

**Economics of Language in the Japanese Context:**

**-Empirical Analysis on the Language Ability of Migrant Children in Japan-**

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**Summary**

This research aims to analyze the determinants of migrant children's language ability/preference (Japanese language and their mother countries language). The number of foreign residents living in Japan is the highest number ever, which is 2.66 million in 2017, and the number of people who wish to live in Japan permanently is increasing. As the number of foreign residents who have settled in Japan increases, the number of migrant children and Japanese students who need Japanese as a Second Language (JSL students) has also been increasing. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, the number of JSL students in FY2018 was 43,947 (9,612 for Japanese nationality and 34,335 for foreign nationalities), which is the largest number in the past.

One of the biggest challenges for JSL student education is that JSL students are scattered. Among elementary schools that have accepted JSL students, 78 % of them have less than four students in the school. Meanwhile, those schools that have received more than 20 JSL students are only 4% in the whole. Needless to say, it is quite challenging for municipalities to send a teacher who can support JSL students to all schools due to a shortage of budget. Local NPOs' effort has sustained the support for JSL students, but the Japanese government must consider a fundamental solution urgently considering the rapid increase of JSL students in the recent years.

In this analysis, the author uses the data obtained through questionnaire survey on foreign residents in Japan. The study was conducted between June 30, 2014, and July 25th, 2014 and anonymous questionnaire was distributed for foreign residents who live in Japan more than three months. The sample number is 1035. Percentages of second generation going to high school in Japan was around 60 % in the early 2000s. However, the survey conducted in 2014 shows that 84.1 % of 16 to 19 years old second generation are attending schools, and 11.2 % are working. The number of those who advance to higher education is still minimal, and we have decided to place our focus on statistical analysis of the high school advancement rate not on college enrollment). It should also be noted that this research was conducted in 26 municipalities where many migrants reside, such as Hamamatsu-city and Oizumi-town.

Chiswick and Miller (2007) have proposed Language Model, and four factors (Exposure, Efficiency, Economic Incentive, Wealth) are essential for language acquisition. 1)Exposure: Intensity of the exposure to destination language is critical to the destination language acquisition. Family and neighborhood environment will influence the exposure to the destination language. 2)Efficiency: Immigrants efficiency are different, and the age of arrival at the destination is a particularly essential variable. 3)Economic Incentive: Economic return to language acquisition is one of the most significant motivations for the study. If the destination language ability largely influences the wage, migrant recognizes the necessity and spend more time on the learning. 4) Wealth: Investment is necessary for language acquisition, not only for school tuition but also for transportation expenses, text, and others. Wealthy family can invest more money on children's education, and their children can receive more benefits compared to disadvantaged children.

The author explores the determinants of language ability and high school advancement of migrant children in Japan by using the above mentioned microdata. The econometric analysis

demonstrates that the acquisition for language acquisition of mother language may be discouraged in the current Japanese admission system. Interestingly enough, those family with higher educational attainment and those who own their own houses (those who seem to consider in long-term plan) don't educate children as those who are both good at Japanese and their mother countries' language. It can be inferred that those parents may take priority in learning Japanese and English which are indispensable in Japanese education/admission system. Besides, single parent households tend to show a lower Japanese language abilities compared to non-single parents household. Also, Japanese language ability level and high school advancement correlate.

Based on the results of the above empirical analysis, the author assumes that, under the current admission system, migrant children and parents haven't felt enough incentive for learning their mother country's language. An amendment of high school/university admission system with the increase of migrant children, including affirmative action need to be considered for promoting multi-cultural co-creation in Japanese society and educational environment.

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