



# Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching

Volume 15, Issue 2, (2025) 96-114

ISSN 2301-2595



<https://un-pub.eu/ojs/index.php/gift/index>

## Leveraging technology for online Japanese resit assessments at a British university

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### Suggested Citation:

Winch, J. (2025). Technology and online Japanese resit assessment at a British university. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 15(2), 96-114. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjft.v15i2.9399>

Received from January 5, 2025; revised from March 2, 2025; accepted from May 2, 2025.

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of Prof. Dr. Jesus Garcia Laborda, Alcala University, Spain.

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### Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of online resit assessments for Japanese language learners, addressing concerns about assessment reliability in digital contexts. Despite the increasing use of online assessments, little research has explored how resit exams compare to initial attempts, particularly in language learning. To bridge this gap, the study analyzed the resit performance of 32 students across two proficiency levels at a British university, using five language marking criteria to assess written and oral tasks from 14 Task Briefs. Findings indicate that while written resit assessments are as challenging as the initial exams, oral resit assessments may be significantly easier. However, the reliability of resit results is questionable due to students' use of Online Translators (OT) and Input Method Editors (IME), which can generate text that does not reflect students' actual language proficiency. These findings highlight the need for assessment designs that minimize the influence of external digital tools, ensuring a more accurate evaluation of language skills. The study contributes to discussions on maintaining academic integrity and developing fairer online language assessments.

**Keywords:** Academic misconduct; higher education; online submission; language assessment; resit.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In UK higher education, common resit practice is that students who do not achieve the required pass mark with the first sit attempt are allowed to take a second resit examination before the start of the next academic year. Academic misconduct is a globally growing problem, and presents a threat to the reputation of higher education worldwide (QAA, 2020) for both sit and resit.

The majority of literature focuses on academic misconduct and online assessment in a sit examination context. However, this paper investigates the same topic in the resit examination context. This section starts with a brief introduction of resit and academic misconduct, followed by issues, research questions, and the aims of this study.

### 1.1. Literature review

#### 1.1.1. Resits

In this University language department, resit examinations are offered to students when they do not achieve the required pass mark at the first sit attempt in August each academic year. Two points are different between sit and resit examinations. Firstly, the resit mark is capped at the pass mark, which is 40% at the language department at the University. Giving students full credit for what they demonstrated is somehow inappropriate, so a ceiling is placed on the resit mark (Ricketts, 2010). Secondly, either a pass or fail is awarded instead of a 0-100 percentage mark. The sit result is discarded and a pass or fail decision is replaced based upon the resit result alone. Any students who are awarded above 40% or 'pass' can progress to the next language level.

#### 1.1.2. Academic misconduct/academic infraction/academic dishonesty in online assessment

Online Translation (OT) is related to several academic offenses including translation, proofreading, collusion, and personation. The most common academic misconduct in online Japanese language assessment is 'translation'. This is followed by 'proofreading' in which students ask their native Japanese parent or native Japanese friend to check their work. 'Collusion' may not be as common as 'translation' and 'proofreading', but the researcher has encountered a case in which students work with another student and use identical sentence/s in their submitted coursework. However, Alonso (2022) claims that the use of OT may be considered as 'collusion' in that students work together with OT. Personation is defined as 'someone other than the student prepares the work for assessment' (the University). If any language-related technologies or software applications prepare students' assessment work, students may also consider that they are committing an academic offense of personation. The main focus of this paper is students' translation, but 'personation' or 'collusion' may also be considered depending on personal interpretation.

Plagiarism is defined as 'the use, without acknowledgment, of the intellectual work of other people, and the act of representing the ideas or discoveries of another as one's own in written work submitted for assessment' (Suprpto et al., 2024). This includes students' copying and pasting from websites. When students use Artificial intelligence (AI) to generate their ideas to form original text these students may be considered to have committed plagiarism (Chan, 2024).

#### 1.1.3 Issues

Online assessment and academic misconduct are the main issues in the resit. Despite academic infractions and the use of OT and/or AI stated on the Japanese language exam papers, students who did not attend classes or have weak language ability students tend to rely on OT and/or AI for both written and oral online Japanese language assessment. The OT and/or AI in the oral assessment is normally demonstrated by students' reading out from their script which they may rely on OT and/or AI in their recorded oral submission. The university's academic misconduct meeting process requires the marker and the language Convenor's additional workload to collect and provide evidence of suspected students' academic misconduct cases, which prevents markers and the language Convenors from reporting students' academic misconduct. Alonso (2022) reports in her study that 75% of respondents, i.e. language teachers, did not report any case of students' OT plagiarism.

In addition, the above-mentioned issue contributes to creating a vicious circle - students who barely pass the Japanese Ab Initio resit continue studying Intermediate modules the following year. These students tend to struggle to catch up with the rest of the class, leading them to absenteeism again. They also continue using OT and/or AI for Japanese Intermediate modules in the online resit assessment.

## **1.2. Conceptual background**

### **1.2.1. Japanese language online assessment and marking criteria**

If we compare the number of students' breach of academic integrity between the old traditional method of process and practices of language assessment (i.e. use of physical dictionary and pen-and-paper writing exam in class) and current online language assessment (use of technology), technology tools might be considered as one of the factors to contribute on students' breach of academic integrity. However, some studies try to see how models can be created to prevent these misconducts (Benson & Enstroem 2023; Rossello & Martinelli 2024; Stephens et al., 2024). Two types of technology tools used in the Japanese written online assessment are OT and Microsoft Japanese Input Method Editor (IME).

### **1.2.2. Online Translators (OT) and students' reason to use OT**

OT is a web-based platform to perform translations between two or more languages. The most frequent type of resource to aid students' writing is Google Translate (GT) (Jolley & Maimone, 2015). GT has been freely available since 2006 (Cancino & Panes, 2021), and in 2016 Google developed Google Neural Machine Translation, which is claimed the most substantial improvement in machine translation quality (Wu, 2016). This means that current students are using well-developed translation tools in their online language assessment.

According to King (2019), Google Translate consisted of a translation model based on phrase-based algorithms that "analyzed word pairs based on the frequency of use across massive amounts of digitalized data". This implies that Google Translate uses a direct translation or literal translation, which may sometimes produce awkward or vague sentences.

The majority of students' reasons for use of OT are more likely a combination of the following: 1) weak language ability (Alonso, 2022); 2) time constraints (Sadrudin 2021; Eret & Ok, 2014); 3) laziness/convenience of copying (Foltynek et al., 2014); 4) pressure to perform academically well (Sadrudin 2021; Goh, 2013; Alonso, 2022); 5) fear of failure (Devlin & Gray 2007, Goh, 2013); 6) desire for higher grades (Eret & Ok, 2014; Alonso, 2022) and 7) academic misconduct perception gaps between students and markers/teaching staff. As for 1) weak language ability (Alonso, 2022), some students who take resit with weak or lack of Japanese language knowledge are more likely to rely heavily on OT. With regards to 2) time constraints, Sadrudin (2021) reports that some students prepare coursework a day before submission, which indicates students' poor time management skills. Students may rely on academic misconduct as the easiest route to meet a deadline. It also allows students to bypass the slow, difficult, time-consuming, and strenuous language study and enables them to work on the same linguistic level as their peers who did not use OT. As for 7) academic misconduct perception gaps between students and a marker/teaching staff may be another reason, some students believe that teachers would not detect students' plagiarism. Some markers are aware that students' online assessment work is not their own, from their class interaction or students' attendance.

