Japanese Pop Culture for Language Learning: A Quantitative Study on Motivation and Japanese Language Skills Among Japanese Language Students in Indonesia

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Abstract

This quantitative study investigates the impact of Japanese Pop Culture (JPC) on the motivation and Japanese language skills of Japanese language study program students in Indonesia. This research is based on theories about the role of pop culture in foreign language learning, especially the role of JPC in students' interest in Japanese. Questionnaires related to interest in learning Japanese, motivation to learn Japanese, activities associated with JPC outside of lectures, and improving Japanese language skills were distributed to 70 Japanese language study program students from several universities in Indonesia. The results of data analysis show that JPC plays a big role in motivating students to study Japanese and improve their Japanese language skills. Based on the questionnaire results, all respondents were interested in and liked JPC. Over half of the respondents were JPC fans before becoming Japanese language study program students. Regarding motivation to study Japanese, as many as 63% of students were motivated to become students in the Japanese language study program because they liked JPC before. More than 80% of respondents carry out JPC activities by watching anime and listening to Japanese music. Half of the respondents stated that they could get to know Japan and understand Japanese people better by consuming JPC. In contrast, more than 80% of respondents felt benefits in increasing their ability and understanding of Japanese after consuming JPC. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used as a basis or reference for further research on using JPC in Japanese language learning.

1. Introduction

The popularity of Japanese Pop Culture (from now on referred to as JPC) began with the entry of Japanese animated cartoons better known as anime into the United States market in 1961 (Iwabuchi, 2015; Klaehn, 2023). Furthermore, Europe entered anime in the 1970s due to collaboration and cooperation between European and Japanese TV stations (Oliveira, 2022). In the 1980s, Japanese anime aggressively entered the American market (Williams, 2006; Rawlins, 2014), and in the 1990s they had successfully spread throughout the world (Iwabuchi, 2015; Klaehn, 2023). After that, apart from anime, manga also simultaneously gained popularity (Gale, 2012; Hashimoto, 2018). Starting from anime and manga, in the following

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years until now, JPC products such as *Dorama* (drama series), J-Pop, J-Rock, *seiyuu* (voice artist), and even cosplay have had the same popularity throughout the world (Klaehn, 2023; Severino & Silva, 2023).

The rapid development of information technology has contributed greatly to the ease of accessing JPC products in the original Japanese version (Klaehn, 2023; Severino & Silva, 2023; Mufidah, 2024). This situation has increased JPC fans' awareness of the Japanese language, increasing their interest in studying Japanese (Armour & Iida, 2016; Imura, 2018; Djafri & Wahidati, 2020). The interest in JPC over the last two decades has contributed to an increase in Japanese language learners worldwide, especially formal learners (Toyoshima, 2013; Oliveira, 2022; Wisniawati et al., 2022). The Japan Foundation survey results (2021) show that as many as 59.9% of respondents who are formal Japanese language learners from all over the world stated that the goal and reason for studying Japanese is "interest in anime, manga, J-POP, fashion, etc.". Oliveira (2022) presents the results of research data analysis which shows that JPC is indeed one of the biggest reasons for students to study Japanese, both informally and formally (Fukunaga, 2006; Allison, 2006; Shamoon, 2010; Armor & Iida, 2014). Students who take part in formal Japanese language learning are proven to interact significantly with JPC products (Gale, 2012; Imura, 2018) so that positive Japanese language acquisition occurs with these interactions (Chan, & Wong, 2017; Han, & Ling, 2017).

Along with the growing popularity of JPC in the world, JPC's popularity in Indonesia has also experienced a significant increase, especially in the last 10 years (Hatami, 2018; Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Bangsa & Sihombing, 2022). JPC first entered Indonesia in the late 1980s by broadcasting Indonesian dubbed versions of Japanese anime and drama on national television stations (Nation & Sihombing, 2022). Starting from consuming Indonesian versions of Japanese anime and dramas, JPC fans in Indonesia can now consume various JPC products and content using Japanese (Hatami, 2018; Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Bangsa & Sihombing, 2022; Faisal, et al., 2022). Similar to the previous explanation about JPC and the reasons for world students to study Japanese, JPC is also one of the strongest reasons for Japanese language learners in Indonesia to study Japanese in formal contexts (Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Wisniawati et al., 2022; Karunia & Masrokhah, 2023). At the beginning of their appearance in Indonesia, anime and manga had a big role in introducing the Japanese language (Hatami, 2018). This was followed by the entry of other JPC products such as Dorama, J-Pop, J-Rock, and cosplay, triggering JPC fans to learn Japanese. Interaction with JPC products has a positive impact on the Japanese language learning process, including improving vocabulary skills, listening skills, and skills in understanding the context of Japanese language use (Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Aida et al., 2021; Wisniawati et al., 2022; Dipa, et al., 2023).

