

The Effect of Using YouTube Songs towards New Vocabulary Acquisition in Higher Learning Institution

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using YouTube songs to learn new vocabulary among Japanese as Foreign language (JFL) learners in Malaysia and to analyze the perception of JFL students in learning new vocabulary using YouTube songs. This study was conducted in one of the higher learning Institutions in Malaysia for one semester to monitor the progress of the respondents from zero knowledge of rudimentary Japanese language to a certain level of basic Japanese proficiency. The respondents were 100 students derived from random purposive sampling. The instrument used a questionnaire with 30 items was administered as the primary data collection instrument, and also class observation notes as additional research data to support the findings from the questionnaire. The data were coded and analyzed using SPSS software version 22. The research finding of the study showed that teaching through YouTube songs increased students' vocabulary ability for JFL learners. The students had positive opinions about using YouTube songs methods. It also revealed that the YouTube song technique was a useful tool to promote students' vocabulary ability, made students cheerfully participate in class, and increased motivation in learning new vocabularies in primary Japanese language.

Keywords: Higher learning institutions, Japanese songs, lyric, music, teaching Japanese, vocabulary, acquisition, YouTube

1. Introduction

The Japanese language has been one of the most popular global languages learned around the world. According to a survey conducted by the Japan Foundation in 2018, approximately 3.85 million people studied Japanese at a record of 18,604 institutions in 137 countries (Japan Times, 2019). Besides that, the Japanese language is significantly being an added value in the job market and tourism sector in ASEAN countries (Yoshikawa, 2007). Indonesia has the highest number of Japanese learners, follows by Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore amounted to more than one million learners. Meanwhile, Japanese language education in Malaysia has also shown encouraging developments, especially at

secondary education and higher education level. The latest survey was published in 2017 by Japan Foundation Report stated that the number of Japanese language learners in Malaysia amounted to 33,224 students, with 430 teachers and 176 institutions offering Japanese language education. Students in Higher Education Institutions are required to study at least one foreign language course in line with the needs of the latest national Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025). The Higher Education Blueprint has outlined 'Language Proficiency' as one of the six student aspirations, where learning at least one additional foreign language is highly encouraged for university students. The Japanese language is one of the most popular foreign languages in universities due to impressive achievements in the economy, innovation, technology sector by Japan as one of the wealthiest countries in the world. This led to a higher number of students learning Japanese language in universities to add values to their resumes. Unfortunately, there had been little success among students being proficient in spoken or written form of Japanese language although they had studied for a few semesters in the university (Abas et al., 2014).

The main problem among JFL students, especially at the Higher Learning Institutions level is the mastery of Japanese vocabulary. Abas *et al.* (2014) study found that students who study had the Japanese language as a foreign language course at Higher Education Institutions have problems mastering vocabulary, language structure, and grammar. According to Abas *et al.* (2014), this problem occurs due to factors such as new foreign vocabulary for students that become more difficult to memorize and apply in practice either in communication training or sentence making exercises. Furthermore, teaching and learning time for the Japanese language course is limited to only 2 hours per week in the requirement of the university. Besides, the students had no opportunity to use and practice the new vocabulary learned outside the classroom due to the necessity of using mother tongue language or English with their friends and family. The researcher interviewed the students learning JFL before the study undertaken. The result of the interview showed that JFL students have stated that the main problem of making good sentences caused by limited knowledge of vocabulary in the Japanese language. Besides, an environment that discourages the use of linguistic learning has also been a source of weakness in verbal mastery. Another factor, this problem exists due to the short teaching time for only 2 hours a week, and thus the teaching staff can only teach a certain lexical. Therefore, this study conducted to find a formula in solving or reducing the weakness of linguistic mastery, especially new Japanese vocabulary.

Vocabulary takes a prominent role to understand language. When we provide the appropriate words, language is easy to understand and make the process of communication is more straightforward. Vocabulary is needed to expand the students' capability to understand new ideas. Lack of jargon makes the process of communication complicated. When the language learners' knowledge of vocabulary is limited, they will have problems with other learning skills like speaking and writing. Using Japanese songs in the classroom is one method that language instructors like to use to teach students. It is readily available through the radio, various recordings, the Internet, and new technologies. Japanese Popular Music is easy to access and to download from the Internet. Music plays an essential role in the socialization of children and adolescents. It will benefit both teachers and learners in learning new words.