### **1.2.3. Input method editor (IME)**

Students use IME for written assessment. Microsoft IME is not an online-based platform, but it is a downloadable software that instantly enables anyone who even has little or no knowledge of the Japanese language to write like a native speaker using Japanese three writing systems using Microsoft products. In addition, students are also supported with another writing support from Microsoft Word's 'auto-correct' features in the Japanese language, which detects and corrects spelling errors before students have even noticed. Another benefit of using IME is that the native Japanese markers would not normally notice that students have relied on this IME function in their written assessment unless they have seen the students' previous piece of writing example or their response on this topic in class.

IME's three functions are explained using the Japanese three writing systems, which are a) 46 hiragana characters, b) 46 katakana characters, and c) kanji (Chinese characters). IME converts from typing roma-ji to a) hiragana, b) katakana and c) kanji. Roma-ji is a romanization of Latin scripts used to help you pronounce the Japanese language. IME's first function is to convert from roma-ji to a) hiragana with 100% accuracy. Hiragana has special sounds (long vowels, contracted sounds, and double consonants), which the majority of beginner-level students struggle to master and are more likely to make mistakes. IME can convert these special sounds instantly without any mistakes, which is significant writing support for absolute beginner Japanese language learners. IME's second function is to convert from roma-ji to b) katakana with 100% accuracy, even though katakana also has special sounds. IME's final function is to convert roma-ji into c) kanji, which is the most vital for markers to detect 'collusion' or/and 'plagiarism'. IME offers students various possible choices of kanji to choose from when students type a Japanese word in roma-ji. This is when students' good understanding and knowledge of kanji is tested as they have to choose the correct kanji so that the sentence makes sense.

IME offers valuable writing support to students in all levels of Japanese in Japanese language assessment. With the absence of IME, writing Japanese sentences or submitting an assessment may be very challenging for both written and oral assessments.

#### **1.2.4. Japanese language marking criteria for written and oral assessment**

This section discusses a total of five marking criteria, four of which are used for written assessment, 1) vocabulary, 2) accuracy, 3) structure and coherence, 4) purpose and content, and one of which is used for oral assessment, and 5) communication. All relate to the data analysis of this study.

#### **1.2.5. Vocabulary**

When we translate, the first step is working on the word level, and choosing the correct word. Word Choice (WC) is important. Choosing a word may not require any Japanese grammatical knowledge but it is critical enough to affect coherence and the understanding of the markers.

Two examples are given to explain the importance of choosing the correct word in the Japanese language. The first example is the concept of 'my family vs. other family' and the second example is the use of 'you' in the Japanese beginner level. To start with the first 'my family vs. other family' concept, the Japanese language has two or more words to describe my family and other family. When the Japanese address the interlocutor's father, they say 'Otosan' (father). However, when the Japanese address the speaker's father, they say 'chichi' (father). They both mean 'father' in English, but we do not usually refer to the interlocutor's father as 'chichi'. In other words, students who use 'chichi' to address the interlocutor's father imply students' lack of understanding of this 'my family vs. other family' term concept, and it is considered a WC error. This applies to both written and oral assessments.

The second example of 'you' (anata) also applies to both written and oral assessment. Native Japanese speakers normally address the interlocutor's name when speaking to the interlocutor in the Japanese language and hardly use 'anata'. If students use 'anata' to address their interlocutor, the marker raises a question of whether the students may not understand the basic Japanese language customs and rules and it is considered a WC error.

In addition, Word Choice errors (WC errors) are unusual for ab initio-level writing. If Ab Initio level students assessed written work includes WC errors, it implies that students are more likely to use OT. According to Groves & Mundt (2015), students who use OT in their coursework believe that 'it (use of OT) is one of the better options' as they are unable to produce sentences using their ability. If students' written work demonstrates surprising lexical and native speakers' grammatical range, they indicate the use of students' OT as well as the possibility of plagiarism. However, OT normally uses direct or literal translation, which sometimes results in producing awkward Japanese sentences. An example that directs translation may not work between English and Japanese is the English word 'like'. 'Like' is a verb in English but it is an adjective in Japanese. The gaps in part of speech results in OT's different translation. Taking into consideration this example, OT does translate incorrectly and when this type of error occurs, either the students' use of OT or their lack of basic understanding of the Japanese language is questioned by the marker.

#### **1.2.6. Accuracy**

After choosing an appropriate word, the next step is working on the sentence level, to construct a well-formed sentence. Accuracy is one of the important criteria which also affects the content criteria. Working on the sentence level, sound Japanese grammar knowledge including verb conjugation, adjective conjugation, particle, appropriate use of form, correct counter and suffix/prefix, etc. is necessary for both oral and written assessment work. Overall, a marker scrutinizes students' grammatical accuracy more in written assessment than in oral assessment.

The accuracy category consists of the following 7 levels: 'high level'; 'overall impression of accuracy'; 'occasional errors'; 'frequent minor errors'; 'frequent major and minor errors'; 'major errors which impede communication'; and 'insufficient'. The majority of students fall into the following 4 ranges: 'overall impression of accuracy'; 'occasional errors'; 'frequent minor errors'; and 'frequent major and minor errors'. To describe an 'overall impression of accuracy', a student's piece of writing may include a few minor errors. Very few students are awarded an 'overall impression of accuracy'. Thus, native Japanese markers tend to scrutinize the written assessment work of students who are awarded an 'overall impression of accuracy' for any possibility that students may either use OT or copy and paste from native language resources. Previous studies maintain that Google Translate allows learners to compose more accurate texts, reducing the number of lexicon-grammatical inaccuracies and improving overall text quality (Lee, 2020; Cancino & Panes, 2021). The written work that uses either OT or copying and paste websites usually includes advanced grammar (e.g. noun modification, passive forms) beyond the student's level of study. Students who attend regularly and consistently are informed and aware that advanced grammar beyond the level of Japanese is not necessary and not rewarded for inclusion in the University Japanese language department. Therefore, the 'overall impression of accuracy' is another warning indicator of the possible use of OT.

'Occasional minor errors' are awarded to students who have occasional minor errors, but their writing generally makes sense. Common minor errors in the Ab Initio level Japanese language are: particles; hiragana; katakana; incomplete sentences; punctuation errors (errors of Japanese commas and full stops); connecting two adjectives; and errors mixing polite form and plain form. Mixing plain form and polite form creates inconsistency in the Japanese written text. The native Japanese speakers do not mix forms in writing and speaking. Mixing forms is one of the common errors in Intermediate and Advanced-level Japanese language. The Ab Initio and Intermediate level students are usually expected to only use polite forms as they are not usually introduced in plain form. If the beginner students included plain forms in their written assessment, it is another indicator that they used OT. This is often a suspect case of plagiarism which native Japanese teachers raise questions about.

'Frequent major and minor errors' are awarded to students who have included major syntax errors that obscured the meaning of the sentence. Sentences that have major errors do not make sense to the native Japanese language markers. If students who had low attendance rates and did not possess basic Japanese grammar knowledge attempted to write using their ability tend to be awarded 'frequent major and minor errors'.