Quite a lot of research has been conducted on JPC and Japanese language learning, including research on JPC and motivation to learn Japanese both informally and formally through educational institutions in Europe, America, and Australia (Gale, 2012; Armour, & Iida, 2016; Imura, 2018; Osumi, 2019), JPC and its relationship to the process of accepting Japanese among Thai students (Toyoshima, 2013), as well as JPC's involvement in Japanese language learning inside and outside the classroom in Europe, America, and Asia (Williams, 2006; Han, & Ling, 2017; Wishnoebroto, Prabowo, & Jhon, 2017; Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Wisniawati et al., 2022). There are findings that state that JPC does make students want to know more about Japanese, but is not the main reason they choose to study Japanese formally at university (Gale, 2012; Imura, 2018). Even so, several research results show that Japanese motivates formal

learners to maximize their Japanese language learning activities (Osumi, 2019). About the process of accepting Japanese as a foreign language, consumption of JPC has been proven to facilitate the acceptance of Japanese among its fans who come from young people of high school and university age (Gale, 2012; Imura, 2018; Osumi, 2019;). Meanwhile, regarding JPC's involvement in the Japanese language learning process, all research shows positive results. JPC has been proven to make the atmosphere and learning process in class more interesting and enjoyable (Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Wisniawati et al., 2022). JPC as an alternative Japanese language learning media has also been proven to be able to improve students' Japanese language skills (Chan, et al., 2017; Chan, & Wong, 2017; Kusrini et al., 2021; Dewanty et al., 2022).

From the results of the research on JPC and Japanese that have been described above, there has been no research that discusses JPC as a motivation to learn Japanese, JPC products as a tool for accepting Japanese as a foreign language, and the influence of JPC on Japanese language skills specifically for university-level students in Indonesia. Therefore, the research will try to find out the portrait of Japanese Pop Culture (JPC) fans who are students of the Japanese Language study program through a description of the results of data analysis about how JPC motivates them to study Japanese formally at university, as well as what impact JPC activities have on them. do with the Japanese language acceptance process.

2.   Methods

This research is based on theories about the role of pop culture in foreign language learning, especially the role of JPC in students' interest in Japanese and acceptance of Japanese as a foreign language (Gale, 2012; Armour, & Iida, 2016; Imura, 2018). This research is quantitative research conducted by distributing questionnaires to 70 respondents who are Japanese language learners in formal institutions. Respondents consisted of students from the Japanese Language Study Program and Japanese Language Education Study Program from various classes at several universities located on the island of Java, Indonesia.

The questionnaire was given to respondents online in the form of a Google Form, containing questions related to JPC and Japanese. The questionnaire consists of 26 questions which are divided into five sections as follows.

1. Personal identity includes age, university origin, and level of Japanese language skills.
2. Respondents' interest in JPC.
3. JPC as motivation to learn Japanese.
4. JPC activities were carried out by respondents.
5. Benefits of JPC in learning Japanese.

The questionnaire results were then analyzed using MS Excel by presenting them in the form of tables, graphs, and charts. The contents of the tables, graphs, and charts are then described by linking them to the theories and previous research findings presented in the introduction section.

3.   Result and Discussion

The results of this research present data, data analysis, and descriptions of findings from questionnaires that have been filled out by 70 students of the Japanese Language Study

Program and Japanese Language Education Study Program of various generations at several universities in Indonesia. Research data and descriptions of analysis results include explanations of the following matters.

1. Portrait of Japanese language students at universities in Indonesia who are JPC fans
2. Motivation of Japanese language students at universities in Indonesia who are JPC fans to study Japanese
3. JPC activities participated in by Japanese language students at universities in Indonesia
4. The benefits felt by Japanese language students at universities in Indonesia by participating in and carrying out JPC activities.

