

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT UNIVERSITI SAINS ISLAM MALAYSIA TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE COHESION MODULE

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**ABSTRACT** - Effective speaking is a crucial aspect of language learning, yet many Japanese language learners at the university level struggle with verbal cohesion, which affects their fluency and coherence. This study explores the experiences and perceptions of Japanese language learners at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) towards the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM). The research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the module in enhancing speech cohesion, as well as students' satisfaction and perceived improvements. Employing a mixed-methods design, the study involved learners from the Faculty of Major Language Studies. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests to assess speaking performance, along with usability surveys to measure usefulness, satisfaction, and ease of use. Qualitative data were obtained from focus group interviews and written reflections to provide deeper insights into students' learning experiences. The findings revealed notable improvements in students' use of cohesive devices, topic continuity, and overall speech structure. High levels of satisfaction were reported, with students appreciating the structured and systematic nature of the module. Many also expressed increased confidence and motivation in speaking Japanese. In conclusion, the JLCM proved to be an effective tool for developing verbal proficiency among university learners. Future research is recommended to test the module with a larger and more diverse group.

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## INTRODUCTION

Effective speaking is a cornerstone of language acquisition, yet Japanese language learners in Malaysian universities, particularly at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), often struggle with verbal cohesion. This challenge significantly impairs their ability to produce coherent and fluent speech. To address this issue, the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM) was developed and implemented. This study explores learners' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of the JLCM, focusing on its impact on speaking performance, cohesion mastery, and student motivation. Grounded in Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion Theory (1976), Gagné's Theory of Instruction, and Behaviourist and Cognitive theories, the research highlights the need for effective pedagogical tools that support discourse-level speaking skills among beginner learners.

Despite the importance of cohesive speech in communication, many novices' Japanese learners face recurring problems such as fragmented sentences, weak topic continuity, and limited use of cohesive devices. These difficulties not only hinder fluency but also affect learners' confidence and willingness to speak. Additionally, existing instructional materials tend to emphasise vocabulary and grammar in isolation, offering minimal guidance on how to connect ideas coherently during oral communication. Learners also report challenges in maintaining motivation and overcoming anxiety, particularly when required to speak spontaneously in classroom settings. Given these issues, this study investigates how a cohesion-focused instructional module can help address these speaking challenges. It seeks to understand whether the JLCM supports improvements in learners' cohesion skills and how students perceive the module in terms of usefulness, clarity, cultural relevance, and its overall influence on their speaking confidence and motivation.

Results showed a significant improvement in the treatment group's speech cohesion, particularly in the use of cohesive devices, topic continuity, and logical sentence progression. Usability assessments revealed high satisfaction, with learners attributing their progress to the structured design and clear objectives of the JLCM. Students also reported increased confidence and reduced anxiety when speaking Japanese, which they linked to the step-by-step approach and culturally sensitive content of the module. However, there remains a lack of cohesive, systematically designed instructional materials that address these speaking challenges in the context of Japanese language learning. Existing modules rarely incorporate cohesion theory or provide structured guidance for developing discourse-level speaking skills, especially for

beginner learners in Islamic university settings. Furthermore, little is known about how such learners perceive cohesion-based instructional approaches, or whether these approaches can effectively support their motivation, confidence, and ability to produce coherent spoken Japanese. These gaps highlight the need to examine the relevance and effectiveness of the JLCM and to understand how learners respond to its use in real classroom conditions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Cohesion, a fundamental concept in discourse analysis, refers to the linguistic and semantic mechanisms that link sentences and ideas together to create unified and comprehensible communication. It enables speakers and writers to connect their ideas smoothly, reducing ambiguity and enhancing clarity for the listener or reader. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) seminal work on cohesion in English laid the groundwork for understanding how meaning is maintained across texts through cohesive devices. Their framework identifies five primary categories of cohesion: reference (e.g., pronouns and demonstratives), substitution (replacement of items to avoid repetition), ellipsis (omission of elements retrievable from context), conjunction (logical connectors), and lexical cohesion (repetition, synonyms, collocations, and lexical chains). Although initially developed within the context of written English, Halliday and Hasan's framework has since been adapted across multiple languages and discourse types, including spoken communication in second language learning contexts. More recent research has demonstrated the significance of these cohesive devices in spoken language, particularly in second language acquisition (SLA). Studies such as those by Chen and Liu (2021) and Zhang and Zhang (2022) have emphasized that cohesion is not limited to the written modality but is equally essential for achieving fluency and communicative competence in speaking. In spoken discourse, cohesion ensures that utterances are logically connected, which is crucial for listener comprehension. Especially in second language learning, where learners may struggle with organizing their thoughts in real time, mastery of cohesive devices supports both language production and effective message delivery.