'Creativity' is not encouraged or rewarded in the Japanese language, as this will put the markers it very difficult to identify students' plagiarism. Some students may feel guilty about submitting the coursework using OT translation or copying and paste, so they try to include their text (Curtis, 2023). This is when the native Japanese markers identify the gap in students' writing and find inconsistency between very accurate and inaccurate sentences. This questions the students' true language level and suspects students' use of OT or copying and pasting other Japanese language resources. Therefore, it may be reasonable to say that inconsistency in the text is one of the indicators of students' use of OT or plagiarism in the Japanese language in this category. Academic misconduct may be a combination or all of translation, collusion, or plagiarism.

#### **1.2.7. Structure and Coherence**

#### 1.2.7.1. Structure

After constructing well-formed sentences at the sentence level, the next stage is linking these sentences together into a clear coherent, and cohesive paragraph. In forming individual sentences at the paragraph level, there are a few cases when markers find it difficult to read and understand students' written work.

Firstly, when a student introduces a new topic or a new word, then continues to write/speak another sentence on a different topic without any link between the sentences, which results in two sentences not flowing, not making sense, and confusing the readers/ markers.

Secondly, when students just put random sentences together to make a paragraph, it does not present meaningful information to the marker. Students are responsible for structuring their written/oral content logically and clearly.

Lastly, markers do not expect to read incomplete sentences or the same sentences repetitively in the coursework. However, if students copy and paste the same sentences from more than one source in their assessment writings, this may be likely to happen. Then, the marker may get the impression that appropriate planning is not apparent due to the repetition.

#### 1.2.7.2. Coherence

The coherence category is scrutinized by observing consistency in the content and grammar. Alonso, (2022) maintains that incoherent text, inconsistency, unnecessary repetition, and incomplete sentences are the indicators of what makes language tutors question students' work. Coherence is broken down into the following sentences: repetitive, incomplete, illogical, or disorganized sentences. If one or a combination of repetitive, incomplete, illogical, or disorganized sentences occur, the markers get the impression that students' appropriate planning is not apparent as markers do not expect to read incomplete, repetitive, illogical, or disorganized texts. For this reason, markers examine the following two points: Firstly, if students' content of the text flows logically and clearly, linking and developing a logical sequence of sentences and paragraphs.

Secondly, the marker also examines if students keep using the same Japanese sentence verb form consistently at the end of each sentence. The inconsistency of verb forms at the end of Japanese sentences breaks down the coherence. The Japanese language has three writing style forms which are displayed at the end of each sentence: 'polite'; 'plain'; and 'expository' forms. Native Japanese speakers consistently use the same forms. To avoid inconsistency and write coherent Japanese writing, students are advised to keep the verb forms consistent in either 'polite' or 'plain' forms. However, if students use OT, and copy and paste the translated sentences in the assessment work, mixing polite and plain forms is likely to happen. Not only does mixing two forms indicate incoherence and a lack of attention to detail, but it also indicates that the work is not the student's own. Academic misconduct may be a combination of or all of translation, collusion, or plagiarism.

### 1.2.8. Purpose and Content

#### 1.2.8.1. Purpose

Writing is an activity that occurs within a community that has various expectations and norms (Mundt & Groves, 2016). The expectation depends on the culture and its community. The expectation of Japanese language writing assessment is that students/writers should adhere to the norms and expectations of the readership, who is usually the marker or a native Japanese speaker. The markers do not expect to read/hear an illogical or disorganized text/speaking content as reading illogical or disorganized text does not adhere to the norms and expectations of the readership/listener. The purpose category is affected if students do not fulfill the expected or required task.

Additionally, students' irrelevant information in their assessment work may also affect the purpose category. Whether written information is relevant or irrelevant is assessed by the Task Brief, which is closely related to the purpose category. Task Brief for written assessment details 'topics', 'structure', 'character count', and 'task instructions' (e.g. color highlighting the appropriate sentences in their written text in online



assessment) to which students are expected to adhere. Task Brief for oral assessment details ‘topics’, ‘structure’, ‘duration of pre-recorded recording’, and ‘task instructions. It should be noted that some British university institutions reward students who write more than the required character count, but the language department policy at the University does not reward for exceeding the character count. Falling below or exceeding the character count or duration of recording time is also penalized as a lack of planning. It also includes the expectation to students, i.e. submit their work which relates to collusion and plagiarism.

There are also a few expectations for students, which are not written. Firstly, students are not expected to use OT translation, then copy, paste, and submit it as their work. It is stated not to use OT translation, but the sentence should be stated more specifically as follows: ‘Students should not use OT translation, copy, paste and submit as their work’. Secondly, in any submission regardless of a written/oral assessment and sit/resit, students are not expected to include or do not need to include grammar, vocabulary, and kanji beyond their Ab Initio or Intermediate level. Students’ including unnecessary grammar, vocabulary, and kanji beyond their level are marked cautiously as suspected cases of OT or IME. Lastly, markers do not expect to read/hear students’ incomplete or illogical sentences in students’ online assessments.

#### 1.2.8.2. Content

The content category is assessed on how much the task was completed by students, which ranges from ‘significant information was completed/communicated’, ‘partially completed (in case of written assessment)/communicated (in case of oral assessment)’ to ‘some information was communicated’. Any repetitive content in the text is also part of this category. When students’ written/oral content includes repetitive information, this stops the flow of the marker’s understanding and affects the content. Markers do not usually expect to read a text that contains identical information repetitively and consider it as the students’ lack of planning. Repetitive information tends to occur when students use OT and copy and paste from various websites that can contain similar information. This category is also closely linked to the Accuracy criterion because if the written or oral content does not make sense, it also affects the marker’s understanding of the content.

#### 1.2.9. Communication

This category is only used for the oral assessment. As the oral resit is a pre-recording video on a specific topic, some students read out from their script in the recordings. When students read out from a script, they usually stare at a certain place throughout the recording. Students’ actions are not spontaneous and look very unnatural. However, in the language oral exam, students are not expected to read out from a script as it is not a ‘read-out a script’ exam which affects the ‘purpose’ category. It is written in the oral Task Brief that students should not read out from a script. However, some students tend to ignore this and read out from a script in their recorded video.

Furthermore, the communication category assesses whether students communicate with confidence. This could be displayed by the student’s hesitation, silence, and mispronunciation. Students’ hesitation ranges from occasional to frequent hesitations. Communication is affected by students’ particle mispronunciation (‘ha’ instead of ‘we’), simple pronunciation mistakes, accent errors, and pause errors, all of which question the students’ basic understanding of Japanese vocabulary and grammar knowledge. A pause is a form of oral punctuation or commas that helps listeners understand a speaker in communication. Therefore, it is important to put pauses in the right places in speaking assessment. It is very important to read out words using correct accents as incorrect pause stops the flow of the native speaker’s understanding. In addition, cases, a word with incorrect accents could change word meanings. It is very important to say words using correct accents. In extreme cases, a word with an incorrect accent can change its meaning. A well-known example is ‘hashi’, which changes the meanings from a bridge to chopsticks. Incorrect pausing, accent, and pronunciation make it very difficult to understand the content of students’ oral coursework.

### 1.3. Purpose of study

The assessment tends to use the same process and practices of language assessment regardless of the advancement of language technology tools and online assessment. This article aims to present the current online Japanese language resit assessment at a British university and to suggest a more streamlined and effective language assessment process. The Research Questions (RQs) of this study comprise of following three:

RQ1: Are online written and oral resits (including DEX) easier than those of sit?

RQ2: Are the University Japanese language resit examination results reliable?

RQ3: How could we improve the process of resits to be more efficient at the University language department?

