

Role Models and Language Learning Choices - a Case Study

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Japanese language has been taught in Sri Lanka for the past 35 years and yet the occupational pathways for the speakers of the language are highly limited. Most of those who specialise in the language tend to teach in educational institutions. The reality is that though there is a clear demand for translators, interpreters and Japanese speakers in companies in Sri Lanka liaised to Japan, these opportunities are neither known by the public learners, nor the opportunities to develop necessary work related and culture specific skills and training is available for the majority of them. This research is a qualitative case study of two Japanese learners. I purposefully selected two learners who have obtained “A” passes in A/Ls with the view that they might have a comparatively clear vision for their future Japanese studies. In this study I gathered that one of them wishes to continue Japanese studies while the other has stopped learning after A/Ls. I tried to understand the goals and the reasons behind the two learners for continuing and discontinuing Japanese studies. What I learned from the study is that the imagined communities play a major role in their choices. A role model can be one of the main factors that enables a learner to continue language studies. At the end of the study I suggest we, as educators have a role in exposing learners to the multiple career choices they have and guide them to take responsibility of their own choices.

Key words: Japanese Language, Qualitative Case Study, Imagined Communities, Role Model