

## **Anime as an Educational Approach for Language Learning**

### **Abstract**

With its global popularity, Japanese anime has been recognised as an effective tool to learn Japanese. Studies such as Anderson and Natsuki Fukunaga explore how some language courses incorporate anime-based learning for student motivation. This paper examines the two questions: How does anime help people stay motivated to learn Japanese and understand the language and culture better, and what are the limitations of using anime to learn Japanese in an educational way? Extending previous research on anime's impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, this research distributed an online survey to anime-watchers regarding their Japanese fluency and their audio/subtitle preferences. The results suggested that anime-based learning had increased the learners' motivation and recognition of daily Japanese phrases, particularly when original Japanese audio with subtitles was used. However, it was also implied that limitations exist, as exaggerated or overly casual expressions common in anime may limit the effective application of language skills in real-life contexts. Future research could also examine how anime can be systematically integrated into curricula and evaluate whether it promotes cultural awareness as effectively as it supports language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Linguistics, Anime, Survey, Japanese

### **Introduction**

“[Anime] motivates me to learn more Japanese, so I can understand without subtitles.”  
—Anonymous survey respondent (2/23, 2025)

Japanese popular culture, such as J-pop, J-dramas, and manga novels, has become a significant cultural force in recent years. This includes anime, and its popularity has led to a growing interest in Japanese culture. However, educators and institutions have not greatly promoted the integration of anime as an educational tool in Japanese learning. While anime grew more popular, fewer people have become interested in learning Japanese. Given that Japanese course enrollment has been declining since 1979, this research aims to present how Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language acquisition. This research aims to investigate whether and how anime helps people remain motivated to learn Japanese and better understand the language and culture, and what the limitations of using anime as an educational tool for learning Japanese are.

## **Background and Literature Review**

Although anime is not officially part of JFL curricula worldwide, it has been used in language education since the late 1980s in Japan, significantly contributing to students' linguistic skill development (Iida & Takeyama, 2022). These early recommendations were suggested by Japanese language teachers in schools, as experts thought anime could serve as a motivational factor for their students (Allison, 2018). Considering that students from Japanese high schools and colleges often participate in anime circles and clubs outside of school, teachers first came up with the integration of anime into their classes. It was to reinforce their exposure to the language and strengthen the students' connection with the language itself.

Chan & Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension [2]. Building on the findings, anime allows students to explore not only formal textbook language but also slang and casual expressions. These repeated phrases can help learners recognise words more easily and improve their pronunciation through listening practice. Fukunaga (2006) and Chan & Wong (2017) speculate that this linguistic development also comes from cultural awareness in the anime context. Students gain insights that are often not covered in formal language-learning methods, such as Japanese social contexts, daily conversations, and traditional practices. Learning about these daily contexts with cultural understanding will help students to link and apply the acquired vocabulary and language in real-life situations. Especially in Japanese, which has a complex system of politeness (such as keigo, casual, and humble forms), these subtle nuances are difficult to fully grasp through textbooks alone. Anime dialogue, however, demonstrates how these speech levels vary across different social contexts.

Expanding on this, Han & Ling (2017) emphasise anime's potential to be incorporated in classrooms, noting that anime-based activities, such as active viewing, freeze framing, dubbing, and role play, could create a learner-centred environment that stimulates both linguistic and critical thinking skills. They explain that anime helps learners practice not only pronunciation and vocabulary but also social nuance by encouraging students to analyse dialogue in a specific context. More importantly, they stress that anime's variety of speech styles, from polite forms to dialects and informal slang, exposes learners to linguistic registers rarely found in textbooks, thus improving adaptability in communication. Additionally, Razali et al. (2018) further support that anime fosters multimodal learning, where subtitles, sound, and imagery combine to strengthen comprehension and encourage engagement in language-related practices such as fan translation or online discussions. These findings suggest that anime can fill in the gap between traditional instruction and informal, everyday Japanese, making it a complement to existing methods.

## **Research Purpose**

This paper investigates the relationship between anime and Japanese language education, specifically comparing anime-based language learning methods with traditional approaches. This

paper will delve into the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning.

Moreover, this paper will also explore whether and how anime can serve as an effective tool for language acquisition in both formal and informal settings. Previous research has largely focused on structured classroom use (e.g., Chan & Wong, 2017), but because learners also engage with anime independently at home, it is necessary to evaluate its potential across both contexts.

This research examines how anime could expose learners to various linguistic features, such as informal and casual speech, to develop word recognition and pronunciation through content. This paper is structured in three main sections: (1) the benefits of using anime as a learning tool through context, (2) the challenges and limitations of anime and language integration, and (3) practical recommendations for integrating anime into official Japanese language curricula. Through analysis of the survey responses, this paper will provide new insights into how anime can be utilised to enhance linguistic development in foreign Japanese language learners, particularly by supporting the shift from textbook Japanese to natural, everyday speech.

## **Hypothesis**

This study's research question is "Does anime-based learning improve Japanese language acquisition and motivation compared to traditional textbook-based learning?" Hence, it could be hypothesised that learners who watch anime with Japanese audio and subtitles in their home language will show greater improvements in word recognition and pronunciation compared to learners who rely only on textbooks (Hypothesis A). Building on previous research (Chan & Wong, 2017; Anderson & Fukunaga, 2020), it is hypothesised that repeated exposure to casual and everyday phrases in anime will result in stronger comprehension and recall than exposure to formal textbook Japanese (Hypothesis B). Finally, it is hypothesised that individual factors such as demographic background, anime-watching frequency, and prior Japanese proficiency will influence how effective anime is as a tool for both linguistic development and cultural learning (Hypothesis C).

## **Methodology**

This study utilised a 10-minute survey to explore the role of anime in Japanese language development within current education systems. The survey included 15 questions, ranging from multiple-choice to open-ended. Twenty individuals participated and provided responses. The research utilised the online platform SurveySwap to gather respondents.<sup>1</sup> It helped reach a global community and obtain diverse insights based on their demographic information and theme-specific

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was purposely written in English to look for a global audience. SurveySwap only supports English, Dutch, and German and does not support non-Latin languages.

answers, including their home language, level of Japanese literacy, and anime-watching frequency. The findings are exploratory at this stage, as this study serves as a pilot project aimed at addressing an existing gap in the literature.

## Results

- **Demographics and Linguistic Profile**

The demographic and linguistic profile of the survey respondents reflects the young population of anime-engaged people, who are globally diverse but mostly speak English. The average age range for anime watchers worldwide is 13 to 24 years old, while the average age group for SurveySwap users is said to be 18 to 28 years old, consisting mostly of university and graduate students. The majority of the respondents for this survey were between 25 and 29 years old (60%), followed by 10 to 18-year-olds (30%), and 30 to 34-year-olds (10%).

- **Languages Spoken at Home**

For the question on languages spoken at home, the item was multi-select, so percentages were not expected to total 100%. English was selected by 80% of respondents, followed by Hindi (30%), Japanese (20%), Mandarin (10%), and Italian (10%). This shows that several participants reported multilingual backgrounds along with English. A smaller portion (20%) selected Japanese, either as native speakers or as learners with high confidence in their proficiency.<sup>2</sup>

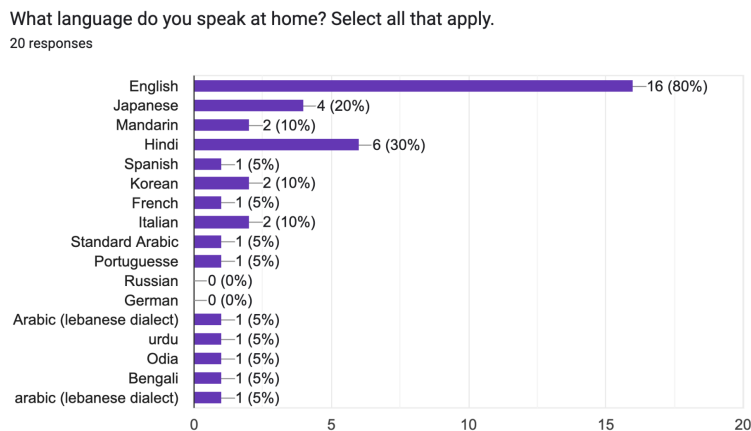


Figure 1. Languages Spoken at Home by Survey Respondents

- **Anime-Watching Frequency**

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<sup>2</sup> This was a 'select all that apply' question.

Anime-watching frequency was shown to vary, with 30% of respondents reporting as watching every day, 20% as watching once every two weeks, and 10% as never watching anime. Outliers who indicated that they “never” watched anime (10%) were disregarded from further analysis.

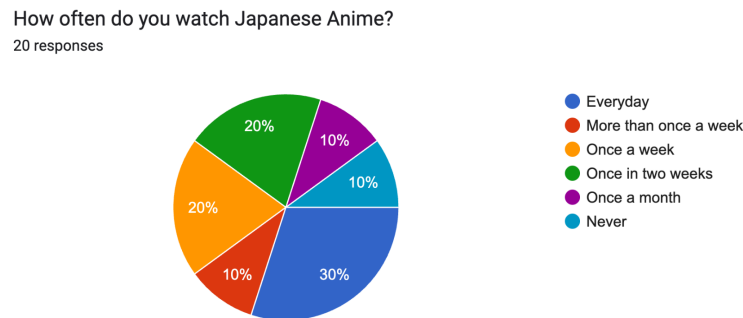


Figure 2. Frequency of anime watching among respondents

- **Audio and Subtitle Preferences**

As participants were asked what language they usually watch anime in (audio), multiple responses were allowed, with the original Japanese audio preferred by 85% of respondents, followed by English (45%), while smaller proportions selected Korean (10%), Hindi (5%), or Mandarin (5%)<sup>3</sup>. When asked ‘in what language are the subtitles in?’, most respondents chose English (94.4%), with Spanish, Korean, and Mandarin each being reported by 5.6% of respondents<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

<sup>4</sup> Two respondents mentioned they watched anime in Korean, which may imply a possibility that they may have answered based on the anime of a Korean production. Moreover, for those who watch anime in English with Japanese subtitles, there are two possibilities: they are either native Japanese speakers wanting to learn English or non-native Japanese speakers attempting to improve their word recognition through subtitles. If the second is true, it is reasonable to assume that their level of Japanese listening is quite advanced, as they are able to understand the context by ear.

When watching anime, do you usually use subtitles in your home language?  
20 responses

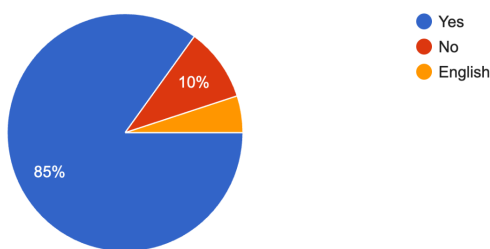


Figure 3. Subtitle language preferences

Audio Choices	% of Respondents
Japanese	85
English	45
Korean	10
Hindi	5
Mandarin	5

Subtitle Choices	% of Respondents
English	94.4
Spanish	5.6
Korean	5.6
Mandarin	5.6

- **Motivation to Learn Japanese**

Motivational perspectives were also gathered through the survey question: “Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?” The responses revealed that 35% of participants answered “yes,” 45% answered “sometimes,” and 15% answered “no.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?  
20 responses

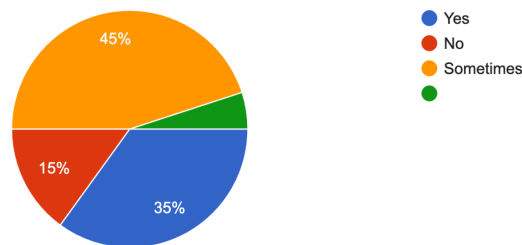


Figure 4. Motivation to learn Japanese through anime

Those who responded affirmatively mentioned improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.

One respondent wrote, “I have been watching anime for over 15 years and was able to pick [up] the language[.] I no longer need to focus so much on the subtitles [...] as I naturally understand what they say[.]” Another explained, “[A]fter watching anime for so many years[.] you come across some words very frequently[.] [...] [Thanks] to subtitles[.] you get to know the meaning too[.] [...] [W]hen [you] hear th[at] word again[.] you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

Respondents who answered “sometimes” also expressed their motivations. For example, one stated, “Sometimes, it motivates me to learn more [J]apanese so I can understand without subtitles[.]” Another added, “I want to visit [J]apan and somewhere at (sic) the back of my mind[.] [I] feel like anime might help me as well in the process[.]”

- **Classroom Integration**

In response to the survey question, ‘Have you ever watched anime as part of your school language curriculum? (e.g., watching an excerpt during class) 70% answered ‘No’ while the remaining 30% answered ‘Yes’.

Among the open-ended responses of ‘If yes, in what way was the anime incorporated into class?’, one participant explained:

“I watched it in my Japanese class when we were done with a unit (sort of like for fun)”

On the other hand, another response was simply:

“a movie study, about [J]apanese culture”

## **Discussion**

Overall, the results show that anime-based learning increased learner motivation and improved recognition of everyday Japanese phrases, particularly when original Japanese audio with subtitles was used. These findings validated Hypothesis A, as learners who combined Japanese audio with subtitles demonstrated stronger word recognition compared to those relying on translations, according to the open-ended responses. The results also supported Hypothesis B, since repeated exposure to casual expressions improved comprehension more effectively than formal textbook language. Evidence for Hypothesis C was only partially confirmed, as individual factors such as multilingual backgrounds, prior Japanese knowledge, and frequency of anime-watching influenced outcomes and built motivation. Overall, the results suggest that anime serves as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for textbooks, connecting textbook learning with more authentic spoken Japanese, though it is needed to avoid dependence on exaggerated or overly casual expressions. Earlier research viewed anime as a source of motivation (Fukunaga, 2006), while later work focused on its linguistic benefits (Chan & Wong, 2017). In contrast, this study introduces a third perspective, emphasising how anime-based learning connects motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy in a single framework.

- ***Demographics and Language Use***

It was revealed that the respondents of this survey were mostly college students on the SurveySwap platform who frequently watched anime and were likely drawn to this survey by its title. Although global data collection in 130+ countries was allowed by SurveySwap, the predominant language required was English, which shows that even though the audience was globally diverse, English remained dominant. This reliance on English highlights the limitation that most respondents depended on it as a home language, indicating that their Japanese proficiency was not yet fully advanced.

It was also shown that several respondents reported multilingual backgrounds, including Hindi, Mandarin, Italian, and even Japanese. This suggests that anime attracts a linguistically diverse audience, but English dominance still shapes their language-learning process. The fact that everyday anime watchers formed a large portion of the respondents shows that anime is already a part of their daily lives, which makes it an accessible and motivational tool for learning. The disregard of “never” watchers reflects that the survey effectively targeted individuals already engaged in anime only.

- ***Language and Subtitles***

The choice of Japanese audio with subtitles in the respondents' home languages suggests that anime was used as a way to learn Japanese while still depending on translation for meaning. Although it may appear that the majority were proficient because they listened in Japanese, the fact that subtitles were required shows that their Japanese proficiency was not yet fully advanced. This

reliance on subtitles indicates that the learners were still in the process of acquiring the language, and anime provided them with exposure while allowing understanding through written support.

The combination of listening in Japanese and reading subtitles in another language also implies that the learners were motivated to connect spoken phrases with their meanings. The repeated matching of dialogue with subtitles likely encouraged recognition of words and phrases, which supports language development. In this sense, anime created a learning environment where authentic Japanese was experienced, but comprehension was still guided by subtitles.

On the other hand, the responses that reported watching anime in English with English subtitles, or in Hindi with Hindi subtitles, suggest that these viewers were less focused on learning Japanese and more interested in following the storyline. In such cases, anime functioned as entertainment rather than education. This shows that the educational value of anime depends heavily on the choices made by the viewers, especially in terms of language and subtitle settings.

- ***Motivation and Language Development***

The responses indicate that anime serves as a source of motivation for many learners, particularly through repeated exposure to common phrases, which improves recognition and recall. The comments suggest that learners gradually connect spoken Japanese with the meaning provided by subtitles, helping them move from dependence on translations toward more independent comprehension.

These findings were supported by previous research conducted by Chan & Wong (2017), in which the worksheets of university students who attended a 10-week course on Learning Japanese Language Through Anime in Malaysia were analysed. In that study, repetition exercises were also emphasised as supporting the memorisation of useful phrases. It was found that anime, unlike the polite speech styles presented in textbooks, was more casual and practical in real-life situations. Interactions between anime characters, such as those between students and teachers, were observed to be informal, reflecting real-life conversations often missing from classroom contexts. Repetition exercises based on anime dialogue were also included in the course, which helped students gradually memorise useful phrases. In this paper's original survey, respondents described a similar process, noting how repeated listening helped them understand Japanese without relying on subtitles.

However, unlike Chan & Wong's study (2017), which was conducted in a classroom setting, the respondents here were self-motivated learners engaging with anime independently. This added the insight that anime was not only supporting formal learning, but was also serving as an independent way to learn casual phrases and maintain motivation outside the classroom. For many respondents, anime was described as an engaging way to learn the language through repeated exposure and genuine interest.

Moreover, according to Razali et al. (2018), anime has not only gained large global popularity but has

also contributed to the promotion of literacy in the Japanese language. Anime fans have used online platforms to engage in Japanese linguistic activities such as commenting, reviewing anime-related posts, and creating fan sites, all of which involve reading and writing skills. When doing so, the process of translation in these contents often unconsciously develops new vocabulary and introduces Japanese sentence structures. This concept of diverse representations, such as sounds and animations that viewers can engage with in the fan-made content, is called multimodal learning. Multimodal learning reflects the respondents' interest in engaging more deeply with anime culture. This includes creating content that uses Japanese language skills, translation, and cultural interpretation. These practices are also common in the broader anime community, where fans often engage in creative, language-based activities such as fan subtitling, translation, and content creation (Ito, 2012).

- ***Classroom Integration***

These results suggest that anime integration in Japanese language learning is not widespread in formal education systems. Where it was used, the responses indicate that anime was often treated as entertainment rather than as a structured learning tool. However, the response mentioning a “movie study, about Japanese culture” directly reveals how cultural factors can support the learning of practical usage of Japanese in real-life situations. By observing character interactions, gestures, and contextual language use, students may deepen both their linguistic and cultural understanding.

Such practical anime integrations in class are recommended. Classroom activities such as analysing anime dialogue can help students engage with the linguistic structures of particular quotes and expressions. Historical contexts represented in anime can also be studied, which not only enhances language development but also provides cultural and historical insights for learners hoping to live or work in Japan. Including subtitles while watching may further engage students, since learners are able to match auditory Japanese with written forms in their textbooks. In this way, anime can serve as a complementary tool alongside traditional materials, particularly in developing reading comprehension skills.

The survey responses also align with prior research emphasising anime's contribution to literacy development. Experts note that anime boosts linguistic acquisition by supporting word recognition, listening skills, pronunciation, and motivation. Fukunaga (2006), for example, found through group discussions and interviews with Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) students that learners gradually became familiar with frequently spoken phrases through repetitive expressions often absent in textbooks. In the same way, the responses in this study show that anime motivated learners to recognise and remember everyday phrases through repeated listening. As one participant explained, “After watching anime for so many years, you come across some words very frequently. Thanks to subtitles, you get to know the meaning too. When you hear that word again, you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

This demonstrates that repeated exposure allows JFL learners to acquire phrases naturally, without relying exclusively on traditional methods such as textbooks or direct translations. Therefore, anime

not only enhances literacy development through word recognition, listening skills, and pronunciation, but also sustains motivation. In this way, new daily phrases can be constantly acquired, making anime a valuable complementary tool to traditional instruction in Japanese language learning.

### **Benefits of Anime and Language Integration**

This is another benefit from learning Japanese through anime: many are motivated to understand the cultural context of anime or get familiar with Japanese culture. For example, the gendered pronouns commonly heard in anime, such as “俺” (used for men) and “あたし” (used by young girls), not only reflect gender-based differences in Japanese but also indicate the character’s age and social context. According to a study by Chan & Wong (2017), students were surprised to hear the elderly female character in the anime *Hanasaku Iroha* using masculine language, specifically words like “お前” (omae) and “こいつ” (koitsu), which are typically considered rough or informal and usually associated with male speech. Notably, the researchers observed that some grandmothers in real life also use these expressions instead of more traditionally polite or feminine language. These language variations can also be observed in various social contexts, such as in the workplace, where formal language is required, and at school, where the language may be more casual. Chan and Wong (2017) also observe that social hierarchies in anime influence character dialogues, helping language learners distinguish between polite and informal speech. Hence, it can be inferred that JFLs who wish to travel to Japan are likely to watch anime in order to develop this skill to adapt language style accordingly.

