

# Research on the effect and effectiveness of experiential learning for university students

Nguyen Ngoc Nguyen

*Faculty of Foreign Languages, Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam.*

*Email: [nguyen.70213077tpe1@oude.edu.vn](mailto:nguyen.70213077tpe1@oude.edu.vn)*

## Abstract

Compared to the speed of social and technological development, Vietnam's education tends to be stagnant. Most universities are collaborating with universities around the world, but until now, teaching methods are still academic and there are few opportunities to experience what they have learned. Because of the lack of experience college students have, there are situations where they are confused about their future after graduation. Therefore, it is very necessary to constantly improve teaching methods in line with the development of society. Currently, universities in developed countries around the world and universities in Vietnam are applying the experiential learning method to their educational programs. Therefore, this paper investigates what effect it has on the learning of college students majoring in Japanese after the university applies the experiential learning method. The results show its vital role during the teaching as well as learning process of the students and we should take more consideration into this activity.

**Keywords:** education, experiential learning method, benefit, students.

## 1. Introduction

This paper studies the effects of Japanese language experiential learning in universities. It then identifies the merits and demerits of the learning method and what difficulties college students face while the university is implementing the experiential learning method [1]. Also, learn the good points of the experiential learning method of each university. Based on these research results, it was written for the purpose of presenting measures to solve difficult problems and experiential learning methods that match the educational goals of the university. Therefore, the problem that college students are uncertain about the future due to lack of experience can be solved [2].

## 2. Methodology

The method of research is to collect and analyze information from books, magazines, documents on the Internet, etc. written in Japanese, Vietnamese, and English. At the same time, we

will collect data from university Japanese language teachers by conducting questionnaires about Japanese language learning methods, focusing on students studying at other universities in Ho Chi Minh City and universities that have Japanese language majors. Then, based on the survey results, the merits and demerits of the experiential learning methods used at each university are compared, and the content of this paper is created.

## 3. Literature review

Today's society has increasingly strict demands on education. With the development of society, education needs to be renewed continuously. Therefore, traditional teaching methods are gradually becoming out of date, so countries around the world and Vietnam have introduced various new learning methods and introduced them into education at all levels. One of the methods that has been popular and chosen and applied by most universities is Kolb's

experiential learning model [2]. There are many research papers on how universities specifically apply this experiential learning method to their educational programs [3].

Although there are some points that the above studies have not researched, what they have in common is that they are researching the introduction of the experiential learning method into the educational program, submitting a concrete plan, and deploying it to our school. However, we have not yet mentioned the effect after applying this learning method [4]. Furthermore, even if it is introduced from elementary education to higher education, it is necessary to conduct research on the actual situation where universities develop experiential learning methods and Vietnamese universities to strengthen the Japanese language of university students and increase their knowledge of Japanese culture through experiential learning methods. There is still little research on enhancement. Therefore, we will study the effects of the Japanese language learning method of each university in Ho Chi Minh City, focusing on universities [5].

Experience is the perception of objects by interacting with them through external material manipulations (seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, etc.) and internal psychological processes (attention, remembering, thinking, imagining, etc.). It is a process of discovery. Through it humans can learn, explore, create and accumulate their own experiences and life skills. Furthermore, experience is actually seeing, hearing, and doing, and moving from a state of not having done it to a state of having done it. However, while many people confuse experience with experience, the two concepts are very different. According to the explanations in the Digital Daijisen and Japanese Dictionary, experience is what you actually experience [6].

By the way, experiential learning is actually applying theory so that learners can get closer to knowledge and remember lectures better.

Learners can not only study in books but also apply in practice [4]. Through this learning, learners can derive experience and make the most of their knowledge and skills. Traditional learning methods place a lot of emphasis on the teacher. Experiential learning methods, on the other hand, focus on the student. Learners have the opportunity to look at the problem from many angles and perspectives and come up with suitable solutions without being imposed. This process consolidates knowledge and helps shape and improve new skills, abilities, behaviors, and new thinking [2].