## 2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

### 2.1. Participants

The total participants of this study were 32 undergraduate students (9 foundation year students, 15 first-year students, and 8 second-year students) who took various combinations of resits at a university in the South East of England in August 2023. A total of 5 students (4 Ab Initio and 1 Intermediate) are registered with a status of Reasonable Adjustment (RA) in the Disability Advice department. These students were eligible to receive the following reasonable adjustments related to assessment and exams: 1) penalty waiver in assessment; 2) request of extensions to deadline, 24 hours or 7 days in assessment; 3) 25% extra time in exams in exams.

Table 1 summarizes the resit type and the number of students who took the resit. Japanese Ab Initio A's 'A' refers to the Autumn term resit and Japanese Ab Initio B's 'B' refers to the Spring term resit. DEX is an abbreviation of Distance Exam, which consists of language (vocabulary and grammar), reading, and a writing question for DEX B. However, DEX A is written only.

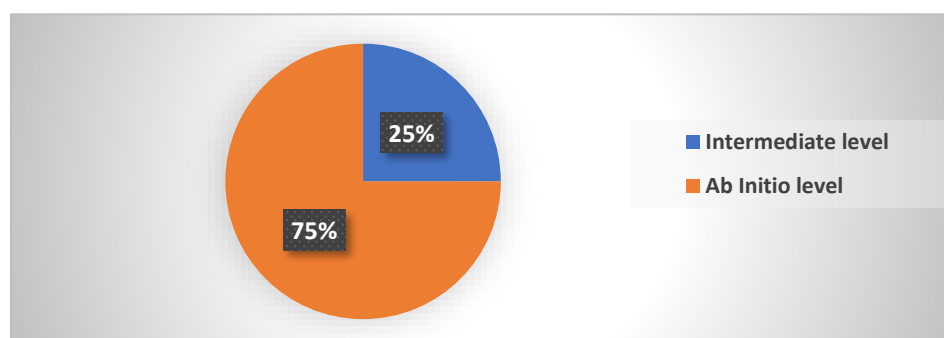
**Table 1**

*The resit type and the number of students who took them*

Resit type	Number of students
Japanese Ab Initio A DEX (Written)	4
Japanese Ab Initio An Oral	7
Japanese Ab Initio B DEX	5
Japanese Ab Initio B Oral	8
Japanese Intermediate A (Written)	1
Japanese Intermediate An Oral	1
Japanese Intermediate B DEX	2
Japanese Intermediate B Written	2
Japanese Intermediate B Oral	2
Total	32

**Figure 1**

*Ratio of Ab Initio and Intermediate resit*





Some students took just one written or oral/written resit while some students took all resits in August 2023 due to their non-submission or failure of the sit DEX. One 1<sup>st</sup> year student resat 4 Japanese resits, while one 2<sup>nd</sup> year student resat 5 Japanese resit assessments.

The 32 students are out of 54 students (35, 1<sup>st</sup> year students and 19, 2<sup>nd</sup> year students). To compare with other higher educational institution's resit rates, Pell et al., (2009) claimed that medical course resit rates are usually less than 10%. However, it should also be noted that there is no theory of resits, and literature on resits in education is remarkably scarce (Ricketts, 2010). These participants were convenient samples.

The participants' attendance rate was also calculated to supplement participants' information as the researchers observed that an increasing number of students who are unable to attend classes due to their mental health conditions or those who are academically weak are aiming to take the resit as their first attempt without attempting to take the first online sit assessment in the Japanese language resit at the University.

Figure 2 shows that the highest attendance rate of 7 first-year students who took Ab Initio A resit is 73% and the lowest attendance rate is 9%. The average attendance rate of students who took Ab Initio A resit (both oral and written) is 44.9%. The following four levels are offered in the Japanese language (from beginners to advance in this order): Japanese Ab Initio; Japanese Intermediate; Japanese Advanced and Japanese in Context. Japanese is one of eight languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and British Sign Language) offered to both foundation year and undergraduate students whose major is not language as an elective module at the language department at the university.

**Figure 2**

*Attendance rate of Ab Initio A*

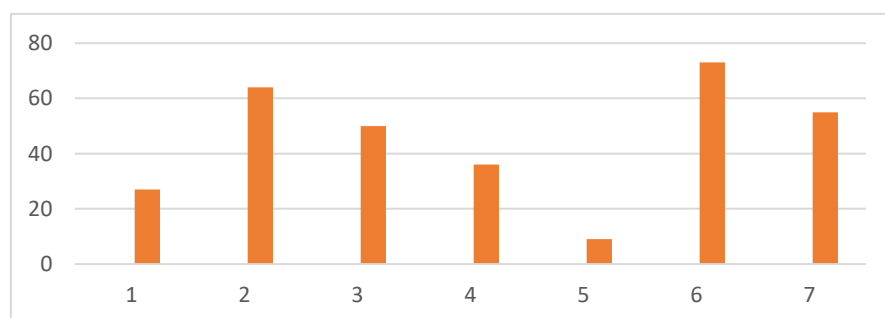
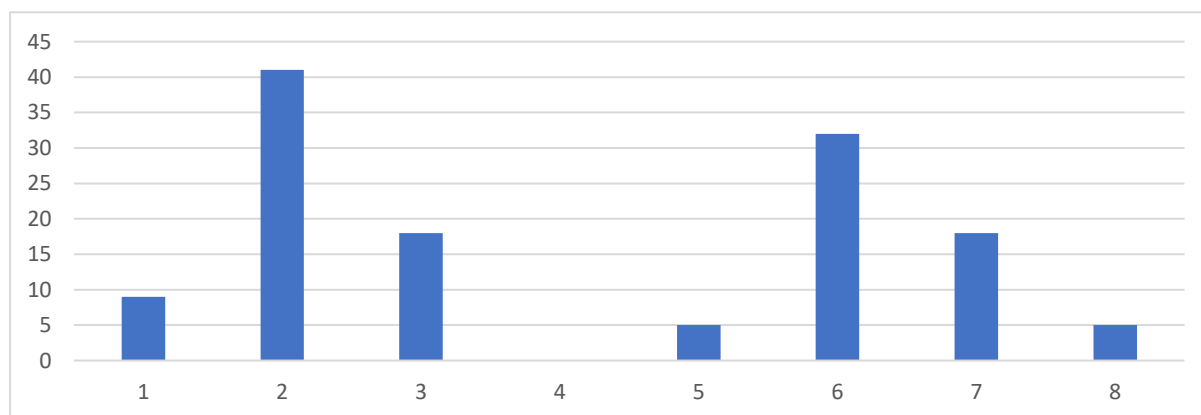


Figure 3 shows that the highest attendance rate of 8 first-year students who took Ab Initio B resit was 41% and the lowest attendance rate was 0% (student 4 did not attend classes at all). The average attendance rate of 1<sup>st</sup> year students who took Ab Initio B resit (both oral and written) is 16%.