Hirano (2008) stated that the melody of the song facilitates better memorizing and recalling the vocabulary learnt among the JFL students. They performed better when the vocabulary is heard as a song rather than as a speech in the classroom. Moreover, the vocabulary is repeated in melodious and rhythmical music to enhance the memorizing process among the JFL students. This repetition is what is called the features of using music and songs in JFL learning vocabulary context for better memorizing and recalling vocabulary among JFL students. Themes help us move away from decontextualized single definitions and towards a concept-based multilayered knowledge of words. Allen (2006) and Nagy (1998) also referred to three properties of effective vocabulary instruction as integration, repetition, and

meaningful use. These three characteristics are also present when it comes to the use of authentic songs in the language classroom. In conclusion, the song is a useful and powerful teaching tool in the JFL classroom. Teachers can use songs to encourage students to learn and develop new vocabulary. It will be beneficial for both teachers and students to new Japanese words.

2. Literature Review

Highlights of the literature review indicate that fundamental problems in Japanese language proficiency are related to the question of lack of Japanese vocabulary. The issue of lack of vocabulary among JFL students restricts students' ability to use Japanese fluently in spoken and written form (Ali, 1989; Mustafa, 2009; Lazim, 2010; Abdullah, 2014; Hieda & Shabudin, 2014) Therefore, mastering Japanese vocabulary will be an essential step before students can master the Japanese language well.

Furuhata-Turner (2013) proposed that by using materials in which students are already interested, language instructors can expect that students will enhance and improve their language competencies. Moreover, interactive activities such as active participation and involvement in the activities designed will create a more learner-centred learning environment to encourage students to practice their Japanese language speaking skills, besides stimulating their critical thinking skills. Vocabulary teaching requires the use of fun and engaging media to help students understand Japanese vocabulary easily. This claim is supported by Krashen's Affective Hypothesis (1982) that songs can be the best resource to reduce stress and anxiety in foreign language learning. Studies by Butzlaf (2000), Johnson & Memmott (2006) and Shen (2009) proved that when a foreign language instructor used interesting melodies song and lyrics in teaching new vocabulary in the class, it actually can reduce 'affective filters' to create a relaxed and effective learning environment. Even singing songs can increase students' interest, enjoyment, and confidence in learning a foreign language.

The students were exposed to the pronunciation of the native speaker by using the correct pronunciation heard in the song used in the classroom. Due to this, they will practice using the language taught in the classroom because the rhythm and melody of the songs are conducive for students to use vocabulary naturally (Farrug, 2018). Selection of media such as songs is a practical method for teaching Japanese vocabulary because the song contains various emotional elements such as happy, sad, excited, and other emotional feelings that can touch the feelings of someone who listens to it.

According to Gardner & Hatch (1989), human beings possess music intelligence as the ability to enjoy, recognize, perform, and compose musical pieces and have the sensitivity to rhythm and pitch. Moreover, music also has social and emotional benefits because the students gain confidence in using the Japanese language by singing the song. At the same time, songs can also play the role as a medium of pronunciation when someone forgets how to say a word they had learnt before. Humming the melody or rhythm of songs on the vocabulary known can trigger the pronunciation of the word that is stored unconsciously in the memory of the brain.

Similarly, songs have rhyming patterns, so they make lessons more enjoyable and exciting to students learning foreign languages. Meanwhile, the learners have fun during song-based activities as they become more willing to learn. Accordingly, learners can learn how to pronounce those words in no time. Thornbury (2002) clarifies that the new vocabulary is easily acquired and recalled in a short time with the help of sound. This process is beneficial because each word is repeated in the song a few times for the students to memorize them more easily and quickly.

There are some studies on the use of songs in learning foreign languages; English (Bret et al., 1996; Zimmerman, 1997), Spanish (Presley et al., 1980), French (Abrate, 1983) and Italian (Nussel & Cicogna, 1991). Unfortunately, the research on the use of songs in Japanese language teaching is not widely conducted locally or abroad. There are a handful of studies conducted on the Japanese language such as Hirano (2008), who stated that using songs in Japanese language teaching classes can motivate students to study outside the Japanese language classroom. Besides that, Mori (2009) conducted a study on 30 Japanese language students at the University of Kansas, who found that the use of songs is effective in the acquisition of transitive and intransitive verbs. However, not much information from the above study shows a positive or negative effect on the use of songs in learning Japanese.