3.1   Portrait of a Japanese Language Learner who is a JPC Fan

The profile of Japanese language students at universities in Indonesia as respondents in this research includes gender, age, level of Japanese language ability, and whether they are JPC fans. The gender of the respondents was dominated by women, namely 67.1% of the total number of respondents, and the remaining percentage were male respondents. Respondents' ages varied, ranging from 18 years (8.5%), 19 years (30%), 20 years (25.7%), 21 years (22.9%), 22 years (8.6%), and 24 years (4.2%). Due to the various ages of the students who were respondents, their Japanese language skills also varied. Variations in respondents' Japanese language skills can be seen in Figure 1. The chart in Figure 1 shows that the average respondent has Japanese language skills equivalent to the Nat test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N5 and N4. Only 1.4% of the total respondents had the highest level of Japanese language skills equivalent to the Nat test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N1.

The questionnaire results showed that 100% of respondents were Japanese language learners who were also JPC fans, and 77.1% of them had known JPC before studying Japanese at university (Figure 2). In more detail, JPC fans are divided into 5 categories as shown in Figure 3.
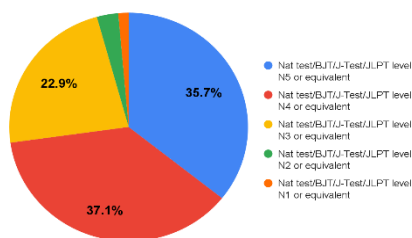

Figure 1. Variations in Japanese language ability of respondent students
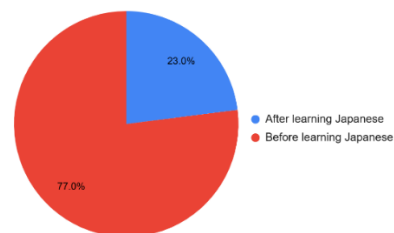
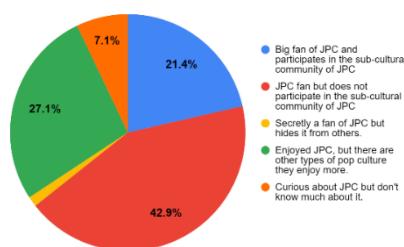

Figure 2. The time when students know JPC

Figure 3. 5 JPC fans categories.

Only 21.4% of JPC fan respondents are big fans and consider it as part of their identity by participating in sub-cultural communities such as anime clubs, manga, cosplay, fans club idols, and others. Most of them (42.9%) are fans who do not participate in the JPC sub-culture community. For fans who enjoy JPC but other types of pop culture are more enjoyed (21.4%), another pop culture that is in demand is Korean, Chinese, and Thailand pop culture.