As mentioned above, experiential learning means that learners often participate in activities such as listening, reading, observing photographs, experiments, and the outdoors. This experiential learning method was proposed by American psychologist David A. Kolb (1939). He cites the models of Dewey (1859), Lewinism (1890) and Piaget (1896) as background to his own theory [3]. According to Kolb's theory of experiential learning, learning is the process by which knowledge is produced through the transformation of experience. It is an action-based process in which learners acquire new knowledge based on evaluating and analyzing real-life experiences. The experiential learning theory proposed by Kolb takes a more holistic approach and emphasizes experience, including perceptual, environmental and emotional factors that influence the learning process [4].

In other words, experiential learning involves retrospectively assessing what is useful and what needs to be remembered after participating in an experience, and then accumulating them for use in future activities [1].

The first phase is Concrete Experience. In this phase, you experience something new, completely open and unbiased. Learners learn through specific activities, behaviors, and manipulations that are directly related to real-life situations and participate in new

experiences; experiences gained through working in specific situations [2].

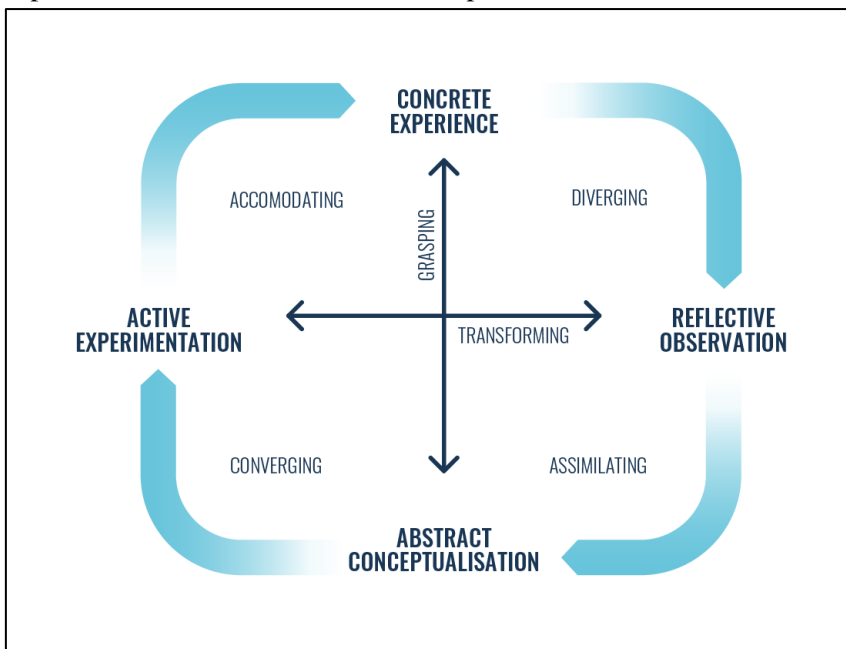
The second aspect is reflective observation. In this phase, we reflect and observe the experience from many perspectives. There, learners reflect on activities, systematically examine experiences, discover features, find meaning, share, analyze, discuss, and agree on systematic perspectives and perspectives. It is necessary to analyze and evaluate the fact, the experience, through the reflection of the experience for oneself [5].

The third phase is abstract conceptualization. This phase creates concepts that integrate observations into logical theories. Learning through constructing concepts, synthesizing and analyzing what we observe creates theories that explain observations or abstract concepts as a

result of the acquisition of particular things. The fourth aspect is Active Experimentation. In this phase, theory is used to make decisions and solve problems [6].

#### 4. Applying the Kolb experiential learning model

A key point of Kolb's theory of experiential learning is that learners need reflection, an interaction between thought and consciousness. As learners analyze and conceptualize their experiences, these concepts are applied in practice from which new experiences emerge. Learners can enter any stage of the cycle and work in that logical order. However, Kolb said, "For this model to be effective, the learner must combine four aspects"[5]. Therefore, one aspect is not as effective as four aspects [7].