According to the Krashen Input Hypothesis (1982), the acquisition of new vocabulary will occur when the meaning of the recent speech is explained first to the students. The definition of terminology can be conveyed using extra-linguistic teaching aids such as illustrations, movements, pictures, and real objects. According to Medina (2002), the use of songs in foreign language classes is in line with the Krashen Input Hypothesis (1982). Japanese songs make it easier for students to learn and remember what they learnt in learning Japanese because of the relaxed and fun Japanese language learning environment (Li & Brand, 2009; Nagy, 1998). Furthermore, the students will be more confident and sensitive than usual and easily acquire new vocabulary more effectively. This statement, aligned with Falioni's (1993) and Borisai & Dennis (2016) findings that "the use of songs in foreign language classes is a method of teaching to focus on students and produce more committed students."

According to much research conducted throughout centuries, there are many philosophers, scientists, researchers, and teachers who have recognized the importance of music to improve language proficiency. Besides, the importance of using songs in foreign language lessons significantly improves learners listening and pronunciation skills, and it plays a massive role in their overall development (Borisai & Dennis, 2016; Deutsch, 1972; Palermo, 1978). The literature review shows that the use of songs can improve skills in learning Japanese explicitly or implicitly. Besides that, the song is an effective motivational tool that encourages students to focus on the process of teaching and learning Japanese. There are many studies conducted on foreign language vocabulary mastery; however, no previous studies did relate to Japanese language vocabulary mastery among students in Malaysia. Therefore, there is a need to conduct this study. The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between the use of Youtube songs and the vocabulary mastery of JFL students in Malaysia.

3. Methodology

A total of 100 male and female students from various races aged between 19 to 24 years were selected by "stratified random sampling" to participate in this study. They take level 1 JFL language program in Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions as elective subjects. The research instrument consists of a set of questions divided into two parts. The first part is an open-ended question on the demographics of the respondents while the second part is by a question regarding students' perceptions of the use of selected Japanese songs from YouTube in improving their vocabulary.

The researcher also conducted observations to obtain additional information not obtained from the questionnaire questions. He chooses ten songs from YouTube, which is short, simple, and match the vocabulary found in the textbook "Minna no Nihongo". The lyrics of the songs are appropriate and have a valuable meaning to teach the students. Japanese songs have been downloaded and then uploaded in the learning e-portal to be accessible inside and outside the classroom. The respondents set a set of

questionnaire questions in the 14th week of semester 2 of the 2019/20 session to obtain research data on students' perceptions of the effect of songs used in the JFL classroom.

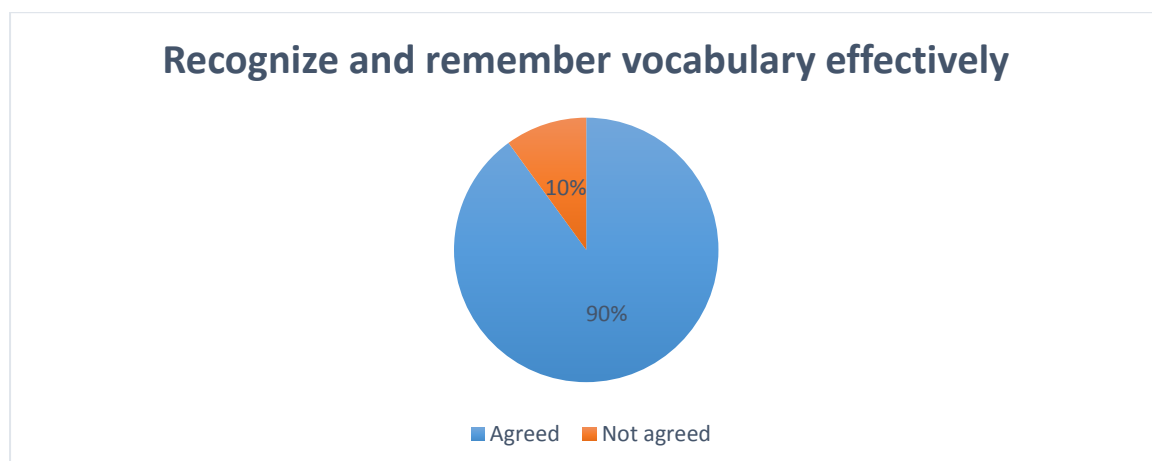
The video clips of Japanese songs have lyrics of songs and bilingual subtitle to assist them in recognizing the audio and the video shown; thus the students can see the lyrics while they hear and see the video clip. The ten songs selected for this study were:

1. ひらがな できるかな?～あいうえおの歌. (Hiragana Song)
2. あいうえおのうた. (Katakana Song)
3. すうじのうた. (Numbers Song in Japanese)
4. どこからきましたか. (Where are you from?)
5. なんさいですか. (How old are you)
6. じかん. (Time)
7. ひび. (Days of the Week)
8. がつ (Months of the Year)
9. いくらですか. (How Much is it?)
10. ひづけ (Dates of the Months)

The video clips are played for selected lessons in the classroom using LCD projector and speakers. Students then are asked to listen to the video clip of the song played and read silently the lyrics shown on the screen for once. Then video clip is played for the second time, and the students were asked to sing along with the song played on the screen. The researcher gave the worksheet of the video clips to the students. The students worked in groups to find ten difficult words and make complex sentences for each word. After the students doing with their worksheet, the students will discuss their answer with the other groups (students) by the teacher's order. The students may ask and discuss with the teacher about the difficulties in comprehending the problematic words. At the end of the class, the students wrote their comments and feedback on the effectiveness of using the Japanese song from YouTube to enhance their new vocabulary learning experience. Students also took notes during the group discussions among students during group work to enrich the data collection.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Effectiveness in Using Youtube Songs



The findings of the study in Table 1 show that almost 90% of the respondents agreed that Japanese songs help them to recognize and remember vocabulary more effectively. This is because as the respondents repeatedly sang Japanese songs, their confidence level increased, and their constraints to master new vocabulary decreased. This result is in line with Borisai & Dennis (2016) statement that "song rhythm with repetitive lyrics is a vehicle to increase students' vocabulary memory level in language learning and other language skills proficiency such as grammar structure and pronunciation among foreign language students." Further, the findings of the study show that almost all the respondents agreed that the use of Japanese songs in learning Japanese is fascinating. The respondents stated that the use of Japanese songs could increase interest and help them memorize more effectively through Japanese rhyme songs. Some studies have noted that the use of Japanese songs is more interesting than conventional lectures. Besides, the Japanese language learning environment will be more interactive as the use of songs will involve interactions between Japanese language instructors and respondents.

Table 2: The perception of students of using YouTube songs in learning new vocabulary

Questionnaire Items	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency (Numbers of respondents)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (Numbers of respondents)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (Numbers of respondents)	Percentage (%)
Why do you think using songs help you to pronounce new vocabulary better?	100	100	0	0	100	100
Melody and rhythm of the songs trigger to recall the vocabulary.	100	100	0	0	100	100
Songs improves memorization	98	98	2	2	100	100
Although I am shy to using Japanese in class, but catchy songs motivate me to sing along.	100	100	0	0	100	100
The lyrics which contain the vocabulary help me to understand and memorize the vocabulary.	99	99	1	1	100	100

The data in Table 2 also show that the use of songs can help the respondents to pronounce new vocabulary better. They also stated the rhythm and melody of the Japanese songs heard many times as if recorded in their memory, thus making the respondents able to recall and recite the vocabulary learned in Japanese songs more effectively. The use of songs in language learning improves memorization. Several studies students (Serafine *et al*, 1984; Borchgrevink, 1982; Christison, 1995; Wiggins, 2007) have shown that song and rhythm can improve the memorization memory of foreign language.