There are interesting findings that show the relationship between the results of the JPC fan category questionnaire (Figure 3) with the Japanese language skills of respondents (Figure 1). More than 50% of JPC fan respondents who do not participate in the sub-cultural community from JPC have Japanese language skills equivalent to NAT Test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N3. Meanwhile, respondents of big fans of JPC who are actively participating in the community have Japanese language skills equivalent to NAT Test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N2. Respondents who have the highest Japanese level, the equivalent of NAT Test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N1, are fans who are curious about JPC but don't know much about it. Details of data findings related to the JPC fan category with Japanese Language Respondents can be seen in Figure 4.
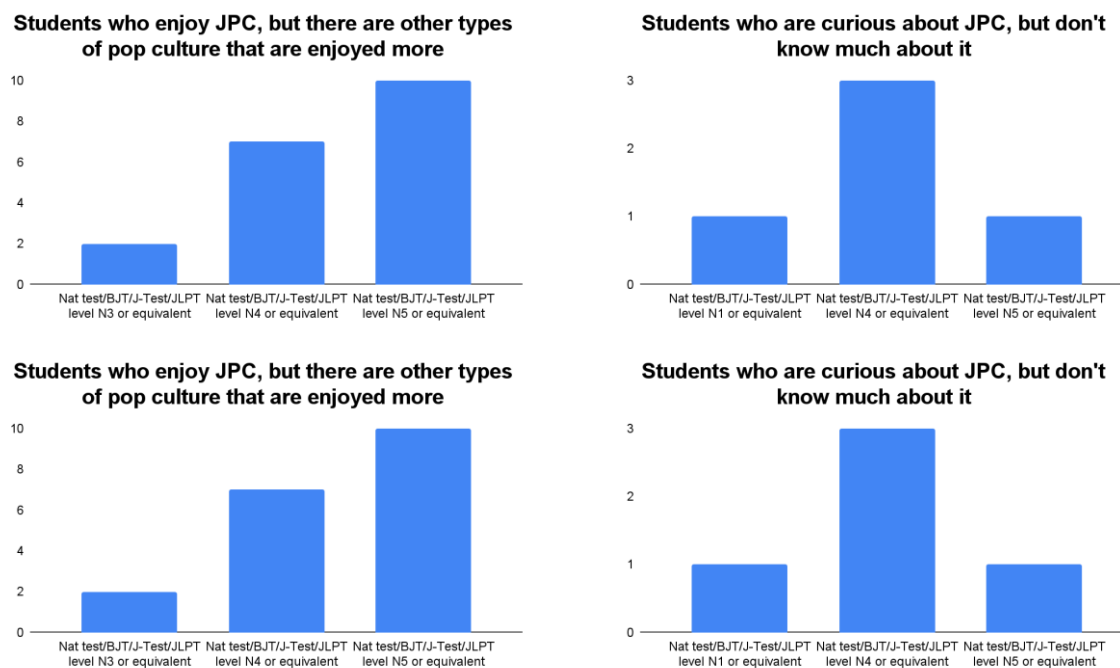

Figure 4. Relationship between the results of the JPC fan category questionnaire with the Japanese language skills of respondents

3.2   Portrait of a Japanese Language Learner who is a JPC Fan

In the results of questionnaire data about motivation to learn Japanese, respondents were asked to choose more than one thing that motivated them to learn Japanese. As a result, as many as 78% of respondents learned Japanese because they were interested in Japanese itself. Besides being interested in Japanese, respondents also learned Japanese because they wanted to travel to Japan (66%). Although all respondents are JPC fans, apparently JPC is not their biggest motivation to learn Japanese, especially Japanese at the university level. Even so, motivation related to JPC is still chosen by more than half of respondents, which is as many as 63% of respondents learn Japanese because they like JPC. Some other reasons for learning Japanese related to JPC owned by respondents include wanting to know the Japanese language in JPC (40%) and they feel that JPC is cool (34%). Some other reasons and their percentage can be seen in Figure 5.

3.3   JPC Activities Carried Out by Japanese Language Learning

Students who are fans of JPCs are mostly familiar with JPC for more than 5 years, and they have known JPC before starting to learn Japanese at universities. Most of them know JPC through internet use (48.6%) and friends' recommendations (21.4%). Only a few (2.9%) know JPC through teachers/lecturers in schools/universities through Japanese language learning materials. Details of data related to the length of time to know JPC and the beginning of knowing JPC are presented in Figure 6 and Figure 7.
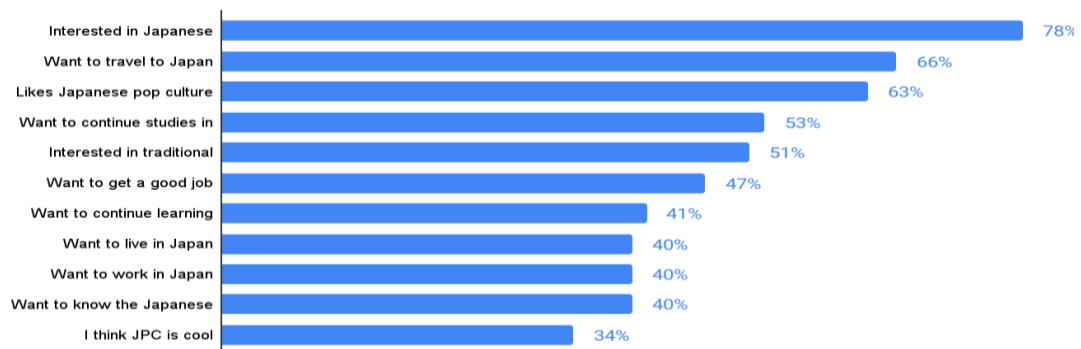