In the context of Japanese language education, cohesion presents a unique challenge. Japanese relies heavily on implicit contextual cues and particles to express relationships between ideas, which may differ significantly from learners' first languages (L1). Tanaka and Abe (2023) highlighted the divergence in cohesion strategies used in written and spoken Japanese, noting that spoken discourse often depends more on ellipsis and minimal verbal cues, whereas written discourse tends to rely on formal markers. This divergence creates a learning gap, particularly for non-native learners such as those in Malaysia who may overgeneralize written patterns into speech or vice versa. The influence of the learners' L1, especially Malay, further complicates the acquisition of cohesive competence in Japanese. Wong and Abdullah (2023) observed that Malaysian learners tend to carry over cohesive patterns from their native language into Japanese, resulting in awkward or incorrect usage. For instance, Malay speakers may overuse explicit conjunctions or misuse reference terms due to structural differences between Malay and Japanese. Such L1 interference may not only affect grammaticality but also hinder discourse-level intelligibility, impacting learners' ability to participate confidently in spoken interactions.

Beyond linguistic structure, affective factors such as anxiety and motivation also play a critical role in language performance. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that when learners are anxious, unmotivated, or lack confidence, their ability to acquire and use language is impeded, regardless of their cognitive abilities. Horwitz (1986) extended this notion by highlighting that foreign language classroom anxiety can significantly reduce learners' willingness to speak, especially in cultures where making errors is stigmatized. These findings are especially relevant in Malaysian Islamic educational institutions, where learners often experience high expectations and cultural pressures. In response, recent studies by Rahman et al. (2023) and Hussein (2023) have advocated for the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy in language modules, particularly within Islamic education contexts. Language modules that incorporate familiar cultural values, religious elements, and contextually relevant examples tend to improve learner engagement, comprehension, and confidence.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM) draws on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concepts of scaffolded learning and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky (1978), learners progress more effectively when they receive guided support from peers or instructors within their ZPD, gradually internalizing linguistic knowledge through social interaction. Nguyen (2023) further emphasized the value of scaffolded task design in promoting speaking fluency, suggesting that pre-task planning, model dialogues, and visual aids can significantly improve learners' cohesion usage in spontaneous speech. In addition, Fujimoto (2023) examined the role of technology and media integration in language education, noting that digital tools such as video prompts, audio recordings, and interactive applications can enhance learners' ability to process and apply cohesive features in real-time communication. The JLCM incorporates these tools by embedding audiovisual materials, culturally relevant dialogues, and digital reflection tasks that reinforce cohesive language use across diverse speaking contexts.

A growing body of scholarly work highlights the central role of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesion Model in explaining how meaning is structured and sustained across spoken and written discourse (Figure 1). The model conceptualizes cohesion as a system of linguistic ties that connect ideas and sentences through five major categories of cohesive devices. Within the field of second language education, researchers have applied this model to investigate learners' spoken output, identify recurring cohesion-related difficulties, and assess instructional strategies designed to strengthen discourse coherence (Chen & Liu, 2021; Wong & Abdullah, 2023).

In the context of Japanese language learning, the cohesion framework has been used to examine learners’ use of particles, referential markers, conjunctions, and ellipsis. These studies consistently demonstrate that beginner learners face challenges in managing cohesion due to cross-linguistic differences, limited exposure, and the cognitive demands of real-time speech production. Positioning the JLCM within this theoretical tradition enables the present study to address these specific discourse-level challenges systematically. By aligning instructional activities with the cohesion features most problematic for learners, the module strengthens the linguistic foundations necessary for producing coherent spoken Japanese. This body of research establishes cohesion theory as both an analytical tool and a pedagogical anchor underpinning the design of the JLCM.