### **Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration**

Despite all the benefits introduced above, anime language learning can have a negative impact on non-native Japanese speakers. Anime often incorporates overly casual and sometimes inappropriate phrases, especially in shounen and action genres. As a result, the survey response “I believe some wording can be wrong” might represent those who prefer to learn Japanese in the traditional way to avoid wording misinterpretations from anime dialogues. Another challenge for learners is to distinguish the gap between anime speech and real-life Japanese. According to Fukunaga (2006), some find it difficult to apply their knowledge in real life due to exaggerated expressions and fictional vocabulary used in anime. Even the dialogues that reflect the characters’ social roles (e.g., speech patterns of high school students, small children, or even samurai) may be inaccurate at times, so learners must be guided to distinguish between natural Japanese and stylised anime dialogue that are uncommon or outdated in real life. Overall, these undesirable outcomes are discouraging some people from using anime as a tool for language learning, especially for those whose aim is to travel to Japan.

## **Conclusion**

The effectiveness of anime as a tool for Japanese language learning was investigated, focusing on the comparison of anime-based learning methods and traditional textbook learning methods. A survey targeted at JFL learners on the SurveySwap platform was conducted so that respondents could be gathered globally and qualitative data could be sought. By this approach, a diverse range of experiences and different levels of familiarity with the Japanese language were allowed. Based on these results, the trends and potential correlations in the respondents' demographics and varying linguistic backgrounds when acquiring Japanese were to be analysed. By comparing and analysing traditional language learning methods with anime integration, the issue of declining Japanese language learners was approached through popular culture. Through this survey, perspectives and understandings of Japanese learners on how their anime-watching habits have impacted their language learning experiences were shared.

Based on the survey and prior research done with external sources, the anime-watching method does have a positive impact on Japanese language acquisition for foreign learners. The findings suggested that, depending on the various combinations of subtitles and the language the anime was watched in, word recognition and phrase memorisation in real-life contexts improved.

Moreover, the open-ended questions supported the claim of most researchers that anime is widely a motivational factor to start learning Japanese: to understand the context of the anime, to get familiar with Japanese cultural norms, and to enhance their travelling experiences by improving their speaking skills. However, some responses challenge this view, as respondents discussed the limitations of anime learning methods, such as overly casual and inappropriate phrases that can cause mistaken interpretation. As a result, it showed that some prefer learning in traditional learning methods rather than through anime.

Although anime-integrated learning is yet to be spread in educational curricula, this paper suggests possible benefits that anime could bring, as well as some practical recommendations to be used in the classroom. In order to realistically apply this new method, though, it is crucial to explore how traditional teaching methods can be combined with anime-based learning and whether educators are able to effectively balance both approaches to mitigate the limitations of misinterpretations of certain speeches.

## **Research Ethics**

This study involved a minimal-risk, anonymous, voluntary survey and did not collect personally identifiable or sensitive information. The research was conducted independently by a secondary school student. The author's school does not maintain an institutional review board (IRB) or formal ethics committee capable of issuing ethics approval or exemption determinations; this is confirmed by a designated school official. Accordingly, the study followed ethical principles appropriate to minimal-risk social research.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation through a consent statement presented at the beginning of the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could discontinue at any time without penalty. Responses were collected anonymously, and no identifying information was recorded.

Survey data were stored securely in a password-protected account accessible only to the author. Data will be retained until completion of the publication process and then permanently deleted. The study involved no deception or intervention and posed minimal risk. Because the sample was self-selected and recruited online, the results may be subject to sampling bias and may not be fully representative.

I affirm that the ideas, arguments, and analysis in this paper are my own. AI tools were used only for minor language editing (grammar and clarity), not for generating content or analysis.

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Submission 100142

Initial review

2/24/26

I recommend this paper for revise and resubmit.

What comes through very clearly in this submission is the author's genuine engagement with the topic. The paper approaches anime beyond its role as a pedagogical tool, as a lived learning experience, which is a real strength in my view. The structure easy to follow, moving coherently from literature review to methodology and discussion. The integration of participant voices is particularly effective (thanks to the short quoted responses), as it grounds the argument in actual experience and gives the paper a welcome human dimension.

The literature review shows good effort and range, especially in bringing together pedagogical and linguistic perspectives (motivation, multimodal learning, informal speech). The author clearly understands the idea that anime can act as a bridge between textbook Japanese and everyday language, and this comes through consistently. The discussion of repetition, subtitles, and motivation is thoughtful and shows strong analytical potential.

Before publication, a few areas would benefit from further development, in ways that are entirely normal at this stage.

The main point concerns the methodology and how the findings are framed. The survey is well chosen, but it remains small (20 participants) and relies on a self-selecting platform. This is acknowledged, which is good, but the conclusions would benefit from being expressed more cautiously. For instance, rather than saying the hypotheses are validated, you might say the results suggest or indicate certain trends (especially given the exploratory nature of the study).

The methodology section could also be slightly more precise. A few sentences clarifying why this method was chosen, how participants were selected (for example via SurveySwap), and how responses were analyzed (such as grouping recurring themes) would strengthen the paper without overcomplicating it.

Finally, some tightening would help in the results and discussion, where a few ideas are repeated (particularly around motivation and subtitles). A clearer distinction between observation and interpretation would also improve the overall clarity. A last pass on references and proofreading would bring the paper to a more polished and professional level.

Overall, this is a thoughtful and promising piece of work that shows real potential. With some refinement in methodology and a slightly more cautious framing of the claims, it could become a strong contribution.

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### **Abstract**

With its global popularity, Japanese anime has been recognised as an effective tool to learn Japanese. Studies such as Anderson and Natsuki Fukunaga explore how some language courses incorporate anime-based learning for student motivation. This paper examines the two questions: How does anime help people stay motivated to learn Japanese and understand the language and culture better, and what are the limitations of using anime to learn Japanese in an educational way? Extending previous research on anime's impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, this research distributed an online survey to anime-watchers regarding their Japanese fluency and their audio/subtitle preferences. The results suggested that anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation and recognition of daily Japanese phrases, particularly when original Japanese audio with subtitles was used. However, it was also implied that limitations exist, as exaggerated or overly casual expressions common in anime may limit the effective application of language skills in real-life contexts. Future research could also examine how anime can be systematically integrated into curricula and evaluate whether it promotes cultural awareness as effectively as it supports language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Linguistics, Anime, Survey, Japanese

### **Introduction**

“[Anime] motivates me to learn more Japanese, so I can understand without subtitles.”  
—Anonymous survey respondent (2/23, 2025)

Japanese popular culture, such as J-pop, J-dramas, and manga novels, has become a significant cultural force in recent years. This includes anime, and its popularity has led to a growing interest in Japanese culture. However, educators and institutions have not greatly promoted the integration of anime as an educational tool in Japanese learning. While anime grew more popular, fewer people have become interested in learning Japanese. Given that Japanese course enrollment has been declining since 1979, this research aims to present how Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language acquisition. This research aims to investigate whether and how anime helps people remain motivated to learn Japanese and better understand the language and culture, and what the limitations of using anime as an educational tool for learning Japanese are.

## **Background and Literature Review**

Although anime is not officially part of JFL curricula worldwide, it has been used in language education since the late 1980s in Japan, significantly contributing to students' linguistic skill development (Iida & Takeyama, 2022). These early recommendations were suggested by Japanese language teachers in schools, as experts thought anime could serve as a motivational factor for their students (Allison, 2018). Considering that students from Japanese high schools and colleges often participate in anime circles and clubs outside of school, teachers first came up with the integration of anime into their classes. It was to reinforce their exposure to the language and strengthen the students' connection with the language itself.

Chan & Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension [2]. Building on the findings, anime allows students to explore not only formal textbook language but also slang and casual expressions. These repeated phrases can help learners recognise words more easily and improve their pronunciation through listening practice. Fukunaga (2006) and Chan & Wong (2017) speculate that this linguistic development also comes from cultural awareness in the anime context. Students gain insights that are often not covered in formal language-learning methods, such as Japanese social contexts, daily conversations, and traditional practices. Learning about these daily contexts with cultural understanding will help students to link and apply the acquired vocabulary and language in real-life situations. Especially in Japanese, which has a complex system of politeness (such as keigo, casual, and humble forms), these subtle nuances are difficult to fully grasp through textbooks alone. Anime dialogue, however, demonstrates how these speech levels vary across different social contexts.

Expanding on this, Han & Ling (2017) emphasise anime's potential to be incorporated in classrooms, noting that anime-based activities, such as active viewing, freeze framing, dubbing, and role play, could create a learner-centred environment that stimulates both linguistic and critical thinking skills. They explain that anime helps learners practice not only pronunciation and vocabulary but also social nuance by encouraging students to analyse dialogue in a specific context. More importantly, they stress that anime's variety of speech styles, from polite forms to dialects and informal slang, exposes learners to linguistic registers rarely found in textbooks, thus improving adaptability in communication. Additionally, Razali et al. (2018) further support that anime fosters multimodal learning, where subtitles, sound, and imagery combine to strengthen comprehension and encourage engagement in language-related practices such as fan translation or online discussions. These findings suggest that anime can fill in the gap between traditional instruction and informal, everyday Japanese, making it a complement to existing methods.

## **Research Purpose**

This paper investigates the relationship between anime and Japanese language education, specifically comparing anime-based language learning methods with traditional approaches. This

paper will delve into the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning.

Moreover, this paper will also explore whether and how anime can serve as an effective tool for language acquisition in both formal and informal settings. Previous research has largely focused on structured classroom use (e.g., Chan & Wong, 2017), but because learners also engage with anime independently at home, it is necessary to evaluate its potential across both contexts.

This research examines how anime could expose learners to various linguistic features, such as informal and casual speech, to develop word recognition and pronunciation through content. This paper is structured in three main sections: (1) the benefits of using anime as a learning tool through context, (2) the challenges and limitations of anime and language integration, and (3) practical recommendations for integrating anime into official Japanese language curricula. Through analysis of the survey responses, this paper will provide new insights into how anime can be utilised to enhance linguistic development in foreign Japanese language learners, particularly by supporting the shift from textbook Japanese to natural, everyday speech.

## **Hypothesis**

This study's research question is "Does anime-based learning improve Japanese language acquisition and motivation compared to traditional textbook-based learning?" Hence, it could be hypothesised that learners who watch anime with Japanese audio and subtitles in their home language will show greater improvements in word recognition and pronunciation compared to learners who rely only on textbooks (Hypothesis A). Building on previous research (Chan & Wong, 2017; Anderson & Fukunaga, 2020), it is hypothesised that repeated exposure to casual and everyday phrases in anime will result in stronger comprehension and recall than exposure to formal textbook Japanese (Hypothesis B). Finally, it is hypothesised that individual factors such as demographic background, anime-watching frequency, and prior Japanese proficiency will influence how effective anime is as a tool for both linguistic development and cultural learning (Hypothesis C).

## **Methodology**

This study utilised a 10-minute survey to explore the role of anime in Japanese language development within current education systems. An online survey method was selected to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling participants to report their learning experiences, strategies, and perceptions in their own words. The survey included 15 questions, ranging from multiple-choice to open-ended. Twenty individuals participated and provided responses. The

research utilised the online platform SurveySwap to gather respondents.<sup>1</sup> SurveySwap was used to recruit participants through a voluntary, self-selecting survey exchange. Respondents were screened for eligibility by confirming that they were studying Japanese and engaged with anime. It helped reach a global community and obtain diverse insights based on their demographic information and theme-specific answers, including their home language, level of Japanese literacy, and anime-watching frequency. Closed-ended items were organised into quantitative summaries. Responses indicating “never watching anime” were excluded from analyses focused on anime-watching practices. Open-ended responses were reviewed multiple times and grouped into frequently addressed themes based on common experiences with representing quotes. The findings are exploratory at this stage, as this study serves as a pilot project aimed at addressing an existing gap in the literature. Given this, the findings are not generalizable, but should rather be seen as exploratory and may support and inform future research with larger participant groups.

## Results

- ***Demographics and Linguistic Profile***

The demographic and linguistic profile of the survey respondents reflects the young population of anime-engaged people, who are globally diverse but mostly speak English. The average age range for anime watchers worldwide is 13 to 24 years old, while the average age group for SurveySwap users is said to be 18 to 28 years old, consisting mostly of university and graduate students. The majority of the respondents for this survey were between 25 and 29 years old (60%), followed by 10 to 18-year-olds (30%), and 30 to 34-year-olds (10%).

- ***Languages Spoken at Home***

For the question on languages spoken at home, the item was multi-select, so percentages were not expected to total 100%. English was selected by 80% of respondents, followed by Hindi (30%), Japanese (20%), Mandarin (10%), and Italian (10%). Several participants reported multilingual backgrounds in addition to English. A smaller portion (20%) selected Japanese, either as native speakers or as learners with high confidence in their proficiency.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was purposely written in English to look for a global audience. SurveySwap only supports English, Dutch, and German and does not support non-Latin languages.

<sup>2</sup> This was a ‘select all that apply’ question.

What language do you speak at home? Select all that apply.  
20 responses

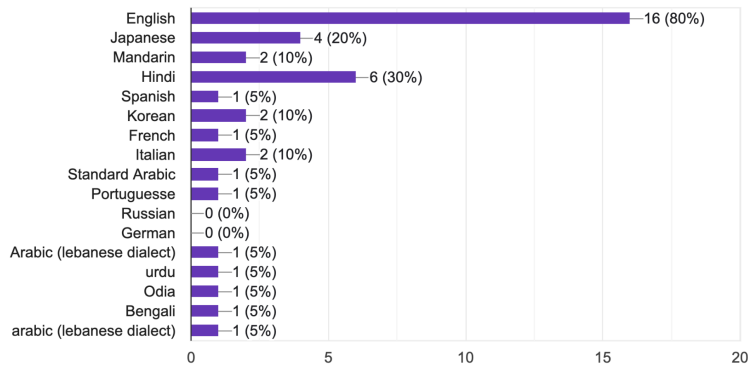


Figure 1. Languages Spoken at Home by Survey Respondents

- **Anime-Watching Frequency**

Anime-watching frequency was shown to vary, with 30% of respondents reporting as watching every day, 20% as watching once every two weeks, and 10% as never watching anime. Outliers who indicated that they “never” watched anime (10%) were disregarded from further analysis.

How often do you watch Japanese Anime?  
20 responses

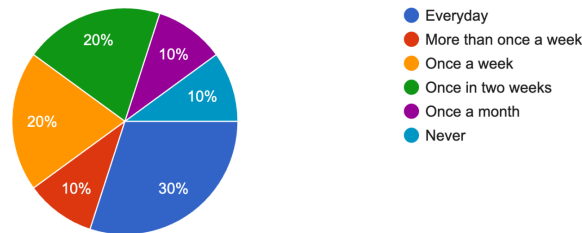


Figure 2. Frequency of anime watching among respondents

- **Audio and Subtitle Preferences**

As participants were asked what language they usually watch anime in (audio), multiple responses were allowed, with the original Japanese audio preferred by 85% of respondents, followed by English (45%), while smaller proportions selected Korean (10%), Hindi (5%), or Mandarin (5%)<sup>3</sup>. When asked ‘in what language are the subtitles in?’, most respondents chose English (94.4%), with Spanish,

<sup>3</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

Korean, and Mandarin each being reported by 5.6% of respondents<sup>4</sup>.

When watching anime, do you usually use subtitles in your home language?  
20 responses

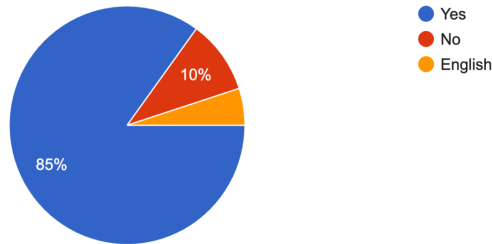


Figure 3. Subtitle language preferences

Audio Choices	% of Respondents
Japanese	85
English	45
Korean	10
Hindi	5
Mandarin	5

Subtitle Choices	% of Respondents
English	94.4
Spanish	5.6
Korean	5.6
Mandarin	5.6

<sup>4</sup> Two respondents mentioned they watched anime in Korean, which may imply a possibility that they may have answered based on the anime of a Korean production. Moreover, for those who watch anime in English with Japanese subtitles, there are two possibilities: they are either native Japanese speakers wanting to learn English or non-native Japanese speakers attempting to improve their word recognition through subtitles. If the second is true, it is reasonable to assume that their level of Japanese listening is quite advanced, as they are able to understand the context by ear.

- **Motivation to Learn Japanese**

Motivational perspectives were also gathered through the survey question: “Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?” The responses revealed that 35% of participants answered “yes,” 45% answered “sometimes,” and 15% answered “no.”<sup>5</sup>

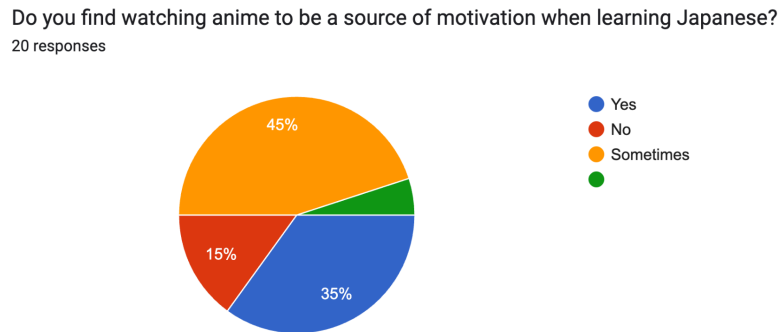


Figure 4. Motivation to learn Japanese through anime

Those who responded affirmatively mentioned improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.

One respondent wrote, “I have been watching anime for over 15 years and was able to pick [up] the language[.] I no longer need to focus so much on the subtitles [...] as I naturally understand what they say[.]” Another explained, “[A]fter watching anime for so many years[.] you come across some words very frequently[.] [...] [Thanks] to subtitles[, you] get to know the meaning too[.] [...] [W]hen [you] hear th[at] word again[.] you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

Respondents who answered “sometimes” also expressed their motivations. For example, one stated, “Sometimes, it motivates me to learn more [J]apanese so I can understand without subtitles[.]”

Another added, “I want to visit [J]apan and somewhere at (sic) the back of my mind[.] [I] feel like anime might help me as well in the process[.]”

- **Classroom Integration**

In response to the survey question, ‘Have you ever watched anime as part of your school language curriculum? (e.g., watching an excerpt during class) 70% answered ‘No’ while the remaining 30%

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<sup>5</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

answered 'Yes'.

Among the open-ended responses of 'If yes, in what way was the anime incorporated into class?', one participant explained:

*"I watched it in my Japanese class when we were done with a unit (sort of like for fun)"*

On the other hand, another response was simply:

*"a movie study, about [J]apanese culture"*

## **Discussion**

Overall, the results suggest that anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation and recognition of everyday Japanese phrases, based on participants' open-ended responses. These findings suggested Hypothesis A, as learners who combined Japanese audio with subtitles also described word recognition compared to those relying on translations, according to the open-ended responses. The results also suggested Hypothesis B, as several participants described repeated exposure to casual expressions as helpful for comprehension compared to textbook language. Evidence related to Hypothesis C was mixed, as individual factors such as multilingual backgrounds, prior Japanese knowledge, and frequency of anime-watching were described as influencing outcomes and motivation. Overall, the results imply that anime serves as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for textbooks, connecting textbook learning with more authentic spoken Japanese, though the responses also suggest the importance of being mindful of exaggerated or overly casual expressions. Earlier research viewed anime as a source of motivation (Fukunaga, 2006), while later work focused on its linguistic benefits (Chan & Wong, 2017). In contrast, this study introduces a third perspective, emphasising how anime-based learning connects motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy in a single framework.

