). The report makes clear that the key drivers of interest are predominantly interest in the language itself, communication, interest in manga, animé and J-pop and the like, as well as history, literature and so forth. In contrast, instrumentalist reasons related to finding work were much less important motivations (emphasis added, Japan Foundation 2013).

In other words, in the context of the Third Wave of Japonism, the influence of Japanese cultural products became an even more important factor than economic reasons in perpetuating interest in the study of the Japanese language. Japanese language teaching is characterized by the continuous increase in the number of learners and the diversification of the student profile, in terms of age and motivation for study. On the other hand, Galan (2008, p. 47-48) warns that:

There is, in fact, a great paradox in our current situation, in that most of our students now see Japanese as a language like any other foreign language and that Japanese language educators, too, carry on pretending that this is the case, whereas an objective and unrestrained assessment of the effectiveness of our current methods shows that Japanese simply cannot be treated at university in the same way as other languages. An analysis of the Japanese language itself, and of how the Japanese succeed in mastering it, supports this. It is time we accept that this paradox is no longer viable.

To address this situation, new methodologies are implemented, such as the communicative approach, replacing teaching practices such as the grammar-translation method, or the traditional method, or the audiolingual method, popularized in the American army during World War II. However, during decades of experimenting with the communicative method, it was noted that it was not suitable for all types of audiences and all learning objectives, especially in Western higher education, where there is a need to understand the structure of the language and acquire writing, which requires a much longer study time than other languages that use alphabets. Winch (2016) discusses Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):

CLT is an ideal teaching method for educational culture which prioritizes one-to-one interaction and paying attention to the

needs of individual students. However, paying attention to individual student's needs may not necessarily meet the needs of all students as a class or the majority students. [...] The findings of this study suggested that the students in the CLT class struggled to read and write in Japanese, which became apparent when they took the Reading and Written Test. Reviewing what CLT has brought to today's students, perhaps the area of grammar, reading and writing need more attention in using this method (Winch, 2016, p. 11-12).

This increases students' dissatisfaction with their learning, leading to dropout or insufficient linguistic knowledge. Case studies from several countries indicate the weaknesses of the communicative method in Japanese language teaching, especially when it comes to writing and reading skills, which are less trained with this method (Galan, 2008; Winch, 2016).

Another feature of Japanese language teaching during this period was the continued support of the Japanese government through the work of government-linked agencies such as JICA and the Japan Foundation. Offices of these agencies were opened in several countries, cultural events were held, and volunteers from JICA and the Japan Foundation were sent to work in various countries to promote the Japanese language and culture.

Special attention is paid to monitoring Japanese language teaching internationally, through the registration of educational institutions by the Japan Foundation, and by the implementation, in 1984, of a Japanese language proficiency test organized with the support of the Japanese government (Japan Foundation) and simultaneously administered worldwide, the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). Since the 1990s, the Japan Foundation has also organized teacher preparation courses in an immersion format at its headquarters, as well as courses and study programs for researchers of Japanese language, culture and education<sup>12</sup>.

Japanese government has invested in the development and improvement of Japanese language teaching using digital resources, creating websites with teaching materials<sup>13</sup>, launching the international network of institutions for the promotion of Japanese language and culture Sakura Network (2007), and adopting the JF Standard (an adaptation of the European framework of foreign language competences) from 2010 onwards, using the principle of acquiring communicative skills and the communicative approach as a teaching methodology<sup>14</sup>.

In the decade 2010-2020, there was government support for the diversification of Japanese language teaching to meet the demands of the target audience, with the creation of teaching materials and websites aimed at audiences interested in Japanese *manga* and animation, as well as the diversification of Japanese language exams, according to the examinees' objectives<sup>15</sup>. Efforts to implement the communicative approach and the teaching of linguistic skills also continued, with the publication, in 2013, in several languages, of the complete version of

the *Marugoto* teaching material, edited by the Japan Foundation, which became a reference in Japanese language teaching worldwide.

However, there is criticism of the government regarding its lack of involvement in directing and managing Japanese language education at a global level. Hashimoto (2018) explains that, even in the second decade of the 21st century, there are no clear guidelines and unified direction on the part of the Japanese government when it comes to the administration of Japanese language education carried out outside Japan, despite there being specific support for initiatives to develop it.

