

Factors Affecting Japanese University Students' Choice of Their Major Second Foreign Languages



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Second foreign language (FL2) in Japan

First foreign language (FL1)

- No choice but English
- From Secondary 1 (- 2010), Primary 5 (2011-2019), Primary 3 (2020-)

Second foreign language (FL2)

- Students can choose
- A compulsory subject at most universities
- Offered as major at some universities (incl. TUFS)

This talk

1. Report the results of a questionnaire survey
 - Factors affecting students' choice of their major FL2s
 - Relationship between students' learning experiences and their self-assessment of the motivation level
2. Share our own experiences

Questionnaire survey

- 4th week of Semester 1 (April 2018)
- 373 Respondents
 - Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS): 348
 - Takushoku University: 25
- 35 items
 - 5-level Likert scale: 33
 - Numerical: 2
 - Descriptive: 1

TUFS respondents (348)

- School of Language and Culture Studies (337)
 - 1st Year: 322
 - 2nd Year: 12
 - 3rd Year: 2
 - 4th Year: 1
- School of International and Area Studies (11)
 - 1st Year: 7, Malay major
 - 2nd Year: 4, English major
- Chose a major language from 27 languages when they applied

27 major languages at TUFSS

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. English (36) | 10. Mongolian (8) | 19. Vietnamese (7) |
| 2. German (23) | 11. Japanese (20) | 20. Khmer (5) |
| 3. Polish (6) | 12. Chinese (25) | 21. Burmese (6) |
| 4. Czech (5) | 13. Korean (11) | 22. Urdu (9) |
| 5. French (26) | 14. Indonesian (8) | 23. Hindi (9) |
| 6. Italian (16) | 15. Malay (13) | 24. Bangla (6) |
| 7. Spanish (34) | 16. Tagalog (7) | 25. Arabic (10) |
| 8. Portuguese (12) | 17. Thai (1) | 26. Persian (6) |
| 9. Russian (27) | 18. Lao (5) | 27. Turkish (6) |

Takushoku U. respondents (25)

- Faculty of International Studies
 - 1st Year: 14
 - 2nd Year: 10
 - 4th Year: 1
- All Malay major
- Chose Malay from 11 languages after the language orientation in the first week

11 major languages at Takushoku University

1. Arabic
2. Indonesian
3. Korean
4. Spanish
5. Thai
6. Chinese
7. Hindi
8. Tagalog
9. Brazilian Portuguese
10. Vietnamese
11. Malay

A. Why did you choose your major language?

Experience: I had...

1. been to a country where the language is spoken.
2. studied in a country where the language is spoken.
3. had a chance to communicate with someone who speaks the language.

Interest: I was interested in...

4. the culture of a country where the language is spoken.
5. the politics and economy of a country where the language is spoken.
6. the language itself (scripts, sound, grammar, etc.).

A. Why did you choose your major language?

Practical benefits: I thought the language...

7. would be useful for my future career.
8. was an internationally important language.

In relation to others:

9. Many people learn the language.
10. Few people learn the language.
11. I thought I would be able to get in if I chose the language.
12. My parents, secondary school teachers or friends recommended the language.

Other:

13. Free description.

5-level Likert scale

5

Strongly
agree

4

Somewhat
agree

3

Neither
agree nor
disagree

2

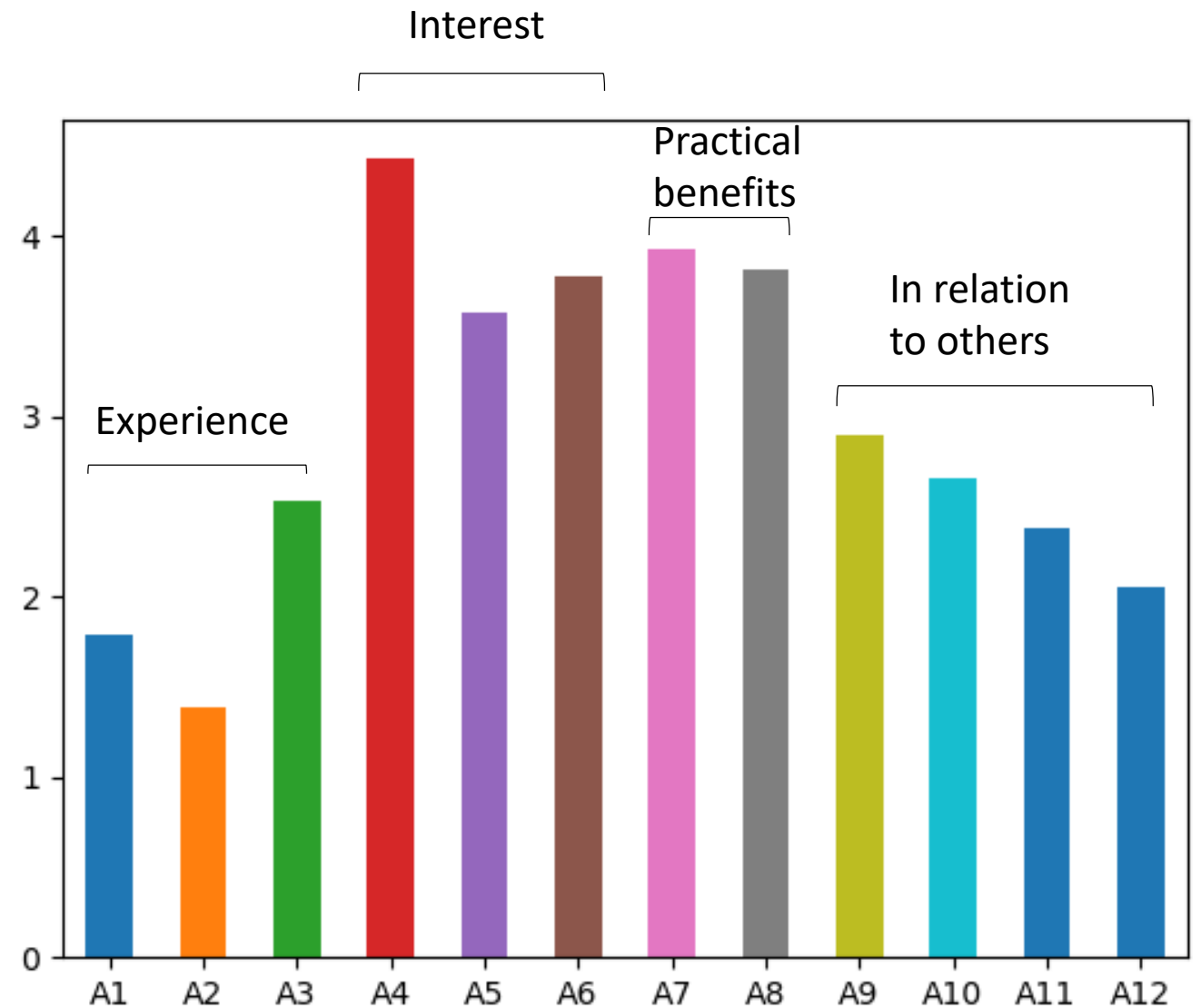
Somewhat
disagree

1

Strongly
disagree

