

Why Study Japanese?

Concerns, Myths – And Facts

**JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY
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Parents and Administrators Believe--

- Chinese is language of future; Japanese is language of past
- If children study Chinese, they'll get a job; if they study Japanese, they won't
- Just because my child likes Japanese pop culture is no reason to learn Japanese

**Question: Why is this a choice between
Chinese and Japanese?**

Both languages are important to America's future.

Myth #1

Japanese Language is in Decline

**With Fewer Students
and Fewer Programs**

But That's Not True !!

The Reality

- The number of Americans studying Japanese is the highest in history! In 2012 there were over 160,000 students at all levels.
- Enrollments at the pre-college level have increased 20% in the past six years and now top 80,000.
- The number of US junior and senior high schools teaching Japanese jumped from 595 in 2009 to 722 in 2012 (+20%).
- Today more students learn Japanese in high school than in college.

Source: Japan Foundation

Myth #2

Japan is in Decline

Japanese is Language “of the Past”

Again, not true! Here are the facts:

- Japan is world's third largest economic power
- Japan's GDP is bigger than Germany, France, England, Italy, or Spain
- Japan's per capita income is six times China's

Japan's Technological Power

- Japan is a world leader in energy, medical research, materials research, the environment, transportation, telecommunications, digital imaging, and other 21st century industries
- Japan has won 25 Nobel prizes in science in 25 years. In past 5 years, Japan has won 7 Nobel prizes in science; UK 4; France 2; Germany 1; China 0; Italy 0; India 1; and South Korea 0.

Japan's Cultural Power

From Frank Lloyd Wright to Steve Jobs, Japan has had a great influence on the US, in:

- Art and architecture
- Interior and graphic design
- Product design and business management
- Literature and film
- Music and theatre
- Cuisine and fashion

Japan's Ties to US

- A military ally of United States
- A foreign policy partner worldwide
- A key player in Asia
- Strong trade and investment ties
- People to people ties for 70 years
- Educational, scientific, cultural ties

Myth #3

Japanese Can't Make Get a Job

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in US creates jobs

- Japan is 2nd largest investor in US, after UK
- Japan FDI \$149 billion in US over past 10 years, while China invested just \$3 billion
- In 2012 only 0.3% of new FDI in US came from China; Japan's investment was 27 times as large!

Myth #3 (continued)

Japanese Can't Get Me a Job, but Chinese will

- 300 million Chinese learning English today
- 4 million Americans of Chinese heritage in US
- In 2012, 8% of immigrants to US were Chinese (only Mexico was higher)

Question: When companies want Chinese speakers, whom will they hire??

Question:

*Who can predict what the world –
and the world economy will look like
in 10 years?*

*So how can you tell your child – or
your students -- that if they study
this language or that today, they
will get a job in 10 years?*

Conclusion

- Choosing a language is not just about business, economics, technology, or geopolitics
- If it were, then more Americans would study German than French – but they don't
- There are other reasons to study a language:
 - ❖ *What language will you enjoy studying?*
 - ❖ *What country and culture will you enjoy learning about?*
 - ❖ *Which language will open the door to new ways of thinking and understanding?*
 - ❖ *Overall, which language motivates you and brings both enjoyment and challenge?*

For many young Americans,
the answer has been –
and will continue to be “Japanese.