[...]Japan [...] has not developed a language policy that defines the roles of languages, levels of proficiency, the individual right to access to languages, or the government's responsibility to support language learning [...] (Hashimoto, 2018, p. 2).

Furthermore, the continuous global growth recorded from the 1980s to the 2020s has not occurred in an even manner, being influenced by the economic situation in Japan<sup>16</sup> and the maturation of the Japanese language education market<sup>17</sup>.

The collapse of Japan's real estate and financial bubble in 1989, which brought decades of economic recession, led to a loss of confidence in Japan's economic strength, and to the migration of people interested in studying Eastern languages to Chinese, in line with the growth of China's economy, and to Korean, due to the growth of international interest in Korean culture, promoted by the dissemination of media products such as films and pop music (the Hallyu Wave or Korean Wave phenomenon).

Furthermore, as Japan suffered the effects of the economic recession, the government's budget for Japanese language education decreased, resulting in a smaller budget for the Japan Foundation, or a decrease in the number of JICA volunteers. Further blows to the Japanese economy in 2008 with the Lehman shock<sup>18</sup> and in 2011 with the Great East Japan Earthquake resulted in a decrease in the number of exchange places to Japan, and in the amount of scholarships offered by the Japanese government<sup>19</sup>.

In concluding the analysis of the last four decades that encompass the Third Wave of Japonism, it was noted that the development of the media increased public access to Japanese cultural products (cable TV, Internet), and the international economic situation, with the search for alternative markets and sources of cheap labor, took the teaching of the Japanese language to various corners of the world, expanding knowledge about Japan and its language on a global level.

## Final Considerations

This study, of a panoramic nature, presented historical milestones in the development of Japanese language teaching in the West, focusing on its relationship with the global economic and political situation, with capitalism and its crises and periods of development.

The Western search for the Japanese language began for religious reasons, with the arrival of Jesuit priests in Japan in the 16th century, as an isolated case. However, the teaching of Japanese in Europe and the American continent began in the 19th century, under the influence of Japonism, and registered periods of intensification accompanying the increase in Western interest in Japanese culture. It was this interest that sustained the continuation of Japanese studies, even when economic contacts were rare, or the Japanese economy presented periods of stagnation. Arnaud (2009) pointed out the existence of three waves of Japonism: the first during the 19th century, the second in the 1960s-1970s, and the third beginning in the 1980s, and continuing to this day.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, Japanese language education suffered significant losses due to the negative impact on the economy, with: job losses, social isolation and the ban on face-to-face teaching, among others. According to the latest report by the Japan Foundation, published in 2023, for the first time there was a decrease in the number of Japanese language students, from 3.84 million to 3.79 million (a reduction of 1.5% compared to 2018).

During the Pandemic, exchange studies in Japan were interrupted, Japanese language schools lost many students, and higher education courses suffered from a decrease in the quality of teaching and student interest, even with the implementation of remote learning.

However, despite these losses suffered by all areas of education, and not only by Japanese education, no significant change has been observed in Western interest in Japan, and the factors that supported the development of this education before the Pandemic, such as interest in Japanese media products and the job opportunities offered by the expansion of Japanese companies abroad, as well as Japanese government support for educational development, continue.

In October 2022, Japan reopened for tourism and in-person academic exchanges, and in 2023 the target of 400,000 foreign students to be received by Japan this year was announced, the highest ever, surpassing the target set in 2014 of 300,000 exchange students, surpassed in 2019, the year before the Pandemic (Kakuchi, 2023). Thus, Japanese language education could reach new historical highs in the coming decades.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to the official website of the Japan Foundation in São Paulo. Available on: <https://fjisp.org.br/linguajaponesa/inicio/#:~:text=No%20Brasil%2C%20o%20n%C3%BAmero%20de,corresponde%20ao%2014%C2%BA%20lugar%20mundial>. Acesso em: 8 jun.2024.

<sup>2</sup> The most important being in London - 1862 and in Paris - 1867, 1878 and 1900.