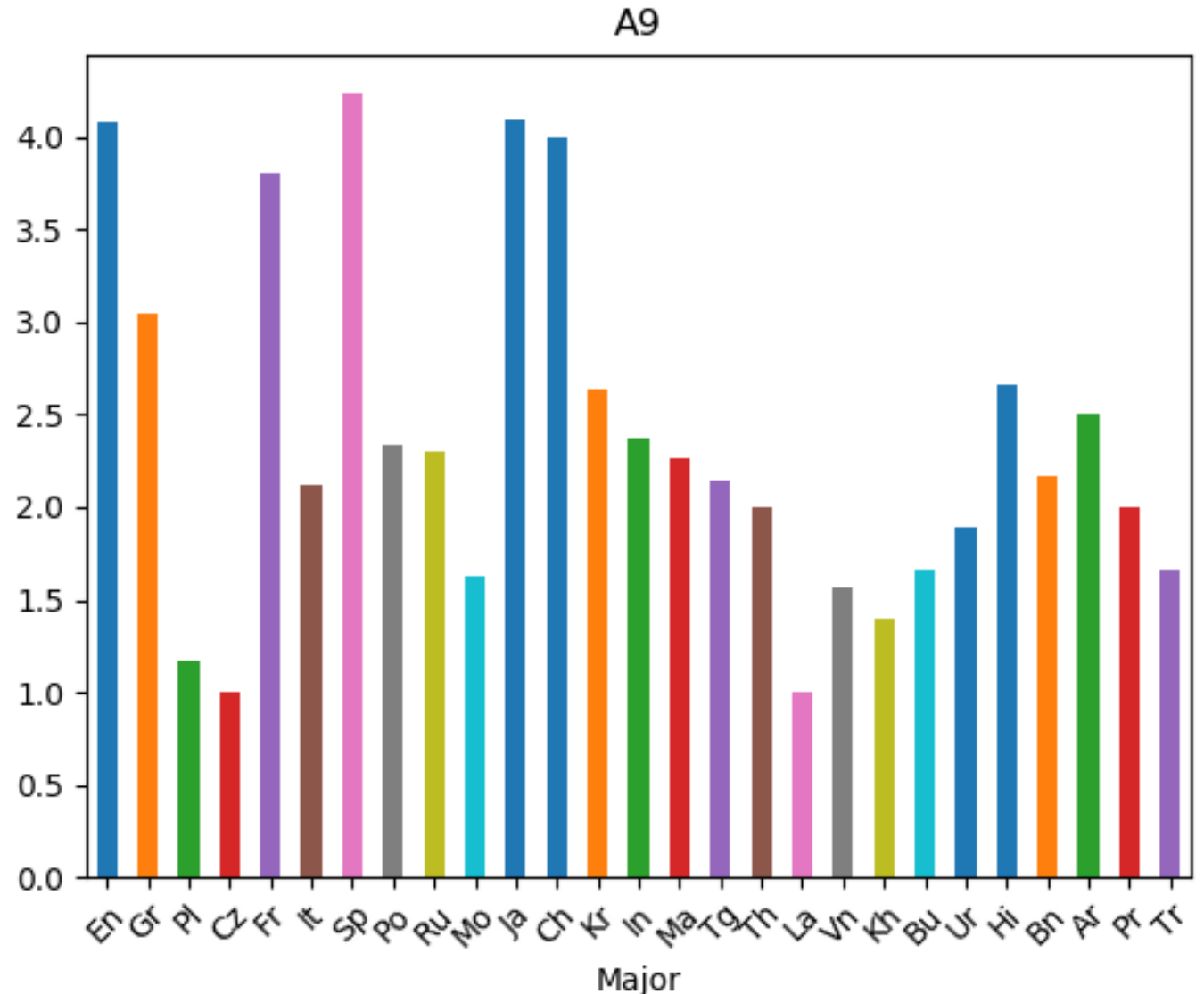
Results (A)

- Interest and practical benefits are important factors.
- Cultural interest (A4) is especially important (M 4.43, SD .85).
- Past experiences do not affect the choice very much.