**Figure 3**

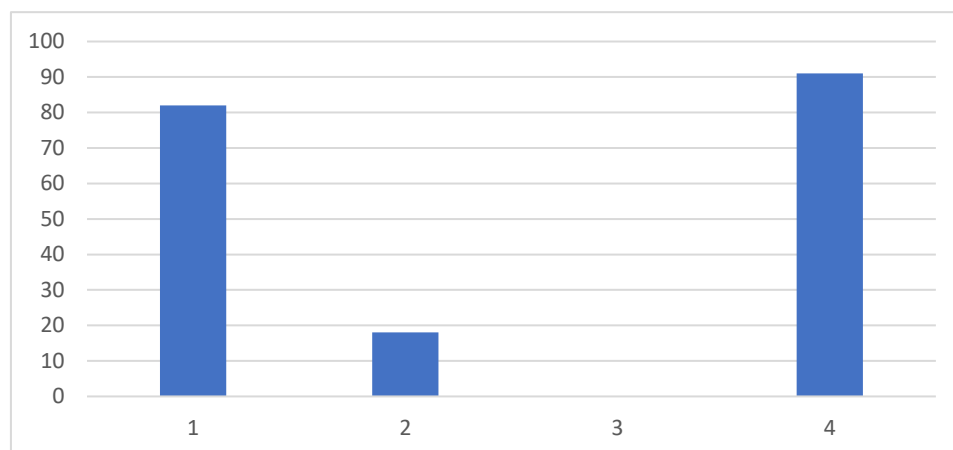
*Attendance rate of Ab Initio B*



Only one 2<sup>nd</sup> year student took the Intermediate A resit (both oral and written) whose average attendance was 32%. Figure 4 shows that the highest attendance rate of 4 second-year students who took Intermediate B was 91% and the lowest attendance rate was 0%. The average attendance rate of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who took Intermediate B resit (both oral and written) was 47.8%. Two students had high attendance (82% and 91%) but these two students simply forgot to take Intermediate DEX.

**Figure 4**

*Attendance rate of Intermediate B*



## 2.2. Data collection

Data is collected for the RQ1 and RQ2 as RQ3 (How could we improve the process of resit to be more efficient at the University language department?) does not involve data. RQ3 will be discussed in the Discussion section.

Regarding data collection of RQ1 (Are online written and oral resits easier than those of sit?), a total of 14 Task Briefs (sit written assessment Task Brief, resit written assessment Task Brief, sit oral assessment Task Brief, resit oral assessment Task Brief) for two Japanese language levels (Ab Initio A, Ab Initio B, Intermediate A and Intermediate B modules) were collected.

With regards to RQ2 (Are the University Japanese language resit examination results reliable?), the data are a total of 32 students' resit results (oral and written resit assessment and DEX resit assessments for four modules (Ab Initio A, Ab Initio B, Intermediate A, and Intermediate B modules), which were marked using Canvas Turnitin in August 2023.

Submitted resits for both oral and written assessments are marked individually based on the same language marking criteria as SIT and awarded between 0-100%. After this, the administrator of the language school office was involved with this process and converted students' marks to either pass (above 40%) or fail format.

The RQ3 (How could we improve the process of resit to be more efficient at the University language department?) does not require data.

## 2.3 Data analysis

Data is analyzed for the RQ1 and RQ2. With regards to data analysis of RQ1 (Are online written and oral resits easier than those of sit?), each Task Brief and submission mode of formative main coursework, Sit DEX, formative coursework resit and DEX resits are compared to whether they are identical or not. If identical, it means that resits are not easier. If not, it means that resits are easier than main/original coursework or sit DEX.

As for data analysis for RQ2 (Are the University Japanese language resit examination results reliable?), 32 students' Japanese resit written, oral and DEX assessment exams were analyzed using the language marking criteria against each of five categories, i.e. vocabulary, accuracy, structure & coherence, purpose & content,

and communication. After going through this process, the ratio of students who use OT is examined. This indicates that the more students use OT and IME, the less reliable the resits are.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 RQ1. Are online written and oral resits (including DEX) easier than those of sit?

Table 2 summarizes Task Briefs for Ab Initio Task Brief for sit/main coursework (written coursework), resit coursework (written coursework), sit DEX, and resit DEX.

**Table 2**

*Summary of task briefs and the modes of submission (Ab Initio)*

Ab Initio	Sit or Main coursework Task Brief	Resit Task Brief
Japanese Ab Initio A DEX (Written coursework)	Read a message and respond in 200 characters using hiragana and katakana (online submission)	Read an email and write about themselves using hiragana and katakana (online submission)
Japanese Ab Initio An Oral coursework	A 3-minute in-class pair conversation on an assigned topic (in-class assessment)	A 3-minute pre-recorded self-introduction video (online submission)
Japanese Ab Initio B DEX	DEX comprises grammar (30%), reading (20%), and writing (50 %) (online submission)	DEX comprises grammar (30%), reading (20%), and writing (50 %) However, the questions are all different from the Main DEX (online submission)
Japanese Ab Initio B Oral coursework	In-class 4-minute oral presentation on your party plan which includes Q&A (in-class assessment)	A 4-minute pre-recorded event planning video 4 minutes (online submission)

Table 3 summarizes Task Briefs for Intermediate Task Brief for sit/ main coursework (written coursework), resit coursework (written coursework), sit DEX, and resit DEX.

**Table 3**

*Summary of Task Brief and the modes of submission (Intermediate)*

Intermediate	Sit or Main coursework Task Brief	Resit Task Brief
Japanese Intermediate a Written coursework	Visitor guide to students' hometowns in 700-800 characters in Japanese (online submission)	Identical to the Main Coursework (online submission)
Japanese Intermediate An oral coursework	In-class 4-minute oral presentation on your visitor guide which includes Q&A (in-class assessment)	A 5-minute pre-recorded 'visitor guide to students' hometown video' (online submission)
Japanese Intermediate B DEX	DEX comprises grammar (30%), reading (20%), and writing (50 %) (online submission)	DEX comprises grammar (30%), reading (20%), and writing (50 %). However, the questions are all different from the Main DEX. (online submission)
Japanese Intermediate B Written coursework	Write CVs in 300-350 characters in Japanese (identical to the main coursework written) (online submission)	Identical to the Main Coursework (online submission)
Japanese Intermediate B Oral coursework	In-class 5-minute job interview with your partner (in-class assessment)	A 5-minute pre-recorded job application video (online submission)

Firstly, the written Task Brief contents and submission modes in Ab Initio and Intermediate for both original sit and resit are compared. The written assessment Task Briefs for both Ab Initio and Intermediate are identical

for both sit and resit. Comparing the submission mode for the original and the resit, both are identical (online). It is possible to conclude the resit written assessment is not easier than that of the sit exam.

Next, the oral assessment Task Brief contents and submission modes in Ab Initio and Intermediate are compared. The oral assessment Task Briefs for Ab Initio and Intermediate differs in submission mode for original sit and resit. While the original oral assessment is assessed in person in class, the oral resit assessment is an online Panopto recording video submission. The oral Task Brief contents are also different. In the resit, the Task Brief asks the students to answer the list of questions in their Panopto recording video. As it is a recorded video, students can read out from their prepared script which they may use OT. However, this oral assessment is not a reading-out test. For this reason, oral resit assessment may be much easier than the original oral assessment.

Lastly, the Task Brief content and submission modes in the Ab initio and Intermediate are compared. Comparing the submission mode for the original and the resit, both are identical (online). Although the exam paper structure of the DEX assessment the Task Brief for both Ab Initio and Intermediate are identical for both sit and resit (grammar, reading, and writing), the resit DEX content (questions of grammar, reading, and writing) is not identical to the sit DEX. It is possible to conclude the resit DEX assessment is not easier than that of the sit exam.

### **3.2 RQ2. Japanese language resit examination results reliable?**

#### **3.2.1 Vocabulary (used for Written and oral resit coursework and DEX)**

Vocabulary category looks at students' lexical range of vocabulary and phrases. In the Japanese language assessment at the University, not only students' vocabulary and phrases but also their choice of kanji (which implies the use of IME) is included in this category.