**Figure 1.** Kolb experiential learning model

The experiential learning model begins with a concrete experience. Teachers need to organize students to participate in specific activities/situations in order to leverage their existing experiences and connect with new situations. Situations/activities can be stories, music, photographs, tours, thematic learning content, etc. [2]. For example, in an English class, when the teacher teaches a new grammar,

students watch a short video that mentions that grammar. This makes students more interested in the language and enjoys learning new grammars (Figure 1).

The teacher will perform activities according to the content of the lesson. Students can then participate in activities through which the content of the lesson can be perfected. For

example, in an English interpreting class, the teacher teaches the students the necessary interpreting skills, and then the students can practice in front of the class. After experiencing, learners learn their lessons and store their knowledge and experience for the future [4].

Finally, the teacher asks the students to apply what they have just learned to the actual situation. Teachers also create opportunities for students to discuss what they have learned and share their experiences with others. For example, in an English interpreting class, the teacher will bring the students to a famous place and the students will introduce the place. Through this learning process, students can retain the learned knowledge longer because it is applied in practice [8].

In addition, there is an observation method in the experiential learning method. Observation is to deepen the experience and understanding by seeing the actual site. Excursions and field trips for learning have come to be incorporated into educational settings as methods.

The observation method applies to the "Concrete Experience" aspect of Kolb's experiential learning model. This method keeps students interested in learning the content of the lesson outside the classroom. There are six phases to conducting observation activities [5].

The first aspect is choosing the people who will participate in the tour activities. The second phase is to decide the goal of the tour. What did the students learn after the tour? Therefore, the teacher determines the objectives of the visit. The third phase is the face-to-face visit plan. In order not to waste time, teachers plan concretely. The fifth phase is for students to write reports about their visits. After the visit, the teacher will have the students report on the visit. In this phase, as shown in Kolb's experiential learning model "Abstract Conceptualization," learners can learn the content of the lesson by themselves. The sixth aspect is for the teacher to comment on the student's report. Finally, the

teacher comments on the student's report and explains the correct content to the student [8].

However, any learning method has advantages and disadvantages. The next part of this paper analyzes the merits and demerits of the experiential learning method.

## **5. Advantages and disadvantages of experiential learning**

It is difficult for students to understand the concept of lectures. Therefore, using this method helps learners to understand concepts more easily. However, when using experiential learning methods, students have the opportunity to apply book concepts and theories to real-life situations. In addition, students have the opportunity to promote and create themselves.

First, using this method helps learners understand concepts more easily. It is difficult for students to understand the concept of lecture. However, when using experiential learning methods, students have the opportunity to apply book concepts and theories to real-life situations. In addition, students have the opportunity to promote and create themselves [6].

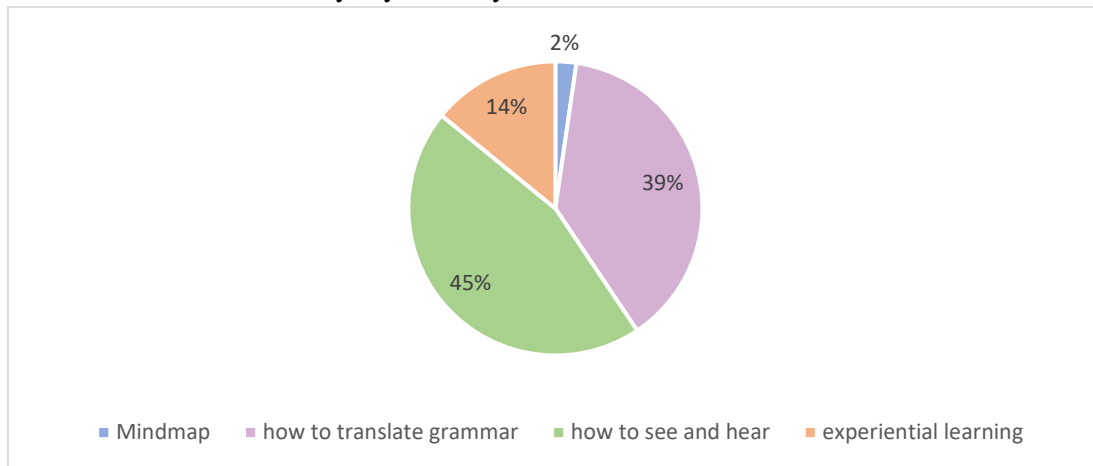
Second, learning through experience is one of the most effective ways to guide students in applying and developing creative thinking. In our world, problems often have multiple solutions. With very practical content, students will realize that there are always many different solutions to each situation and each problem should be solved. Students are encouraged to seek and come up with their own solutions to their assigned tasks [3].