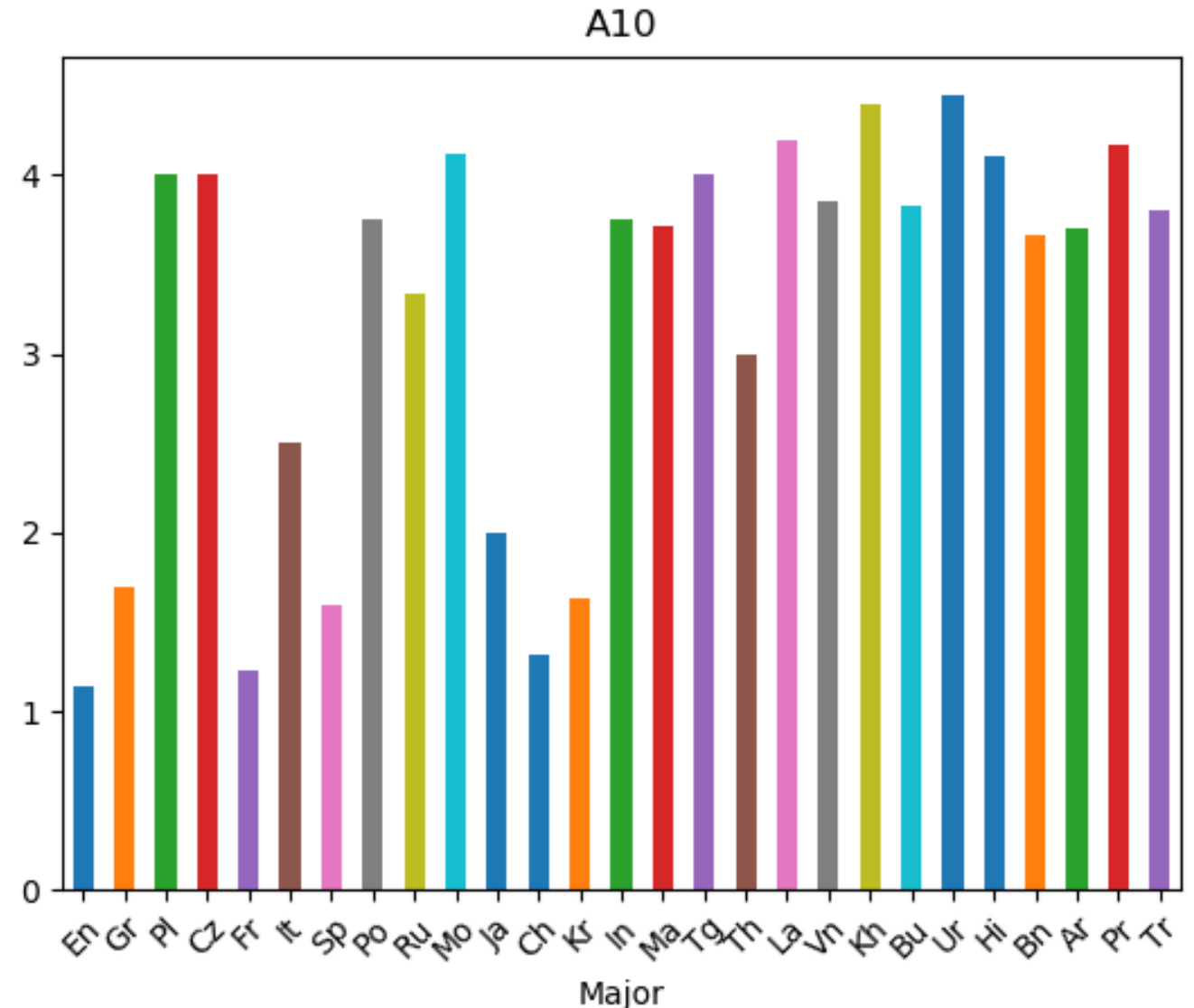
Results (A9, A10)

- The number of other people who learn a language seems to affect the choice.
- Except Italian and Korean
- Large learner population
→ High means for A9
- Small learner population
→ High means for A10



Results (A9, A10)

- The number of other people who learn a language seems to affect the choice.
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A13 (1)

German

- I was interested in German **philosophy**.
- I used to live in Germany.
- My **favourite voice actor/actress** was from Germany, and I studied about him/her and got interest in German.
- I like German **football**.
- Because German is **cute**.

Polish

- I was a little interested in Polish **cities and history**.

Czech

- Czech is only used in the Republic of Czech.

French

- **Yearning**.
- I **want to visit** France.
- I **want to travel** to France.

