

The Images of Japan and the Japanese People: A Case of Japanese as a Foreign Language Students in Portugal

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Abstract : Recently, the studies of the images about Japan and/or the Japanese people have been done in a Japanese language education context since the number of the students of Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) has been increasing worldwide, including in Portugal. It has been claimed that one of the reasons for this increase is the current popularity of Japanese pop-culture, namely anime (Japanese animations) and manga (Japanese visual novels), among young students. In the present study, the images about Japan and the Japanese held by JFL students in Portugal were examined by a questionnaire survey. The JFL students in higher education in Portugal (N=296) were asked to answer, among the other questions, their degree of agreement (using a Likert scale) with 24 pre-defined descriptions about the Japanese, which appear as relevant in a qualitative pilot study conducted before. The results show that the image of Japanese people by Portuguese JFL students is stressed around four dimensions: 1) diligence, 2) kindness, 3) conservativeness and 4) innovativeness. The students considered anime was the main source of information about the Japanese people and culture and anime was also strongly associated with the students' interests in learning Japanese language.

Keywords : anime, cultural studies, images about Japan and Japanese people, Portugal

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