Third, in addition, students find more effective approaches and problem-solving methods when participating in hands-on activities. Learners learn to analyze, compare and eliminate ineffective methods and solutions. Eliminating ineffective methods in experiential learning is a very valuable part of the learning process. Learners learn not to be afraid of making

mistakes and always remember them so that they are not repeated [6].

Currently, the benefits of experiential learning in thinking development have been proven by many scientists. The German physicist Herman Ebbinghaus states that if the learning rate from lectures is 100% in one day, by two days the

number drops significantly from 50-80%. Similarly, according to William Glasser, we learn only 10% from reading and 20% from listening. Meanwhile, he believes that 80% of the knowledge we gain is through practical experience[7]. Applying this method, the brain can remember the lesson much longer [9].



**Figure 2.** The ratio of university teaching methods

Fourth, experiential learning also helps students navigate their future. Currently, there are many career-oriented experiential learning projects (such as OJT internships) because they are based on real-world activities. Through these activities, students begin to explore their skills, talents and passions (Figure 2).

Fifth, most experiential learning activities are communal in nature, with students working in groups. Through it, learners can interact with friends in groups, complete assigned tasks, and grow together. Communication skills will also improve.

However, experiential learning methods are not without disadvantages, but they are neglected because they do not have an impact greater than the advantages. The disadvantages of the experiential learning method are described below.

Both teachers and students have to prepare more before class than before. Specifically, for the outdoor activity of becoming a tour guide and interpreter, the teacher finds the observation

points and makes detailed plans to ensure the safety of the students. In advance, teach students what the guides and interpreters are doing and what they should do. For students, it is necessary to understand and memorize all of the information in order to research information on the history and characteristics of the tour site, and to be able to answer customer questions. Furthermore, this disadvantage causes the following problems [3].

As explained in the concepts above, experiential learning methods were designed around the learner. Learners must do it themselves, then think about the problem, compare it with what they have learned or hypothesize, and test it. Then, through the experiential process, we not only gain new experiences, but also strengthen the basic knowledge we have acquired. Therefore, it is not suitable for people accustomed to traditional learning methods. They think that the teacher does everything (teaching, knowledge, etc.) and they only need to memorize it, and they do not experience or verify anything. is at a loss as to what to do, and