- **Demographics and Language Use**

It was revealed that the respondents of this survey were mostly college students on the SurveySwap platform who frequently watched anime and were may have been drawn to this survey due to its topic. Although SurveySwap allows global participation, English was the predominant language in responses. This is a limitation, as the sample may reflect English-speaking learners more strongly than other groups.

It was also shown that several respondents reported multilingual backgrounds, including Hindi, Mandarin, Italian, and even Japanese. This suggests that anime attracts a linguistically diverse audience, but English dominance still shapes their language-learning process. The fact that everyday anime watchers formed a large portion of the respondents shows that anime is already a part of their daily lives, which makes it an accessible and motivational tool for learning. The disregard of "never" watchers reflects that the survey effectively targeted individuals already engaged in anime only.

- ***Language and Subtitles***

The frequent use of Japanese audio with subtitles suggests that learners engaged with spoken Japanese while relying on written support for comprehension. Several responses described gradually recognizing recurring phrases through repeated listening combined with subtitles, which participants associated with word recognition and phrase acquisition.

Some responses also described watching anime in English with English subtitles (or other non-Japanese audio/subtitle combinations). In these cases, participants did not emphasize Japanese learning goals as strongly, suggesting that anime may function primarily as entertainment unless viewers intentionally choose settings or strategies that support language learning.

- ***Motivation and Language Development***

The responses indicate that anime serves as a source of motivation for many learners, particularly through repeated exposure to common phrases, which improves recognition and recall. The comments also described gradual recognition of common phrases over time.

These findings were supported by previous research conducted by Chan & Wong (2017), in which the worksheets of university students who attended a 10-week course on Learning Japanese Language Through Anime in Malaysia were analysed. In that study, repetition exercises were also emphasised as supporting the memorisation of useful phrases. It was found that anime, unlike the polite speech styles presented in textbooks, was more casual and practical in real-life situations. Interactions between anime characters, such as those between students and teachers, were observed to be informal, reflecting real-life conversations often missing from classroom contexts. Repetition exercises based on anime dialogue were also included in the course, which helped students gradually memorise useful phrases. In this paper's original survey, respondents described a similar process, noting how repeated listening helped them understand Japanese without relying on subtitles.

However, unlike Chan & Wong's study (2017), which was conducted in a classroom setting, the respondents here were self-motivated learners engaging with anime independently. This added the insight that anime was not only supporting formal learning, but was also serving as an independent way to learn casual phrases and maintain motivation outside the classroom. For many respondents, anime was described as an engaging way to learn the language through repeated exposure and genuine interest.

Moreover, according to Razali et al. (2018), anime has not only gained large global popularity but has also contributed to the promotion of literacy in the Japanese language. Anime fans have used online platforms to engage in Japanese linguistic activities such as commenting, reviewing anime-related posts, and creating fan sites, all of which involve reading and writing skills. When doing so, the process of translation in these contents often unconsciously develops new vocabulary and introduces Japanese sentence structures. This concept of diverse representations, such as sounds

and animations that viewers can engage with in the fan-made content, is called multimodal learning. Multimodal learning reflects the respondents' interest in engaging more deeply with anime culture. This includes creating content that uses Japanese language skills, translation, and cultural interpretation. These practices are also common in the broader anime community, where fans often engage in creative, language-based activities such as fan subtitling, translation, and content creation (Ito, 2012).

- ***Classroom Integration***

These results suggest that anime integration in Japanese language learning is not widespread in formal education systems. Where it was used, the responses indicate that anime was often treated as entertainment rather than as a structured learning tool. However, the response mentioning a "movie study, about Japanese culture" directly reveals how cultural factors can support the learning of practical usage of Japanese in real-life situations. By observing character interactions, gestures, and contextual language use, students may deepen both their linguistic and cultural understanding.

Such practical anime integrations in class are recommended. Classroom activities such as analysing anime dialogue can help students engage with the linguistic structures of particular quotes and expressions. Historical contexts represented in anime can also be studied, which not only enhances language development but also provides cultural and historical insights for learners hoping to live or work in Japan. Including subtitles while watching may further engage students, since learners are able to match auditory Japanese with written forms in their textbooks. In this way, anime can serve as a complementary tool alongside traditional materials, particularly in developing reading comprehension skills.

The survey responses also align with prior research emphasising anime's contribution to literacy development. Experts note that anime boosts linguistic acquisition by supporting word recognition, listening skills, pronunciation, and motivation. Fukunaga (2006), for example, found through group discussions and interviews with Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) students that learners gradually became familiar with frequently spoken phrases through repetitive expressions often absent in textbooks. In the same way, the responses in this study show that anime motivated learners to recognise and remember everyday phrases through repeated listening. As one participant explained, "After watching anime for so many years, you come across some words very frequently. Thanks to subtitles, you get to know the meaning too. When you hear that word again, you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles."

These responses suggest that repeated exposure may help learners become familiar with frequently used phrases. Overall, the findings suggest that anime may support literacy development through word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, while also sustaining motivation. Within this exploratory sample, anime appears to function as a complementary tool alongside traditional instruction. In this way, new daily phrases can be constantly acquired, making anime a valuable complementary tool to traditional instruction in Japanese language learning.

## **Benefits of Anime and Language Integration**

This is another benefit from learning Japanese through anime: many are motivated to understand the cultural context of anime or get familiar with Japanese culture. For example, the gendered pronouns commonly heard in anime, such as “俺” (used for men) and “あたし” (used by young girls), not only reflect gender-based differences in Japanese but also indicate the character’s age and social context. According to a study by Chan & Wong (2017), students were surprised to hear the elderly female character in the anime *Hanasaku Iroha* using masculine language, specifically words like “お前” (omae) and “こいつ” (koitsu), which are typically considered rough or informal and usually associated with male speech. Notably, the researchers observed that some grandmothers in real life also use these expressions instead of more traditionally polite or feminine language. These language variations can also be observed in various social contexts, such as in the workplace, where formal language is required, and at school, where the language may be more casual. Chan and Wong (2017) also observe that social hierarchies in anime influence character dialogues, helping language learners distinguish between polite and informal speech. Hence, it can be inferred that JFLs who wish to travel to Japan are likely to watch anime in order to develop this skill to adapt language style accordingly.

## **Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration**

Despite all the benefits introduced above, anime language learning can have a negative impact on non-native Japanese speakers. Anime often incorporates overly casual and sometimes inappropriate phrases, especially in shounen and action genres. As a result, the survey response “I believe some wording can be wrong” might represent those who prefer to learn Japanese in the traditional way to avoid wording misinterpretations from anime dialogues. Another challenge for learners is to distinguish the gap between anime speech and real-life Japanese. According to Fukunaga (2006), some find it difficult to apply their knowledge in real life due to exaggerated expressions and fictional vocabulary used in anime. Even the dialogues that reflect the characters’ social roles (e.g., speech patterns of high school students, small children, or even samurai) may be inaccurate at times, so learners must be guided to distinguish between natural Japanese and stylised anime dialogue that are uncommon or outdated in real life. Overall, these undesirable outcomes are discouraging some people from using anime as a tool for language learning, especially for those whose aim is to travel to Japan.

## **Conclusion**

The effectiveness of anime as a tool for Japanese language learning was investigated, focusing on the comparison of anime-based learning methods and traditional textbook learning methods. A survey targeted at JFL learners on the SurveySwap platform was conducted so that respondents could be

gathered globally and qualitative data could be sought. By this approach, a diverse range of experiences and different levels of familiarity with the Japanese language were allowed. Based on these results, the trends and potential correlations in the respondents' demographics and varying linguistic backgrounds when acquiring Japanese were to be analysed. By comparing and analysing traditional language learning methods with anime integration, the issue of declining Japanese language learners was approached through popular culture. Through this survey, perspectives and understandings of Japanese learners on how their anime-watching habits have impacted their language learning experiences were shared.

Based on the survey and prior research done with external sources, the findings suggest that the anime-watching method may have a positive impact on Japanese language acquisition for foreign learners. The findings suggested that, depending on the various combinations of subtitles and the language the anime was watched in, word recognition and phrase memorisation in real-life contexts improved.

Moreover, the open-ended questions supported the claim of most researchers that anime is widely a motivational factor to start learning Japanese: to understand the context of the anime, to get familiar with Japanese cultural norms, and to enhance their travelling experiences by improving their speaking skills. However, some responses challenge this view, as respondents discussed the limitations of anime learning methods, such as overly casual and inappropriate phrases that can cause mistaken interpretation. As a result, it showed that some prefer learning in traditional learning methods rather than through anime.

Although anime-integrated learning is yet to be spread in educational curricula, this paper suggests possible benefits that anime could bring, as well as some practical recommendations to be used in the classroom. In order to realistically apply this new method, though, it is crucial to explore how traditional teaching methods can be combined with anime-based learning and whether educators are able to effectively balance both approaches to mitigate the limitations of misinterpretations of certain speeches.

## **Research Ethics**

This study involved a minimal-risk, anonymous, voluntary survey and did not collect personally identifiable or sensitive information. The research was conducted independently by a secondary school student. The author's school does not maintain an institutional review board (IRB) or formal ethics committee capable of issuing ethics approval or exemption determinations; this is confirmed by a designated school official. Accordingly, the study followed ethical principles appropriate to minimal-risk social research.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation through a consent statement presented at the beginning of the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could discontinue at any time without penalty. Responses were collected anonymously, and no identifying information was recorded.

Survey data were stored securely in a password-protected account accessible only to the author. Data will be retained until completion of the publication process and then permanently deleted. The study involved no deception or intervention and posed minimal risk. Because the sample was self-selected and recruited online, the results may be subject to sampling bias and may not be fully representative.

I affirm that the ideas, arguments, and analysis in this paper are my own. AI tools were used only for minor language editing (grammar and clarity), not for generating content or analysis.

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**Manuscript:** “Anime as an Educational Approach for Language Learning” (Submission 100142)

Dear Editorial Team,

Thank you for the desk review and the opportunity to revise and resubmit. Below is a summary of how the manuscript has been revised in response to the comments.

### **Comment 1**

“The main point concerns the methodology and how the findings are framed. The survey remains small (20 participants) and relies on a self-selecting platform. The conclusions would benefit from being expressed more cautiously, particularly regarding validation of the hypotheses.”

#### **Response:**

The discussion has been revised to frame the findings more cautiously, reflecting the exploratory nature of the study and the limitations of the small, self-selecting sample. Language such as “validated” has been replaced with more tentative phrasing (e.g., “suggest,” “indicate,” or “provide preliminary support”). The hypothesis discussion has been adjusted accordingly.

### **Comment 2**

“The methodology section could be more precise, clarifying why the method was chosen, how participants were selected (e.g., via SurveySwap), and how responses were analyzed (such as grouping recurring themes).”

#### **Response:**

The methodology section has been expanded to clarify the rationale for selecting an online survey, the voluntary recruitment process via SurveySwap, and the eligibility criteria for participation. Additional detail has been added regarding data analysis, including descriptive summarization of closed-ended responses and thematic grouping of recurring ideas in open-ended responses.

### **Comment 3**

“Some tightening would help in the results and discussion, particularly where ideas around motivation and subtitles are repeated. A clearer distinction between observation and interpretation would improve clarity.”

**Response:**

The Results and Discussion sections have been revised to reduce repetition, especially concerning motivation and subtitle use. The Results section now focuses on descriptive findings and participant quotations, while interpretive commentary has been clearly confined to the Discussion section to strengthen the distinction between observation and analysis.

**Comment 4**

“A final pass on references and proofreading would improve the overall polish.”

**Response:**

The manuscript has undergone careful proofreading for clarity and consistency. References and in-text citations have been reviewed and formatted for accuracy.

Thank you again for the constructive feedback and for the opportunity to strengthen this work. I hope the revisions address the concerns raised and that the manuscript is now suitable for further consideration.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box redacting the author's name.

## ANIME AS AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

□ **Accept with major revisions (acceptance conditional on satisfactory major revisions)**

### **Originality & Significance – Does the paper contribute new insights or perspectives to the field?**

Yes, the paper addresses a previously researched issue in language learning (the benefits of anime for language education) from an overlooked/ different perspective, i.e. Japanese learners' *out-of-classroom interactions* with anime and the benefits from the learners' point of view. This is an interesting vantage point.

However, the author should stake out the field more clearly so that the sources cited reflect the breadth of the field (see 'Engagement with Literature' and 'Evidence'). Moreover, they should reformulate how they present the significance of the responses to "Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?" in a more consistent way. At times, the author argues that 'anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation'; at other times, they say 'anime-based learning connects motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy in a single framework'. Since only 35% answered 'yes' and 45% 'sometimes' to the question about motivation, I recommend emphasising the idea of 'framework' in which motivation works in tandem with other factors.

### **Clarity & Structure – Is the argument well-organized and easy to follow? Are ideas clearly presented?**

Yes, in the main, but the author should action the following to align the paper with good research practice and improve cohesiveness:

- Keywords list. Replace 'linguistics' with a more relevant term, e.g. language learning, foreign language learning. Replace 'survey' with 'quantitative and qualitative research'
- State explicitly at the outset the contribution of the paper (see above), In other words, state explicitly that the paper will focus on the learners' *own perceptions*. i.e. Japanese language learners' perception of using anime as a learning tool *out of the classroom*
- Outline research methods in the abstract (mixed methods)
- Integrate footnotes in the text.
- Move ethical considerations after 'Methodology'
- The signposting provided by the author – '(1) the benefits of using anime as a learning tool through context, (2) the challenges and limitations of anime and

*language integration, and (3) practical recommendations for integrating anime into official Japanese language curricula* – does not reflect the structure of the paper. The subheadings should be reworded to reflect the signposting, or vice versa.

- Split 'Methodology' into two paragraphs
- Outline the themes identified in the open-ended responses in 'Methodology'. Do the subheadings 'Language and Subtitles', 'Motivation and Language Development', etc. refer to these very themes?
- Page 11. Reference to 'travel to Japan' is confusing because up to this point the emphasis has been on learning for education. Rephrase to make the paper more cohesive

### **Use of Evidence & Research Methods – Are sources appropriately cited? Is the**

### **methodology sound and well-explained?**

There are inaccuracies to be fixed:

- Reformat references in abstract: surname followed by year
  - 'Anderson' first cited in the abstract appear neither in the paper nor in end-of-text list
  - Page 1. Provide the source for the decline in Japanese learners
  - Page 2. Add 'Iida & Takeyama, 2022' to end-of-text list and replace '&' with 'and'
  - P.2: Razali et al. (2018) does not match end-of-text list. Check and reformat.
  - Reformat end-of-text reference: (PDF) JAPANESE LANGUAGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING ANIME AS A TEACHING TOOL.
  - Remove from end-of-text list as not mentioned in text: *Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, Izumi Tsuji Fandom Unbound Otaku Culture in A Connected World PDF.*
- The format also looks odd and the source does not seem academic.**
- In 'Methodology' Anderson and Fukunaga appear to be co-authors. Check this as it clashes with end-of-text list

### **Engagement with Literature – Does the paper demonstrate an understanding of relevant research in the field? Do they acknowledge known results and connect their findings well to them?**

- The paper demonstrates understanding of the field in that the author highlights an issue worth investigating. However, although the author presents research on the topic as well established (see abstract), the paper connects to four sources mainly: Chan and Wong, Fukunaga, Han and Ling, Razali. Can the author stake out the breadth and depth of the field more clearly and add 3-4 sources

accordingly **if they exist**? If not, please make it clear that research on this topic is emergent/limited.

- Add sources for 'multimodal learning' (p. 10)

**Grammar & Language – Is the writing clear and professional? Minor grammatical and stylistic errors should be noted, but they should not be the main focus of the review**

Yes, the writing is clear and professional. The following oversights/stylistic errors should be fixed:

- Replace 'in an educational way' with 'for educational purposes'
- Remove commas before 'as' when 'as' means 'because', e.g. 'These findings suggested Hypothesis A, as learners who combined Japanese audio with subtitles also described ...'
- Remove '[2]' on page 2
- Replace '&' with 'and'
- 'delve into' is increasingly associated with AI texts. Replace
- Join the first two paragraphs of 'Research purpose'
- Page 4: remove comma before 'who are globally...'
- Bottom of page 5: Capital letter missing. 'in what language...?'
- Justify/align indent: 'Those who responded affirmatively mentioned improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition'.

## *Review: Anime as an Educational Approach for Language Learning*

This article is an inspiring exploration of anime as a tool for Japanese language learning and I appreciated the author's initiative in combining a literature review with original survey data. The focus on both motivation and language acquisition across a variety of contexts is explained well, and the research questions and hypotheses are appropriate and insightful.

The integration of participant quotes adds more richness and authenticity, and the author shows good awareness of limitations, such as the small sample size and exploratory nature of the study. However, I would have appreciated some more recent literature cited in-text from within the last few years.

Mentions of more recent articles, such as a 2026 citation in the bibliography, are not mentioned in the text, and furthermore links to a 2017 article instead. This is where the main concern of the article is confusing: there are several authors mentioned in the text that are not cited in the bibliography, and there are a few authors cited in the bibliography that are not cited in the text. These elements need major revisions before proceeding further.

The graphic data from the survey is also problematic at times, there are percentages and text-based information that are missing or need further explanations. While it is alright to use AI for minor grammar editing, there are certain examples that I feel were taken from ChatGPT and used in certain sentences, such as “not only” and (e.g., with parentheses) which is very much a typical statement that ChatGPT often utilizes and should be removed and simply connect to the main point.

Further elucidating how the specific results of the survey additionally support or challenge each hypothesis would enhance the article as well. This is especially concerning towards the end of the article, as this section raises some challenges of anime-based learning, though using the word “negative” is a bit strong – perhaps risks or limitations. The article would also benefit from some recommendations to counteract the challenges mentioned in the article. Although not required, there is specific mention of guidance needed, and these recommendations could be more helpful in supporting the readers with possibilities.

Beyond these dynamics, the article is composed well and has a natural flow. I am excited to see your continued research trajectory and wishing you the best in these revisions and all of your endeavors.

Recommendation: Accept with major revisions

# Anime as an Educational Approach for Language Learning

## Abstract

With its global popularity, Japanese anime has been recognised as an effective tool to learn Japanese. Studies such as Anderson and Natsuki Fukunaga explore how some language courses incorporate anime-based learning for student motivation. This paper examines the two questions: How does anime help people stay motivated to learn Japanese and understand the language and culture better, and what are the limitations of using anime to learn Japanese in an educational way? Extending previous research on anime's impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, this research distributed an online survey to anime-watchers regarding their Japanese fluency and their audio/subtitle preferences. The results suggested that anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation and recognition of daily Japanese phrases, particularly when original Japanese audio with subtitles was used. However, it was also implied that limitations exist, as exaggerated or overly casual expressions common in anime may limit the effective application of language skills in real-life contexts. Future research could also examine how anime can be systematically integrated into curricula and evaluate whether it promotes cultural awareness as effectively as it supports language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Linguistics, Anime, Survey, Japanese

## Introduction

“[Anime] motivates me to learn more Japanese, so I can understand without subtitles.”  
—Anonymous survey respondent (2/23, 2025)

Japanese popular culture, such as J-pop, J-dramas, and manga novels, has become a significant cultural force in recent years. This includes anime, and its popularity has led to a growing interest in Japanese culture. However, educators and institutions have not greatly promoted the integration of anime as an educational tool in Japanese learning. While anime grew more popular, fewer people have become interested in learning Japanese. Given that Japanese course enrollment has been declining since 1979, this research aims to present how Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language acquisition. This research aims to investigate whether and how anime helps people remain motivated to learn Japanese and better understand the language and culture, and what the limitations of using anime as an educational tool for learning Japanese are.

## Background and Literature Review

Although anime is not officially part of JFL curricula worldwide, it has been used in language education since the late 1980s in Japan, significantly contributing to students' linguistic skill development (Iida & Taniyama, 2022). These early recommendations were suggested by Japanese language teachers in schools, as experts thought anime could serve as a motivational factor for their students (Allison, 2018). Considering that students from Japanese high schools and colleges often participate in anime circles and clubs outside of school, teachers first came up with the integration of anime into their classes. It was to reinforce their exposure to the language and strengthen the students' connection with the language itself.