In conclusion, the development and implementation of the Japanese Language Cohesion Module are anchored in a clear understanding of cohesion as conceptualised by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Their model positions cohesion as a system of linguistic ties including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion that enables ideas to be connected meaningfully across spoken discourse. The literature consistently shows that difficulties in employing these cohesive devices are among the primary factors contributing to fragmented and incoherent speech among beginner Japanese language learners. By drawing on this cohesion model as its central theoretical foundation, the JLCM directly targets the specific discourse-level features that learners commonly struggle with. Activities and tasks are structured to help learners recognise, practise, and internalise cohesive patterns so that their spoken output becomes more logically connected and contextually appropriate. The literature therefore reinforces the importance of a cohesion-based instructional approach and validates its role in strengthening learners’ overall speaking competence.

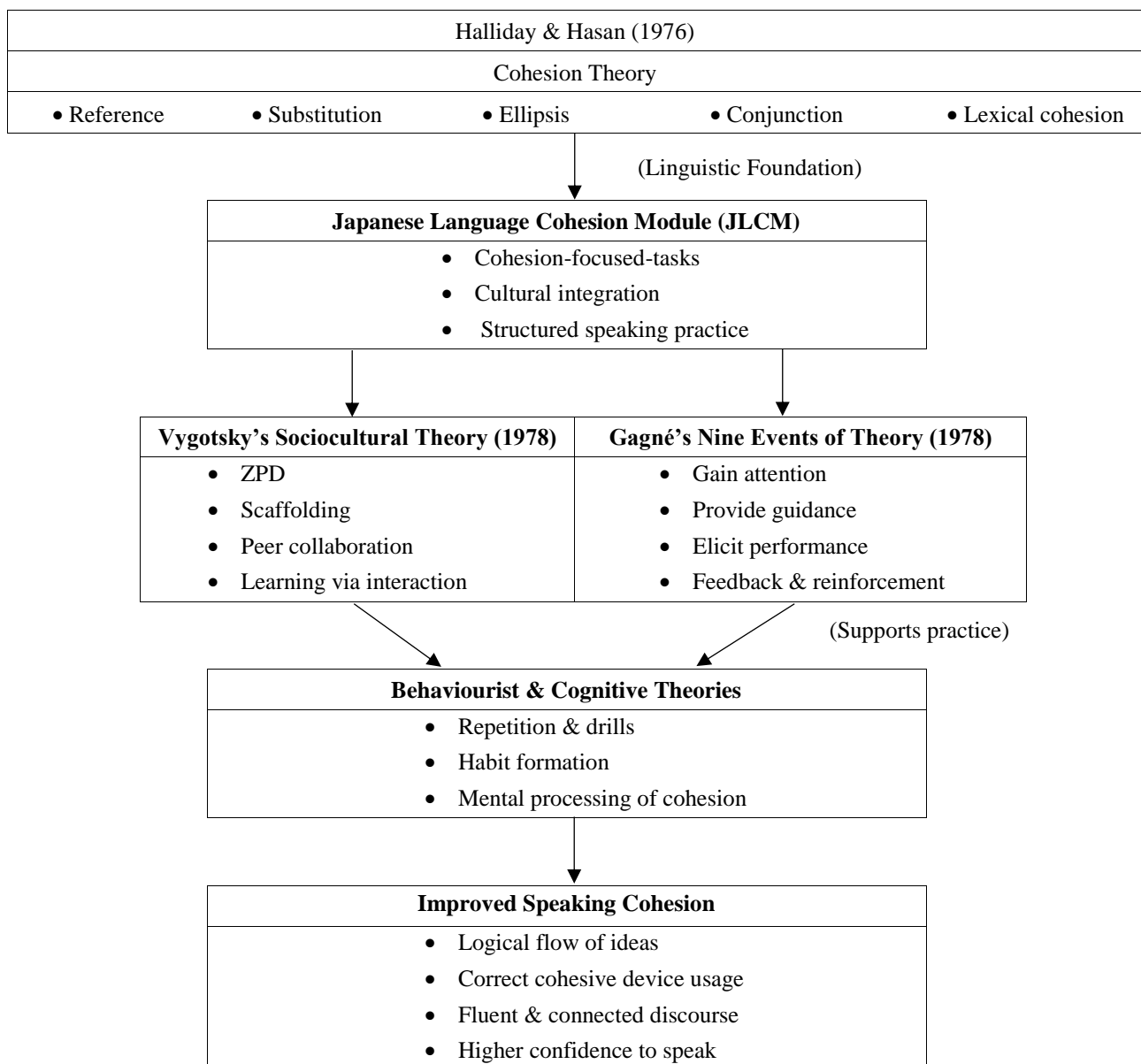


Figure 1. Theoretical foundations of the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM)

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to examine learners' perceptions and attitudes toward the implementation of the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM) in a beginner-level Japanese language course at the university. Sequential explanatory designs, as outlined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), involve two distinct but connected phases: an initial quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase intended to clarify, support, or extend the statistical results. In the quantitative phase of the present study, speaking performance scores, cohesion-based rubrics, and survey ratings on usefulness, satisfaction, and ease of use were collected to measure the effects of the JLCM on learner outcomes. In the subsequent qualitative phase, focus group interviews and reflective journals were used to gather detailed explanations of learners' experiences, challenges, and attitudes, particularly in relation to the quantitative trends observed. This design was chosen to ensure that measurable changes in speaking cohesion could be examined alongside rich narrative evidence, thereby strengthening the interpretation and credibility of the findings.

### Participants

The study was conducted at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), within the Faculty of Major Language Studies, involving undergraduate students enrolled in a beginner-level Japanese language course (A1) aligned with the *Marugoto* syllabus. A total of 60 students voluntarily participated in the study. These participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they had no prior knowledge of the Japanese language beyond the university's beginner-level curriculum. To maintain rigour and eliminate selection bias, participants were then randomly assigned to two equal groups:

- 1) Treatment Group (n = 30): Received instruction using the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM), which integrates cohesive elements, cultural themes, and interactive speaking tasks.
- 2) Control Group (n = 30): Continued with traditional instruction based solely on the *Marugoto A1* textbook and standard classroom activities.

### Instructional Procedures

The study was implemented over a 10-week period, coinciding with the academic semester. The treatment group participated in weekly sessions designed based on the JLCM framework, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. The instructional design of the JLCM was systematically structured using the ADDIE model, a well-established instructional design framework encompassing five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation (Molenda, 2003).

- 1) In the Analysis phase, learners' needs, linguistic challenges, and curriculum gaps were identified through preliminary classroom observations and expert consultation.
- 2) During the Design and Development phases, instructional materials were developed to emphasise cohesive features such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), and incorporated relevant cultural content aligned with learners' backgrounds.
- 3) The Implementation phase saw the delivery of JLCM through interactive activities including cohesion-focused drills, role plays, digital storytelling, peer interactions, and guided reflections.
- 4) In the Evaluation phase, both formative and summative assessments were conducted to measure the effectiveness of the module and gather learner feedback.

### Quantitative

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM) on students' speaking cohesion, pre- and post-tests were administered to both the treatment and control groups. These speaking tests were conducted at two different stages: once before the intervention began and again after the completion of the 10-week module. The primary objective of these tests was to measure any changes in the learners' ability to use cohesive devices effectively in spoken Japanese.

During the test sessions, students were given short-spoken tasks that required them to either narrate a personal or hypothetical event or participate in a situational role play based on everyday Japanese language usage. These tasks were carefully designed to elicit extended speech and to provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their use of cohesive language features. The performances were recorded and evaluated using a 15-point analytic rubric that was adapted from Brown's (2004) speaking assessment scale. The rubric focused on three key dimensions: (1) the appropriate and consistent use of cohesive devices such as reference terms, conjunctions, substitution, and ellipsis; (2) fluency and coherence in delivering spoken discourse; and (3) grammatical accuracy and appropriateness in language use.