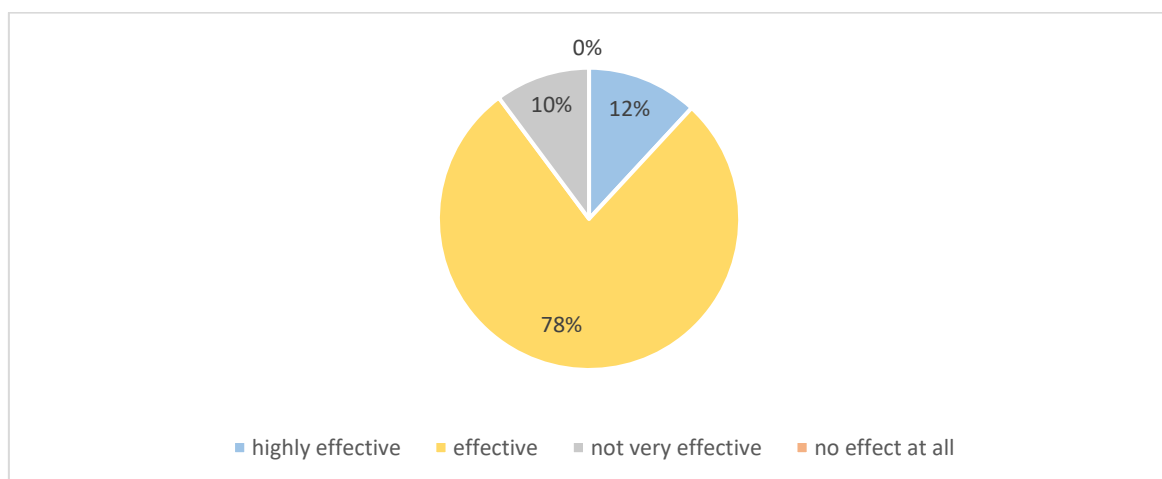
loses motivation. And some people don't like experiential learning because it involves more preparation than traditional learning [5].

The more you need to prepare, the longer it will take. Additionally, while most outdoor activities go well, there are occasional surprises. Therefore, it is inevitable that it will take time to solve the problem that has occurred.

If you take non-curriculum subjects and non-school experiential classes, some places offer them for free, while others charge a participation fee or tuition fee. For example, if you want to experience Japanese tea ceremony, flower arrangement, you need to pay a small amount to buy materials and tools. Others have free admission. Sometimes you have to buy an entrance ticket [8].

### 6. Current status of applying the Japanese experiential learning method and difficulties faced by university students

The educational goal of the Japanese language department for college students is to have a clear understanding of Japanese culture and the Japanese language, and to educate them so that they can use Japanese well at work. The educational program teaches the basic knowledge and four skills of Japanese (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), and then teaches subjects related to majors such as translation/interpretation, travel/tourism, and trade. To ensure that Japanese university students can apply Japanese in many fields.



**Figure 3.** Effects of experiential learning methods on learning Japanese language and culture

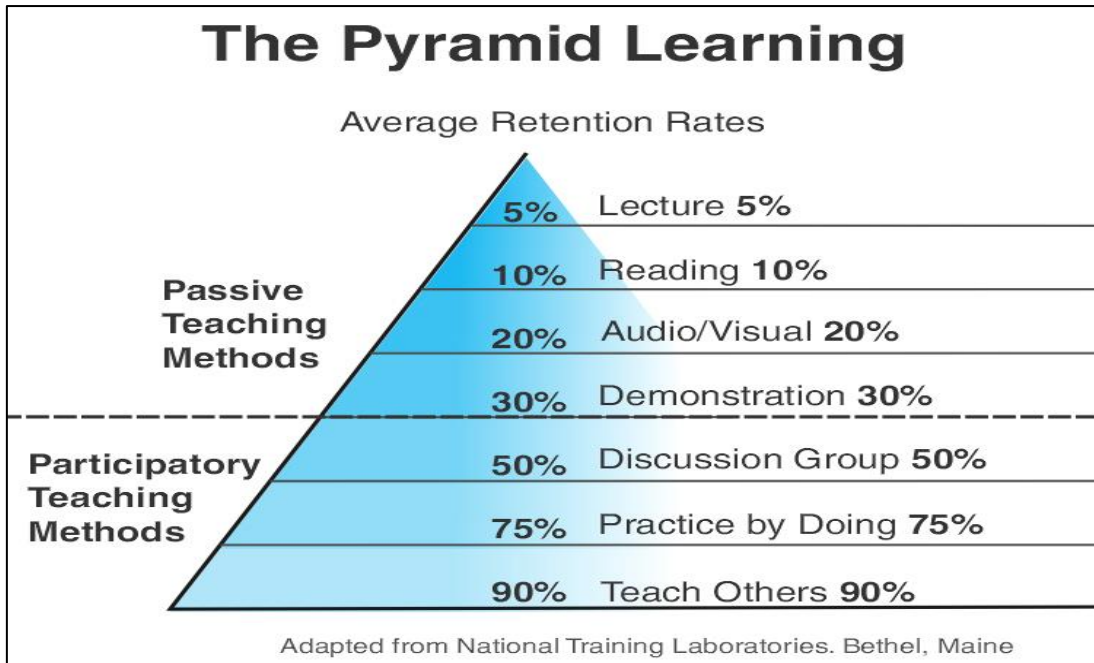
Specifically, university students learn basic Japanese grammar, kanji, and vocabulary in their first semester. In this semester, you will be able to read simple greetings and daily conversations, which is equivalent to N5 level. In the next three semesters, we will study grammar, kanji and vocabulary from beginner to intermediate level. Honorifics are also learned, so you can read and write long, complex sentences, and improve your listening and conversation skills. In particular, the characteristics of Japanese sounds (Japanese beats, etc.) are studied so that university students in the Japanese department can