Chan & Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension [2]. Building on the findings, anime allows students to explore **not only formal** textbook language but also slang and casual expressions. These repeated phrases can help learners recognise words more easily and improve their pronunciation through listening practice. Fukunaga (2006) and Chan & Wong (2017) speculate that this linguistic development also comes from cultural awareness in the anime context. Students gain insights that are often not covered in formal language-learning methods, such as Japanese social contexts, daily conversations, and traditional practices. Learning about these daily contexts with cultural understanding will help students to link and apply the acquired vocabulary and language in real-life situations. Especially in Japanese, which has a complex system of politeness (such as keigo, casual, and humble forms), these subtle nuances are difficult to fully grasp through textbooks alone. Anime dialogue, however, demonstrates how these speech levels vary across different social contexts.

Expanding on this, Han & Ling (2017) emphasise anime's potential to be incorporated in classrooms, noting that anime-based activities, such as active viewing, freeze framing, dubbing, and role play, could create a learner-centred environment that stimulates both linguistic and critical thinking skills. They explain that anime helps learners practice **not only** pronunciation and vocabulary but also social nuance by encouraging students to analyse dialogue in a specific context. More importantly, they stress that anime's variety of speech styles, from polite forms to dialects and informal slang, exposes learners to linguistic registers rarely found in textbooks, thus improving adaptability in communication. Additionally, Razali *et al.* (2018) further support that anime fosters multimodal learning, where subtitles, sound, and imagery combine to strengthen comprehension and encourage engagement in language-related practices such as fan translation or online discussions. These findings suggest that anime can fill in the gap between traditional instruction and informal, everyday Japanese, making it a complement to existing methods.

## Research Purpose

This paper investigates the relationship between anime and Japanese language education, specifically comparing anime-based language learning methods with traditional approaches. This

paper will delve into the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning.

Moreover, this paper will also explore whether and how anime can serve as an effective tool for language acquisition in both formal and informal settings. Previous research has largely focused on structured classroom use (e.g., Chan & Wong, 2017), but because learners also engage with anime independently at home, it is necessary to evaluate its potential across both contexts.

This research examines how anime could expose learners to various linguistic features, such as informal and casual speech, to develop word recognition and pronunciation through content. This paper is structured in three main sections: (1) the benefits of using anime as a learning tool through context, (2) the challenges and limitations of anime and language integration, and (3) practical recommendations for integrating anime into official Japanese language curricula. Through analysis of the survey responses, this paper will provide new insights into how anime can be utilised to enhance linguistic development in foreign Japanese language learners, particularly by supporting the shift from textbook Japanese to natural, everyday speech.

## **Hypothesis**

This study's research question is "Does anime-based learning improve Japanese language acquisition and motivation compared to traditional textbook-based learning?" Hence, it could be hypothesised that learners who watch anime with Japanese audio and subtitles in their home language will show greater improvements in word recognition and pronunciation compared to learners who rely only on textbooks (Hypothesis A). Building on previous research (Chan & Wong, 2017; Andersson & Fukunaga, 2020), it is hypothesised that repeated exposure to casual and everyday phrases in anime will result in stronger comprehension and recall than exposure to formal textbook Japanese (Hypothesis B). Finally, it is hypothesised that individual factors such as demographic background, anime-watching frequency, and prior Japanese proficiency will influence how effective anime is as a tool for both linguistic development and cultural learning (Hypothesis C).

## **Methodology**

This study utilised a 10-minute survey to explore the role of anime in Japanese language development within current education systems. An online survey method was selected to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling participants to report their learning experiences, strategies, and perceptions in their own words. The survey included 15 questions, ranging from multiple-choice to open-ended. Twenty individuals participated and provided responses. The

research utilised the online platform SurveySwap to gather respondents.<sup>1</sup> SurveySwap was used to recruit participants through a voluntary, self-selecting survey exchange. Respondents were screened for eligibility by confirming that they were studying Japanese and engaged with anime. It helped reach a global community and obtain diverse insights based on their demographic information and theme-specific answers, including their home language, level of Japanese literacy, and anime-watching frequency. Closed-ended items were organised into quantitative summaries. Responses indicating “never watching anime” were excluded from analyses focused on anime-watching practices. Open-ended responses were reviewed multiple times and grouped into frequently addressed themes based on common experiences with representing quotes. The findings are exploratory at this stage, as this study serves as a pilot project aimed at addressing an existing gap in the literature. Given this, the findings are not generalizable, but should rather be seen as exploratory and may support and inform future research with larger participant groups.

## Results

- ***Demographics and Linguistic Profile***

The demographic and linguistic profile of the survey respondents reflects the young population of anime-engaged people, who are globally diverse but mostly speak English. The average age range for anime watchers worldwide is 13 to 24 years old, while the average age group for SurveySwap users is said to be 18 to 28 years old, consisting mostly of university and graduate students. The majority of the respondents for this survey were between 25 and 29 years old (60%), followed by 10 to 18-year-olds (30%), and 30 to 34-year-olds (10%).

- ***Languages Spoken at Home***

For the question on languages spoken at home, the item was multi-select, so percentages were not expected to total 100%. English was selected by 80% of respondents, followed by Hindi (30%), Japanese (20%), Mandarin (10%), and Italian (10%). Several participants reported multilingual backgrounds in addition to English. A smaller portion (20%) selected Japanese, either as native speakers or as learners with high confidence in their proficiency.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was purposely written in English to look for a global audience. SurveySwap only supports English, Dutch, and German and does not support non-Latin languages.

<sup>2</sup> This was a ‘select all that apply’ question.

What language do you speak at home? Select all that apply.  
20 responses

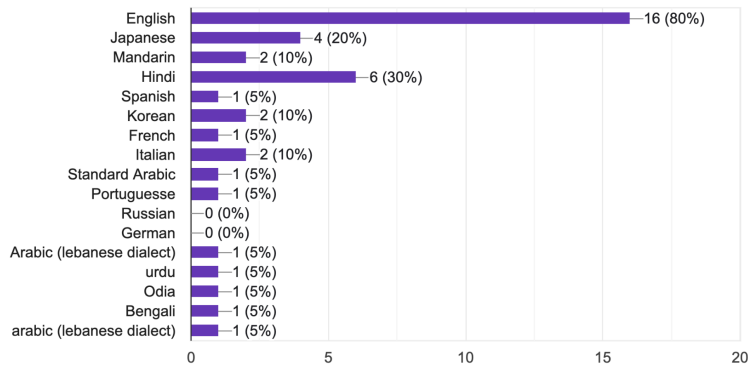


Figure 1. Languages Spoken at Home by Survey Respondents

- **Anime-Watching Frequency**

Anime-watching frequency was shown to vary, with 30% of respondents reporting as watching every day, 20% as watching once every two weeks, and 10% as never watching anime. Outliers who indicated that they “never” watched anime (10%) were disregarded from further analysis.

How often do you watch Japanese Anime?  
20 responses

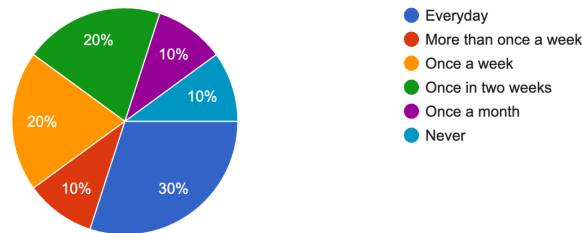


Figure 2. Frequency of anime watching among respondents

- **Audio and Subtitle Preferences**

As participants were asked what language they usually watch anime in (audio), multiple responses were allowed, with the original Japanese audio preferred by 85% of respondents, followed by English (45%), while smaller proportions selected Korean (10%), Hindi (5%), or Mandarin (5%)<sup>3</sup>. When asked ‘in what language are the subtitles in?’, most respondents chose English (94.4%), with Spanish,

<sup>3</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

Korean, and Mandarin each being reported by 5.6% of respondents<sup>4</sup>.

When watching anime, do you usually use subtitles in your home language?  
20 responses

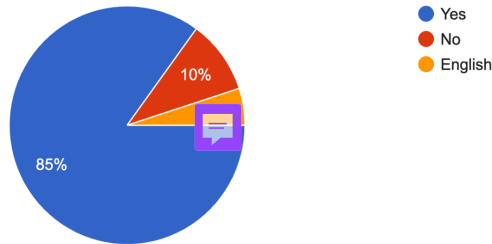


Figure 3. Subtitle language preferences

Audio Choices	% of Respondents
Japanese	85
English	45
Korean	10
Hindi	5
Mandarin	5

Subtitle Choices	% of Respondents
English	94.4
Spanish	5.6
Korean	5.6
Mandarin	5.6

<sup>4</sup> Two respondents mentioned they watched anime in Korean, which may imply a possibility that they may have answered based on the anime of a Korean production. Moreover, for those who watch anime in English with Japanese subtitles, there are two possibilities: they are either native Japanese speakers wanting to learn English or non-native Japanese speakers attempting to improve their word recognition through subtitles. If the second is true, it is reasonable to assume that their level of Japanese listening is quite advanced, as they are able to understand the context by ear.

- **Motivation to Learn Japanese**

Motivational perspectives were also gathered through the survey question: “Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?” The responses revealed that 35% of participants answered “yes,” 45% answered “sometimes,” and 15% answered “no.”<sup>5</sup>

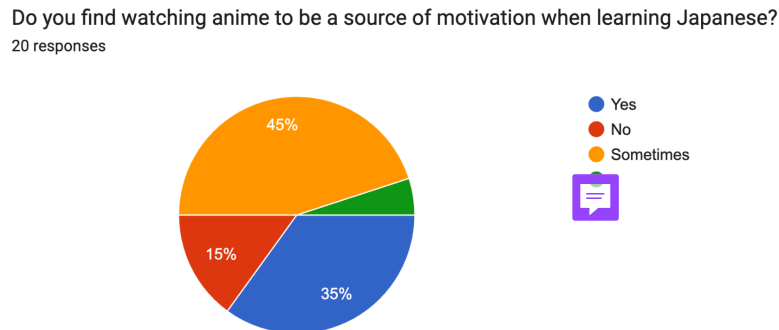


Figure 4. Motivation to learn Japanese through anime

Those who responded affirmatively mentioned improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.

One respondent wrote, “I have been watching anime for over 15 years and was able to pick [up] the language[.] I no longer need to focus so much on the subtitles [...] as I naturally understand what they say[.]” Another explained, “[A]fter watching anime for so many years[.] you come across some words very frequently[.] [...] [Thanks] to subtitles[, you] get to know the meaning too[.] [...] [W]hen [you] hear th[at] word again[.] you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

Respondents who answered “sometimes” also expressed their motivations. For example, one stated, “Sometimes, it motivates me to learn more [J]apanese so I can understand without subtitles[.]” Another added, “I want to visit [J]apan and somewhere at (sic) the back of my mind[.] [I] feel like anime might help me as well in the process[.]”

- **Classroom Integration**

In response to the survey question, ‘Have you ever watched anime as part of your school language curriculum? (e.g., watching an excerpt during class) 70% answered ‘No’ while the remaining 30%

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<sup>5</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

answered 'Yes'.

Among the open-ended responses of 'If yes, in what way was the anime incorporated into class?', one participant explained:

*"I watched it in my Japanese class when we were done with a unit (sort of like for fun)"*

On the other hand, another response was simply:

*"a movie study, about [J]apanese culture"*

## **Discussion**

Overall, the results suggest that anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation and recognition of everyday Japanese phrases, based on participants' open-ended responses. These findings suggested Hypothesis A, as learners who combined Japanese audio with subtitles also described word recognition compared to those relying on translations, according to the open-ended responses. The results also suggested Hypothesis B, as several participants described repeated exposure to casual expressions as helpful for comprehension compared to textbook language. Evidence related to Hypothesis C was mixed, as individual factors such as multilingual backgrounds, prior Japanese knowledge, and frequency of anime-watching were described as influencing outcomes and motivation. Overall, the results imply that anime serves as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for textbooks, connecting textbook learning with more authentic spoken Japanese, though the responses also suggest the importance of being mindful of exaggerated or overly casual expressions. Earlier research viewed anime as a source of motivation (Fukunaga, 2006), while later work focused on its linguistic benefits (Chan & Wong, 2017). In contrast, this study introduces a third perspective, emphasising how anime-based learning connects motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy in a single framework.

- **Demographics and Language Use**

It was revealed that the respondents of this survey were mostly college students on the SurveySwap platform who frequently watched anime and were may have been drawn to this survey due to its topic. Although SurveySwap allows global participation, English was the predominant language in responses. This is a limitation, as the sample may reflect English-speaking learners more strongly than other groups.

It was also shown that several respondents reported multilingual backgrounds, including Hindi, Mandarin, Italian, and even Japanese. This suggests that anime attracts a linguistically diverse audience, but English dominance still shapes their language-learning process. The fact that everyday anime watchers formed a large portion of the respondents shows that anime is already a part of their daily lives, which makes it an accessible and motivational tool for learning. The disregard of "never" watchers reflects that the survey effectively targeted individuals already engaged in anime only.

- **Language and Subtitles**

The frequent use of Japanese audio with subtitles suggests that learners engaged with spoken Japanese while relying on written support for comprehension. Several responses described gradually recognizing recurring phrases through repeated listening combined with subtitles, which participants associated with word recognition and phrase acquisition.

Some responses also described watching anime in English with English subtitles (or other non-Japanese audio/subtitle combinations). In these cases, participants did not emphasize Japanese learning goals as strongly, suggesting that anime may function primarily as entertainment unless viewers intentionally choose settings or strategies that support language learning.

- **Motivation and Language Development**

The responses indicate that anime serves as a source of motivation for many learners, particularly through repeated exposure to common phrases, which improves recognition and recall. The comments also described gradual recognition of common phrases over time.

These findings were supported by previous research conducted by Chan & Wong (2017), in which the worksheets of university students who attended a 10-week course on Learning Japanese Language Through Anime in Malaysia were analysed. In that study, repetition exercises were also emphasised as supporting the memorisation of useful phrases. It was found that anime, unlike the polite speech styles presented in textbooks, was more casual and practical in real-life situations. Interactions between anime characters, such as those between students and teachers, were observed to be informal, reflecting real-life conversations often missing from classroom contexts. Repetition exercises based on anime dialogue were also included in the course, which helped students gradually memorise useful phrases. In this paper's original survey, respondents described a similar process, noting how repeated listening helped them understand Japanese without relying on subtitles.

However, unlike Chan & Wong's study (2017), which was conducted in a classroom setting, the respondents here were self-motivated learners engaging with anime independently. This added the insight that anime was not only supporting formal learning, but was also serving as an independent way to learn casual phrases and maintain motivation outside the classroom. For many respondents, anime was described as an engaging way to learn the language through repeated exposure and genuine interest.

Moreover, according to Razali et al. (2018), anime has not only gained large global popularity but has also contributed to the promotion of literacy in the Japanese language. Anime fans have used online platforms to engage in Japanese linguistic activities such as commenting, reviewing anime-related posts, and creating fan sites, all of which involve reading and writing skills. When doing so, the process of translation in these contents often unconsciously develops new vocabulary and introduces Japanese sentence structures. This concept of diverse representations, such as sounds

and animations that viewers can engage with in the fan-made content, is called multimodal learning. Multimodal learning reflects the respondents' interest in engaging more deeply with anime culture. This includes creating content that uses Japanese language skills, translation, and cultural interpretation. These practices are also common in the broader anime community, where fans often engage in creative, language-based activities such as fan subtitling, translation, and content creation (Ito, 2012).

- ***Classroom Integration***

These results suggest that anime integration in Japanese language learning is not widespread in formal education systems. Where it was used, the responses indicate that anime was often treated as entertainment rather than as a structured learning tool. However, the response mentioning a “movie study, about Japanese culture” directly reveals how cultural factors can support the learning of practical usage of Japanese in real-life situations. By observing character interactions, gestures, and contextual language use, students may deepen both their linguistic and cultural understanding.

Such practical anime integrations in class are recommended. Classroom activities such as analysing anime dialogue can help students engage with the linguistic structures of particular quotes and expressions. Historical contexts represented in anime can also be studied, which not only enhances language development but also provides cultural and historical insights for learners hoping to live or work in Japan. Including subtitles while watching may further engage students, since learners are able to match auditory Japanese with written forms in their textbooks. In this way, anime can serve as a complementary tool alongside traditional materials, particularly in developing reading comprehension skills.

The survey responses also align with prior research emphasising anime's contribution to literacy development. Experts note that anime boosts linguistic acquisition by supporting word recognition, listening skills, pronunciation, and motivation. Fukunaga (2006), for example, found through group discussions and interviews with Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) students that learners gradually became familiar with frequently spoken phrases through repetitive expressions often absent in textbooks. In the same way, the responses in this study show that anime motivated learners to recognise and remember everyday phrases through repeated listening. As one participant explained, “After watching anime for so many years, you come across some words very frequently. Thanks to subtitles, you get to know the meaning too. When you hear that word again, you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

These responses suggest that repeated exposure may help learners become familiar with frequently used phrases. Overall, the findings suggest that anime may support literacy development through word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, while also sustaining motivation. Within this exploratory sample, anime appears to function as a complementary tool alongside traditional instruction. In this way, new daily phrases can be constantly acquired, making anime a valuable complementary tool to traditional instruction in Japanese language learning.

## Benefits of Anime and Language Integration

This is another benefit from learning Japanese through anime: many are motivated to understand the cultural context of anime or get familiar with Japanese culture. For example, the gendered pronouns commonly heard in anime, such as “俺” (used for men) and “あたし” (used by young girls), not only reflect gender-based differences in Japanese but also indicate the character’s age and social context. According to a study by Chan & Wong (2017), students were surprised to hear the elderly female character in the anime *Hanasaku Iroha* using masculine language, specifically words like “お前” (omae) and “こいつ” (koitsu), which are typically considered rough or informal and usually associated with male speech. Notably, the researchers observed that some grandmothers in real life also use these expressions instead of more traditionally polite or feminine language. These language variations can also be observed in various social contexts, such as in the workplace, where formal language is required, and at school, where the language may be more casual. Chan and Wong (2017) also observe that social hierarchies in anime influence character dialogues, helping language learners distinguish between polite and informal speech. Hence, it can be inferred that JFLs who wish to travel to Japan are likely to watch anime in order to develop this skill to adapt language style accordingly.

## Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration

Despite all the benefits introduced above, anime language learning can have a negative impact on non-native Japanese speakers. Anime often incorporates overly casual and sometimes inappropriate phrases, especially in shounen and action genres. As a result, the survey response “I believe some wording can be wrong” might represent those who prefer to learn Japanese in the traditional way to avoid wording misinterpretations from anime dialogues. Another challenge for learners is to distinguish the gap between anime speech and real-life Japanese. According to Fukunaga (2006), some find it difficult to apply their knowledge in real life due to exaggerated expressions and fictional vocabulary used in anime. Even the dialogues that reflect the characters’ social roles (e.g., speech patterns of high school students, small children, or even samurai) may be inaccurate at times, so learners must be guided to distinguish between natural Japanese and stylised anime dialogue that are uncommon or outdated in real life. Overall, these undesirable outcomes are discouraging some people from using anime as a tool for language learning, especially for those whose aim is to travel to Japan.

## Conclusion

The effectiveness of anime as a tool for Japanese language learning was investigated, focusing on the comparison of anime-based learning methods and traditional textbook learning methods. A survey targeted at JFL learners on the SurveySwap platform was conducted so that respondents could be

gathered globally and qualitative data could be sought. By this approach, a diverse range of experiences and different levels of familiarity with the Japanese language were allowed. Based on these results, the trends and potential correlations in the respondents' demographics and varying linguistic backgrounds when acquiring Japanese were to be analysed. By comparing and analysing traditional language learning methods with anime integration, the issue of declining Japanese language learners was approached through popular culture. Through this survey, perspectives and understandings of Japanese learners on how their anime-watching habits have impacted their language learning experiences were shared.

Based on the survey and prior research done with external sources, the findings suggest that the anime-watching method may have a positive impact on Japanese language acquisition for foreign learners. The findings suggested that, depending on the various combinations of subtitles and the language the anime was watched in, word recognition and phrase memorisation in real-life contexts improved.

Moreover, the open-ended questions supported the claim of most researchers that anime is widely a motivational factor to start learning Japanese: to understand the context of the anime, to get familiar with Japanese cultural norms, and to enhance their travelling experiences by improving their speaking skills. However, some responses challenge this view, as respondents discussed the limitations of anime learning methods, such as overly casual and inappropriate phrases that can cause mistaken interpretation. As a result, it showed that some prefer learning in traditional learning methods rather than through anime.

