

Learners' Perceptions of Japanese Language Textbooks at the Elementary Level: An Analysis Based on the ARCS Model

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Abstract— Textbooks play a crucial role in foreign language education, particularly at the elementary level where learners rely heavily on structured materials to develop language skills. This study aims to investigate learners' perceptions of the GENKI Japanese language textbook based on Keller's ARCS motivational model, which consists of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. A quantitative research design was employed.

The participants were 92 students enrolled in the Japanese for International Business program in the Faculty of Global Communication who registered for the course JIB-113 (Japanese for International Business 3) in the second semester of the 2025 academic year, of whom 80 provided valid responses and were included in the analysis. Data were collected through a 34-item questionnaire. The instrument demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.904$). Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used for data analysis.

The results revealed that the Relevance dimension received the highest mean score, indicating that learners perceive the textbook content as meaningful and beneficial for their future goals. The Confidence dimension was rated relatively high, suggesting that students generally believe they can successfully understand and complete the lessons. In contrast, the Attention and Satisfaction dimensions were rated at a moderate level, particularly regarding visual attractiveness and intrinsic enjoyment. These findings suggest that while the GENKI textbook provides strong structural support and relevant content, improvements in visual design and engagement strategies may further enhance learner motivation and overall learning experience.

Keywords— *Japanese textbook, GENKI, ARCS model, Learner perception, Motivation*

I. INTRODUCTION

In foreign language learning, textbooks play a central and indispensable role in the teaching process. A textbook serves as the main source of content, determining lesson structure, teaching sequence, and learning activities for students. Therefore, the quality and design of a textbook directly influence the effectiveness of language learning.

In Japanese language education, various textbook series have been developed and published. These textbooks differ in their instructional approaches, such

as structural syllabus, situational syllabus, functional syllabus, and topic-based syllabus. At the elementary level, many textbooks follow a structural syllabus, which organizes lessons around specific grammar patterns. This approach allows learners to study similar grammatical forms within the same lesson and practice sentence structures systematically. However, one limitation is that grammatical patterns grouped in a single lesson may not always be meaningfully related, which can lead to confusion and difficulty in understanding contextual differences.

The textbook used in the Japanese for International Business program at this institute is the GENKI series. GENKI is primarily based on a structural syllabus but also incorporates elements of a situational syllabus. As a result, each lesson presents content in a connected and contextualized manner, rather than introducing unrelated grammar patterns within the same chapter.

In Thailand, the most widely used Japanese textbooks are Minna no Nihongo, while Akiko to Tomodachi is commonly used at the secondary school level. Compared to these textbooks, GENKI is less commonly adopted in Thai educational institutions. Therefore, it is important to examine whether GENKI is suitable and supportive for Thai learners.

Investigating the appropriateness of GENKI for Thai students will help identify its strengths and limitations. The findings can provide useful insights for course improvement, curriculum development, and textbook selection in order to better respond to learners' needs in the future.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The ARCS model, developed by Keller [1], provides a systematic framework for understanding and enhancing learner motivation through four key components: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The model is grounded in expectancy-value theory and has been widely used to design and evaluate instructional materials aimed at improving learner engagement and motivation.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the ARCS model in various educational contexts. For instance, Roemintoyo et al.[2] reported that the implementation of the ARCS model improved students' learning outcomes by enhancing motivation and engagement. Similarly,

Purwanto et al.[3] found that the ARCS model significantly improved learners' language performance, particularly in terms of accuracy and fluency, by integrating motivational and cognitive elements. These findings suggest that the ARCS model is an effective framework for analyzing both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning.

In addition, previous studies have examined the characteristics of the GENKI textbook, one of the most widely used materials in Japanese language education. Research by Lidster [4] has shown that GENKI provides well-structured grammar explanations, systematic vocabulary presentation, and visually engaging materials that support beginner learners and help reduce learning anxiety. The use of consistent characters and contextualized dialogues also enhances learners' engagement and facilitates communicative practice.

However, several studies have also identified important limitations. For example, Saito-Abbott [5] pointed out that the organization of content in GENKI is not always systematic, with limited integration across language skills and inconsistent connections between grammar, vocabulary, and learning activities. In addition, the separation of skills and the lack of sufficient contextualization may reduce the effectiveness of learning in foreign language environments where exposure to authentic input is limited.

These findings indicate that evaluating textbooks requires not only an analysis of linguistic content but also an examination of their pedagogical structure and motivational impact on learners. However, despite these studies, limited research has examined learners' perceptions of Japanese language textbooks using a motivational framework such as the ARCS model, particularly in the context of Thai learners studying Japanese as a foreign language. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating learners' perceptions of the GENKI textbook and their vocabulary learning strategies based on the ARCS framework.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to investigate how elementary-level Japanese language learners perceive and evaluate the textbook used in their course based on the ARCS motivational model.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a quantitative research design was used to examine elementary-level learners' perceptions of the GENKI Japanese textbook based on the ARCS motivational model. This section explains the participants, the questionnaire used in the study, and the procedures for data collection and statistical analysis.