pronounce Japanese more correctly. Until the fourth semester, it is equivalent to N3 and N2 levels. In the translation and interpreting major, first of all, you will be taught the necessary skills as a translator and interpreter. Later, I will study IT terminology, business terminology, and Japanese culture. From now on, you will learn the subject of upgrading translation and interpretation skills. On the other hand, college students are taught knowledge such as clichés that they have to use at work, how to answer a phone call, and how to write an email. In addition, Japanese management is also included in the educational program. In other words,

university students in the Japanese department need to acquire various knowledge through a detailed study program [7].

However, Japan is hiring software engineers, so if there is an opportunity to work for a Japanese company, I will teach Japanese to university

students in this department with the goal of being able to use simple Japanese in the workplace. Therefore, the educational program is not complicated, and elementary grammar, kanji, etc. are taught in the third and fourth semesters.



**Figure 4.** Learning pyramid

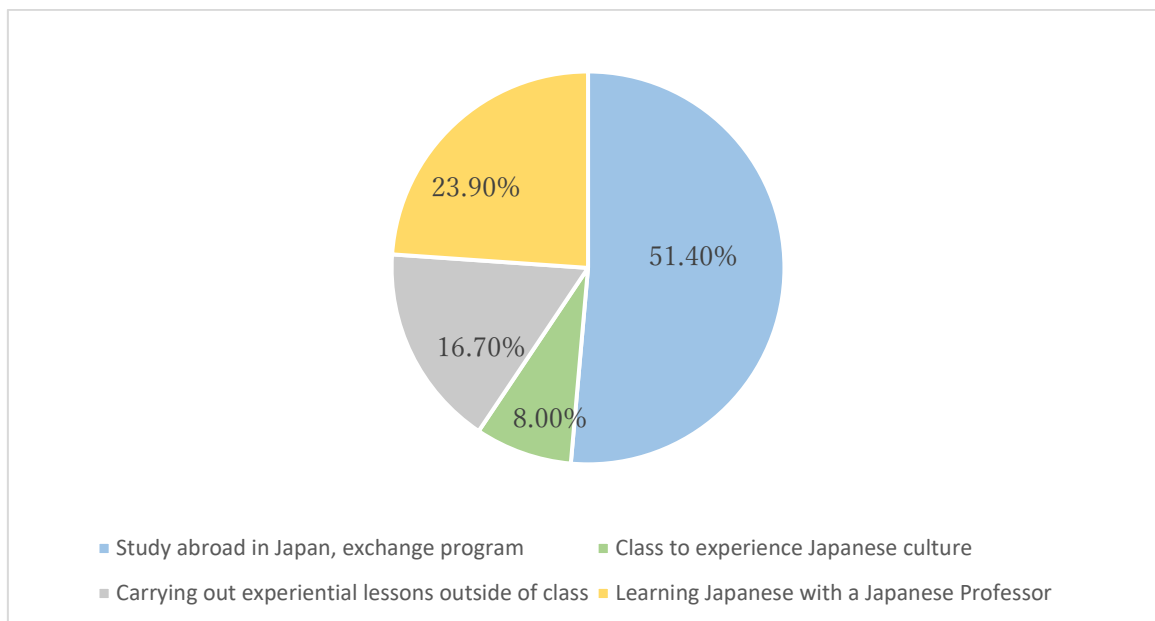
First, in 1960, the US National Institute of Training presented a learning pyramid that showed the relationship between the learning method and the rate of retention of knowledge learned by the learner. According to the learning pyramid, the most effective learning method is to teach others, and humans can remember about 90% of what they have learned. But you need to understand that knowledge yourself so that you can pass it on to others. Moreover, from ancient times. Therefore, the best choice is the learning method of “experience yourself”, which yields an average learning retention rate of 75% [9].