Figure 5. Relationship between the results of the JPC fan category questionnaire with the Japanese language skills of respondents.
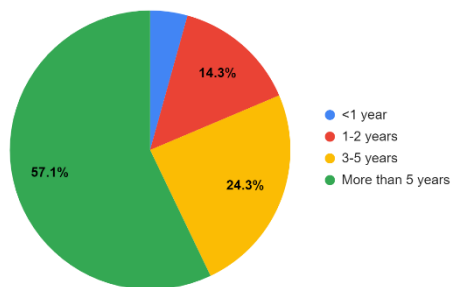

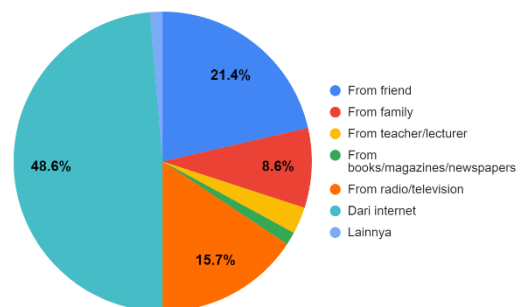Figure 6. Description of what is contained in the first panel

Figure 7. Media or people where the respondent first learned about JPC.

In the Introduction section, it was explained that the beginning of the popularity of JPC throughout the world including Indonesia was pioneered by anime and manga (Hatami, 2018; Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Nation & Sihombing, 2022). Anime and manga are still the most popular JPC products in Indonesia compared to other JPC products. However, in the results of this research questionnaire, it is known that anime and manga are not JPC products most liked by respondents. Respondents were asked to choose more than one JPC product that was liked. In Figure 8, it appears that Japanese Music is most liked by respondents (91.4%). Although anime also has a large percentage of 87.1%, manga is only liked by 65.7% of respondents. Even so, the interview results showed that Japanese Music, mostly favored by respondents, was Japanese songs originating from the Anime Original Soundtrack.

From the results of the questionnaire, it is also known what the details of respondents' activities in enjoying the JPC product they like. Details of the activity are focused on how they enjoy JPC products in terms of language. In JPC products that contain audio-visual content such as anime, Japanese music, drama/movie, detailed activity focusing on the use of dubbing and subtitles. As for JPC products in the form of visuals such as manga, light novels, and novels, detailed activity focusing on the consumption of Japanese-language versions and translation versions. This is done to find out the relationship between the JCP activities that respondents do with their ability to learn and understand Japanese.

As many as 92.9% of respondents watched anime using subtitles, both English and Indonesian subtitles. Only 4.3% of respondents who watched without subtitles, namely respondents with Japanese language skills equivalent to NAT Test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N2 and N1. Respondents stated that they chose to display subtitles because the Japanese used in anime is quite difficult, different from the Japanese language that they learned at the university. The results of the questionnaire data about anime-watching activities can be seen in Figure 9.
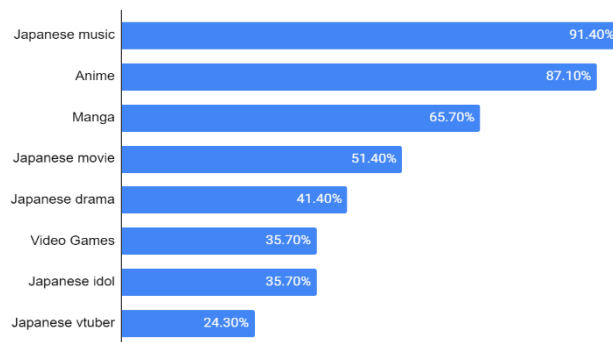

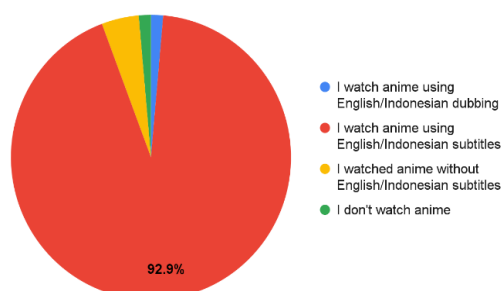Figure 8. Types of JPC products that respondents like

Figure 9. Anime-watching activity

Just like the activity of watching anime, most respondents also watch Japanese dramas/movies using English and Indonesian subtitles (77.1%). Respondents stated that the Japanese used in Japanese drama/movies are more easily understood than anime, but they still use subtitles to understand the meaning or similarity of Japanese expressions that appear in Indonesian or English. Respondents who watch dramas/movies without subtitles (4.3%) are students who have Japanese language skills equivalent to NAT Test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N2 and N1, because the use of daily Japanese in Drama/Movie will be easily understood by Japanese students who master the intermediate and upper-level Japanese. The following Figure 10 shows the results of the respondent's activity questionnaire in watching Japanese dramas/movies.