Although anime-integrated learning is yet to be spread in educational curricula, this paper suggests possible benefits that anime could bring, as well as some practical recommendations to be used in the classroom. In order to realistically apply this new method, though, it is crucial to explore how traditional teaching methods can be combined with anime-based learning and whether educators are able to effectively balance both approaches to mitigate the limitations of misinterpretations of certain speeches.

## **Research Ethics**

This study involved a minimal-risk, anonymous, voluntary survey and did not collect personally identifiable or sensitive information. The research was conducted independently by a secondary school student. The author's school does not maintain an institutional review board (IRB) or formal ethics committee capable of issuing ethics approval or exemption determinations; this is confirmed by a designated school official. Accordingly, the study followed ethical principles appropriate to minimal-risk social research.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation through a consent statement presented at the beginning of the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could discontinue at any time without penalty. Responses were collected anonymously, and no identifying information was recorded.

Survey data were stored securely in a password-protected account accessible only to the author. Data will be retained until completion of the publication process and then permanently deleted. The study involved no deception or intervention and posed minimal risk. Because the sample was self-selected and recruited online, the results may be subject to sampling bias and may not be fully representative.

I affirm that the ideas, arguments, and analysis in this paper are my own. AI tools were used only for minor language editing (grammar and clarity), not for generating content or analysis.

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## **Anime as an Educational Approach for Language Learning**

### **Abstract**

With its global popularity, Japanese anime has been recognised as an effective tool to learn Japanese. Previous studies have explored how anime-based learning can support student motivation. This paper examines the two questions: How does anime help people stay motivated to learn Japanese and understand the language and culture better, and what are the limitations of using anime to learn Japanese for educational purposes? Building on a limited but developing body of research on anime's impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, this study used a mixed-methods online survey of anime viewers, combining quantitative questions about Japanese proficiency and audio/subtitle preferences with qualitative open-ended responses about motivation, learning strategies, and perceived limitations. The results suggested that anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation and recognition of daily Japanese phrases, particularly when original Japanese audio with subtitles was used. However, it was also implied that limitations exist as exaggerated or overly casual expressions common in anime may limit the effective application of language skills in real-life contexts. Future research could also examine how anime can be systematically integrated into curricula and evaluate whether it promotes cultural awareness as effectively as it supports language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Language Learning, Anime, Quantitative and Qualitative Research, Japanese

### **Introduction**

“[Anime] motivates me to learn more Japanese, so I can understand without subtitles.”  
—Anonymous survey respondent (2/23, 2025)

Japanese popular culture, such as J-pop, J-dramas, and manga novels, has become a significant cultural force in recent years. This includes anime, and its popularity has led to a growing interest in Japanese culture. However, educators and institutions have not greatly promoted the integration of anime as an educational tool in Japanese learning. This paper contributes to research on anime and Japanese language learning by focusing on learners' own perceptions of using anime as a learning tool outside the classroom. Rather than examining only formal classroom uses of anime, the study investigates how learners describe their independent anime-watching practices and how these practices relate to motivation, phrase recognition, listening, and cultural understanding. While anime grew more popular, fewer people have become interested in learning Japanese. This research aims to present how Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language acquisition. This research aims to investigate whether and how anime helps people remain motivated to learn Japanese and better understand the language and culture, and what the limitations of using anime as an educational tool for learning Japanese are.

## **Background and Literature Review**

Although anime is not officially part of JFL curricula worldwide, it has been used in language education since the late 1980s in Japan, significantly contributing to students' linguistic skill development (Iida and Takeyama, 2022). These early recommendations were suggested by Japanese language teachers in schools as experts thought anime could serve as a motivational factor for their students (Allison, 2018). Considering that students from Japanese high schools and colleges often participate in anime circles and clubs outside of school, teachers first came up with the integration of anime into their classes. It was to reinforce their exposure to the language and strengthen the students' connection with the language itself.

Chan and Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension. Building on the findings, anime allows students to explore formal textbook language alongside slang and casual expressions. These repeated phrases can help learners recognise words more easily and improve their pronunciation through listening practice. Fukunaga (2006) and Chan and Wong (2017) speculate that this linguistic development also comes from cultural awareness in the anime context. Students gain insights that are often not covered in formal language-learning methods, such as Japanese social contexts, daily conversations, and traditional practices. Learning about these daily contexts with cultural understanding will help students to link and apply the acquired vocabulary and language in real-life situations. Especially in Japanese, which has a complex system of politeness (such as keigo, casual, and humble forms), these subtle nuances are difficult to fully grasp through textbooks alone. Anime dialogue, however, demonstrates how these speech levels vary across different social contexts.

Expanding on this, Han and Ling (2017) emphasise anime's potential to be incorporated in classrooms, noting that anime-based activities, such as active viewing, freeze framing, dubbing, and role play, could create a learner-centred environment that stimulates both linguistic and critical thinking skills. They explain that anime helps learners practice pronunciation, vocabulary, and social nuance by encouraging students to analyse dialogue in a specific context. More importantly, they stress that anime's variety of speech styles, from polite forms to dialects and informal slang, exposes learners to linguistic registers rarely found in textbooks, thus improving adaptability in communication. Additionally, Razali (2018) further support that anime fosters multimodal learning, where subtitles, sound, and imagery combine to strengthen comprehension and encourage engagement in language-related practices such as fan translation or online discussions. These findings suggest that anime can fill in the gap between traditional instruction and informal, everyday Japanese, making it a complement to existing methods.

## **Research Purpose**

This paper investigates the relationship between anime and Japanese language education,

specifically comparing anime-based language learning methods with traditional approaches. This paper will examine the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning. Moreover, this paper will also explore whether and how anime can serve as an effective tool for language acquisition in both formal and informal settings. Previous research has largely focused on structured classroom use (e.g., Chan and Wong, 2017), but because learners also engage with anime independently at home, it is necessary to evaluate its potential across both contexts.

This research examines how anime could expose learners to various linguistic features, such as informal and casual speech, to develop word recognition and pronunciation through content. The paper first reviews existing research on anime and Japanese language learning, then presents the survey methodology and results. The discussion is organised around the main themes identified in the responses: language and subtitle practices, motivation and language development, classroom integration, contextual benefits, and challenges or limitations of anime-based learning. Through analysis of the survey responses, this paper will provide new insights into how anime can be utilised to enhance linguistic development in foreign Japanese language learners, particularly by supporting the shift from textbook Japanese to natural, everyday speech.

## **Hypothesis**

This study's research question is "Does anime-based learning improve Japanese language acquisition and motivation compared to traditional textbook-based learning?" Hence, it could be hypothesised that learners who watch anime with Japanese audio and subtitles in their home language will show greater improvements in word recognition and pronunciation compared to learners who rely only on textbooks (Hypothesis A). Building on previous research (Chan and Wong, 2017; Fukunaga, 2006), it is hypothesised that repeated exposure to casual and everyday phrases in anime will result in stronger comprehension and recall than exposure to formal textbook Japanese (Hypothesis B). Finally, it is hypothesised that individual factors such as demographic background, anime-watching frequency, and prior Japanese proficiency will influence how effective anime is as a tool for both linguistic development and cultural learning (Hypothesis C).

## **Methodology**

This study utilised a 10-minute survey to explore the role of anime in Japanese language development within current education systems. An online survey method was selected to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling participants to report their learning experiences, strategies, and perceptions in their own words. The survey included 15 questions, ranging from multiple-choice to open-ended. Twenty individuals participated and provided responses. The

research utilised the online platform SurveySwap to gather respondents.<sup>1</sup> SurveySwap was used to recruit participants through a voluntary survey exchange. Because the survey was written in English and SurveySwap supports English, Dutch, and German but not non-Latin languages, the sample may reflect English-speaking respondents more strongly than other groups. Respondents were screened for eligibility by confirming that they were studying Japanese and engaged with anime. It helped reach a global community and obtain diverse insights based on their demographic information and theme-specific answers, including their home language, level of Japanese literacy, and anime-watching frequency.

Closed-ended items were organised into quantitative summaries. Responses indicating “never watching anime” were excluded from analyses focused on anime-watching practices. Open-ended responses were reviewed multiple times and grouped into frequently addressed themes based on common experiences with representing quotes. These themes became the basis for the discussion subheadings, including “Language and Subtitles,” “Motivation and Language Development,” “Classroom Integration,” and “Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration.” The findings are exploratory at this stage as this study serves as a pilot project aimed at addressing an existing gap in the literature. Given this, the findings are not generalizable, but should rather be seen as exploratory and may support and inform future research with larger participant groups.

## **Research Ethics**

This study involved a minimal-risk, anonymous, voluntary survey and did not collect personally identifiable or sensitive information. The research was conducted independently by a secondary school student. The author’s school does not maintain an institutional review board (IRB) or formal ethics committee capable of issuing ethics approval or exemption determinations; this is confirmed by a designated school official. Accordingly, the study followed ethical principles appropriate to minimal-risk social research.

All participants provided informed consent prior to participation through a consent statement presented at the beginning of the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could discontinue at any time without penalty. Responses were collected anonymously, and no identifying information was recorded.

Survey data were stored securely in a password-protected account accessible only to the author. Data will be retained until completion of the publication process and then permanently deleted. The study involved no deception or intervention and posed minimal risk. Because the sample was self-selected and recruited online, the results may be subject to sampling bias and may not be fully representative.

I affirm that the ideas, arguments, and analysis in this paper are my own. AI tools were used only for

---

<sup>1</sup> The survey was purposely written in English to look for a global audience. SurveySwap only supports English, Dutch, and German and does not support non-Latin languages.

minor language editing (grammar and clarity), not for generating content or analysis.

## Results

- **Demographics and Linguistic Profile**

The demographic and linguistic profile of the survey respondents reflects the young population of anime-engaged people who are globally diverse but mostly speak English. The average age range for anime watchers worldwide is 13 to 24 years old, while the average age group for SurveySwap users is said to be 18 to 28 years old, consisting mostly of university and graduate students. The majority of the respondents for this survey were between 25 and 29 years old (60%), followed by 10 to 18-year-olds (30%), and 30 to 34-year-olds (10%).

- **Languages Spoken at Home**

For the question on languages spoken at home, because this question allowed participants to select more than one language, the percentages represent the proportion of respondents who selected each option and are not expected to total 100%. English was selected by 80% of respondents, followed by Hindi (30%), Japanese (20%), Mandarin (10%), and Italian (10%). Several participants reported multilingual backgrounds in addition to English. A smaller portion (20%) selected Japanese, either as native speakers or as learners with high confidence in their proficiency.<sup>2</sup>

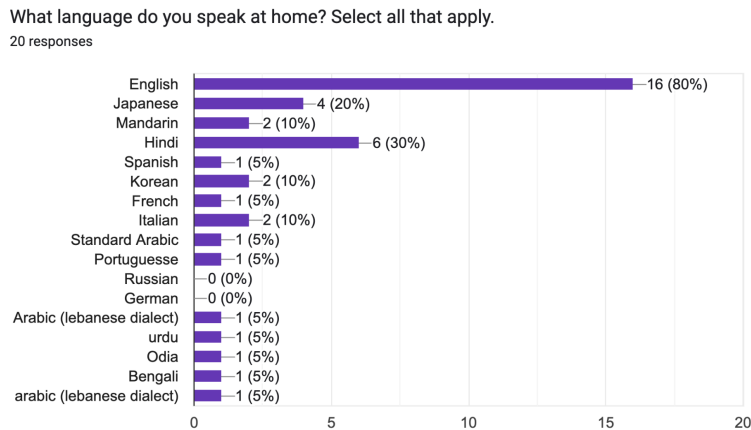


Figure 1. Languages Spoken at Home by Survey Respondents

- **Anime-Watching Frequency**

---

<sup>2</sup> Because this item allowed participants to select all languages that applied, the percentages were not expected to total 100%.

Anime-watching frequency was shown to vary, with 30% of respondents reporting as watching every day, 20% as watching once every two weeks, and 10% as never watching anime. Outliers who indicated that they “never” watched anime (10%) were disregarded from further analysis.

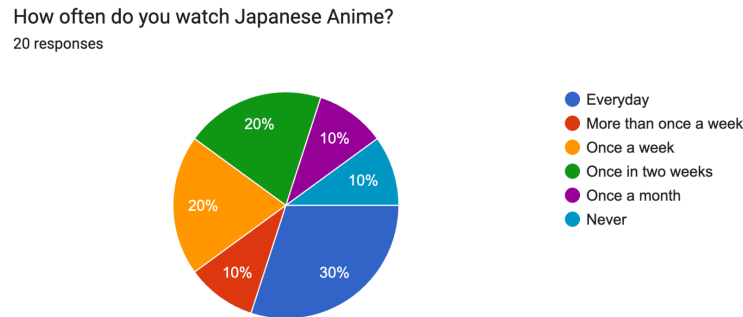
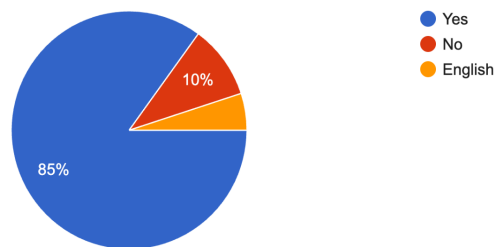


Figure 2. Frequency of anime watching among respondents

- **Audio and Subtitle Preferences**

As participants were asked what language they usually watch anime in (audio), multiple responses were allowed. Since the audio-language question allowed multiple responses, the percentages represent the share of respondents who selected each option rather than mutually exclusive categories.<sup>3</sup> When asked ‘In what language are the subtitles in?’, most respondents chose English (94.4%), with Spanish, Korean, and Mandarin each being reported by 5.6% of respondents<sup>4</sup>.

When watching anime, do you usually use subtitles in your home language?  
20 responses



<sup>3</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

<sup>4</sup> Two respondents mentioned they watched anime in Korean, which may imply a possibility that they may have answered based on the anime of a Korean production. Moreover, for those who watch anime in English with Japanese subtitles, there are two possibilities: they are either native Japanese speakers wanting to learn English or non-native Japanese speakers attempting to improve their word recognition through subtitles. If the second is true, it is reasonable to assume that their level of Japanese listening is quite advanced as they are able to understand the context by ear.

Figure 3. Subtitle language preferences

Audio Choices	% of Respondents
Japanese	85
English	45
Korean	10
Hindi	5
Mandarin	5

Subtitle Choices	% of Respondents
English	94.4
Spanish	5.6
Korean	5.6
Mandarin	5.6

- **Motivation to Learn Japanese**

Motivational perspectives were also gathered through the survey question: “Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?” The responses revealed that 35% of participants answered “yes,” 45% answered “sometimes,” and 15% answered “no.”<sup>5</sup> Because the largest group answered “sometimes,” these results suggest that anime should not be treated as a universal source of motivation. Instead, motivation appears to work alongside other factors, such as subtitle use, repeated exposure, prior proficiency, and cultural interest.

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<sup>5</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?  
20 responses

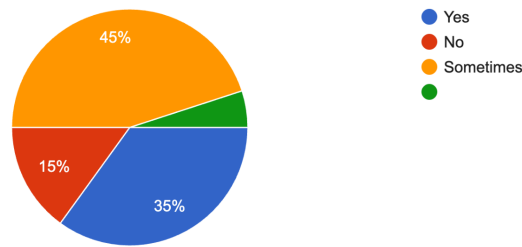


Figure 4. Motivation to learn Japanese through anime

Participants who answered “yes” often connected anime viewing with improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.

One respondent wrote, “I have been watching anime for over 15 years and was able to pick [up] the language[.] I no longer need to focus so much on the subtitles [...] as I naturally understand what they say[.]” Another explained, “[A]fter watching anime for so many years[.] you come across some words very frequently[.] [...] [Thanks] to subtitles[, you] get to know the meaning too[.] [...] [W]hen [you] hear th[at] word again[.] you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

Respondents who answered “sometimes” also expressed their motivations. For example, one stated, “Sometimes, it motivates me to learn more [J]apanese so I can understand without subtitles[.]” Another added, “I want to visit [J]apan and somewhere at (sic) the back of my mind[.] [I] feel like anime might help me as well in the process[.]”

- **Classroom Integration**

In response to the survey question, ‘Have you ever watched anime as part of your school language curriculum? (e.g., watching an excerpt during class) 70% answered ‘No’ while the remaining 30% answered ‘Yes’.

Among the open-ended responses of ‘If yes, in what way was the anime incorporated into class?’, one participant explained:

“I watched it in my Japanese class when we were done with a unit (sort of like for fun)”

On the other hand, another response was simply:

“a movie study, about [J]apanese culture”

## **Discussion**

Overall, the results suggest that anime-based learning may support motivation alongside recognition of everyday Japanese phrases, particularly when motivation is understood as part of a broader framework that also includes linguistic development and cultural literacy. These findings suggested Hypothesis A as learners who combined Japanese audio with subtitles also described word recognition compared to those relying on translations, according to the open-ended responses. The results also suggested Hypothesis B as several participants described repeated exposure to casual expressions as helpful for comprehension compared to textbook language. Evidence related to Hypothesis C was mixed as individual factors such as multilingual backgrounds, prior Japanese knowledge, and frequency of anime-watching were described as influencing outcomes and motivation. Overall, the results imply that anime serves as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for textbooks, connecting textbook learning with more authentic spoken Japanese, though the responses also suggest the importance of being mindful of exaggerated or overly casual expressions. Rather than treating motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy as separate outcomes, this study presents them as connected elements within a single framework of anime-based language learning. Within this framework, motivation may encourage continued exposure to Japanese, while repeated listening and contextual viewing may support phrase recognition and cultural understanding.

- ***Demographics and Language Use***

It was revealed that the respondents of this survey were mostly college students on the SurveySwap platform who frequently watched anime and were may have been drawn to this survey due to its topic. Although SurveySwap allows global participation, English was the predominant language in responses. This is a limitation as the sample may reflect English-speaking learners more strongly than other groups.

It was also shown that several respondents reported multilingual backgrounds, including Hindi, Mandarin, Italian, and even Japanese. This suggests that anime attracts a linguistically diverse audience, but English dominance still shapes their language-learning process. The fact that everyday anime watchers formed a large portion of the respondents shows that anime is already a part of their daily lives, which makes it an accessible and motivational tool for learning. The disregard of “never” watchers reflects that the survey effectively targeted individuals already engaged in anime only.

- ***Language and Subtitles***

The frequent use of Japanese audio with subtitles suggests that learners engaged with spoken Japanese while relying on written support for comprehension. Several responses described gradually recognizing recurring phrases through repeated listening combined with subtitles, which participants associated with word recognition and phrase acquisition.

Some responses also described watching anime in English with English subtitles (or other

non-Japanese audio/subtitle combinations). In these cases, participants did not emphasize Japanese learning goals as strongly, suggesting that anime may function primarily as entertainment unless viewers intentionally choose settings or strategies that support language learning.

- ***Motivation and Language Development***

The responses indicate that anime serves as a source of motivation for many learners, particularly through repeated exposure to common phrases, which improves recognition and recall. The comments also described gradual recognition of common phrases over time.

These findings were supported by previous research conducted by Chan and Wong (2017), in which the worksheets of university students who attended a 10-week course on Learning Japanese Language Through Anime in Malaysia were analysed. In that study, repetition exercises were also emphasised as supporting the memorisation of useful phrases. It was found that anime, unlike the polite speech styles presented in textbooks, was more casual and practical in real-life situations. Interactions between anime characters, such as those between students and teachers, were observed to be informal, reflecting real-life conversations often missing from classroom contexts. Repetition exercises based on anime dialogue were also included in the course, which helped students gradually memorise useful phrases. In this paper's original survey, respondents described a similar process, noting how repeated listening helped them understand Japanese without relying on subtitles.

However, unlike Chan and Wong's study (2017), which was conducted in a classroom setting, the respondents here were self-motivated learners engaging with anime independently. This added the insight that anime was not only supporting formal learning, but was also serving as an independent way to learn casual phrases and maintain motivation outside the classroom. For many respondents, anime was described as an engaging way to learn the language through repeated exposure and genuine interest.