## 7. Some suggestions for Applying Experiential Learning Method

Although Vietnam and Japan have a long history of exchanges, Japan-Vietnam diplomatic relations were officially established in September 1973. As a result, the number of universities with Japanese majors in Vietnam is gradually increasing. This paper selects a university with a long history of Japanese language education in Ho Chi Minh City and analyzes the current situation of applying the experiential learning method.

The first is the Ho Chi Minh City University of Humanities and Social Sciences, which established a Japanese department in 1992.





**Figure 5.** University experiential learning methods

The characteristics of this university's experiential learning method are explained below. Ho Chi Minh City University of Humanities and Social Sciences divides the Japanese language department into general education and special education. Both have Japanese teachers, but Japanese teachers also teach subjects such as Japanese history and Japanese culture in special education. Therefore, college students will have more opportunities to experience conversations with native speakers [8].

The second feature is the collaboration with Japan (Figure 5). Undergraduate students in the Japanese department of the University of Humanities have the opportunity to receive scholarships to study in Japan from the Japanese government, JASSO, or individual universities. At the same time, the University of Humanities will offer short-term study abroad programs, such as experiencing Japanese summer culture for two weeks at Kobe University and studying Japanese for six weeks at the Japan Foundation. In addition, we often cooperate with universities such as Hiroshima University, Waseda University, and Osaka Sangyo University to hold cultural exchange events. Both university students can experience the other country's food

culture, traditional culture, music, etc. and make a deep impression [2].

In particular, we established a Japanese language club called Tohnichi, and this year is the 24th year. It was established with the goal of creating opportunities for everyone to interact in Japanese, experience conversations with Japanese people, and gain new knowledge. In addition, although this club belongs to the University of Humanities and Social Sciences, in fact, anyone can participate, including many Japanese learners, Japanese traveling to Vietnam, and Japanese working in Vietnam every week [7].

The next university to be analyzed is Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages and Information Technology. The Faculty of Japanese Studies was established in 1995, and the educational program was created with reference to the program of the University of Humanities and Social Sciences. First of all, there are five Japanese professors at this university who are in charge of various subjects, so university students can interact in Japanese and experience correct and natural Japanese depending on the situation. It also has strong cooperative relationships with many



universities in Japan. College students have the opportunity to exchange from one to three years at a Japanese university. Going to Japan is the best way to experience Japanese language, Japanese culture and Japanese life. Every year, the Faculty of Oriental Languages and Cultures holds a cultural festival, where the university students of this faculty can refer to and experience each culture [1].

In addition, the Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages and Information Technology also has a Japanese glove. However, the scale of this club is to conduct each activity only within the school [8].

Each university has Japanese teachers, and when teaching Japanese language and Japanese culture, it is necessary to communicate in Japanese. Therefore, if you have a conversation with your teacher and say something wrong or unnatural, you will be corrected by the teacher. Students compare their mistakes with what they have learned, and their initial ignorance becomes clear [3].

