Research Article

The Utilization of The "Tsutaeru Hatsuon" Online Media in Learning Japanese Accents and Intonations

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Abstract

This study reveals the analysis of the online media's role, "Tsutaeru Hatsuon", to improve Japanese language learners in mastering and to apply Japanese phonetics, especially in accents and intonation. This study uses primary data in the form of respondents' answers to questions in the website "Tsutaeru Hatsuon", which was conducted twice, namely pre-test and post-test, and secondary data in the form of responses questionnaires. Respondents in this study were 64 Japanese language education students at Semarang State University, class of 2019. The results showed that the post-test scores increased than the pre-test scores. In Japanese intonation material, respondents who answered questions correctly on all questions increased by 23%, while in accent material, respondents who answered questions correctly on all questions increased by 31%. Thus, it can be concluded that there is an improvement in the respondent's ability to understand Japanese intonation and accent after using the "Tsutaeru Hatsuon" website. According to respondents, the questionnaire answers showed that the website "Tsutaeru Hatsuon" is easy to understand and use. Moreover, the material is easy to understand, and the explanation is very detailed, which is equipped with sound files and learning videos. It is beneficial for learners to be able to understand Japanese accents and intonations directly.

Keywords: accent, intonation, Japanese, online media, tsutaeru hatsuon

1. Introduction

Japanese language learning has so far neglected the phonetic aspects so that Japanese learners have limited knowledge of Japanese phonetics. However, several phoneticians and phonologists from both Japan and Indonesia, such as Kashima (2002), and Nayoan (2012), Hernawati (2015 and 2016), argued that there were problems with Japanese pronunciation. Those problems are consonant sounds, intonations, accents, and others carried out by Japanese language learners in Indonesia.

In Japanese, accent and intonation are essential when communicating because the accent is one of the determinants of word meaning. Intonation is one of the determinants of meaning at the sentence level. Saito (2009) argues that an accent is a rule related to the pitch and stress that exist in each language. Kashima (2002) explains that in Japanese, the accent is related to linguistic and non-linguistic information. Language information is divided into 2, which functions to distinguish semantically and syntactically. Accent distinguishes

semantically such as in words *"owari"* (尾張, place name) and *"owari"* (終わり, finished). Both examples have the same pronunciation but differ in meaning.

The accent which differentiates syntactically can be found in the word *"kyouiku"* (教育, education) and the phrase *"kyou iku"* (今日行く). In this case, the accent distinguishes the word *"Kyouiku"* as a word and *"kyou iku"* as a sentence. Besides, Kashima reveals that accent in Japanese is broadly divided into *Atama daka gata* (high accent pattern at the beginning), *Naka daka gata* (high accent pattern in the middle; applies to words which have more than three *mora*), *Odaka gata* (high accent pattern at the end) and *heiban gata* (flat accent pattern). Kashima (2002) defines intonation as changes in the level of sound at the sentence level. Based on the type, intonation in Japanese is divided into ascending intonation (used when asking 「食べる？」 (*Taberu*?) marked with 「↗」), intonation which does not increase (used when answering questions, for example for 「食べる？」 question then the answer is 「うん、食べる」 (*Un, taberu*) marked with 「→」), descending intonation) is used when responding to a statement, usually accompanied by a feeling of slight shock, marked with a down arrow 「↘」), flat intonation (for example: when pronouncing 「ちょっとすみませんが」, the 「が」 particle is pronounced with the same level of height as the previous word, marked with 「…」). The overall intonation pattern is used in pronouncing 「おめでとうございます」. This word is pronounced as one unit with the same intonation. In this case, the whole sentence will be pronounced in a high tone during a happy situation, and vice versa. The whole sentence can be pronounced in a low tone during an unhappy situation. However, the pitch and stress in the Indonesian language do not differentiate meaning at both the word and the sentence level. Marsono (2006) states that when the speaker says "I read a book" in both high and low tones, it does not differentiate between meaning. Likewise, regarding stress (emphasis), in the Indonesian language, stress does not have a function as a meaning differentiator. However, it has a role to show the intent or desire of the speaker.

Therefore, it can be understood that the concepts of accent and intonation in Japanese and Indonesian are different. This matter is the reason which causes Indonesian Japanese learners have difficulties in understanding Japanese accent and intonation. Consequently, learning Japanese phonetics is needed to overcome these problems by using the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"*. The website *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* is a website developed by *Waseda University* Japan, created for Japanese learners who want to learn Japanese pronunciation in a fun way. The material on the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is in the form of intonation, accent, rhythm, syllable, and voice (voiced and voiceless) in Japanese. It is equipped with audio and video lessons, and the explanation for each existing material complements some exercises. Several studies show the effectiveness of using online media in language learning, including research conducted by Amel Jassim Khalaf (2018).