Moreover, according to Razali (2018), anime has not only gained large global popularity but has also contributed to the promotion of literacy in the Japanese language. Anime fans have used online platforms to engage in Japanese linguistic activities such as commenting, reviewing anime-related posts, and creating fan sites, all of which involve reading and writing skills. When doing so, the process of translation in these contents often unconsciously develops new vocabulary and introduces Japanese sentence structures. The combination of spoken dialogue, subtitles, images, and sound can be considered a form of multimodal learning as learners engage with Japanese through several modes of communication at the same time.

Multimodal learning reflects the respondents' interest in engaging more deeply with anime culture. This includes creating content that uses Japanese language skills, translation, and cultural interpretation. These practices are also common in the broader anime community, where fans often engage in creative, language-based activities such as fan subtitling, translation, and content creation (Ito, 2012).

- **Classroom Integration**

These results suggest that anime integration in Japanese language learning is not widespread in formal education systems. Where it was used, the responses indicate that anime was often treated as entertainment rather than as a structured learning tool. However, the response mentioning a “movie study, about Japanese culture” directly reveals how cultural factors can support the learning of practical usage of Japanese in real-life situations. By observing character interactions, gestures, and contextual language use, students may deepen both their linguistic and cultural understanding.

Such practical anime integrations in class are recommended. Classroom activities such as analysing anime dialogue can help students engage with the linguistic structures of particular quotes and expressions. Historical contexts represented in anime can also be studied, which not only enhances language development but also provides cultural and historical insights for learners hoping to live or work in Japan. Including subtitles while watching may further engage students, since learners are able to match auditory Japanese with written forms in their textbooks. In this way, anime can serve as a complementary tool alongside traditional materials, particularly in developing reading comprehension skills.

The survey responses also align with prior research emphasising anime’s contribution to literacy development. Experts note that anime boosts linguistic acquisition by supporting word recognition, listening skills, pronunciation, and motivation. Fukunaga (2006), for example, found through group discussions and interviews with Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) students that learners gradually became familiar with frequently spoken phrases through repetitive expressions often absent in textbooks. In the same way, the responses in this study show that anime motivated learners to recognise and remember everyday phrases through repeated listening. As one participant explained, “After watching anime for so many years, you come across some words very frequently. Thanks to subtitles, you get to know the meaning too. When you hear that word again, you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

These responses suggest that repeated exposure may help learners become familiar with frequently used phrases. Overall, the findings suggest that anime may support literacy development through word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, while also sustaining motivation. Within this exploratory sample, anime appears to function as a complementary tool alongside traditional instruction. In this way, new daily phrases can be constantly acquired, making anime a valuable complementary tool to traditional instruction in Japanese language learning.

### **Benefits of Anime and Language Integration**

This is another benefit from learning Japanese through anime: many are motivated to understand the cultural context of anime or get familiar with Japanese culture. For example, the gendered pronouns commonly heard in anime, such as “俺” (used for men) and “あたし” (used by young girls),

not only reflect gender-based differences in Japanese but also indicate the character's age and social context. According to a study by Chan and Wong (2017), students were surprised to hear the elderly female character in the anime *Hanasaku Iroha* using masculine language, specifically words like “お前” (omae) and “こいつ” (koitsu), which are typically considered rough or informal and usually associated with male speech. Notably, the researchers observed that some grandmothers in real life also use these expressions instead of more traditionally polite or feminine language. These language variations can also be observed in various social contexts, such as in the workplace, where formal language is required, and at school, where the language may be more casual. Chan and Wong (2017) also observe that social hierarchies in anime influence character dialogues, helping language learners distinguish between polite and informal speech. Hence, it can be inferred that JFL learners may use anime to observe how language style changes across social relationships and communicative contexts, which can support their understanding of when formal or informal expressions are appropriate.

### **Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration**

Despite the benefits introduced above, anime-based language learning also presents risks and limitations for non-native Japanese speakers. Anime often incorporates overly casual and sometimes inappropriate phrases, especially in shounen and action genres. As a result, the survey response “I believe some wording can be wrong” might represent those who prefer to learn Japanese in the traditional way to avoid wording misinterpretations from anime dialogues. Another challenge for learners is to distinguish the gap between anime speech and real-life Japanese. According to Fukunaga (2006), some find it difficult to apply their knowledge in real life due to exaggerated expressions and fictional vocabulary used in anime. Dialogue reflecting characters' social roles, such as the speech patterns of high school students, small children, or samurai, may also be stylised or inaccurate at times, so learners must be guided to distinguish between natural Japanese and stylised anime dialogue that are uncommon or outdated in real life. Overall, these limitations may discourage some learners from using anime as a language-learning tool, especially if they are unsure how to distinguish stylised anime dialogue from everyday Japanese.

To counteract these limitations, anime is recommended to be used with guidance rather than treated as a complete replacement for textbooks or classroom instruction. Teachers can test students to identify whether a phrase is formal, casual, outdated, or exaggerated, and then compare it with a more standard expression used in everyday Japanese. Learners can also be encouraged to keep vocabulary logs that mark where an expression was heard, who used it, and whether it would be appropriate in real-life contexts. These strategies would allow anime to remain engaging while reducing the risk of misusing stylised or overly casual language.

### **Conclusion**

The effectiveness of anime as a tool for Japanese language learning was investigated, focusing on the

comparison of anime-based learning methods and traditional textbook learning methods. A survey targeted at JFL learners on the SurveySwap platform was conducted so that respondents could be gathered globally and qualitative data could be sought. By this approach, a diverse range of experiences and different levels of familiarity with the Japanese language were allowed. Based on these results, the trends and potential correlations in the respondents' demographics and varying linguistic backgrounds when acquiring Japanese were to be analysed. By comparing and analysing traditional language learning methods with anime integration, the issue of declining Japanese language learners was approached through popular culture. Through this survey, perspectives and understandings of Japanese learners on how their anime-watching habits have impacted their language learning experiences were shared.

Based on the survey and prior research done with external sources, the findings suggest that the anime-watching method may have a positive impact on Japanese language acquisition for foreign learners. The findings suggested that, depending on the various combinations of subtitles and the language the anime was watched in, word recognition and phrase memorisation in real-life contexts improved.

Moreover, the open-ended questions supported the claim of most researchers that anime is widely a motivational factor to start learning Japanese: to understand the context of the anime, to get familiar with Japanese cultural norms, and to enhance their travelling experiences by improving their speaking skills. However, some responses challenge this view as respondents discussed the limitations of anime learning methods, such as overly casual and inappropriate phrases that can cause mistaken interpretation. As a result, it showed that some prefer learning in traditional learning methods rather than through anime.

Although anime-integrated learning is yet to be spread in educational curricula, this paper suggests possible benefits that anime could bring as well as some practical recommendations to be used in the classroom. In order to realistically apply this new method, though, it is crucial to explore how traditional teaching methods can be combined with anime-based learning and whether educators are able to effectively balance both approaches to mitigate the limitations of misinterpretations of certain speeches.

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# Anime as an Educational Approach for Language Learning

1

2

## 3 Abstract

4

5 With its global popularity, Japanese anime has been recognised as an effective tool to learn Japanese.  
6 Previous studies have explored how anime-based learning can support student motivation. Studies  
7 such as Anderson and Natsuki Fukunaga explore how some language courses incorporate  
8 anime-based learning for student motivation. This paper examines the two questions: How does  
9 anime help people stay motivated to learn Japanese and understand the language and culture better,  
10 and what are the limitations of using anime to learn Japanese for educational purposes in an  
11 educational way? Building on a limited but developing body of research on anime's impact on word  
12 recognition, listening, and pronunciation, this study used a mixed-methods online survey of anime  
13 viewers, combining quantitative questions about Japanese proficiency and audio/subtitle  
14 preferences with qualitative open-ended responses about motivation, learning strategies, and  
15 perceived limitations.

16 Extending previous research on anime's impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation,  
17 this research distributed an online survey to anime watchers regarding their Japanese fluency and  
18 their audio/subtitle preferences. The results suggested that anime-based learning was associated  
19 with learner motivation and recognition of daily Japanese phrases, particularly when original  
20 Japanese audio with subtitles was used. However, it was also implied that limitations exist, as  
21 exaggerated or overly casual expressions common in anime may limit the effective application of  
22 language skills in real-life contexts. Future research could also examine how anime can be  
23 systematically integrated into curricula and evaluate whether it promotes cultural awareness as  
24 effectively as it supports language acquisition.

25

26

27 **Keywords:** Language Learning, Linguistics, Anime, Quantitative and Qualitative Research, Survey,  
28 Japanese

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30

31

## 32 Introduction

33

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“[Anime] motivates me to learn more Japanese, so I can understand without subtitles.”

35

—Anonymous survey respondent (2/23, 2025)

36

37 Japanese popular culture, such as J-pop, J-dramas, and manga novels, has become a significant  
38 cultural force in recent years. This includes anime, and its popularity has led to a growing interest in  
39 Japanese culture. However, educators and institutions have not greatly promoted the integration of  
40 anime as an educational tool in Japanese learning. This paper contributes to research on anime and  
41 Japanese language learning by focusing on learners' own perceptions of using anime as a learning  
42 tool outside the classroom. Rather than examining only formal classroom uses of anime, the study  
43 investigates how learners describe their independent anime-watching practices and how these  
44 practices relate to motivation, phrase recognition, listening, and cultural understanding. While

1 anime grew more popular, fewer people have become interested in learning Japanese. ~~Given that~~  
2 ~~Japanese course enrollment has been declining since 1970,~~ this research aims to present how  
3 Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language  
4 acquisition. This research aims to investigate whether and how anime helps people remain  
5 motivated to learn Japanese and better understand the language and culture, and what the  
6 limitations of using anime as an educational tool for learning Japanese are.

7 ¶  
8 ¶  
9 ¶

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11

## 12 **Background and Literature Review**

13

14 Although anime is not officially part of JFL curricula worldwide, it has been used in language  
15 education since the late 1980s in Japan, significantly contributing to students' linguistic skill  
16 development (Iida ~~and~~ Takeyama, 2022). These early recommendations were suggested by Japanese  
17 language teachers in schools; as experts thought anime could serve as a motivational factor for their  
18 students (Allison, 2018). Considering that students from Japanese high schools and colleges often  
19 participate in anime circles and clubs outside of school, teachers first came up with the integration  
20 of anime into their classes. It was to reinforce their exposure to the language and strengthen the  
21 students' connection with the language itself.

22

23 Chan ~~and~~ Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill  
24 development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension [2]. Building on the  
25 findings, ~~anime allows students to explore not only formal textbook language but also slang and~~  
26 ~~casual expressions.~~ anime allows students to explore formal textbook language alongside slang and casual  
27 expressions. These repeated phrases can help learners recognise words more easily and  
28 improve their pronunciation through listening practice. Fukunaga (2006) and Chan ~~and~~ Wong  
29 (2017) speculate that this linguistic development also comes from cultural awareness in the anime  
30 context. Students gain insights that are often not covered in formal language-learning methods,  
31 such as Japanese social contexts, daily conversations, and traditional practices. Learning about these  
32 daily contexts with cultural understanding will help students to link and apply the acquired  
33 vocabulary and language in real-life situations. Especially in Japanese, which has a complex system  
34 of politeness (such as keigo, casual, and humble forms), these subtle nuances are difficult to fully  
35 grasp through textbooks alone. Anime dialogue, however, demonstrates how these speech levels  
36 vary across different social contexts.

37

38 Expanding on this, Han ~~and~~ Ling (2017) emphasise anime's potential to be incorporated in  
39 classrooms, noting that anime-based activities, such as active viewing, freeze framing, dubbing, and  
40 role play, could create a learner-centred environment that stimulates both linguistic and critical  
41 thinking skills. ~~They explain that anime helps learners practice not only pronunciation and vocabulary but~~  
42 ~~also social nuance.~~ They explain that anime helps learners practice pronunciation, vocabulary, and social  
43 nuance by encouraging students to analyse dialogue in a specific context. More  
44 importantly, they stress that anime's variety of speech styles, from polite forms to dialects and

1 informal slang, exposes learners to linguistic registers rarely found in textbooks, thus improving  
2 adaptability in communication. Additionally, Razali ~~et al.~~ (2018) further support that anime fosters  
3 multimodal learning, where subtitles, sound, and imagery combine to strengthen comprehension  
4 and encourage engagement in language-related practices such as fan translation or online  
5 discussions. These findings suggest that anime can fill in the gap between traditional instruction and  
6 informal, everyday Japanese, making it a complement to existing methods.

7  
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## 10 **Research Purpose**

11

12 This paper investigates the relationship between anime and Japanese language education,  
13 specifically comparing anime-based language learning methods with traditional approaches. This  
14 paper will ~~examine~~ ~~delve into~~ the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese  
15 language learning. ¶

16 ¶

17 Moreover, this paper will also explore whether and how anime can serve as an effective tool for  
18 language acquisition in both formal and informal settings. Previous research has largely focused on  
19 structured classroom use (e.g., Chan ~~and~~ Wong, 2017), but because learners also engage with anime  
20 independently at home, it is necessary to evaluate its potential across both contexts.

21

22 This research examines how anime could expose learners to various linguistic features, such as  
23 informal and casual speech, to develop word recognition and pronunciation through content. ~~The~~  
24 ~~paper first reviews existing research on anime and Japanese language learning, then presents the~~  
25 ~~survey methodology and results. The discussion is organised around the main themes identified in~~  
26 ~~the responses: language and subtitle practices, motivation and language development, classroom~~  
27 ~~integration, contextual benefits, and challenges or limitations of anime-based learning. This paper is~~  
28 ~~structured in three main sections: (1) the benefits of using anime as a learning tool through context,~~  
29 ~~(2) the challenges and limitations of anime and language integration, and (3) practical~~  
30 ~~recommendations for integrating anime into official Japanese language curricula.~~ Through analysis  
31 of the survey responses, this paper will provide new insights into how anime can be utilised to  
32 enhance linguistic development in foreign Japanese language learners, particularly by supporting the  
33 shift from textbook Japanese to natural, everyday speech.

34  
35  
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## 37 **Hypothesis**

38

39 This study's research question is "Does anime-based learning improve Japanese language acquisition  
40 and motivation compared to traditional textbook-based learning?" Hence, it could be hypothesised  
41 that learners who watch anime with Japanese audio and subtitles in their home language will show  
42 greater improvements in word recognition and pronunciation compared to learners who rely only  
43 on textbooks (Hypothesis A). Building on previous research (Chan ~~and~~ Wong, 2017; Fukunaga, 2006)  
44 (~~Chan & Wong, 2017; Anderson & Fukunaga, 2020~~), it is hypothesised that repeated exposure to

1 casual and everyday phrases in anime will result in stronger comprehension and recall than  
2 exposure to formal textbook Japanese (Hypothesis B). Finally, it is hypothesised that individual  
3 factors such as demographic background, anime-watching frequency, and prior Japanese  
4 proficiency will influence how effective anime is as a tool for both linguistic development and  
5 cultural learning (Hypothesis C).

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8

## 9 **Methodology**

10

11 This study utilised a 10-minute survey to explore the role of anime in Japanese language  
12 development within current education systems. An online survey method was selected to collect  
13 both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling participants to report their learning experiences,  
14 strategies, and perceptions in their own words. The survey included 15 questions, ranging from  
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17 recruit participants through a voluntary survey exchange. Because the survey was written in English  
18 and SurveySwap supports English, Dutch, and German but not non-Latin languages, the sample may  
19 reflect English-speaking respondents more strongly than other groups. ~~SurveySwap was used to~~  
20 ~~recruit participants through a voluntary, self-selecting survey exchange.~~ Respondents were  
21 screened for eligibility by confirming that they were studying Japanese and engaged with anime. It  
22 helped reach a global community and obtain diverse insights based on their demographic  
23 information and theme-specific answers, including their home language, level of Japanese literacy,  
24 and anime-watching frequency.

25

26 Closed-ended items were organised into quantitative summaries. Responses indicating “never  
27 watching anime” were excluded from analyses focused on anime-watching practices. Open-ended  
28 responses were reviewed multiple times and grouped into frequently addressed themes based on  
29 common experiences with representing quotes. These themes became the basis for the discussion  
30 subheadings, including “Language and Subtitles,” “Motivation and Language Development,”  
31 “Classroom Integration,” and “Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration.” The  
32 findings are exploratory at this stage, as this study serves as a pilot project aimed at addressing an  
33 existing gap in the literature. Given this, the findings are not generalizable, but should rather be  
34 seen as exploratory and may support and inform future research with larger participant groups.

35

36

## 37 **Research Ethics**

38

39 This study involved a minimal-risk, anonymous, voluntary survey and did not collect personally  
40 identifiable or sensitive information. The research was conducted independently by a secondary  
41 school student. The author’s school does not maintain an institutional review board (IRB) or formal

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42 <sup>1</sup> The survey was purposely written in English to look for a global audience. SurveySwap only supports English,  
Dutch, and German and does not support non-Latin languages.

1 ethics committee capable of issuing ethics approval or exemption determinations; this is confirmed  
2 by a designated school official. Accordingly, the study followed ethical principles appropriate to  
3 minimal-risk social research.

4

5 All participants provided informed consent prior to participation through a consent statement  
6 presented at the beginning of the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents  
7 could discontinue at any time without penalty. Responses were collected anonymously, and no  
8 identifying information was recorded.

9

10 Survey data were stored securely in a password-protected account accessible only to the author.  
11 Data will be retained until completion of the publication process and then permanently deleted. The  
12 study involved no deception or intervention and posed minimal risk. Because the sample was  
13 self-selected and recruited online, the results may be subject to sampling bias and may not be fully  
14 representative.

15

16 I affirm that the ideas, arguments, and analysis in this paper are my own. AI tools were used only for  
17 minor language editing (grammar and clarity), not for generating content or analysis.

18

19

## 20 **Results**

21

### 22 • ***Demographics and Linguistic Profile***

23

24 The demographic and linguistic profile of the survey respondents reflects the young population of  
25 anime-engaged people, who are globally diverse but mostly speak English. The average age range for  
26 anime watchers worldwide is 13 to 24 years old, while the average age group for SurveySwap users is  
27 said to be 18 to 28 years old, consisting mostly of university and graduate students. The majority of  
28 the respondents for this survey were between 25 and 29 years old (60%), followed by 10 to  
29 18-year-olds (30%), and 30 to 34-year-olds (10%).

30

31

### 32 • ***Languages Spoken at Home***

33

34 For the question on languages spoken at home, because this question allowed participants to select  
35 more than one language, the percentages represent the proportion of respondents who selected  
36 each option and are not expected to total 100%. ~~For the question on languages spoken at home, the~~  
37 ~~item was multi-select, so percentages were not expected to total 100%.~~ English was selected by 80%  
38 of respondents, followed by Hindi (30%), Japanese (20%), Mandarin (10%), and Italian (10%). Several  
39 participants reported multilingual backgrounds in addition to English. A smaller portion (20%)  
40 selected Japanese, either as native speakers or as learners with high confidence in their proficiency.<sup>2</sup>

41

---

42 <sup>2</sup> Because this item allowed participants to select all languages that applied, the percentages were not expected to total 100%. ~~This was a 'select all that apply' question.~~

What language do you speak at home? Select all that apply.  
20 responses

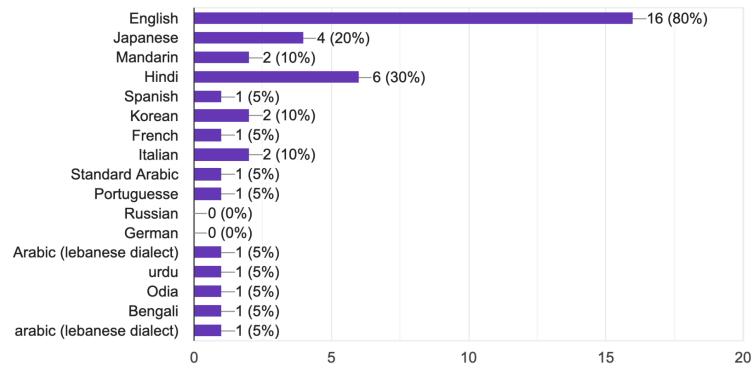


Figure 1. Languages Spoken at Home by Survey Respondents

• **Anime-Watching Frequency**

Anime-watching frequency was shown to vary, with 30% of respondents reporting as watching every day, 20% as watching once every two weeks, and 10% as never watching anime. Outliers who indicated that they “never” watched anime (10%) were disregarded from further analysis.