Speaking of culture, the above three universities often invite Japanese people and people who study Japanese culture to exchange meetings held at the university. To convey Japanese culture in the form of lectures. After explaining what the tea ceremony is by giving examples, the students can actually make and enjoy the tea themselves. Experience each culture and strengthen your knowledge of Japanese culture. Then the concept of the tea ceremony is formed in the mind and there is an answer to the question "What is the tea ceremony?"

Alternatively, explain how to create an experiential learning method of participating in Grab. Each week, Grab selects one theme, such as seasons, attractions, or food culture, and divides participants into small groups. In the group, both Japanese and Vietnamese, everyone speaks their own opinions and consults in Japanese. Then you can learn various knowledge and practice Japanese. So, through the process of communication, both sides have

their doubts about the other's country clarified [5].

Finally, we will analyze the scholarship program for studying in Japan. Every year, university students with the highest grades in all schools receive this scholarship and exchange to Japan for short-term study abroad as well as the opportunity to work for a Japanese company. In fact, these programs are not experiential learning methods, which create opportunities for college students to go to Japan and learn more. Therefore, it can be said that as soon as you arrive in Japan, it becomes a hands-on learning experience [7].

## 8. Conclusion

There is a possibility that the learning effect of Japanese language students will be enhanced. First, the Japanese language clubs have not yet been established enough at universities in Ho Chi Minh City. It is not necessary for the scale of the group to be large, but it would be good if there was a group in charge of holding exchange meetings and cultural festivals. Especially for a country like Vietnam where Japanese is rarely used, it is important to create an environment for communicating in Japanese. Every week, for about an hour and a half to two hours, we teach origami, kirigami, and how to make tea. After holding a small presentation, we choose a theme and discuss it together. Participants then acquire new experiences and create opportunities to transfer their knowledge to those around them. Second, the study of grammar introduces Japanese teaching methods and not only introduces them into major classes, but also role-plays the study of conversation, and separates the study of kanji into independent classes.

## References

- [1] Orpett Long, S., Akande, Y. S., Purdy, R. W., & Nakano, K. (2010). Deepening learning and inspiring rigor: Bridging academic and experiential learning using a host country approach to a study

- tour. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14(1), 89-111.
- [2] Rahmat, N. H., Abdullah, N. A. T., & Kashiwazaki, K. (2020). An Analysis of Experiential Learning During Language Learning: A Case Study of Undergraduates from a Japanese University. *Humanities*, 5(2), 260-271.
- [3] Valentine, D., & Cheney, R. S. (2001). Intercultural business communication, international students, and experiential learning. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 64(4), 90-104.
- [4] Arnold, N., & Paulus, T. (2010). Using a social networking site for experiential learning: Appropriating, lurking, modeling and community building. *The Internet and higher education*, 13(4), 188-196.
- [5] Boggu, A. T., & Sundarsingh, J. (2016). The impact of experiential learning cycle on language learning strategies. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 4(10), 24-41.
- Kayes, A. B., Kayes, D. C., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Experiential learning in teams. *Simulation & Gaming*, 36(3), 330-354.
- [6] Hatoss, A. (2019). Linguistic landscapes: An experiential learning project for developing intercultural competence. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 42(2), 146-170.
- [7] Nguyen, Đ. (2020). The Role of Experiential Learning Method in Japanese Study Process at University. *Solid State Technology*, 63(6), 3267-3274.
- [8] Azar, A. S., Albattat, A., & Kamaruddin, A. Y. (2020). The effectiveness of hospitality experiential learning from academic and industry perspectives. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(12), 296-301.
- [9] Rho, E., Chan, K., Varoy, E. J., & Giacaman, N. (2020). An experiential learning approach to learning manual communication through a virtual reality environment. *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies*, 13(3), 477-490.