Amel conducted research entitled "The Effectiveness of Using the Internet in TEFL Learning" through interviews and questionnaires to 150 students and 5 TEFL trainers in Kuwait. The results of his research show that using the internet positively impacts the effectiveness of English learning and TEFL courses. It also reveals that speed, availability, affordability, easiness and other factors are

advantages of the internet. Besides, there is another research conducted by Kurniawan Sabar and Asfah Rahman (2011) entitled "The Using Web (E-Learning) In Learning Process In Briton International English School Of Makassar". The methods of obtaining the data are recording, interviewing seven informants, observing class, documenting, and studying literature. The results of the research reveal that the students obtain some values. First, the students get lots of up to date information and learning materials more easily, quickly, and clearly. Second, the students get information and learning materials in different forms of media such as text, picture, and video, making them attractive. Third, the student's English skills could develop, especially their reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills. Fourth, the students are more active and enthusiastic in the learning process because they participated directly in getting information and learning materials needed in the English learning process. From the two studies, it can be understood that online media has excellent benefits in language learning, improving skills and obtaining information related to language learning. Especially in today's technological era, online media cannot be separated from everyday life, including learning activities. The difference between the author's research and the previous research is the materials or the studied data. In this study, the authors examined the use of online media in studying Japanese accents and intonations.

Based on the background, the first research purpose is to find out the respondent's knowledge of Japanese accent and intonation before and after using the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"*. The second purpose is to find out the role of the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* to improve Japanese learners' ability to master and apply Japanese accents and intonations. This study is intended to describe comprehensively the benefits by using the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* in

learning Japanese accents and intonations. This study is also aimed to determine the perceptions of Japanese learners towards the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"*. The results of this study are expected to provide information regarding the role of the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* in the process of increasing the ability of Japanese language learners to master Japanese phonetic concepts, especially in terms of accents and intonations both theoretically and practically. This research is also expected to encourage the enthusiasm for further research related to Japanese phonetics and phonology.

2. Methods

This research uses quantitative and qualitative methodology. The quantitative method is used to process data in numbers to produce the percentage needed to answer the problems studied. In contrast, the qualitative method describes the meaning of the calculated numbers from the quantitative method and describes the questionnaire results. According to Johnson (2008), there are four main goals of qualitative analysis: 1) data reduction, 2) inference (generalize from a representative set of observations to a large universe of possible observation using hypothesis test, 3) discovery of relationships (find descriptive or causal patterns in data which may be described in multiple regression models or factor analysis), 4) exploration of processes that may have a basis in probability. Meanwhile, according to Given (2008), qualitative methods are best for addressing why researchers have in mind when they develop their projects. Qualitative approaches are typically used to explore new phenomena and capture individuals' thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process.

Respondents in this study were 64 students of the Japanese language education study program, Semarang State University (class 2019). There were 25 male

respondents and 39 female respondents. All respondents took the *"Nihongo no Onsei"* course in the second semester, and I was the lecturer. Thus, data collection in the form of answers and questionnaires was carried out during the lecture.

The media used in this research is the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website developed by *Waseda University* Japan. The material on the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is in the form of intonation, accent, rhythm, syllable, and material on voiced and voiceless letters in Japanese. In this study, the material will be focused on Japanese accents and intonations.

The tools used in data collection in this study are a computer connected to the internet network and headphones. Respondents were asked to answer the questions twice before introducing the "Tsutaeru Hatsuon" website, or what was called the pre-test, and after introducing the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website or that so-called post-test. The research procedures carried out at the pre-test are as follow. First, respondents were asked to access the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website and then answer the website's practice questions. It is done to determine and measure students' abilities regarding accent and intonation of Japanese before using the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website. Firstly, data collection in the form of answers to the questions on this website was carried out during the lecture. Secondly, respondents studied the material on the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website, especially regarding accents and intonation. This material was given for four meetings. After studying the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website, respondents were asked to answer the same questions again as those questions before studying the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website. This step is called answering the post-test. The post-test answers in the data collection process were carried out simultaneously with taking the questionnaire at the end of the lecture *"Nihongo no Onsei"*.

The pre-test and post-test answers from the respondents were used as primary data, while the research instrument in the form of the questionnaire was used as secondary data. The questionnaire consists of questions about Japanese accents and intonation to find out how far the respondents understand Japanese accents and intonations. The next question is about the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website to find out the benefits gained by using the website to learn Japanese accents and intonations.
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3. Result and Discussion

In this section, the analysis of the questionnaire answers will be discussed. The answers to the questions are divided into 2, namely the answers regarding intonation and the answers regarding accents.