How often do you watch Japanese Anime?  
20 responses

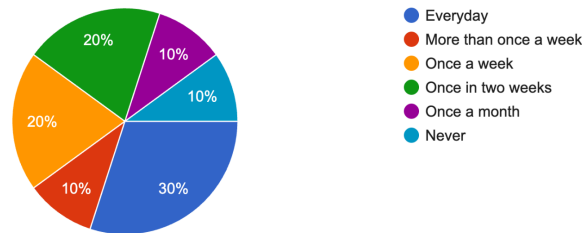


Figure 2. Frequency of anime watching among respondents

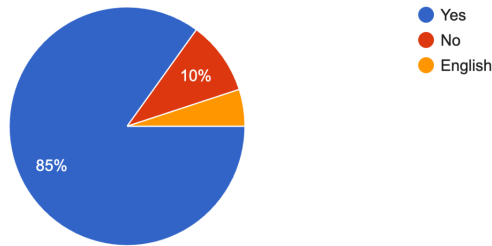
• **Audio and Subtitle Preferences**

As participants were asked what language they usually watch anime in (audio), multiple responses were allowed. Since the audio-language question allowed multiple responses, the percentages represent the share of respondents who selected each option rather than mutually exclusive categories. The original Japanese audio was preferred by 85% of respondents, followed by English (45%), while smaller proportions selected Korean (10%), Hindi (5%), or Mandarin (5%), with the original Japanese audio preferred by 85% of respondents, followed by English (45%), while smaller

1 proportions selected Korean (10%), Hindi (5%), or Mandarin (5%)<sup>3</sup>. When asked 'In what language  
 2 are the subtitles in?', most respondents chose English (94.4%), with Spanish, Korean, and Mandarin  
 3 each being reported by 5.6% of respondents<sup>4</sup>.

4  
5

When watching anime, do you usually use subtitles in your home language?  
20 responses



6  
7  
8  
9

Figure 3. Subtitle language preferences

Audio Choices	% of Respondents
Japanese	85
English	45
Korean	10
Hindi	5
Mandarin	5

10  
11

Subtitle Choices	% of Respondents
English	94.4
Spanish	5.6

<sup>3</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

<sup>4</sup> Two respondents mentioned they watched anime in Korean, which may imply a possibility that they may have  
 12 answered based on the anime of a Korean production. Moreover, for those who watch anime in English with  
 13 Japanese subtitles, there are two possibilities: they are either native Japanese speakers wanting to learn English or  
 14 non-native Japanese speakers attempting to improve their word recognition through subtitles. If the second is true, it  
 15 is reasonable to assume that their level of Japanese listening is quite advanced, as they are able to understand the  
 16 context by ear.

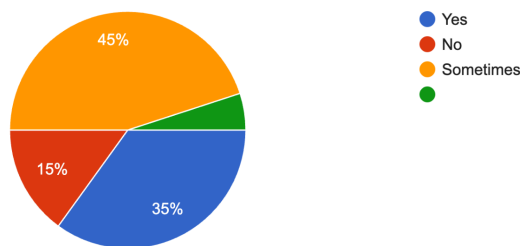
Korean	5.6
Mandarin	5.6

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12

- **Motivation to Learn Japanese**

Motivational perspectives were also gathered through the survey question: “Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?” The responses revealed that 35% of participants answered “yes,” 45% answered “sometimes,” and 15% answered “no.”<sup>5</sup> Because the largest group answered “sometimes,” these results suggest that anime should not be treated as a universal source of motivation. Instead, motivation appears to work alongside other factors, such as subtitle use, repeated exposure, prior proficiency, and cultural interest.

Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?  
20 responses



13  
14  
15  
16

Figure 4. Motivation to learn Japanese through anime

Participants who answered “yes” often connected anime viewing with improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.

~~Those who responded affirmatively mentioned improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.~~

21 ¶

One respondent wrote, “I have been watching anime for over 15 years and was able to pick [up] the language[.] I no longer need to focus so much on the subtitles [...] as I naturally understand what they say[.]” Another explained, “[A]fter watching anime for so many years[,] you come across some words very frequently[.] [...] [Thanks] to subtitles[, you] get to know the meaning too[.] [...] [W]hen [you] hear th[at] word again[,] you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

28

Respondents who answered “sometimes” also expressed their motivations. For example, one stated,

<sup>5</sup> One response was incorrectly submitted

1 “Sometimes, it motivates me to learn more [J]apanese so I can understand without subtitles[.]”  
2 Another added, “I want to visit [J]apan and somewhere at (sic) the back of my mind[.] [I] feel like  
3 anime might help me as well in the process[.]”

4

5

6 • **Classroom Integration**

7

8 In response to the survey question, ‘Have you ever watched anime as part of your school language  
9 curriculum? (e.g., watching an excerpt during class) 70% answered ‘No’ while the remaining 30%  
10 answered ‘Yes’.

11

12 Among the open-ended responses of ‘If yes, in what way was the anime incorporated into class?’, one  
13 participant explained:

14 “I watched it in my Japanese class when we were done with a unit (sort of like for fun)”

15

16 On the other hand, another response was simply:

17 “a movie study, about [J]apanese culture”

18

19 **Discussion**

20

21 Overall, the results suggest that anime-based learning may support motivation alongside  
22 recognition of everyday Japanese phrases, particularly when motivation is understood as part of a  
23 broader framework that also includes linguistic development and cultural literacy. ~~Overall, the~~  
24 ~~results suggest that anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation and recognition of~~  
25 ~~everyday Japanese phrases, based on participants’ open-ended responses.~~ These findings suggested  
26 Hypothesis A, as learners who combined Japanese audio with subtitles also described word  
27 recognition compared to those relying on translations, according to the open-ended responses. The  
28 results also suggested Hypothesis B, as several participants described repeated exposure to casual  
29 expressions as helpful for comprehension compared to textbook language. Evidence related to  
30 Hypothesis C was mixed, as individual factors such as multilingual backgrounds, prior Japanese  
31 knowledge, and frequency of anime-watching were described as influencing outcomes and  
32 motivation. Overall, the results imply that anime serves as a complementary tool rather than a  
33 replacement for textbooks, connecting textbook learning with more authentic spoken Japanese,  
34 though the responses also suggest the importance of being mindful of exaggerated or overly casual  
35 expressions. ~~Rather than treating motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy as~~  
36 ~~separate outcomes, this study presents them as connected elements within a single framework of~~  
37 ~~anime-based language learning. Within this framework, motivation may encourage continued~~  
38 ~~exposure to Japanese, while repeated listening and contextual viewing may support phrase~~  
39 ~~recognition and cultural understanding. Earlier research viewed anime as a source of motivation~~  
40 ~~(Fukunaga, 2006), while later work focused on its linguistic benefits (Chan & Wong, 2017). In contrast,~~  
41 ~~this study introduces a third perspective, emphasising how anime-based learning connects~~  
42 ~~motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy in a single framework.~~

43

44

1     • **Demographics and Language Use**

2

3 It was revealed that the respondents of this survey were mostly college students on the SurveySwap  
4 platform who frequently watched anime and were may have been drawn to this survey due to its  
5 topic. Although SurveySwap allows global participation, English was the predominant language in  
6 responses. This is a limitation, as the sample may reflect English-speaking learners more strongly  
7 than other groups.

8

9 It was also shown that several respondents reported multilingual backgrounds, including Hindi,  
10 Mandarin, Italian, and even Japanese. This suggests that anime attracts a linguistically diverse  
11 audience, but English dominance still shapes their language-learning process. The fact that everyday  
12 anime watchers formed a large portion of the respondents shows that anime is already a part of  
13 their daily lives, which makes it an accessible and motivational tool for learning. The disregard of  
14 “never” watchers reflects that the survey effectively targeted individuals already engaged in anime  
15 only.

16

17     • **Language and Subtitles**

18

19 The frequent use of Japanese audio with subtitles suggests that learners engaged with spoken  
20 Japanese while relying on written support for comprehension. Several responses described gradually  
21 recognizing recurring phrases through repeated listening combined with subtitles, which  
22 participants associated with word recognition and phrase acquisition.

23

24 Some responses also described watching anime in English with English subtitles (or other  
25 non-Japanese audio/subtitle combinations). In these cases, participants did not emphasize Japanese  
26 learning goals as strongly, suggesting that anime may function primarily as entertainment unless  
27 viewers intentionally choose settings or strategies that support language learning.

28

29

30     • **Motivation and Language Development**

31

32 The responses indicate that anime serves as a source of motivation for many learners, particularly  
33 through repeated exposure to common phrases, which improves recognition and recall. The  
34 comments also described gradual recognition of common phrases over time.

35

36 These findings were supported by previous research conducted by Chan and Wong (2017), in which  
37 the worksheets of university students who attended a 10-week course on Learning Japanese  
38 Language Through Anime in Malaysia were analysed. In that study, repetition exercises were also  
39 emphasised as supporting the memorisation of useful phrases. It was found that anime, unlike the  
40 polite speech styles presented in textbooks, was more casual and practical in real-life situations.  
41 Interactions between anime characters, such as those between students and teachers, were  
42 observed to be informal, reflecting real-life conversations often missing from classroom contexts.  
43 Repetition exercises based on anime dialogue were also included in the course, which helped  
44 students gradually memorise useful phrases. In this paper’s original survey, respondents described a

1 similar process, noting how repeated listening helped them understand Japanese without relying on  
2 subtitles.

3

4 However, unlike Chan and Wong's study (2017), which was conducted in a classroom setting, the  
5 respondents here were self-motivated learners engaging with anime independently. This added the  
6 insight that anime was not only supporting formal learning, but was also serving as an independent  
7 way to learn casual phrases and maintain motivation outside the classroom. For many respondents,  
8 anime was described as an engaging way to learn the language through repeated exposure and  
9 genuine interest.

10

11 Moreover, according to Razali et al. (2018), anime has not only gained large global popularity but has  
12 also contributed to the promotion of literacy in the Japanese language. Anime fans have used online  
13 platforms to engage in Japanese linguistic activities such as commenting, reviewing anime-related  
14 posts, and creating fan sites, all of which involve reading and writing skills. When doing so, the  
15 process of translation in these contents often unconsciously develops new vocabulary and  
16 introduces Japanese sentence structures. **The combination of spoken dialogue, subtitles, images,  
17 and sound can be considered a form of multimodal learning as learners engage with Japanese  
18 through several modes of communication at the same time.**

19 ~~This concept of diverse representations, such as sounds and animations that viewers can engage  
20 with in the fan-made content, is called multimodal learning.~~ Multimodal learning reflects the  
21 respondents' interest in engaging more deeply with anime culture. This includes creating content  
22 that uses Japanese language skills, translation, and cultural interpretation. These practices are also  
23 common in the broader anime community, where fans often engage in creative, language-based  
24 activities such as fan subtitling, translation, and content creation (Ito, 2012).

25

26

### 27 • **Classroom Integration**

28

29 These results suggest that anime integration in Japanese language learning is not widespread in  
30 formal education systems. Where it was used, the responses indicate that anime was often treated  
31 as entertainment rather than as a structured learning tool. However, the response mentioning a  
32 "movie study, about Japanese culture" directly reveals how cultural factors can support the learning  
33 of practical usage of Japanese in real-life situations. By observing character interactions, gestures,  
34 and contextual language use, students may deepen both their linguistic and cultural understanding.  
35

36 Such practical anime integrations in class are recommended. Classroom activities such as analysing  
37 anime dialogue can help students engage with the linguistic structures of particular quotes and  
38 expressions. Historical contexts represented in anime can also be studied, which not only enhances  
39 language development but also provides cultural and historical insights for learners hoping to live or  
40 work in Japan. Including subtitles while watching may further engage students, since learners are  
41 able to match auditory Japanese with written forms in their textbooks. In this way, anime can serve  
42 as a complementary tool alongside traditional materials, particularly in developing reading  
43 comprehension skills.

44

1 The survey responses also align with prior research emphasising anime’s contribution to literacy  
2 development. Experts note that anime boosts linguistic acquisition by supporting word recognition,  
3 listening skills, pronunciation, and motivation. Fukunaga (2006), for example, found through group  
4 discussions and interviews with Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) students that learners  
5 gradually became familiar with frequently spoken phrases through repetitive expressions often  
6 absent in textbooks. In the same way, the responses in this study show that anime motivated  
7 learners to recognise and remember everyday phrases through repeated listening. As one  
8 participant explained, “After watching anime for so many years, you come across some words very  
9 frequently. Thanks to subtitles, you get to know the meaning too. When you hear that word again,  
10 you kind of get to know what the character is saying without looking at the subtitles.”

11

12 These responses suggest that repeated exposure may help learners become familiar with frequently  
13 used phrases. Overall, the findings suggest that anime may support literacy development through  
14 word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, while also sustaining motivation. Within this  
15 exploratory sample, anime appears to function as a complementary tool alongside traditional  
16 instruction. In this way, new daily phrases can be constantly acquired, making anime a valuable  
17 complementary tool to traditional instruction in Japanese language learning.

18

19

20

## 21 **Benefits of Anime and Language Integration**

22

23 This is another benefit from learning Japanese through anime: many are motivated to  
24 understand the cultural context of anime or get familiar with Japanese culture. For  
25 example, the gendered pronouns commonly heard in anime, such as “俺” (used for men) and  
26 “あたし” (used by young girls), not only reflect gender-based differences in Japanese  
27 but also indicate the character’s age and social context. According to a study by Chan  
28 and Wong (2017), students were surprised to hear the elderly female character in the anime Hanasaku  
29 Iroha using masculine language, specifically words like “お前” (omae) and “こいつ” (koitsu), which are  
30 typically considered rough or informal and usually associated with male speech. Notably, the researchers  
31 observed that some grandmothers in real life also use these expressions instead of more traditionally  
32 polite or feminine language. These language variations can also be observed in various social contexts,  
33 such as in the workplace, where formal language is required, and at school, where the language may be  
34 more casual. Chan and Wong (2017) also observe that social hierarchies in anime influence character  
35 dialogues, helping language learners distinguish between polite and informal speech. Hence, it can  
36 be inferred that JFL learners may use anime to observe how language style changes across social  
37 relationships and communicative contexts, which can support their understanding of when formal  
38 or informal expressions are appropriate. Hence, it can be inferred that JFLs who wish to travel to  
39 Japan are likely to watch anime in order to develop this skill to adapt language style accordingly.

40

41

42

## 43 **Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration**

44

1 Despite the benefits introduced above, anime-based language learning also presents risks and  
2 limitations for non-native Japanese speakers. ~~Despite all the benefits introduced above, anime-~~  
3 ~~language learning can have a negative impact on non-native Japanese speakers.~~ Anime often  
4 incorporates overly casual and sometimes inappropriate phrases, especially in shounen and action  
5 genres. As a result, the survey response “I believe some wording can be wrong” might represent  
6 those who prefer to learn Japanese in the traditional way to avoid wording misinterpretations from  
7 anime dialogues. Another challenge for learners is to distinguish the gap between anime speech and  
8 real-life Japanese. According to Fukunaga (2006), some find it difficult to apply their knowledge in  
9 real life due to exaggerated expressions and fictional vocabulary used in anime. **Dialogue reflecting**  
10 **characters’ social roles, such as the speech patterns of high school students, small children, or**  
11 **samurai, may also be stylised or inaccurate at times.** ~~Even the dialogues that reflect the characters’~~  
12 ~~social roles (e.g., speech patterns of high school students, small children, or even samurai) may be~~  
13 ~~inaccurate at times,~~ so learners must be guided to distinguish between natural Japanese and stylised  
14 anime dialogue that are uncommon or outdated in real life. **Overall, these limitations may discourage**  
15 **some learners from using anime as a language-learning tool, especially if they are unsure how to**  
16 **distinguish stylised anime dialogue from everyday Japanese.** ~~Overall, these undesirable outcomes are~~  
17 ~~discouraging some people from using anime as a tool for language learning, especially for those~~  
18 ~~whose aim is to travel to Japan.~~

19

20 To counteract these limitations, anime is recommended to be used with guidance rather than  
21 treated as a complete replacement for textbooks or classroom instruction. Teachers can test  
22 students to identify whether a phrase is formal, casual, outdated, or exaggerated, and then compare  
23 it with a more standard expression used in everyday Japanese. Learners can also be encouraged to  
24 keep vocabulary logs that mark where an expression was heard, who used it, and whether it would  
25 be appropriate in real-life contexts. These strategies would allow anime to remain engaging while  
26 reducing the risk of misusing stylised or overly casual language.

27

28

## 29 **Conclusion**

30

31 The effectiveness of anime as a tool for Japanese language learning was investigated, focusing on the  
32 comparison of anime-based learning methods and traditional textbook learning methods. A survey  
33 targeted at JFL learners on the SurveySwap platform was conducted so that respondents could be  
34 gathered globally and qualitative data could be sought. By this approach, a diverse range of  
35 experiences and different levels of familiarity with the Japanese language were allowed. Based on  
36 these results, the trends and potential correlations in the respondents’ demographics and varying  
37 linguistic backgrounds when acquiring Japanese were to be analysed. By comparing and analysing  
38 traditional language learning methods with anime integration, the issue of declining Japanese  
39 language learners was approached through popular culture. Through this survey, perspectives and  
40 understandings of Japanese learners on how their anime-watching habits have impacted their  
41 language learning experiences were shared.

42

43 Based on the survey and prior research done with external sources, the findings suggest that the  
44 anime-watching method may have a positive impact on Japanese language acquisition for foreign

1 learners. The findings suggested that, depending on the various combinations of subtitles and the  
2 language the anime was watched in, word recognition and phrase memorisation in real-life contexts  
3 improved.

4

5 Moreover, the open-ended questions supported the claim of most researchers that anime is widely a  
6 motivational factor to start learning Japanese: to understand the context of the anime, to get familiar  
7 with Japanese cultural norms, and to enhance their travelling experiences by improving their  
8 speaking skills. However, some responses challenge this view; as respondents discussed the  
9 limitations of anime learning methods, such as overly casual and inappropriate phrases that can  
10 cause mistaken interpretation. As a result, it showed that some prefer learning in traditional learning  
11 methods rather than through anime.

12

13 Although anime-integrated learning is yet to be spread in educational curricula, this paper suggests  
14 possible benefits that anime could bring; as well as some practical recommendations to be used in  
15 the classroom. In order to realistically apply this new method, though, it is crucial to explore how  
16 traditional teaching methods can be combined with anime-based learning and whether educators  
17 are able to effectively balance both approaches to mitigate the limitations of misinterpretations of  
18 certain speeches.

19

20

## 21 ~~Research Ethics~~

22 ¶

23 ~~This study involved a minimal risk, anonymous, voluntary survey and did not collect personally~~  
24 ~~identifiable or sensitive information. The research was conducted independently by a secondary~~  
25 ~~school student. The author's school does not maintain an institutional review board (IRB) or formal~~  
26 ~~ethics committee capable of issuing ethics approval or exemption determinations; this is confirmed~~  
27 ~~by a designated school official. Accordingly, the study followed ethical principles appropriate to~~  
28 ~~minimal risk social research.~~¶

29 ¶

30 ~~All participants provided informed consent prior to participation through a consent statement~~  
31 ~~presented at the beginning of the survey. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents~~  
32 ~~could discontinue at any time without penalty. Responses were collected anonymously, and no~~  
33 ~~identifying information was recorded.~~¶

34 ¶

35 ~~Survey data were stored securely in a password-protected account accessible only to the author.~~  
36 ~~Data will be retained until completion of the publication process and then permanently deleted. The~~  
37 ~~study involved no deception or intervention and posed minimal risk. Because the sample was~~  
38 ~~self-selected and recruited online, the results may be subject to sampling bias and may not be fully~~  
39 ~~representative.~~¶

40 ¶

41 ~~I affirm that the ideas, arguments, and analysis in this paper are my own. AI tools were used only for~~  
42 ~~minor language editing (grammar and clarity), not for generating content or analysis.~~¶

43

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## Referee 1

### **Comment 1:**

However, the author should stake out the field more clearly so that the sources cited reflect the breadth of the field (see ‘Engagement with Literature’ and ‘Evidence’).