To ensure objectivity and consistency in scoring, all speaking tasks were evaluated by trained raters. The results from the pre- and post-tests were then compiled and analysed using SPSS Version 27. The analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics to observe general performance trends, paired-sample t-tests to determine whether there were statistically significant improvements within each group over time, and Cohen's d to measure the effect size or magnitude of improvement, particularly in the treatment group using the JLCM compared to the control group that received traditional instruction.

In addition to performance-based assessment, the study also sought to explore learners' attitudes and satisfaction toward the JLCM. For this purpose, the User Satisfaction and Experience (USE) Questionnaire, originally developed by Lund (2001), was administered exclusively to the treatment group at the end of the intervention. This validated instrument was selected for its reliability in assessing user experience with instructional tools and materials.

The USE Questionnaire consisted of items designed to capture learners' perceptions across three major constructs:

- 1) Usefulness, which referred to how beneficial learners perceived the module to be in improving their speaking performance and understanding of cohesive devices;
- 2) Satisfaction, which measured the degree of enjoyment, motivation, and engagement learners experienced while interacting with the module and its activities; and
- 3) Ease of Use, which assessed how user-friendly, accessible, and clearly structured the JLCM materials and instructions were from the learners' perspective.

Participants responded to the items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The quantitative responses were tabulated and analysed statistically to determine the overall level of learner satisfaction, the perceived value of the JLCM, and any potential areas for improvement. This feedback was instrumental in evaluating not just the linguistic outcomes of the module but also its pedagogical impact and usability in a real classroom setting.

### Qualitative

To obtain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of learners' experiences with the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM), the second phase of this mixed-methods study employed qualitative data collection and analysis. This phase was designed to complement and contextualise the quantitative findings, providing insight into the learners' perceptions, emotional responses, and the subjective impact of the module on their speaking development. The qualitative phase was conducted immediately following the post-tests, ensuring that learners' reflections were recent and grounded in their authentic experience throughout the 10-week intervention.

### Focus Group Interviews

One of the primary qualitative data sources was a series of semi-structured focus group interviews. A total of six focus group sessions were conducted, with each group comprising five students from the treatment group, amounting to 30 participants in total. This group size was intentionally kept small to promote in-depth discussions, ensure that each participant had ample opportunity to speak, and facilitate a supportive, non-threatening environment conducive to honest sharing. The focus group interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview protocol. This approach allowed for consistency across sessions while also providing flexibility to probe deeper based on participants' responses. The interview guide included open-ended questions that explored several key areas:

- 1) Learners' overall perceptions and reactions to the JLCM.
- 2) Specific challenges and difficulties encountered during the module.
- 3) The perceived effect of the JLCM on their speaking ability, particularly in the use of cohesive devices.
- 4) Their engagement with culturally integrated content.
- 5) The role of peer collaboration and interaction in their learning experience.

The interviews were conducted in a mix of Malay and English, based on the participants' comfort level and preferred language of expression. This bilingual approach ensured that learners could articulate their thoughts more clearly and authentically. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The inclusion of direct learner voices provided rich data that highlighted not just what learners experienced but also how they interpreted and internalised those experiences.

### Reflective Journals

In addition to the focus group interviews, qualitative insights were also gathered through weekly reflective journals submitted by each member of the treatment group. Over the 10 weeks, learners were instructed to write brief reflections after each JLCM session. These reflections were intended to encourage metacognitive awareness and to capture the learners' evolving thoughts, emotions, and self-assessments throughout the module. The prompts for the reflective journals were intentionally open-ended, encouraging learners to write freely about:

- 1) What they had learned during the week's session.
- 2) How they felt about the activities they participated in.
- 3) How they applied cohesive elements (such as conjunctions, referential terms, and lexical cohesion) in their speech.
- 4) Their experiences interacting with peers and engaging with cultural content.

These weekly entries offered longitudinal qualitative data, allowing the researchers to track changes in learners' attitudes, confidence, and skill development over time. Reflective journaling also served as a formative tool for learners to self-monitor and articulate their learning processes.