3.1 Analysis of Question Answers

As described above, data collection in the form of answers to questions from respondents was carried out twice, namely pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was conducted when the respondents had never studied through the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website, intending to know and measure the students' abilities regarding Japanese accents and intonation before using the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website. The post-test was carried out after the respondent learned to use the website *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* to measure the students' ability after using the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website. The question is taken from the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website by clicking on the section that says 「かんたんなチェックをする」 (*Kantan na checkku o suru* is doing a simple check). It is on the initial display of the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website.

After clicking on that section, questions about the material on the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website will appear, including questions regarding intonation, accent, rhythm, syllabus, vowels and consonants, as well as voices (voiced or

voiceless), which are carried out randomly. There are two questions for each material so that in total, there are ten questions given in the written form in Japanese and equipped with audio. Questions about intonation are questions number 4 and 9; accents are number 5 and 10; about rhythm are numbers 2 and 7; about vowels and consonants are number 3 and 8; and about voices are number 1 and 6.

Respondents must click on the loudspeaker icon to the right of a question to hear audio about that question. There are two answers provided, and the respondent needs to choose which one of the two answers is correct. After answering the questions on the screen, the respondents click the sign to the next question.

When all the questions have been answered thoroughly, the answer sheet will appear. If the answer is correct, then the answer sheet will appear in a circle. However, if there is a wrong answer, then the wrong answer will be marked with a cross. Respondents can check which part is wrong by clicking on the cross sign. Therefore, they can learn about the correct answer and its detailed explanation by clicking on the word 「べんきょうす

る」 (*Benkyoo suru*; Learning) which is to the right of the circle or cross in each of the questions.

3.1.1 Results of Answers Regarding Intonation

Questions related to intonation can be found in question number 4 and question number 9. Questions number 4 and number 9 are as follows.

Question number 4:
A: このデザインでいいですか？
Choose one!
B: ○そうですね
　○そうですね
A: 何か問題がありますか
Question number 9:
A: 小林さん、最近見ませんね
B: そういえば、今度結婚するんですよね
Choose one!
A: ○そうですか
　○そうですか
B: なんか残念そうですね

Table 1. The result of the test for the question about intonation

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
All correct	23	36%	38	59%
One incorrect	29	45%	20	31%
All incorrect	12	19%	6	9%
Total	64	100%	64	100%

Table 2. The result of the test for the question about accent

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
All correct	25	39%	45	70%
One incorrect	15	23%	12	19%
All incorrect	24	38%	7	11%
Total	64	100%	64	100%

At the time of the pre-test, of the two questions regarding Japanese intonation, 23 (36%) respondents answered correctly, 29 (45%) respondents answered incorrectly for one of the questions, and those who answered incorrectly on both questions were 12 respondents (19%). At the post-test, 38 respondents answered correctly (59%), while those who answered 1 of the questions incorrectly were 20 respondents (31%) and 6 respondents (9%) answered incorrectly for both questions. The test results can be seen in Table 1.

Based on these results, it can be understood that after using the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website, the respondents who answered the questions correctly all experienced an increase of 23%, from 36% to 59%. In comparison, those who answered correctly for one of the questions decreased by 14%, from 45 % to 31%. Respondents who answered incorrectly on both questions also decreased by 10%, from 19% to 9%. Thus, it can be concluded that the respondents' knowledge of Japanese intonation has been increased by using the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website.

3.1.2 Results of Answers Regarding Accents

Questions related to accents can be found in question number 5 and question number 10. Questions number 5 and number 10 are as follows.
Question number 5:
A: 旅行、楽しかったね
B: 時間が足りなかったね
Choose one!
B: ○いつか、また行こうね
　○いつか、また行こうね
A: え？５日？
Question number 10:
A: きのう、よっぱらちゃった
B: どのぐらい飲んだの？
Choose one!
A: ○いっぱい
　○いっぱい
B: おさけ、つよいんだ

During the pre-test, of the two questions about Japanese accents, 25 respondents answered correctly (39%), 15 respondents answered one of the questions incorrectly (23%), and 24 respondents answered incorrectly on both questions (38%). While at the post-test, 45 respondents answered correctly (70%), 12 respondents answered one of the questions incorrectly (19%) and seven respondents incorrectly on both questions (11 %). The test results can be seen in Table 2.

Based on these results, it can be understood that after using the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website, the respondents who answered the questions correctly achieved a significant increase of as much as 31%, from 39% to 70%. In contrast, the number of respondents who answered incorrectly for one of the questions decreased 4%, from 23% to 19%. The number of respondents who answered incorrectly on both questions also decreased by 27%, from 38% to 11%. Thus, it can be concluded that the respondent's knowledge of accents has increased after using the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website so that the level of accuracy in answering questions is getting higher. This finding is in line with finding the effectiveness of this website to students' intonation knowledge.