While the activity of watching anime and Japanese dramas/movies is carried out by more than 70% of respondents using subtitles, only 31.4% of respondents watch MV (Music Video) Japanese songs using subtitles. As many as 32.9% of respondents chose to watch MV Japanese songs without subtitles. The percentage of use of subtitles when watching MV Japanese songs has a considerable difference from the percentage of use of subtitles when watching anime, drama, and movies. This is because most respondents have found out or have memorized the meaning of Japanese song lyrics that they often listen to, so they feel no need to use subtitles when watching the MV. This data shows that the shorter the duration of the audio/video JPC product, the content of the content will be easily understood by students. Details of the data from watching the Japanese song MV conducted by respondents are presented in Figure 11.
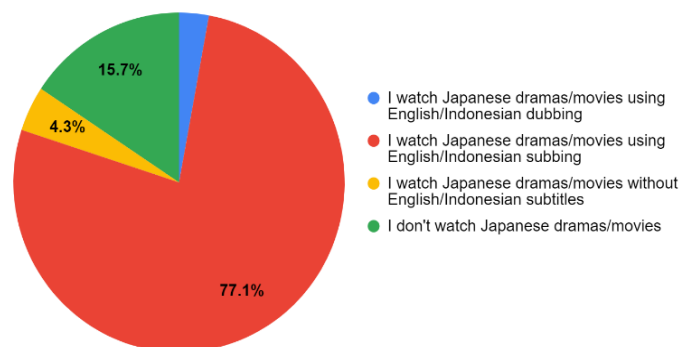

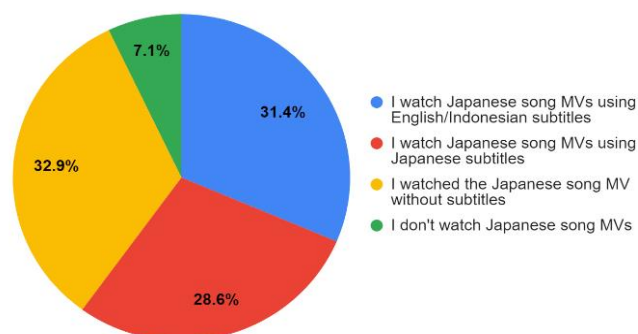Figure 10. Japanese Dramas/Movies Watching Activity

Figure 11. Japanese songs MV watching activity.

For text-based or print-based JPC activities, namely Manga, Light Novel, and Novel, 78.6% of respondents read it in the Indonesian and English translation versions. Similar to Audio Visual JPC activities, respondents who often read Japanese versions of Manga, Light novels, and novels are students who have Japanese Nat tests/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N2 and N1. Respondents read a lot of translation versions because besides being easier to read, it is also easier to buy or access. Text-based JPC products such as manga, light novels, and novels that speak Japanese are difficult to obtain and have an expensive price so only a few students are interested in reading the original version. In addition, for students who have Japanese language skills equivalent to NAT Test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N3 and down, text that has many grammar that they have not learned becomes the biggest drawing to enjoy manga, light novels, and novels Japanese versions. Details of respondents' activity data in consuming manga, light novels, and novels are presented in Figure 12.