Italian

- I like Italian **history**.
- Italian **food** is yummy.
- A secondary school teacher I respected talked about Italian from time to time.
- **Spelling** corresponds to pronunciation.
- Italian is relatively **easy** to learn.

A13 (2)

Spanish

- I was interested in **football**.
- **Football**.
- I am interested in the **painter** Salvador Dali.
- The pronunciation sounds **cool**.
- I was interested in Spanish **history**.

Portuguese

- The **scenery** I watched on TV was beautiful.

Russian

- Someday I **want to visit** Russia, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.
- I was interested in **outer space**.

- My Centre Test score wasn't good.
- I was interested in **trill sounds**.
- I was into Russian **pop music**.
- I thought Russia has a good **food** culture.
- I had studied Russian by myself.

Mongolian

- A secondary school teacher of mine was a graduate of TUFSS's Mongolian studies programme.
- My Centre Test score wasn't good, and I thought Mongolian was a safe choice.

A13 (3)

Chinese

- I wanted to improve the Japan-China relationship.
- I started to be skeptical about how Japanese media reports about China.
- I wanted to talk to Chinese people, without regard to national and political relationship.
- I have Chinese blood but could not speak Chinese.

Korean

- I like **K-Pop**.

Indonesian

- I love Indonesia.
- I found my friend who studied in Malaysia

speaking Malay cool.

- I have lived in Indonesia.
- My mother's advice.

Malay

- I thought Malay was an **easy** language.
- I thought Malay was **easier** to learn than other languages.
- I was interested in **Southeast Asia**.

Tagalog

- I wanted to study English hard.
- The Philippines is an English-speaking country.
- A secondary school teacher of mine was a graduate of TUFS's Philippines studies programme.

A13 (4)

Thai

- I was interested in beautiful **temples**.

Lao

- I studied about Laos and was attracted by its rich **nature** and **relaxed atmosphere and people**.
- I want to explore **Mekong River** and **forests**.

Urdu

- I thought Urdu had a broad utility.
- I like **camels**.

Hindi

- It seems impossible to teach yourself Hindi.
- Hindi has many speakers.
- Because I do **yoga**.

- I was interested in India.

Arabic

- Because Arabic is a **difficult** language.

Persian

- I thought Persian was necessary to understand the **Mesopotamia civilization**.

Turkish

- I found it attractive that Turkey belongs to both the **Asian and European** continents and both **cultures are mixed** there.
- I like Spain and Turkey in the **early modern period**.

E. Tell us about your learning experiences of your major language so far.

Learning conditions: I am satisfied with...

1. the curriculum.
2. classes by native speaker teachers.
3. classes by non-native speaker teachers.

Feelings towards teachers: I have favourable feelings towards...

4. native speaker teachers.
5. non-native speaker teachers.