- <sup>3</sup> The Europeans who accompanied these missions and events achieved direct contact with the Japanese language, even without traveling to Japan, contributing to the development of Japanese studies (Seki, 1997).
- <sup>4</sup> Prominent alumni of the Japanese language course at the University of St. Petersburg include scholars N. I. Konrad (1891-1970), the founder of the Soviet school of Japanese scholars, Martin N. Ramming (1889-1988), the first tenured professor of Japanese in Berlin, and linguist Yevgeny Dmitrievich Polivanov (1891-1937), the inventor of the system of transliteration of the Japanese language into the Cyrillic alphabet, which is still in use today.
- <sup>5</sup> Seki (1997) mentions “Elementary Japanese for University Students”, authored by professors Serge Elisseeff and Edwin O. Reischauer, published in 1940 by the Yenching Institute.
- <sup>6</sup> “[...]until the early 1970s, Japanese language education abroad was not actively encouraged because many Japanese intellectuals, as well as citizens of former Japanese colonies in Korea and China, recalled Japan’s prewar efforts to propagate its language in Asia and still felt a connection between language promotion and imperial ambitions”.. (Ogoura, 2012, n. p.)
- <sup>7</sup> Akira Kurosawa’s *Rashômon* won the Golden Lion at the Venice International Film Festival in 1951 and the Oscar for Best Film Not in the English Language in 1952, and was followed by other films that gained international fame.
- <sup>8</sup> For example, in Romania in 1962 (Waniek, 1995), Bulgaria in 1967; Serbia in 1975, Sweden in 1956, Norway in 1966, Finland between 1964-1965 (Japan Foundation, 2020).
- <sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://fjisp.org.br/institucional/>. Accessed on: 9 jun. 2024
- <sup>10</sup> Available at: <https://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/basic/history/index.html>. Accessed on: 9 jun. 2024.
- <sup>11</sup> Japanese government agency responsible for supporting developing countries through the management of Official Development Assistance (ODA) programs. Its support was provided through equipment donations, production and distribution of textbooks, and sending Japanese volunteers to organize immersion courses and seminars for Japanese language teachers, such as the Seminar for Japanese Language Teachers in Brazil (*Zenpaku Ni-hongo Kyôshi Kenshukai*), which began in 1957.. Available at: <https://www.wochikochi.jp/foreign/2017/01/brazil-japanese-education.php>. Accessed on: 9 jun. 2024.
- <sup>12</sup> Available at: <https://jf50.jpf.go.jp/en/history/>. Accessed on: 9 jun. 2024.
- <sup>13</sup> For example, *Minna no Kyôzai* [Didactic materials for everyone] (2002), *Erin ga chôsen! Nihongo dekiru!* [Erin’s Challenge: I can speak Japanese!] (2006)
- <sup>14</sup> Idem.
- <sup>15</sup> In addition to the JLPT, for examinees with objectives such as obtaining a Japanese visa, exchange or employment in Japan and abroad, The Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) was created for examinees aiming for residence status in Japan as a “Specific Skilled Worker”.
- <sup>16</sup> When Japan entered an economic recession in 1992, it reduced its budget for support programs for teaching Japanese abroad and sending Japanese volunteers to educational institutions, which led to a reduction and even closure of Japanese language courses. The adoption of a government financial plan that took into account the continuation of support for institutions where Japanese language was already imple-

mented could have avoided the closure of courses. This situation was striking in Eastern European countries such as Romania, which depended on the support of JICA volunteers for the permanence and expansion of Japanese language teaching, due to the lack of contact with native speakers.

<sup>17</sup> With the reorganization of educational institutions and the fluctuation of the target audience's interest in response to Japan's economic situation, in the first two decades of the 21st century, there was a slight decrease in the number of students and educational institutions offering Japanese language courses in regions where Japanese language teaching has a longer history, such as Europe, Australia and the United States.

<sup>18</sup> International financial crisis that began in the United States, following a financial and real estate bubble that culminated in the bankruptcy of the American bank Lehman.

<sup>19</sup> The crises also had an unexpected effect, with the return of immigrants of South American origin, mainly Brazilians, who worked in companies in Japan (the phenomenon of the return of the *dekasegi*), heating up the Japanese language education market in their countries, with the injection of new labor with updated knowledge of the Japanese language during their years of work in Japan (Morales, 2020).

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