3.4   Benefits of JPC for Japanese Language Study

Before discussing data about the benefits of JPC felt by respondents on their Japanese language skills, there are results of questionnaire data that shows the comparison of what JPC products they like before and after learning Japanese at the University (Figure 12). In the previous sub-chapter, data has been presented about the types of JPC products that were liked by respondents (Figure 8), and the most choices are Japanese Music, Anime, Manga, Japanese Movie, and Japanese Drama. After learning Japanese, the order of the type of JPC product that is preferred does not change. It's just that, there is a slight difference in percentage in each JPC product.
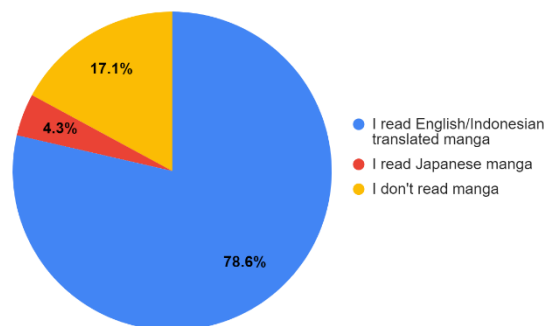

Figure 12. Manga reading activities, light novels, and Japanese novels
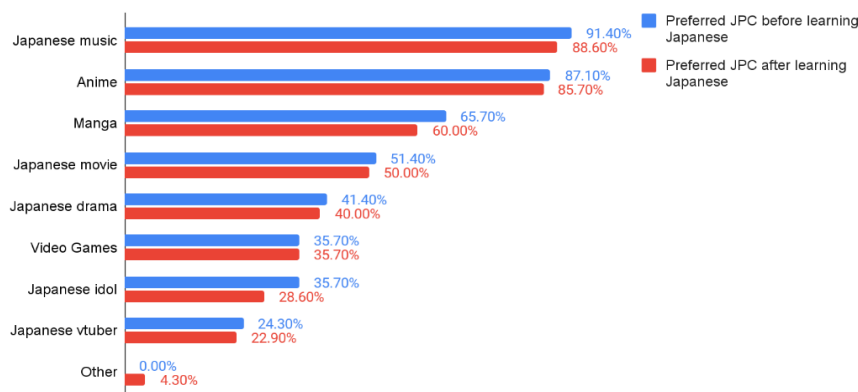

Figure 13. Comparison of JPC products that students like before and after learning Japanese

From the results of the questionnaire data about understanding Japanese in general, 45.7% of respondents agreed and 40% of respondents strongly agreed that they can understand Japanese better because they already know JPC. Only 14.3% disagree that JPC can help them understand Japanese well because according to him, understanding Japanese will be more easily obtained from teaching materials in formal learning. When focused again on four Japanese language skills, namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking, respondents strongly agree that JPC helps them improve their ability to listen to Japanese, and they agree that JPC improves their ability to speak in Japanese. However, respondents feel that JPC does not help improve the ability to read and write in Japanese because respondents only consume JPC products in the form of manga, light novels, or novels in the translation version (Figure 12), to increase the understanding of kanji, grammar, and Japanese expressions through activities Reading Japanese text does not occur. In more detail, the benefits of the JPC felt by respondents on their four Japanese language skills can be seen in Figure 14.