Overall, 9/11 (82%) students used IME for written coursework resit and resit DEX. It is easier to find students' use of IME for lower levels (i.e. Ab Initio level A DEX written) as students do not need to include kanji. However, 2 out of 4 students included kanji which indicates that half of the students used IME which also affects their Purpose category.

In the Ab Initio B DEX, all the students (4 out of 4) used kanji beyond Ab Initio 100 kanji which indicates that students used IME which also affected their Purpose criteria.

In the Intermediate A written assessment, there is only one student and this student (1 out of 1) used kanji beyond the Intermediate A 150 kanji which indicates that students used IME which also affected their Purpose criteria.

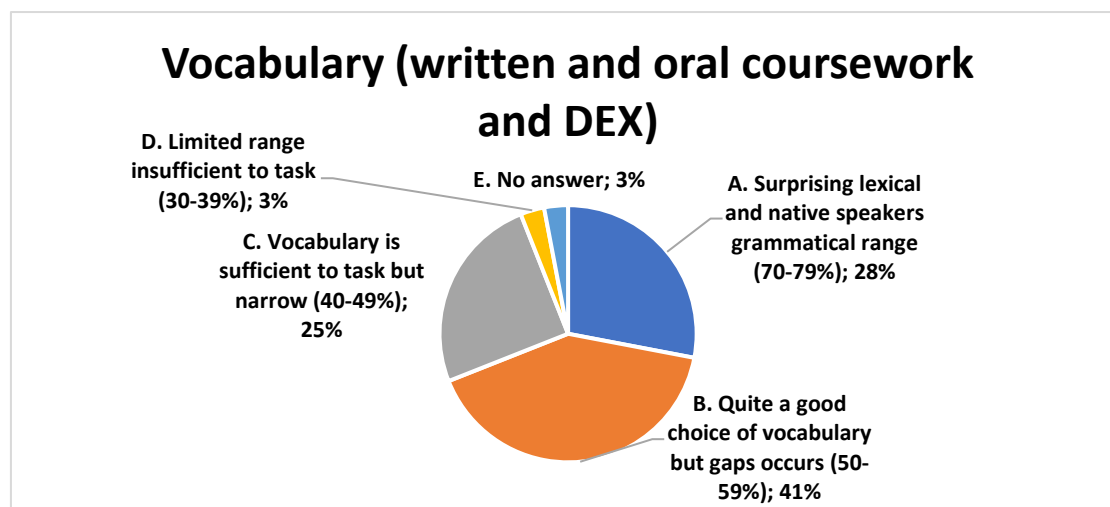
In the Intermediate B written coursework, all students (2 out of 2) used kanji beyond Intermediate A 200 kanji which indicates that the students used IME which also affected their Purpose criteria.

Figure 5 summarizes the students' awarded vocabulary level for written and online oral resit assessment. Two (6%) out of 32 students used 'surprising lexical and had native speakers' grammatical range' (70-79%), which is normally very rare to be awarded and suspected the use of OT. Seventeen (53%) out of 32 students' writing used 'quite a good choice of vocabulary but gaps occurred' (50-59%). It is are various reasons why gaps occur in students' writing. The first and the most common reason is that students mixed sentences which are their work and sentences using OT. These created gaps in the lexical level as well as incoherence which affected the 'Coherent' category. The students who feel guilty of relying totally on OT, normally mix their work. From these, nearly 60% (19/32) of students, i.e. two out of three students used machine translation.

Twelve (38%) out of 32 students' vocabulary is sufficient to task (40-49%) or limited range (20-39%). The majority of these students did not use OT as much as the above-mentioned students and what is expected for these students, considering their low or no attendance rate (below 20%). These students used OT partially and their use of OT was observed in their kanji and grammar which is beyond the level. One student only answered grammar and vocabulary questions but did not attempt the essay part at all.

**Figure 5**

*Students awarded vocabulary level.*



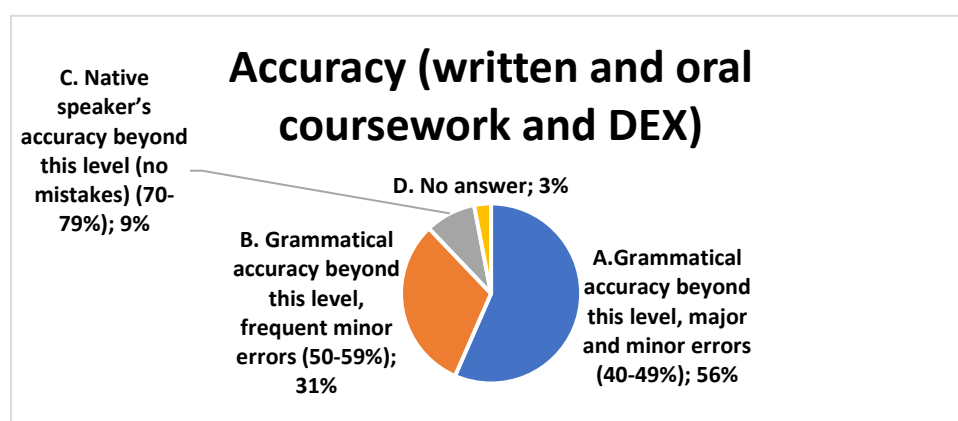
### 3.2.2 Accuracy (Written and oral resit coursework and DEX resit)

This category looks at the grammatical precision or control and how much they are successfully used ranging from native accuracy to occasional errors, frequent minor errors, or a combination of major and minor errors.

Figure 6 summarizes students' awarded accuracy content level for written and online oral resit assessment. Six (19%) out of 32 students' writing was native speaker's accuracy (no mistakes) beyond this level (70-79%) despite their low attendance rate. This implies the use of OT. Four (13%) out of 32 students' writing had frequent minor errors, while grammatical accuracy beyond this level (50-59%), presents gaps in students' writing. This implies a mixture of OT and their work. From these, a total of 32% (19/32) of students are suspected of using OT. Twenty-one (66%) out of 32 students' writing included frequent major and minor errors (40-49%). Major errors refer to sentences that do not make sense, which implies that either students used OT or students translated themselves. One student did not attempt the writing part of the DEX resit.

**Figure 6**

*Students awarded accuracy level.*



### 3.2.3 Purpose (Written and oral resit coursework and DEX resit)

This category looks at the focus of the task, specifically if students followed the Task Brief or ignored it and wrote what they wished to write. Some students ignore the character count that students are expected to write or speak, either exceedingly significantly or falling below significantly.