A. Population

The participants in this study were students enrolled in the Japanese for International Business program in the Faculty of Global Communication who

registered for the course JIB-113 (Japanese for International Business 3) in the second semester of the 2025 academic year. A total of 92 students were registered for the course, of whom 80 provided valid responses and were included in the analysis.

B. Research Instrument

A 34-item questionnaire was developed to examine learners' perceptions of the GENKI Japanese textbook based on the ARCS model. The items were adapted from previous studies and adjusted for this study. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) [6]. The questionnaire was distributed online, and the responses were collected for statistical analysis.

TABLE I. QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE
BASED ON THE ARCS MODEL

Items marked with an asterisk (*) indicate reverse-coded items, and the scores shown reflect the values after reverse coding.

NO	ARCS	QUESTION
Q1	Confidence	When I first looked at each lesson in the Genki textbook, I thought it would be easy for me.
Q2*	Confidence	The Genki textbook and the supplementary exercises provided by the instructor feel more difficult to understand than I expected. (-)
Q3*	Confidence	Each page contains too much information, making it difficult to remember the key points. (-)
Q4	Confidence	While studying with the Genki textbook, I feel confident that I can learn the content.
Q5*	Confidence	The exercises in each lesson are too difficult for me. (-)
Q6	Confidence	After working on the exercises in each lesson for a while, I feel confident that I will be able to pass tests on this content.
Q7*	Confidence	I am unable to truly understand most of the content in this textbook. (-)
Q8	Confidence	This textbook is well organized, which gives me confidence that I can successfully learn the material.
Q9	Attention	There is something interesting at the beginning of each lesson that captures my attention.
Q10	Attention	The media and content in the textbook are visually appealing.
Q11	Attention	The writing style of the textbook makes me want to continue reading.
Q12*	Attention	Each lesson contains too much abstract content for me to concentrate. (-)
Q13*	Attention	The appearance of the textbook is not attractive. (-)
Q14	Attention	The layout and organization of information on each page help increase my interest.
Q15	Attention	This textbook stimulates my curiosity.
Q16*	Attention	The textbook contains too much repetition, which sometimes makes me feel bored. (-)
Q17	Attention	I have learned something new or surprising from this textbook.
Q18	Attention	The variety of content, exercises, and illustrations in this textbook helps maintain my interest in the lessons.
Q19*	Attention	The writing style of this textbook is boring. (-)
Q20*	Attention	There is too much text on each page, which feels overwhelming. (-)

NO	ARCS	QUESTION
Q21	Satisfaction	Completing the exercises in this textbook makes me feel satisfied with my achievement.
Q22	Satisfaction	I enjoy this textbook so much that I want to learn more.
Q23	Satisfaction	I truly enjoy learning with this textbook.
Q24	Satisfaction	I feel good when I successfully complete the exercises in this textbook.
Q25	Satisfaction	I feel satisfied studying with a well-designed textbook like this.
Q26	Relevance	I clearly understand how the content of this textbook connects to what I already know.
Q27	Relevance	There are stories, pictures, or examples that show how the lesson content is important to people.
Q28	Relevance	I feel that successfully completing each lesson is important to me.
Q29	Relevance	The content of this textbook relates to my interests.
Q30	Relevance	The textbook explains or provides examples of how the knowledge in each lesson can be applied in real life.
Q31	Relevance	The content and writing style of this textbook make me feel that the material is worth learning.
Q32*	Relevance	This textbook does not meet my needs because I already know most of the content. (-)
Q33	Relevance	I can connect the content of this textbook to things I have seen, done, or thought about in real life.
Q34	Relevance	The content of this textbook will be useful for me in the future.

C. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to examine learners' perceptions of the GENKI textbook across the four ARCS dimensions. The data were analyzed using JAMOVI statistical software. The primary measures reported in this study were the mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD).

D. Data Collection

34 items of the questionnaire were input into Google Forms and distributed by posting on Google Classroom. The collection period was from November 25, 2025, to December 22, 2025.

V. RESEARCH RESULT

This section presents the findings obtained from the statistical analyses described in the previous section. First, the reliability of the questionnaire is reported. Then, the descriptive results of learners' perceptions based on the ARCS model are presented.

A. Reliability of the Survey

To examine the overall reliability of the questionnaire used in this study, reliability coefficients were calculated. The results showed that Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.904. [7], [8]

B. Questionnaire Content Results: Overall Perceptions

The overall mean score of the questionnaire was 3.41, indicating a moderately positive perception of the GENKI Japanese language textbook among elementary-level learners.