## Thematic Analysis Procedure

Both qualitative data sources the focus group interview transcripts and the reflective journals were subjected to thematic analysis, a flexible yet rigorous method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The analysis followed the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- 1) Familiarisation with the data: All transcripts and journal entries were read multiple times to develop an initial understanding and immerse the researcher in the content.
- 2) Generating initial codes: Segments of text relevant to the research questions were systematically coded using NVivo 14 software, allowing for the efficient organisation of qualitative data.
- 3) Searching for themes: Codes were grouped into potential themes based on recurring ideas, expressions, and learner narratives.
- 4) Reviewing themes: Emerging themes were reviewed about the coded data and the entire dataset to ensure internal coherence and external distinction.
- 5) Defining and naming themes: Final themes were clearly defined, labelled, and supported with representative quotes to capture the essence of learners' experiences.
- 6) Producing the report: The findings were written up in a coherent narrative that linked the themes to the research objectives and theoretical framework.

## Key Emergent Themes

The identification of this theme is directly related to the purpose of the study, which examines learners' perceptions and attitudes toward the implementation of the JLCM. The increase in motivation and confidence emerged from the qualitative phase of the research, specifically through the analysis of interview and journal data collected after the use of the module. This theme therefore illustrates how learners experienced the cohesion-based instructional approach and supports the quantitative findings by explaining *why* their speaking performance improved. Including this theme in the paper demonstrates how the JLCM influenced not only linguistic outcomes but also affective factors, which are central to understanding the module's overall effectiveness.

### 1) Increased Motivation and Confidence to Speak

This theme directly relates to the study's objective of examining learners' perceptions and attitudes toward the JLCM. The qualitative data revealed that the module's structured, scaffolded design helped reduce learners' anxiety and increased their willingness to speak, which explains *why* the treatment group demonstrated greater improvement in the quantitative results. This theme therefore provides essential insight into how the module supported affective factors motivation and confidence that are central to successful speaking performance and learner acceptance of the JLCM.

### 2) Improved Awareness and Application of Cohesion

This theme explains how learners internalised the cohesion features emphasised in the JLCM, linking directly to the study's focus on discourse-level speaking skills. Through interviews and journals, learners reported recognising and intentionally using cohesive devices, which offers a qualitative explanation for the statistically significant improvement seen in post-test scores. This theme is therefore crucial in demonstrating how the module enhanced learners' understanding and use of cohesion, supporting the pedagogical purpose of the JLCM.

### 3) Appreciation of Culturally Relevant Content

This theme connects to the study's emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy within the JLCM. Learners expressed that familiar cultural themes made lessons more meaningful, which in turn increased engagement and reduced affective barriers to speaking. This is directly relevant to the paper, as the module was specifically designed for Malaysian learners in an Islamic university setting. The theme explains *why* the module was well-received and how cultural alignment contributed to positive attitudes toward learning Japanese.

### 4) Positive Peer Collaboration Experiences

This theme aligns with the study's methodological design, which incorporated peer-based tasks such as role plays and group dialogues. Learners indicated that collaborative activities increased their fluency and confidence, reinforcing the social-interaction component of the module. This finding helps explain learners' positive perceptions of the JLCM and demonstrates how the module operationalised theories of scaffolding and social learning. It also supports the study's goal of understanding how instructional design influences speaking performance.

### 5) Theoretical Alignment in Learner Experiences

This theme connects learners' experiences with the theoretical foundations guiding the JLCM, Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion Framework and Gagné's Instructional Theory. Learners' reflections indicated that the structured practice and discourse focused activities helped them internalize cohesive patterns, reflecting the theoretical expectations of the module. This theme reinforces the methodological coherence of the study by showing that learners' experiences were consistent with the module's intended design principles.

