

NIHONGO LANGUAGE SKILLS AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR ALUMNI STUDENTS ON BESTLINK COLLEGE OF THE PHILIPPINES

ABSTRACT

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The hospitality industry increasingly emphasizes the need for foreign language proficiency, particularly Nihongo, in its curriculum to enhance communication skills. By learning Nihongo, hospitality students are better equipped to interact with Japanese-speaking guests, facilitating smoother and more enjoyable customer experiences. Integrating Nihongo into hospitality programs prepares students to meet the demands of a globalized service industry and increases their employability in competitive sectors such as hotels, cruise lines, and airlines. This study explored the role of Nihongo language skills as a competitive advantage among alumni of the Hospitality Management program at Bestlink College of the Philippines. The respondents included alumni with current or past experience in the hospitality industry. Data were gathered using an online survey administered via Google Forms. A snowball sampling technique was applied, starting with 30 participants who were asked to share the survey with other eligible alumni in their network. The results indicated that a significant majority of respondents encountered challenges during their internships or employment in the hospitality sector. Participants frequently cited issues related to knowledge gaps, time constraints, verbal and written communication, career opportunities, cultural awareness, and job-related stress. Notably, alumni who lacked Nihongo language skills were more likely to experience communication difficulties, particularly when interacting with Japanese-speaking clients or supervisors. These challenges highlighted the value of language proficiency as a means of improving workplace integration and career mobility. The study underscores the importance of Nihongo language skills as a competitive edge for hospitality graduates. Respondents who were proficient in Nihongo reported fewer communication barriers and greater confidence in their professional roles. Challenges faced by alumni with limited language skills suggest a clear link between language training and workplace performance. The findings further suggest that continuous practice, such as watching Japanese-language films and engaging in regular pronunciation exercises, can help alumni improve their language competence and reduce job-related stress.

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