**Table 4**

*Number of students who did not follow character count or recording time*

	Number of students who did not follow character count or recording time	
Japanese Ab Initio A DEX resit	4 out of 4 students	All students ignored the character count
Japanese Ab Initio An Oral coursework	3 out of 7 students	Nearly half of the students ignored the recording time
Japanese Ab Initio B DEX resit	5 out of 5 students	All students ignored the character count.
Japanese Ab Initio B Oral coursework	7 out of 8 students	The majority of students ignored recording time
Japanese Intermediate a Report	1 out of 1 student	One student ignored the character count
Japanese Intermediate An Oral Coursework	0 out of 1 student	No problem
Japanese Intermediate B DEX resit	1 out of 2 students	One student ignored the character count
Japanese Intermediate B Written coursework	1 out of 2 students	One student ignored the character count of another student
Japanese Intermediate B Oral coursework	1 out of 2 students	The presentation time of one student is significantly below

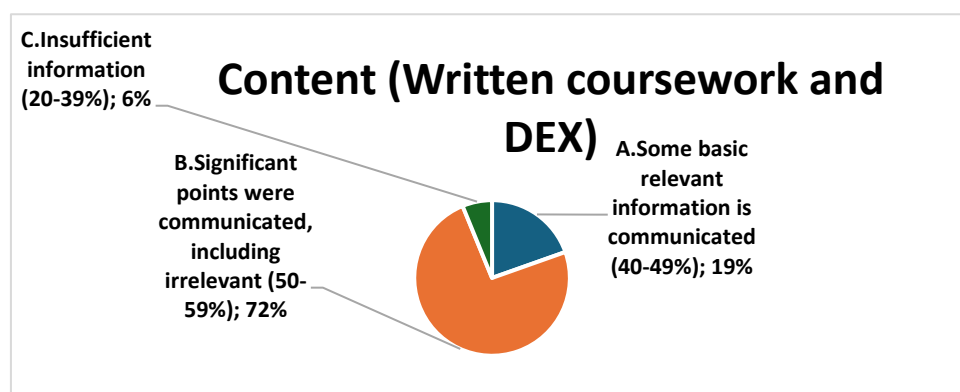
Table 4 indicates that the majority of resit students did not pay attention to the focus of the Task Brief for both oral and written coursework. As for both DEX A and B which are written, all students ignored the purpose. As for oral Ab Initio A coursework, more than half ignored the Task Brief.

### 3.2.4 Content (Written, oral coursework, and resit DEX)

This category examines the information on what students wrote whether it is relevant, or repetitive, or if the students wrote following the Task Brief. Figure 7 summarizes students' awarded content level for written and online oral resit assessment. Significant points were communicated (50-59%) for 6 (19%) out of 32 students' writing. This implies the use of machine translation considering students' low attendance rate. Some basic relevant information was communicated (40-49%) for 23 (72%) out of 32 students' writing. Two out of 32 students provided insufficient information (20-39%). This is due to the shortage of their required information (For example, one student's oral recording was 0:47 out of 4 minutes recording and the other is 334 characters out of 700-800 characters). One student did not attempt the writing part of the DEX resit.

**Figure 7**

*Students awarded content level.*



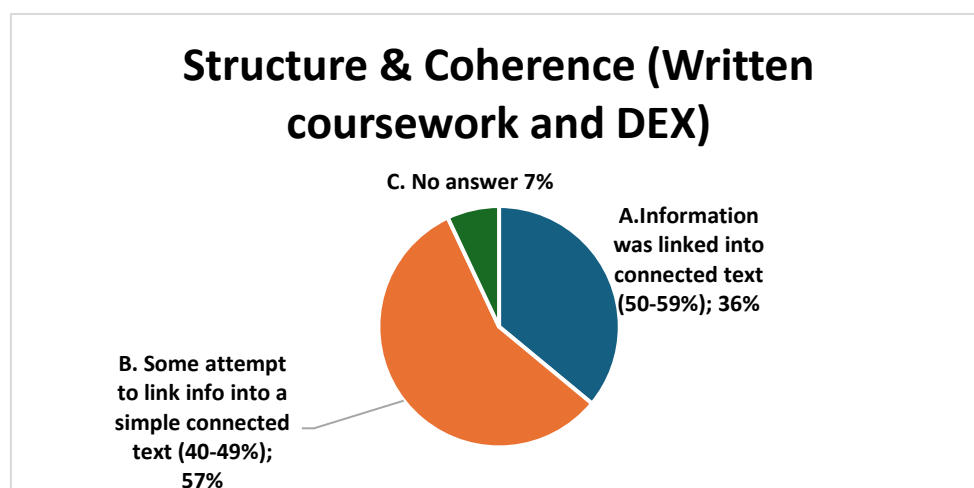


### 3.2.5 Structure & Coherence (Resit written coursework and DEX resit)

This category looks at the organization within the written text or paragraphs, focusing on logical sequencing, consistency, and coherence. Figure 8 summarizes students' awarded Structure & Coherence level for written and online oral resit assessment. The information of 5 (36%) out of 14 students was linked into connected text (50-59%). The sentence sequence of 8 (57%) out of 14 students lacked logic (40-49%). One student did not attempt the writing part of the resit, who was awarded 17.

**Figure 8**

*Students awarded Structure & Coherence level*



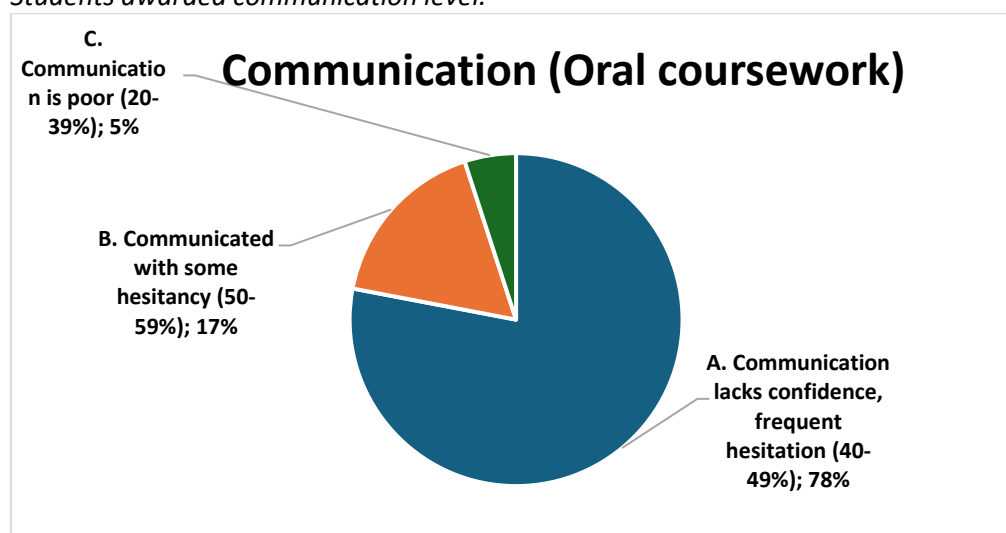
### 3.2.6. Communication (Oral coursework resit)

This category is only used for oral coursework which assesses students' communicative competence, such as hesitations, confidence, pronunciation, mispronunciation, and interaction.

Figure 9 summarizes students' awarded communication level for online oral resit assessment. Fourteen (78%) out of 18 students lacked confidence (40-49%) in their communication category. This is the expected outcome as students missed opportunities to practice communication with their peers in class due to low attendance. Three (17%) out of 18 students communicated with some hesitancy (50-59%). One student's communication was poor (20-39%). The majority of students had a disadvantage in this category due to low or no attendance and a lack of confidence in speaking Japanese.