The item with the highest mean value was Item 34, "The content of this textbook will be useful for me in the future" ($M = 4.17$). The second highest was Item 28, "Successfully completing each lesson is important to me" ($M = 3.95$), followed by Item 32 ($M = 3.80$). These results suggest that students perceive the textbook as meaningful and beneficial for their future learning and goals.

The lowest-rated item was "I enjoy this textbook so much that I want to learn more" ($M = 2.83$). Other lower-rated items included Item 13 ($M = 2.90$) and Item 23 ($M = 2.91$), which relate to visual attractiveness and curiosity.

Overall, the findings indicate that while students recognize the relevance and usefulness of the textbook, aspects related to enjoyment and engagement were rated at a moderate level. Additionally, the words written to the right of the mean values represent the results of item analysis categorized according to the following definition [7].

TABLE II. SCORE RANGE CATEGORIES

Categories	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Highest	4.21	5
High	3.41	4.2
Moderate	2.61	3.4
Low	1.81	2.6
Lowest	1	1.8

TABLE III. RESULT OF ITEM ANALYSIS

No	Mean	Rating Level	SD
Q34	4.17	high	0.84
Q28	3.95	high	0.86
Q32*	3.80	high	1.15
Q27	3.73	high	0.86
Q30	3.69	high	0.87
Q24	3.69	high	0.89
Q7*	3.69	high	1.04
Q33	3.67	high	0.82
Q26	3.63	high	0.79
Q4	3.61	high	0.82
Q1	3.59	high	0.79
Q5*	3.51	high	0.93
Q6	3.51	high	0.80
Q3*	3.49	high	0.87
Q31	3.46	high	0.84
Q21	3.46	high	0.84
Q16*	3.46	high	0.93
Q12*	3.44	high	0.90
Q17	3.42	high	0.93

No	Mean	Rating Level	SD
Q20*	3.41	high	0.94
Q29	3.39	moderate	0.82
Q9	3.31	moderate	0.84
Q8	3.29	moderate	0.94
Q18	3.26	moderate	0.85
Q10	3.23	moderate	0.86
Q19*	3.14	moderate	0.94
Q2*	3.10	moderate	0.98
Q14	3.05	moderate	0.95
Q25	3.04	moderate	0.88
Q11	3.02	moderate	0.76
Q15	2.94	moderate	0.86
Q23	2.91	moderate	0.86
Q13*	2.90	moderate	0.98
Q22	2.83	moderate	0.82
Total	3.41	moderate	0.43

C. Questionnaire Content Results: Analysis Based on the ARCS Model

The analysis based on the ARCS model revealed differences across the four motivational dimensions: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction.

1. Attention

The overall mean score for the Attention dimension was 3.22, indicating a moderate level. After reverse coding the negatively worded items, Items 16 ($M = 3.46$) and 12 ($M = 3.44$) showed relatively high mean scores, suggesting that students generally did not strongly perceive repetition or abstract content as major obstacles to their concentration. Item 17 ($M = 3.42$) also received a relatively high score, indicating that learners recognized interesting or new elements in the textbook.

Items related to visual attractiveness and curiosity stimulation received comparatively lower scores, including Item 15 ($M = 2.94$) and Item 13 ($M = 2.90$). Since Item 13 was reverse-coded prior to analysis, the relatively low mean score indicates that visual attractiveness may still be an area that requires improvement.

TABLE IV. RESULTS OF ITEM ANALYSIS: ATTENTION

No	Mean	Rating Level	SD
Q16*	3.46	high	0.93
Q12*	3.44	high	0.90
Q17	3.42	high	0.93
Q20*	3.41	high	0.94
Q9	3.31	moderate	0.84

No	Mean	Rating Level	SD
Q18	3.26	moderate	0.85
Q10	3.23	moderate	0.86
Q19*	3.14	moderate	0.94
Q14	3.05	moderate	0.95
Q11	3.02	moderate	0.76
Q15	2.94	moderate	0.86
Q13*	2.92	moderate	0.98
Total	3.22	moderate	0.51

2. Relevance

The Relevance dimension received the highest overall mean score of 3.72. The highest-rated items were Item 34 ($M = 4.17$), Item 28 ($M = 3.95$), and Item 32 ($M = 3.80$). Item 32 was reverse-coded prior to analysis; therefore, the relatively high mean score indicates that learners generally felt that the textbook matched their needs. Overall, these results suggest that students strongly perceive the textbook content as meaningful and beneficial for their future learning and goals.

Overall, Relevance showed the highest mean score, indicating alignment between the textbook content and learners' perceived needs.