Theme	Learners Experience	Relevance to the Study
1. Increased Motivation and Confidence to Speak	Learners reported feeling more motivated and confident to participate in speaking tasks due to the structured, scaffolded nature of the JLCM, which gradually introduced cohesive devices.	This explains <i>why</i> the treatment group showed greater improvement quantitatively. Increased confidence supported better performance, aligning with the study’s aim to assess learner attitudes toward the JLCM.
2. Improved Awareness and Use of Cohesion	Learners became more aware of cohesive devices (e.g., conjunctions, reference terms, lexical reiteration) and intentionally applied them in their speech after repeated exposure and practice.	This theme directly relates to the research focus on cohesion in spoken Japanese. It provides qualitative evidence that learners internalised the cohesion skills targeted by the JLCM, supporting the significant post-test gains.
3. Appreciation of Culturally Relevant Content	Learners expressed strong appreciation for culturally familiar themes embedded in the module, such as local customs, daily routines, and Islamic values. This made lessons more meaningful and enjoyable.	This aligns with the module’s culturally responsive design and explains the treatment group’s higher satisfaction ratings. It confirms that cultural familiarity enhanced motivation and comprehension.
4. Positive Peer Collaboration Experiences	Learners valued pair work, group discussions, and role plays. They felt that peer collaboration improved fluency, reduced fear of mistakes, and offered a supportive environment to practise cohesion.	Peer collaboration is a core feature of the JLCM’s design, based on social learning and scaffolding. This theme clarifies how the module created opportunities for meaningful, discourse-level practice.
5. Alignment With Theoretical Foundations	Learners’ reflections showed that structured tasks, guided practice, and discourse-level focus helped them internalise cohesive structures consistent with Gagné’s Instructional Theory and Halliday & Hasan’s Cohesion Framework.	This demonstrates strong coherence between the study’s theoretical framework and actual learner outcomes. It strengthens the methodological validity of using a cohesion-based, scaffolded instructional approach.

These findings from the qualitative phase served as a crucial complement to the quantitative results. They provided rich, descriptive evidence of how the JLCM influenced not only learners’ linguistic performance but also their affective responses, cultural engagement, and social learning experiences. These findings from the qualitative phase served as a crucial complement to the quantitative results. They provided rich, descriptive evidence of how the JLCM influenced not only learners’ linguistic performance but also their affective responses, cultural engagement, and social learning experiences.

**RESEARCH FINDING**

In this section explains what the results of the study mean. It connects the findings to the main goals of the research and compares them with previous studies or theories.

**Quantitative Findings**

The quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant improvement in speaking cohesion among learners in the treatment group who were taught using the JLCM. The mean score for the treatment group increased from 7.3 in the pre-test to 12.9 in the post-test, representing a mean difference of 5.6 points. In contrast, the control group, which followed conventional instruction using the Marugoto A1 textbook, showed only a marginal improvement from 7.1 to 8.0, a mean difference of merely 0.9 points. Table 1 presents the comparison of the mean scores and statistical significance between the pre and post-tests for both groups:

Table 1. Mean scores pre and post-tests for both groups

Group	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Treatment (JLCM)	7.3	12.9	+5.6	6.21	< 0.01
Control	7.1	8.0	+0.9	1.12	0.26

These results clearly demonstrate that the JLCM had a notable and statistically significant effect on students' ability to use cohesive devices effectively in spoken Japanese. The control group's relatively stagnant performance suggests that conventional teaching approaches may not adequately support the development of discourse-level skills such as cohesion.

**User Satisfaction and Experience**

In addition to performance-based outcomes, the study also assessed learners' attitudes and satisfaction with the learning experience through the User Satisfaction and Experience (USE) Questionnaire. This instrument measured three key dimensions Usefulness, Satisfaction, and Ease of Use using a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2. USE questionnaire results – mean ratings

Dimension	Treatment Mean	Control Mean
Usefulness	4.5	3.2
Satisfaction	4.6	3.1
Ease of Use	4.4	3.0

These results suggest that learners perceived the JLCM as highly beneficial, enjoyable, and user-friendly. A visual representation of the differences in learner ratings highlights the treatment group's overall positive reception of the module.

**Qualitative Findings and Integration**

To provide deeper insight into the learners' experiences, qualitative data were collected from semi-structured focus group interviews and weekly reflective journals. Thematic analysis of these data sources uncovered several recurring themes that not only supported the quantitative results but also provided rich context for understanding how and why the JLCM was effective.