**Figure 9**

*Students awarded communication level.*



#### 4. DISCUSSION

Resit assessment seems to have overt and covert purposes, which seem contradictory to each other. An example of the overt purpose of assessment is QAA's (2006) 'enabling the public (including employers), and higher education providers, to know that an individual has attained an appropriate level of achievement' (para. 12) which applies to the purpose of resit. On the other hand, a covert purpose of resit is summarized by 'hitting the ground running for the next year' (Proud, 2015). Two recent examples of covert purposes that have been practiced at university are given, one is by students in resit and the other is by a member of university staff. As for the first example, the students who write their text partly or wholly in their first language, use IME and OT in the Japanese language resit, pass the module, and are considered to attain an appropriate level of achievement even though students assessed work is not the students. Another example is an e-mail from a staff member in the foundation year department to a foundation year student at the University in 2023. Before this foundation year student took a resit, the staff gave this student the following advice:

*"Since passing your semester 1 Japanese Ab Initio module is not a requirement for your chosen year 1 course, and you have passed 90 credits in your Foundation Year overall (and have an average mark for the year of more than 40%), it will be possible for you to progress into year 1 without passing your language module."*

It is not, however, possible for you to progress without engaging with the module in some way. Since you did not submit either assessment in semester 1, you have a mark of 0% for the module, which the exam board cannot condone. *If you were to attempt you resit and achieve a mark of 1% or more for the module overall, the resit exam board would be able to condone the credit for this module and allow you to progress into year one of your chosen course.*

If you do not attempt the resits for this module, it may not be possible for you to progress into year 1." In the e-mail, the university staff tells the student that he will pass the module if he attempts the take the resit and obtain more than 1%. This e-mail explains why one student in this study did not attempt the essay question as they knew that they would pass or receive more than a mark of 1% by attempting the grammar and vocabulary questions.

For the covert purpose of resit, it is proposed that the marker marks on 'Canvas Turnitin' and 'Speed Grader' and records the results in either a 'fail or pass' format without involving the language administration staff as the current resit assessments process involves a marker and administration staff at the Language Department at the University. This proposal is for the following two reasons: firstly, due to the pedagogical issues, and secondly, due to the resit workload and efficacy. As for the first pedagogical issue, any students who passed the resit for the covert purpose of assessment mentioned above can continue studying Japanese Intermediate level in the following year without Japanese Ab Initio knowledge and with no attendance. In the resit, students may have committed an offense in the sense that the work which they are submitting is theirs, but could not be truly said to be theirs in totality. This is pedagogically unacceptable. Another pedagogical issue may be summarized as "a translation produced with no students' intellectual input is a waste of the teacher's time to correct it" (Somers et al., 2006,).

The second reason is the workload and efficacy, which relates to RQ3 (How could we improve the process of resit efficiency at the University language department?). The current language resit marking process at the University is labor-intensive as the resit workload involves both teaching staff and administrative staff. The Japanese teaching staff sets the DEX resit, marks using 'Canvas Turnitin' and 'Speed Grader', writes feedback comments on 'Canvas Turnitin' and 'Speed Grader', awards the rubric for five categories as well as students' final marks between 0 and 100%, and finally records students' marks onto the University records and information system which is the central website used by students and staff. After that, the administrative staff in the language department makes changes to the University records and information system to record into a 'pass or fail' format. It is suggested to review and streamline the resit process where the marker marks and records into a 'fail or pass' format without involving language administration staff. Proud (2015) rightly points out as follows:

*"Resits alone do not have any significant effect on students' outcomes. This raises the question of whether it is efficient to require students to experience a further examination, which would need to be marked, and the cost of man hours*

*related to this; why not merely allow the students to demonstrate that they have achieved the level of attainment required through a less labor-intensive method?"*

Firstly, a language teacher who is also a marker can easily find the gap between students' performance in class and the submitted assessment work. One in three language teachers finds it easy to spot students' plagiarized work (Alonso, 2022) if they know the student's average performance in class, or when the style of writing differs significantly from that of the rest of the text and what is expected from them.

Secondly, the lower language level is another pointer. Previous studies suggest a link between OT and lower language learners. Somers et al., (2006) argue the excessive reliance on OT by lower proficiency learners. Alonso (2022) expresses a similar view that lower-level students are more likely to use unauthorized OT in online assessments. Cancino & Panes (2021) claim that ambiguous sentences produced by OT are not adequately tackled by lower language proficiency learners. Valijärvi & Tarsoly (2019) assert that the use of Google Translate by beginner students may affect their purpose of learning in the area of analytical skills. It is not only the development of analytical skills that is hindered, but also critical thinking skills, independent working, and presentation skills (in oral assessment) may be hindered, all of which are considered employability skills that language learning may be able to offer to undergraduate students.

Lastly, grammar structure and vocabulary beyond the level is another indicator. Alonso (2022) maintains that "spotting usage of advanced structures or register outside their remit" and warns that it is suspicious if lower-level students' text were too accurate generally. Previous studies indicate that the overall grammar and lexical quality of L2 writing was increased when an OT was used to assist the process of writing (Garcia & Peña, 2011; Cancino & Pane, 2021).

Including kanji beyond their level indicates that students rely heavily on IME function. Students' use of IME may be considered 'collusion' in that students work together with or 'plagiarism' in that use of IME is the work of other people, i.e. IME, and the act of representing the ideas or discoveries of another as one's own in written work submitted for assessment.

Japanese markers can use a list of kanji as one of the indicators that students have relied on the IME function in their written assessment. For this reason, it is very important to provide a list of kanji for the students to master. This list of kanji is also expected for the students to include in their coursework to demonstrate their kanji knowledge. The list of kanji is set at each level as it becomes evidence of students' use of IME and plagiarism. If students use beyond the expected kanji range, it is considered that students have heavily relied on IME and academic misconduct. For example, students are not expected to include any kanji in the Ab Initio A written assessment as they have not been introduced to this language level. As for the Ab initio B-level assessment, students are expected to include 100 kanji. In the Intermediate level assessment, students are expected to include a total of 250 kanji for the Intermediate A written assessment, while students are expected to include a total of 450 kanji for the Intermediate B written assessment.

Students are informed that they do not need to demonstrate their kanji ability by using beyond their level. Even if they did, they do not receive any credit for including advanced kanji. In addition, students' incorrect choice of kanji also indicates that students have heavily relied on IME. Choosing the wrong kanji obscures the meaning of a sentence or even changes the meaning of a sentence. For these reasons, it is reasonable to consider that IME may be one of the main indicators of Japanese language academic misconduct.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This section concludes by summarizing the 3 RQs of this study as conclusions. RQ1 asks if online written and oral resits are easier than those of sitting. The written coursework resit is not easier than the sit exam. However, oral resit coursework may be much easier than the original oral coursework. Resit DEX is not easier than sit exam. It is possible to say that it is more advantageous for students to take resit oral assessment than written assessment and DEX both sit and resit.

RQ2 asks if the University's Japanese language resit examination results are reliable. Students' resit results may not be reliable in that students use OT and IME in their assessment and the text produced by this technology is not the students' work.

RQ3 asks if we could improve the process of resits to be more effective at the University language department. This was discussed in the Discussion section and it was suggested that the marker marks and records the results in either 'fail or pass' format without involving the language administration staff. It is recommended to review this process and streamline it.

The limitation of this study is the number of participants. The total number of participants in this study was 32 which is a relatively small sample size. It was not feasible to increase the size of the sample in the empirical study, as this was the maximum resit number of students. The total number of participants in the study limits the generalizability of the conclusions drawn from the results. Nonetheless, it may be possible to draw some conclusions about the specific sample population.

Recommendations in this paper are given to Japanese language teachers on the awareness of students' academic misconduct in Japanese online language assessment. The first half of this section discusses academic misconduct indicated related to OT while the latter part discusses the IME.

**Conflict of interest:** No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Ethical Approval:** The study adheres to the ethical guidelines for conducting research.

**Funding:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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