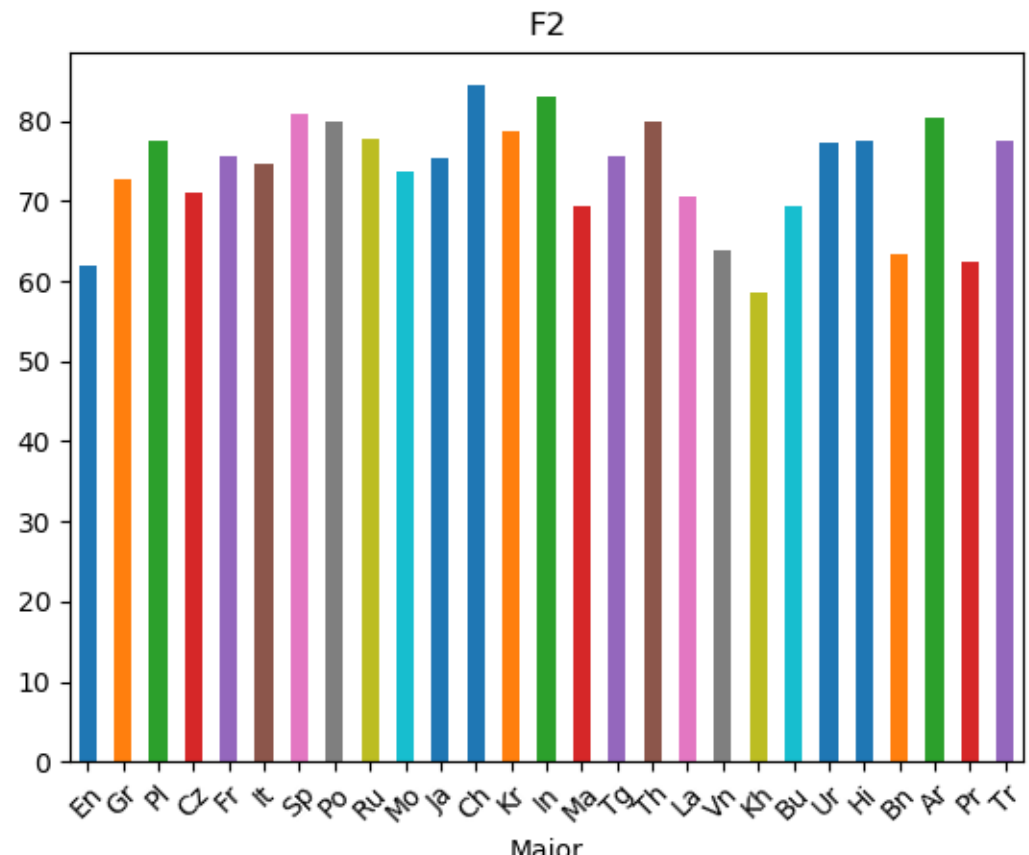
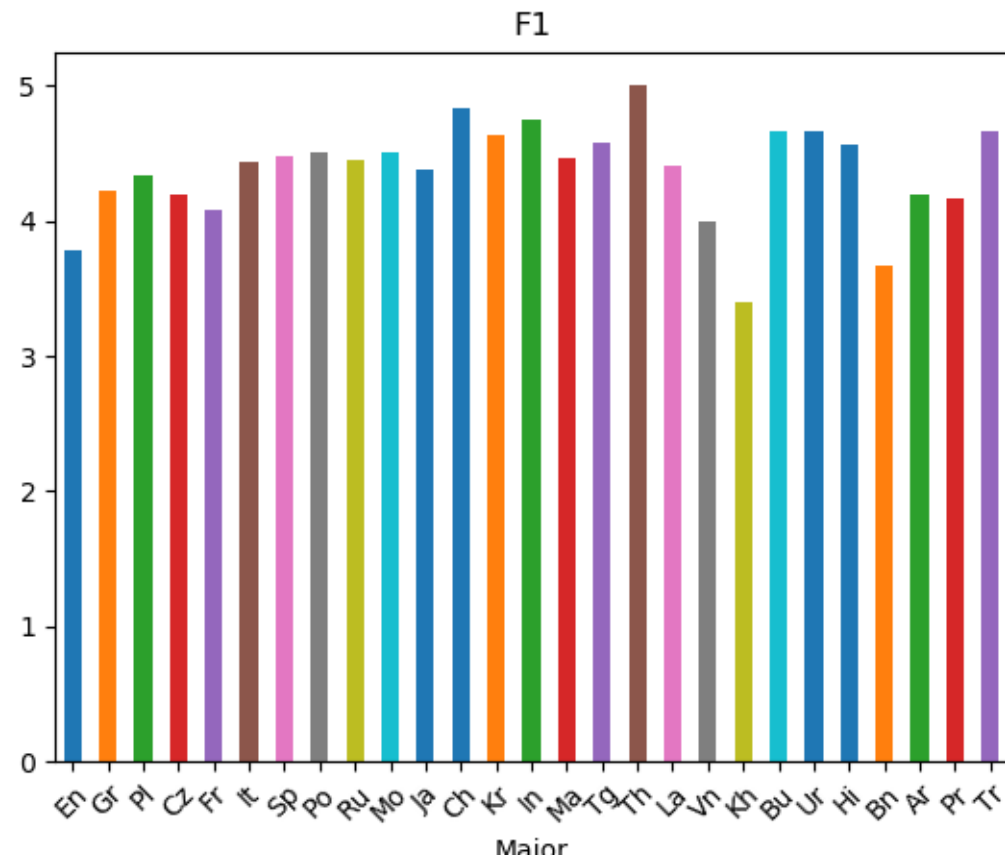
Others:

6. My classmates study hard.
7. It is hard to learn the language.
8. It is fun to learn the language.

F. Tell us how motivated you are to learn your major language.

1. My motivation has increased compared to before entrance to the university.

2. Self-assessment: ____ / 100



Learning experiences and change in motivation level

Moderate positive correlation

- E1: I am satisfied with the curriculum. ($r = .47$)
- E8: It is fun to learn the language. ($r = .50$)

Weak positive correlation

- E2: I am satisfied with classes by native speaker teachers. ($r = .39$)
- E3: I am satisfied with classes by non-native speaker teachers. ($r = .37$)
- E4: I have favourable feelings towards native speaker teachers. ($r = .37$)
- E5: I have favourable feelings towards non-native speaker teachers. ($r = .37$)
- E6: My classmates study hard. ($r = .23$)

Learning experiences and self-assessed motivation level

Moderate positive correlation

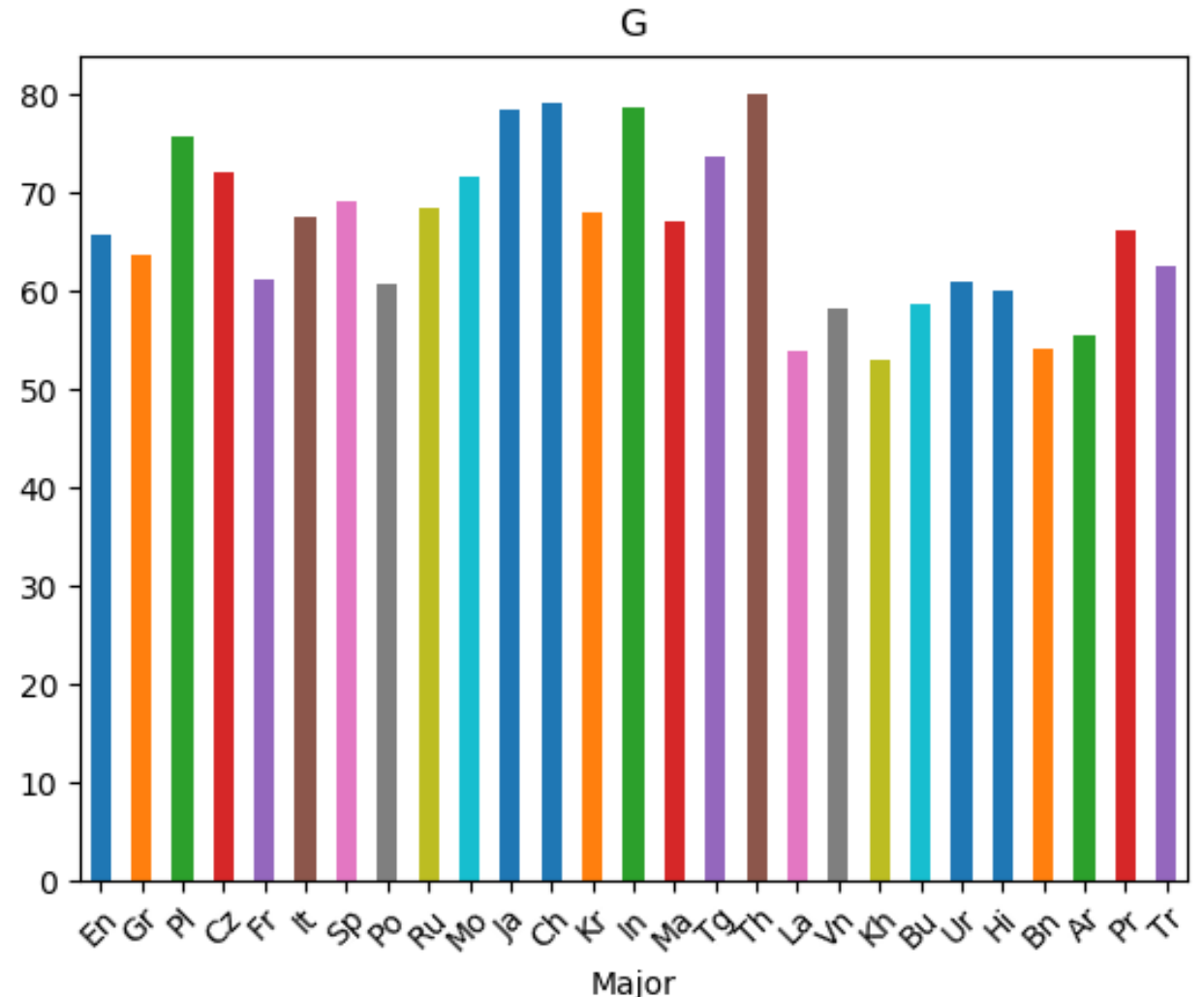
- E8: It is fun to learn the language. ($r = .46$)