3.2 Analysis of Questionnaire Answers

The questionnaire given to respondents in this study consisted of 14 questions which were divided into four groups, namely, (1) 3 questions about Japanese accents, (2) 3 questions about Japanese intonation, (3) 3 questions about accent and intonation of Japanese, and (4) 5 questions about the website *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"*. The following section discusses each of the questions.

3.2.1 Questions about Japanese Accents

The questions about Japanese accents consist of 3 points:
Q1. Do you know the Japanese accent?

Q2. When and where did you learn Japanese accents?

Q3. What do you know about Japanese accents?

All respondents answered "yes" to Q1. The questionnaire was given at the end of the lecture, so the respondent had already gained knowledge of Japanese accents during lectures. For Q2, all of the respondents answered: "during their study at Japanese Language Education study program". Thus, before taking the *"Nihongo no Onsei"* course, the previous respondent had never known Japanese accents. Regarding Q3, the participants' answers were in line with the material about the Japanese accent that was the pitch at the word level. It was delivered during the lecture.

3.2.2 Questions about Japanese intonation

The questions about the intonation of the Japanese language consist of 3 points:

Q4. Do you know the Japanese intonation?

Q5. When and where did you learn Japanese intonation?

Q6. What do you know about Japanese intonation?

Like the question in the questionnaire about the intonation, all respondents (100%) answered "yes" to questions Q4 and answered Q5 with the same answer, which was "during lectures in the Japanese Language Education study program". Thus, before taking the *"Nihongo no Onsei"* course, the respondents had never learnt any knowledge of Japanese intonation. For Q3, the respondents' answers were following the material about intonation delivered during the lecture, in which intonation was the pitch or level of tone at the sentence level.

3.2.3 Questions about Japanese Accent and Intonation

The questions about Japanese accent and intonation consist of 3 points:

Q7. Do you think that the Japanese accent and intonation are important?

Q8. Do you need to learn Japanese accent and intonation in lectures?

Q9. Would you like to learn more about Japanese accents and intonations?

All respondents (100%) answered "yes" to questions Q7, Q8, and Q9. Thus, respondents think that accents and intonations are essential to learning, especially during lectures, because they have never learned these accents and intonations. After gaining knowledge in lectures, respondents want to learn more about Japanese accents and intonations, both in other lectures and independently.

3.2.4 Inquiries about the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* Website

The questions about the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website consist of 5 points:

Q10. Have you used the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website before?

Q11. Do you think that the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is easy to use?

Q12. Does the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website help in learning accents and intonations?

Q13. Will you use this *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website in the future?

Q14. Would you recommend this *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website to students?

All respondents (100%) answered "no" to question Q10. In other words, the respondents did not know and had never used the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website before attending the *"Nihongo no Onsei"* lecture. Then, 100% of respondents answered "yes" to Q11, Q12, Q13, and Q14. It shows that the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is easy to understand and use. The *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is also beneficial for respondents in learning and understanding Japanese accents and intonations. The material is easy to comprehend, and detailed explanations are equipped with audio files that are very useful for understanding Japanese accents and

intonations immediately. Moreover, the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is also equipped with instructional videos, so that this visual method helps learners understand the material more easily. The respondents highly recommend this *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website to Japanese learners to learn about accents and intonations in particular and other materials in general.

3.3 Discussion

Based on the research results, it can be understood that the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is beneficial for learners in learning Japanese accents and intonations. In this study, the discussion focused on Japanese accent and intonation material. However, the discussion of phonetics is not limited to accents and intonations. There are also other materials such as vowels, consonants, and rhythms. Thus, further research is needed to discuss other phonetic materials besides accents and intonation through either the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* or other media.

4. Conclusion

This research has the theme "Utilization of Online Media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* in Learning Japanese Accents and Intonation". Based on the results of the analysis described above, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, respondents did not know the Japanese accent and intonation before learning through the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"*. Thus, the respondents did not know Japanese accents and intonations, so the respondents could not master and apply Japanese accents and intonations. Second, after using the online media *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"*, respondents know Japanese accents and intonations and can master and apply Japanese accents and intonations, especially the material on the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website.

According to the respondents, the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website is easy to use,

which helps in learning Japanese accents and intonations. After studying the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website for a short period, respondents have the desire to use the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website continuously, not only in terms of learning accents and intonations, but also other Japanese phonetic learning, including rhythm, syllable, voice (sound voiced and unvoiced), and others. Besides, the respondents also desire to recommend this *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website to other Japanese learners. By learning the *"Tsutaeru Hatsuon"* website, respondents believe that Japanese accents and intonations are essential to learning, both in lectures and outside lectures (independent study). The respondents also had a desire to learn more about Japanese accents and intonations.

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