1) Increased Motivation and Confidence to Speak

Many learners reported a significant boost in their confidence when participating in speaking tasks throughout the implementation of the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM). This improvement was largely attributed to the structured and systematic design of the module, which introduced cohesive devices gradually and in manageable segments. The step-by-step approach allowed learners to build their skills incrementally, which in turn reduced their fear of making mistakes and encouraged active participation during speaking activities.

2) Improved Awareness of Cohesion

Learners also demonstrated increased awareness of the important role that cohesive devices play in constructing meaningful and coherent speech. As they were repeatedly exposed to features such as conjunctions, reference terms, and lexical reiteration throughout the module, students began to recognise these elements and intentionally incorporate them into their own spoken responses. This conscious application of cohesion not only improved the clarity of their speech but also allowed them to organise their ideas more logically.

3) Appreciation of Culturally Relevant Content

Participants expressed strong appreciation for the integration of culturally relevant themes within the JLCM. Lessons that focused on familiar context such as food etiquette, greeting customs, and typical daily routines resonated with learners and made the content more meaningful and engaging. The inclusion of topics aligned with the students' cultural background contributed to a sense of comfort and connection, which enhanced motivation and fostered a more positive learning environment.

4) Positive Peer Collaboration Experiences

Another emerging theme was the value of peer collaboration. Learners frequently highlighted the benefits of working in pairs and small groups, particularly in activities such as role plays, dialogues, and peer feedback sessions. These collaborative tasks were seen as effective in improving fluency and confidence, while also providing a supportive atmosphere in which learners could practice using cohesive structures without fear of judgment. Peer interaction helped learners co-construct language and learn from each other's strengths and mistakes.

5) Theoretical Frameworks

The overall improvement in the post-test speaking scores of the treatment group indicates that the JLCM successfully offered learners multiple opportunities for meaningful practice. These opportunities allowed students to internalise cohesive structures through authentic, contextualised speaking tasks. The design of the module reflects theoretical underpinnings from Gagné's Instructional Theory and Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion Framework, as it combines structured input with discourse-level focus. The emphasis on practice, scaffolding, and learner-centred content helped learners transition from isolated sentence production to coherent speech.

## 6) Implication

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings strongly suggest that the JLCM was effective in enhancing both the linguistic competence and affective engagement of Japanese language learners. The module not only improved students' ability to use cohesive devices in speech but also positively influenced their motivation, confidence, and overall attitudes toward speaking Japanese. These results highlight the value of cohesion-based, culturally responsive instruction and suggest its potential for broader application in foreign language education, particularly among beginner-level and culturally diverse learners.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While the findings demonstrate the effectiveness of the JLCM, the study is limited by its small sample size and short duration. Future research should involve larger, more diverse participant groups and examine the long-term retention of cohesion skills. Additionally, exploring the integration of the module with digital tools in hybrid or online settings could provide further insights into its scalability and adaptability.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the perceptions and attitudes of Japanese language learners at USIM toward the implementation of the Japanese Language Cohesion Module (JLCM). Evidence from both quantitative and qualitative findings shows that the module contributed meaningfully to improving learners' speaking cohesion, confidence, and motivation. Students in the treatment group exhibited measurable gains in their use of cohesive devices particularly references, conjunctions, and lexical reiteration indicating that cohesion-focused instruction strengthened their discourse-level speaking skills. Learners also expressed high satisfaction with the module's structured progression, clarity of activities, and integration of culturally relevant content.

Overall, the results suggest that a cohesion-based instructional approach, grounded in Halliday and Hasan's framework and supported by Gagné's principles of instructional design, offers an effective pedagogical model for beginner-level foreign language learners. By addressing both linguistic competence and affective factors, the JLCM fosters a supportive learning environment that encourages active participation and meaningful language use. Considering these positive outcomes, it is recommended that cohesion-oriented speaking modules be adapted and implemented in other language programs, especially those involving multicultural learner groups or learners at the novice proficiency level. Future research should investigate the long-term retention of cohesion strategies, evaluate the module's adaptability for intermediate and advanced learners, and explore the potential of digital tools to enhance cohesion focused Future research should explore the long-term retention of cohesion skills, scalability of the module for intermediate and advanced learners, and integration of technology for blended and online instruction.

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