TABLE V. RESULTS OF ITEM ANALYSIS: RELEVANCE

No	Mean	Rating Level	SD
Q34	4.17	high	0.84
Q28	3.95	high	0.86
Q32*	3.80	high	1.15
Q27	3.73	high	0.86
Q30	3.69	high	0.87
Q33	3.67	high	0.82
Q26	3.63	high	0.79
Q31	3.46	high	0.84
Q29	3.39	moderate	0.82
Total	3.72	high	0.53

3. Confidence

The overall mean for the Confidence dimension was 3.47, indicating a relatively high level. Item 7 ($M = 3.69$), which was reverse-coded prior to analysis, also showed a relatively high mean score. This suggests that learners generally felt able to understand the textbook content. However, Item 2 ($M = 3.10$) was reverse-coded before analysis. The result shows that most students did not think the textbook was too difficult. However, some students still found parts of the content a little difficult to understand.

This means that most students feel they can learn, but too much or complex information may affect their confidence.

TABLE VI. RESULTS OF ITEM ANALYSIS: CONFIDENCE

No	Mean	Rating Level	SD
Q7*	3.69	high	1.04
Q4	3.61	high	0.82
Q1	3.59	high	0.79
Q5*	3.51	high	0.93
Q6	3.51	high	0.80
Q3*	3.49	high	0.87
Q8	3.29	moderate	0.94
Q2*	3.10	moderate	0.98
Total	3.47	high	0.55

4. Satisfaction

The Satisfaction dimension had an overall mean of 3.19, indicating a moderate level. Learners reported feeling satisfied when completing exercises (Item 24, $M = 3.69$; Item 21, $M = 3.46$). However, intrinsic enjoyment was comparatively lower (Item 22, $M = 2.83$; Item 23, $M = 2.91$).

This means that students feel proud when they finish the exercises, but they do not strongly enjoy using the textbook.

TABLE VII. RESULTS OF ITEM ANALYSIS: SATISFACTION

No	Mean	Rating Level	SD
Q24	3.69	high	0.89
Q21	3.46	high	0.84
Q25	3.04	moderate	0.88
Q23	2.91	moderate	0.86
Q22	2.83	moderate	0.82
Total	3.19	moderate	0.67

The analysis indicates that the GENKI textbook performs well in the Relevance dimension, moderately in Confidence, and at a moderate level in Attention and Satisfaction. Improvements in visual design, reduction of information density, and inclusion of more engaging activities may further enhance learners' motivational experiences.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the GENKI textbook received the highest score in the Relevance dimension. This result can be interpreted in light of the ARCS model, which emphasizes the importance of perceived usefulness in sustaining learner motivation [1]. In the present context, students are enrolled in a Japanese for International Business program, and therefore have strong instrumental motivation to learn Japanese for future career purposes. This may explain why they perceive the content of the textbook as highly relevant and useful. This finding is also consistent with previous studies

indicating that perceived relevance plays a key role in motivating learners in foreign language contexts [2].

The Confidence dimension was also rated relatively high, indicating that most learners believe they are able to understand the lesson content. This finding suggests that the level of difficulty of the textbook is generally appropriate for the learners. However, some students reported that the amount of information presented on each page is excessive, which may increase cognitive load and negatively affect their learning experience. This observation aligns with cognitive processing theory, which suggests that excessive information can hinder effective learning by overloading learners' cognitive capacity [9].

In contrast, the Attention and Satisfaction dimensions were rated at a moderate level. Although learners feel a sense of achievement when completing exercises, their overall interest and enjoyment appear to be limited. This result may reflect a gap between perceived usefulness (Relevance) and intrinsic motivation, where learners recognize the importance of the material but do not necessarily find it engaging. Similar patterns have been reported in previous studies on ARCS-based instructional design, where relevance alone does not guarantee high levels of learner engagement [3].

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that improving visual design and reducing information density could enhance learners' attention and satisfaction. For example, the use of clearer layout structures, color-coded grammar explanations, and more interactive and communicative activities may help increase engagement and promote a more motivating learning experience. These suggestions are consistent with previous research emphasizing the role of instructional design in supporting learner motivation and engagement [1].

VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study examined learners' perceptions of the GENKI Japanese language textbook based on the ARCS motivational model. The findings revealed that the textbook performs strongly in the Relevance and Confidence dimensions, indicating that learners perceive the content as meaningful and believe they can successfully learn from it. However, the Attention and Satisfaction dimensions were rated at a moderate level, suggesting that improvements in visual design and engagement strategies may enhance learner motivation.

These findings highlight the importance of considering both motivational and cognitive factors in textbook evaluation, particularly in foreign language contexts. The study also provides practical implications for Japanese language instructors and curriculum developers, suggesting that enhancing visual presentation and incorporating more interactive activities may improve learners' engagement and satisfaction.

Future research should further investigate learners' motivational experiences through qualitative methods such as interviews, focusing on how specific elements

of textbook design influence engagement. In addition, comparative studies with other widely used Japanese language textbooks, such as Minna no Nihongo, would provide a deeper understanding of how different materials affect learner motivation.

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