Weak positive correlation

- E1: I am satisfied with the curriculum. ($r = .33$)
- E2: I am satisfied with classes by native speaker teachers. ($r = .33$)
- E3: I am satisfied with classes by non-native speaker teachers. ($r = .21$)
- E4: I have favourable feelings towards native speaker teachers. ($r = .28$)
- E5: I have favourable feelings towards non-native speaker teachers. ($r = .21$)

G. Tell us how well you understand your major language classes.

- Self-assessment: ___ / 100
- Motivation and understanding levels:
Moderate positive correlation with self-assessed motivation level ($r = .49$)



Our own experiences

Nomoto

- 8 years' experience of teaching Malay @ TUFS, Waseda

Faridah

- 28 years' experience of teaching Malay @ TUFS, Takushoku and other universities, a couple of private language schools



Why choose Malay?: What some students tell us (1)

- Because their senior students and secondary school teachers recommended Malay.
- Not a strong factor according to our questionnaire survey.
- But some respondents did note something to this effect:
 - A secondary school teacher I respected talked about Italian from time to time. (Italian)
 - A secondary school teacher of mine was a graduate of TUFSS's Mongolian studies programme. (Mongolian)
 - A secondary school teacher of mine was a graduate of TUFSS's Philippines studies programme. (Tagalog)
 - My mother's advice. (Indonesian)

Why choose Malay?: What some students tell us (2)

- Because they have lived in Malaysia/Singapore (for their parents' work) or visited there on school trips.
- Not a strong factor according to our questionnaire survey.
- But indeed, in recent years, more than a half of our new students have visited/stayed in Malaysia/Singapore before.
- From our questionnaire survey:
 - I used to live in Germany. (German)
 - I have lived in Indonesia. (Indonesian)

What motivates students' learning

From our experience, students get most motivated when they get someone to communicate with in Malay.

- Study abroad
 - Friends
 - Sometimes we see a very dramatic change in a student's motivation level.
- Part-time job (in Japan)
 - Helping Malaysian students in Japan
- Study tour (end of 1st year, 2-3 weeks, led by Faridah every year)
 - Host family members
 - Local students at schools/universities they visited



PROGRAM KELUARGA ANGKAT PELAJAR-PELAJAR TOKYO UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES KERJASAMA KERAJAAN NEGERI KEDAH DAN INSTITUT KAJIAN INDONESIA, THAILAND DAN SINGAPURA (UUM-ITS)

Study Tour 2018
Kedah, Malaysia