From the questionnaire data that has been presented in the Result section, it is known that all respondents who are samples taken randomly from Japanese language students at various universities in Indonesia are fans of Japanese Pop Culture (JPC). Respondents were JPC fans even long before they began to learn Japanese at the university. Respondents argued that one of the biggest reasons they wanted to learn Japanese was because of their preference for JPC. These findings are in line with the results of the Survey The Japan Foundation (2021), Oliveira (2022), Fukunaga (2006), Allison (2006), Shamoon (2010), Armor and Iida (2014) which state that Japanese learners begin to study Japanese because Interested in anime, manga, j-pop, fashion, and others. Even so, following what was stated by Gale (2012) and Imura (2018), respondents have another reason and motivation that are greater than their preferences for JPC, because they are interested in Japanese themselves and want to travel to Japan. JPC was originally an initial motivation for learning more about Japan, but it was not their main reason for choosing to learn Japanese formally at the university (Jafri & Wahidati, 2020; Wisniawati et al., 2022).
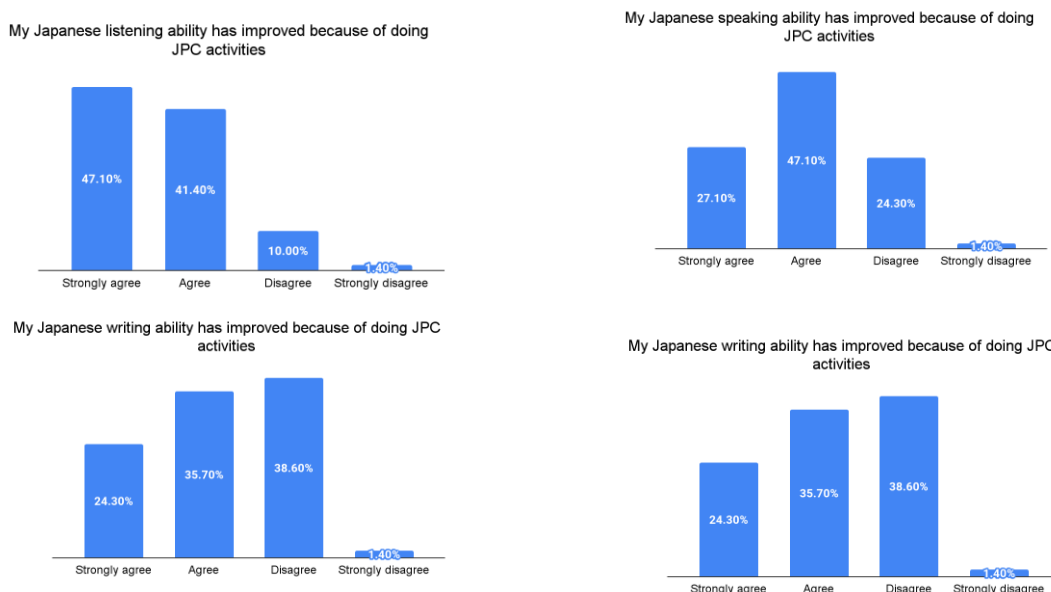

Figure 14. Benefits of JPC for Japanese Language Study

The results of this research questionnaire show that the type of activity to enjoy JPC is strongly influenced by the Japanese language skills owned by respondents. The higher the Japanese language skills of students, they will be able to enjoy various types of JPC using Japanese without the need for subtitles, translations, or dubbing. Interestingly, this study found that although respondents with medium Japanese language skills (equivalent to NAT Test/BJT/J-Test/JLPT N3) were indeed big fans of JPC, respondents who had high Japanese language skills (equivalent to NAT Test/BJT/J- Test/JLPT N2 and N1) are not active JPC fans. These findings are indeed in line with the findings of other research (Armour & Iida, 2016; Toyoshima, 2018) which shows that JPC consumption is proven to facilitate Japanese acceptance among its fans, but there are cases that JPC fans with low passion levels can still be able to Receive Japanese very well.

The results of this study prove the success of previous studies (Williams, 2006; Han, & Ling, 2017; Wishnoebroto et al., 2017; Djafri & Wahidati, 2020; Wisniawati et al., 2022) about the positive impact of JPC on Learning Japanese, with a statement from most respondents who state that they can better understand Japanese as a whole thanks to the JPC activity they have been following. Although Han and Ling (2017), Wishnoebroto et al. (2017), and Djafri and Wahidati (2020) have research results that prove that JPC both in the classroom and outside the classroom can improve the ability of vocabulary, listening skills, and skills Understanding the context of the use of Japanese, there are slightly different findings in this study. The questionnaire shows that even though JPC does help respondents improve their ability to listen and speak Japanese, their writing and reading skills are not helped by JPC consumption. This is probably due to the lack of access to JPC products in the form of reading/text such as manga, light novels, and Japanese-language novels.

The findings results of this study have revealed the things that are the initial purpose of this study, namely to know the portrait of JPC fan students at universities in Indonesia, reveal their motivation to learn Japanese and know the impact of JPC activity on their Japanese language skills. The findings of this study can be a reference for the next research on the use of JPC in learning Japanese, both in the classroom and outside the classroom, and informally or formally.

4. Conclusions

This study shows that all respondents who are Japanese learning at universities in Indonesia are JPC fans. However, even though all respondents are JPC fans their favourite on JPC is not their biggest reason for learning Japanese. Even so, JPC activities that students do can be alternative learning to Japanese outside the classroom and can help improve Japanese language skills. Research data revealed that respondents felt the positive benefits of JPC in increasing their four Japanese language skills, especially in the ability to listen and speak Japanese.

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