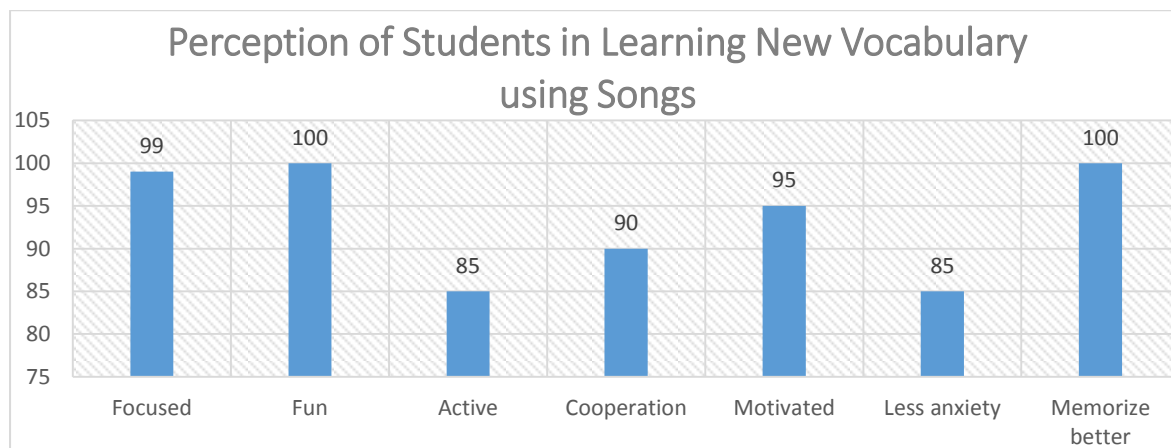
The data in Table 2 shows that respondents were excited to make vocabulary exercises related to Japanese songs introduced in Japanese language teaching classes. They did their best to try to learn the lyrics of Japanese songs even though they were ashamed to sing loudly. Due to time constraints, e-learning portals are used as a platform for respondents to upload and listen to Japanese songs repeatedly according to their convenience. Besides, the meaning of new vocabulary or lyrics has been distributed in the respondents to understand the Japanese songs.

Table 3: Vocabulary Proficiency Progress among Respondents

Result of students		Week 1	Week 14	Progress
Grade	Scale	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%)
A	80-100	50	70	50
B	60-79	20	25	40
C	50-59	10	5	10
D	45-49	10	0	-
E	40-44	10	0	-
Total		100	100	

The researcher had continuous monitoring the progress of the respondents by collecting their marks in vocabulary training in the form of an excel file and was summed up on the 14th weekend of semester 2 of the 2019/2020 session. The overall marks of the respondents showed continuous vocabulary proficiency progress from the first exercise to the last vocabulary exercise carried through the study in Table 3.

Table 4: Perception of Students in Learning New Vocabulary



Findings in table 4 show that almost all respondents feel focused on learning Japanese vocabulary in the classroom because they are directly involved in song singing activities. They feel fun and happy to be able to make movements related to the song they sang during the related vocabulary learning process. Besides, the respondents stated that they did not feel bored and lost focus as their senses moved actively throughout the singing activity. It is in contrast to conventional classes that make the respondents sit and copy the notes given by the lecturer.

The use of various linguistic intelligence ensures the process involved in language learning through the songs. One of them is visual-spatial intelligence. For example, they are reading lyrics in the song. Next is

the kinesthetic or psychomotor intelligence. They are clapping or dancing to the beat of the song, and lastly interpersonal intelligence which is chanting as a whole group while singing the song. This process facilitates foreign language acquisition because the fun in the song helps foreign language learners develop their instincts to recognize the linguistic features of the target language through singing (Butzlaff, 2000)]. The affective aspect of the respondents also developed with the use of Japanese songs because the respondents had to show their emotions while singing the songs. The song contains various emotional elements such as happy, sad, enthusiastic, and other emotional feelings that can touch the feelings of someone who listens to it.

The respondents stated that song is a useful motivational tool to reduce learning stress and anxiety. As shown by Burhayani (2013), the nature of fun songs, rhythmic music, and song lyrics can help create a relaxed, effective, and low-stress learning environment, and therefore foster positive emotional states among students. Thus, music and songs can function directly by motivating students to learn Japanese, lowering "affective filters" and bringing maximum stimuli and effective language acquisition (Butzlaff, 2000; Johnson & Memmott, 2006). The result is in line with the findings of Yamato (2006) and Hirano (2008) that Japanese songs make it easier for students to learn and remember what they learnt in learning Japanese because of the relaxed and fun Japanese learning environment.

5. Findings and Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that using Youtube songs in learning new vocabulary in JFL class can increased motivation and interest among respondents in the classroom. The use of songs turned the learning process of Japanese vocabulary more relaxing and fun because the students feel fun and do not feel bored in the process of teaching and learning Japanese. The use of Japanese songs that attract rhythm helps students to memorize and remember Japanese vocabulary more effectively. Therefore, the use of songs in the teaching of Japanese vocabulary has a positive effect on improving the mastery of Japanese vocabulary of students in a Malaysian university. Even the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective aspects develop in line with the acquisition of student vocabulary throughout the process of learning Japanese vocabulary occurs.

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