#### **Response:**

Thank you for this suggestion. Since adding new sources is being handled separately, I have revised the wording so that the paper does not overstate the breadth of existing research. I now describe the field as limited and developing rather than fully established.

#### **Change made:** (in the Abstract)

~~Extending previous research on anime’s impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation~~  
Building on a limited but developing body of research on anime’s impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, this research distributed an online survey to anime-watchers regarding their Japanese fluency and their audio/subtitle preferences.

### **Comment 2:**

Moreover, they should reformulate how they present the significance of the responses to “Do you find watching anime to be a source of motivation when learning Japanese?” in a more consistent way.

#### **Response:**

Thank you for identifying this inconsistency. I have revised the discussion so that motivation is presented more cautiously and consistently as one part of a broader framework, rather than as the only or strongest outcome of anime-based learning.

#### **Change made:**

~~Overall, the results suggest that anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation and recognition of everyday Japanese phrases~~

Overall, the results suggest that anime-based learning may support motivation alongside recognition of everyday Japanese phrases, particularly when motivation is understood as part of a broader framework that also includes linguistic development and cultural literacy.

### **Comment 3:**

At times, the author argues that ‘anime-based learning was associated with learner motivation’; at other times, they say ‘anime-based learning connects motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy in a single framework’.

#### **Response:**

I have revised the wording so that the manuscript consistently uses the broader “framework” idea rather than shifting between separate claims.

**Change made:**

~~Earlier research viewed anime as a source of motivation (Fukunaga, 2006), while later work focused on its linguistic benefits (Chan & Wong, 2017). In contrast, this study introduces a third perspective, emphasising how anime-based learning connects motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy in a single framework.~~

Rather than treating motivation, linguistic development, and cultural literacy as separate outcomes, this study presents them as connected elements within a single framework of anime-based language learning. Within this framework, motivation may encourage continued exposure to Japanese, while repeated listening and contextual viewing may support phrase recognition and cultural understanding.

**Comment 4:**

Since only 35% answered ‘yes’ and 45% ‘sometimes’ to the question about motivation, I recommend emphasising the idea of ‘framework’ in which motivation works in tandem with other factors.

**Response:**

I have revised the results and discussion to avoid overstating the motivation finding. The revised wording emphasizes that anime is sometimes motivational and that motivation works together with other factors.

**Change made:**

Added part after “The responses revealed that 35% of participants answered “yes,” 45% answered “sometimes,” and 15% answered “no.”

Because the largest group answered “sometimes,” these results suggest that anime should not be treated as a universal source of motivation. Instead, motivation appears to work alongside other factors, such as subtitle use, repeated exposure, prior proficiency, and cultural interest.

**Comment 5:**

Keywords list. Replace ‘linguistics’ with a more relevant term, e.g. language learning, foreign language learning. Replace ‘survey’ with ‘quantitative and qualitative research’

**Response:**

I have revised the keywords to use more specific terms.

**Change made:**

~~Linguistics, Anime, Survey, Japanese~~

Language Learning, Anime, Quantitative and Qualitative Research, Japanese

**Comment 6:**

State explicitly at the outset the contribution of the paper (see above), In other words, state explicitly that the paper will focus on the learners' own perceptions. i.e. Japanese language learners' perception of using anime as a learning tool out of the classroom

**Response:**

I have added a clearer statement of the paper's contribution in the introduction.

**Change made:**

Added after "However, educators and institutions have not greatly promoted the integration of anime as an educational tool in Japanese learning."

This paper contributes to research on anime and Japanese language learning by focusing on learners' own perceptions of using anime as a learning tool outside the classroom. Rather than examining only formal classroom uses of anime, the study investigates how learners describe their independent anime-watching practices and how these practices relate to motivation, phrase recognition, listening, and cultural understanding.

**Comment 7:**

Outline research methods in the abstract (mixed methods)

**Response:**

I have revised the abstract to state that the study uses a mixed-methods survey design.

**Change made:**

~~this research distributed an online survey to anime watchers regarding their Japanese fluency and their audio/subtitle preferences~~

this study used a mixed-methods online survey of anime viewers, combining quantitative questions about Japanese proficiency and audio/subtitle preferences with qualitative open-ended responses about motivation, learning strategies, and perceived limitations.

**Comment 8:**

Integrate footnotes in the text.

**Response:**

I have integrated the explanatory footnotes into the main text so that the methodology and results sections read more smoothly.

**Change made:**

~~1 SurveySwap was used to recruit participants through a voluntary, self-selecting survey exchange.~~

SurveySwap was used to recruit participants through a voluntary, self-selecting survey exchange. Because the survey was written in English and SurveySwap supports English, Dutch, and German but not non-Latin languages, the sample may reflect English-speaking respondents more strongly than other groups.

~~2 This was a 'select all that apply' question.~~

Because this item allowed participants to select all languages that applied, the percentages were not expected to total 100%.

### **Comment 9:**

Move ethical considerations after 'Methodology'

#### **Response:**

I have moved the Research Ethics section so that it appears immediately after the Methodology section.

#### **Change made:**

Revised order as below

Methodology → Research Ethics → Results → Discussion → Conclusion

### **Comment 10:**

The signposting provided by the author – '(1) the benefits of using anime as a learning tool through context, (2) the challenges and limitations of anime and language integration, and (3) practical recommendations for integrating anime into official Japanese language curricula' – does not reflect the structure of the paper. The subheadings should be reworded to reflect the signposting, or vice versa.

#### **Response:**

I have revised the signposting so that it more accurately matches the actual structure of the paper.

#### **Change made:**

~~This paper is structured in three main sections: (1) the benefits of using anime as a learning tool through context, (2) the challenges and limitations of anime and language integration, and (3) practical recommendations for integrating anime into official Japanese language curricula.~~

The paper first reviews existing research on anime and Japanese language learning, then presents the survey methodology and results. The discussion is organised around the main themes identified in the responses: language and subtitle practices, motivation and language development, classroom integration, contextual benefits, and challenges or limitations of anime-based learning.

**Comment 11:**

Split 'Methodology' into two paragraphs

**Response:**

I have divided the methodology section into two paragraphs: one describing the survey design and recruitment, and the second describing data analysis and the exploratory nature of the study.

**Change made:**

## Paragraph 1:

This study utilised a 10-minute survey to explore the role of anime in Japanese language development within current education systems. An online survey method was selected to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling participants to report their learning experiences, strategies, and perceptions in their own words. The survey included 15 questions, ranging from multiple-choice to open-ended. Twenty individuals participated and provided responses. The research utilised the online platform SurveySwap to gather respondents. SurveySwap was used to recruit participants through a voluntary survey exchange. Because the survey was written in English and SurveySwap supports English, Dutch, and German but not non-Latin languages, the sample may reflect English-speaking respondents more strongly than other groups. Respondents were screened for eligibility by confirming that they were studying Japanese and engaged with anime. It helped reach a global community and obtain diverse insights based on their demographic information and theme-specific answers, including their home language, level of Japanese literacy, and anime-watching frequency.

## Paragraph 2:

Closed-ended items were organised into quantitative summaries. Responses indicating "never watching anime" were excluded from analyses focused on anime-watching practices. Open-ended responses were reviewed multiple times and grouped into frequently addressed themes based on common experiences with representing quotes. The findings are exploratory at this stage, as this study serves as a pilot project aimed at addressing an existing gap in the literature. Given this, the findings are not generalizable, but should rather be seen as exploratory and may support and inform future research with larger participant groups.

**Comment 12:**

Outline the themes identified in the open-ended responses in 'Methodology'. Do the subheadings 'Language and Subtitles', 'Motivation and Language Development', etc. refer to these very themes?

**Response:**

I have clarified in the Methodology section that the discussion subheadings reflect themes identified through the open-ended responses.

**Change made:**

Added after “Open-ended responses were reviewed multiple times and grouped into frequently addressed themes based on common experiences with representing quotes.”

“These themes became the basis for the discussion subheadings, including “Language and Subtitles,” “Motivation and Language Development,” “Classroom Integration,” and “Challenges and Limitations of Anime and Language Integration.”

**Comment 13:**

Page 11. Reference to ‘travel to Japan’ is confusing because up to this point the emphasis has been on learning for education. Rephrase to make the paper more cohesive

**Response:**

I have removed the emphasis on travel to Japan and revised the sentence so that it stays focused on language learning and educational contexts.

**Change made:**

~~Hence, it can be inferred that JFLs who wish to travel to Japan are likely to watch anime in order to develop this skill to adapt language style accordingly.~~

Hence, it can be inferred that JFL learners may use anime to observe how language style changes across social relationships and communicative contexts, which can support their understanding of when formal or informal expressions are appropriate.

**Comment 14:**

Reformat references in abstract: surname followed by year

**Response:**

I have revised the abstract so that citations use surname followed by year.

**Change made:**

Changed to: Fukunaga (2006), Chan and Wong (2017), and Han and Ling (2017)

**Comment 15:**

Page 1. Provide the source for the decline in Japanese learners

**Response:**

I have removed this statement from the manuscript because I was unable to verify it with an appropriate source and did not want to include an unsupported claim.

**Change made:**

~~Given that Japanese course enrollment has been declining since 1979, this research aims to present how Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language acquisition.~~

This research aims to present how Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language acquisition.

**Comment 16:**

Page 2. Add 'Iida & Takeyama, 2022' to end-of-text list and replace '&' with 'and'

**Response:**

Thank you for this correction. I have revised the in-text citation to use "and." The reference list addition will be completed in the bibliography revision.

**Change made:**

~~(Iida & Takeyama, 2022)~~

(Iida and Takeyama, 2022)

**Comment 17:**

P.2: Razali et al. (2018) does not match end-of-text list. Check and reformat.

**Response:**

I have revised the in-text citation so that it matches the current reference-list entry.

**Change made:**

~~Razali et al. (2018)~~

Razali (2018)

**Comment 18:**

Reformat end-of-text reference: (PDF) JAPANESE LANGUAGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING ANIME AS A TEACHING TOOL.

**Response:**

Since this item is not clearly cited in the manuscript and appears inaccurately formatted, I have removed it from the bibliography for now.

**Change made:**

~~(PDF) JAPANESE LANGUAGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING ANIME AS A TEACHING TOOL. (2026). ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i1.6862>~~

**Comment 19:**

Remove from end-of-text list as not mentioned in text: Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, Izumi Tsuji Fandom Unbound Otaku Culture in A Connected World PDF.

**Response:**

I removed the non-academic PDF/Scribd version and replaced it with the properly published book reference. I also cited it in the manuscript so that the bibliography and in-text citations match.

**Change made:**

~~Mizuki, I. (n.d.). Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, Izumi Tsuji Fandom Unbound Otaku Culture in A Connected World PDF | PDF | Anime | Manga. Retrieved July 10, 2025, from <https://www.scribd.com/document/340441527/Mizuko-Ito-Daisuke-Okabe-Izumi-Tsuji-Fandom-Unbound-Otaku-Culture-in-a-Connected-World-pdf>~~

Ito, M., Okabe, D., & Tsuji, I. (Eds.). (2012). Fandom unbound: Otaku culture in a connected world. Yale University Press.

**Comment 20:**

In ‘Methodology’ Anderson and Fukunaga appear to be co-authors. Check this as it clashes with end-of-text list

**Response:**

I fixed the citation by removing “Anderson & Fukunaga, 2020” and replacing it with the correct source, “Fukunaga, 2006.”

**Change made:**

~~(Chan & Wong, 2017; Anderson & Fukunaga, 2020)~~

(Chan and Wong, 2017; Fukunaga, 2006)

**Comment 21:**

The paper demonstrates understanding of the field in that the author highlights an issue worth investigating. However, although the author presents research on the topic as well established (see abstract), the paper connects to four sources mainly: Chan and Wong, Fukunaga, Han and Ling, Razali. Can the author stake out the breadth and depth of the field more clearly and add 3-4 sources accordingly if they exist? If not, please make it clear that research on this topic is emergent/limited.

**Response:**

In the current revision, I have changed the wording so that the manuscript presents this topic as a limited but developing area of research rather than as a fully established field.

**Change made:**

~~Extending previous research on anime's impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation~~  
Building on a limited but developing body of research on anime's impact on word recognition, listening, and pronunciation, this research distributed an online survey to anime-watchers regarding their Japanese fluency and their audio/subtitle preferences.

**Comment 22:**

Add sources for 'multimodal learning' (p. 10)

**Response:**

This will be addressed separately as part of the source-addition revision. For now, I have clarified the wording around multimodal learning without adding a new source.

**Change made:**

~~This concept of diverse representations, such as sounds and animations that viewers can engage with in the fan-made content, is called multimodal learning.~~  
The combination of spoken dialogue, subtitles, images, and sound can be considered a form of multimodal learning as learners engage with Japanese through several modes of communication at the same time.

**Comment 23:**

Replace 'in an educational way' with 'for educational purposes'

**Response:**

I have replaced "in an educational way" with "for educational purposes."

**Change made:**

what are the limitations of using anime to learn Japanese in an educational way?  
what are the limitations of using anime to learn Japanese for educational purposes?

**Comment 24:**

Remove commas before 'as' when 'as' means 'because', e.g. 'These findings suggested Hypothesis A as learners who combined Japanese audio with subtitles also described ...'

**Response:**

I have removed the comma before “as” and revised the sentence for clarity.

**Change made:**

Commas are crossed out ↓

However, some responses challenge this view, as respondents discussed the limitations of anime learning methods, such as overly casual and inappropriate phrases that can cause mistaken interpretation.

However, it was also implied that limitations exist, as exaggerated or overly casual expressions common in anime may limit the effective application of language skills in real-life contexts.

The findings are exploratory at this stage, as this study serves as a pilot project aimed at addressing an existing gap in the literature.

**Comment 25:**

Remove ‘[2]’ on page 2

**Response:**

I have removed ‘[2]’.

**Change made:**

~~Chan & Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension [2].~~

Chan and Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension.

**Comment 26:**

Replace ‘&’ with ‘and’

**Response:**

I have replaced “&” with “and” in the main text.

**Change made:**

“Chan & Wong” to “Chan and Wong”

“Iida & Takeyama” to “Iida and Takeyama”

“Anderson & Fukunaga” to “Fukunaga / Chan and Wong; Fukunaga”

**Comment 27:**

‘delve into’ is increasingly associated with AI texts. Replace

**Response:**

I have replaced “delve into” with another word.

**Change made:**

~~This paper will delve into the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning.~~

This paper will examine the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning.

**Comment 28:**

Join the first two paragraphs of ‘Research purpose’

**Response:**

I have joined the first two paragraphs of the Research Purpose section.

**Change made:**

~~This paper investigates the relationship between anime and Japanese language education, specifically comparing anime-based language learning methods with traditional approaches. This paper will delve into the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning.~~

~~Moreover, this paper will also explore whether and how anime can serve as an effective tool for language acquisition in both formal and informal settings.~~

This paper investigates the relationship between anime and Japanese language education, specifically comparing anime-based language learning methods with traditional approaches. This paper will delve into the advantages and limitations of integrating anime into Japanese language learning. Moreover, this paper will also explore whether and how anime can serve as an effective tool for language acquisition in both formal and informal settings.

**Comment 29:**

Page 4: remove comma before ‘who are globally...’

**Response:**

I have removed the unnecessary comma.

**Change made:**

~~anime-engaged people, who are globally diverse but mostly speak English~~  
anime-engaged people who are globally diverse but mostly speak English

**Comment 30:**

Bottom of page 5: Capital letter missing. 'in what language...?'

**Response:**

I have corrected the capitalization issue.

**Change made:**

~~When asked 'in what language are the subtitles in?'~~  
When asked, "In what language are the subtitles in?"

**Comment 31:**

Justify/align indent: 'Those who responded affirmatively mentioned improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition'.

**Response:**

I have fixed the alignment and integrated the sentence into the paragraph to make it look connected.

**Change made:**

~~Those who responded affirmatively mentioned improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.~~  
Participants who answered "yes" often connected anime viewing with improvements in word recognition and phrase acquisition.

## Referee 2

**Comment 1:**

Mentions of more recent articles, such as a 2026 citation in the bibliography, are not mentioned in the text, and furthermore links to a 2017 article instead.

**Response:**

I have removed the uncited and incorrectly formatted 2026 bibliography item for now. If this source is used in the revised literature review, it will be cited in the text and reformatted properly.

**Change made:**

~~(PDF) JAPANESE LANGUAGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING ANIME AS A TEACHING TOOL. (2026). ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i1.6862>~~

### **Comment 2:**

The graphic data from the survey is also problematic at times, there are percentages and text-based information that are missing or need further explanations.

#### **Response:**

I have revised the results section to explain the survey percentages more clearly, especially where participants were allowed to select more than one answer. I also added text-based explanations to clarify how the survey figures should be interpreted.

#### **Change made:**

Clarifications on ↓

~~For the question on languages spoken at home, the item was multi-select, so percentages were not expected to total 100%.~~

For the question on languages spoken at home, because this question allowed participants to select more than one language, the percentages represent the proportion of respondents who selected each option and are not expected to total 100%.

Sentence added after “As participants were asked what language they usually watch anime in (audio), multiple responses were allowed.”

→ Since the audio-language question allowed multiple responses, the percentages represent the share of respondents who selected each option rather than mutually exclusive categories. This explains why the percentages exceed 100% when added together.

### **Comment 3:**

While it is alright to use AI for minor grammar editing, there are certain examples that I feel were taken from ChatGPT and used in certain sentences, such as “not only” and (e.g., with parentheses) which is very much a typical statement that ChatGPT often utilizes and should be removed and simply connect to the main point.

#### **Response:**

I have revised sentences that sounded formulaic and removed or reduced phrases such as “not only” and parenthetical “e.g.” examples where possible.

#### **Change made:**

~~anime allows students to explore not only formal textbook language but also slang and casual expressions.~~

anime allows students to explore formal textbook language alongside slang and casual expressions.

~~They explain that anime helps learners practice not only pronunciation and vocabulary but also social nuance~~

They explain that anime helps learners practice pronunciation, vocabulary, and social nuance

~~Even the dialogues that reflect the characters' social roles (e.g., speech patterns of high school students, small children, or even samurai) may be inaccurate at times~~

Dialogue reflecting characters' social roles, such as the speech patterns of high school students, small children, or samurai, may also be stylised or inaccurate at times

#### **Comment 4:**

This is especially concerning towards the end of the article, as this section raises some challenges of anime-based learning, though using the word “negative” is a bit strong – perhaps risks or limitations.

#### **Response:**

I have replaced “negative impact” with the more precise phrase “risks and limitations.”

#### **Change made:**

~~Despite all the benefits introduced above, anime language learning can have a negative impact on non-native Japanese speakers.~~

Despite the benefits introduced above, anime-based language learning also presents risks and limitations for non-native Japanese speakers.

#### **Comment 5:**

The article would also benefit from some recommendations to counteract the challenges mentioned in the article.

#### **Response:**

I have added practical recommendations to the challenges section so that the paper explains how learners and educators can address the risks of casual, exaggerated, or inappropriate anime language.

#### **Change made:**

Added after “Dialogue reflecting characters' social roles, such as the speech patterns of high school students, small children, or samurai, may also be stylised or inaccurate at times so learners must be guided to distinguish between natural Japanese and stylised anime dialogue that are uncommon or outdated in real life.”

To counteract these limitations, anime is recommended to be used with guidance rather than treated as a complete replacement for textbooks or classroom instruction. Teachers can test students to identify whether a phrase is formal, casual, outdated, or exaggerated, and then

compare it with a more standard expression used in everyday Japanese. Learners can also be encouraged to keep vocabulary logs that mark where an expression was heard, who used it, and whether it would be appropriate in real-life contexts. These strategies would allow anime to remain engaging while reducing the risk of misusing stylised or overly casual language.

**Comment 6:**

Although not required, there is specific mention of guidance needed, and these recommendations could be more helpful in supporting the readers with possibilities.

**Response:**

I have expanded the recommendations to make the need for guidance more practical and specific.

**Change made:**

This is addressed in the changes made in comment 5.

**Comment 7:**

I am excited to see your continued research trajectory and wishing you the best in these revisions and all of your endeavors.

**Response:**

Thank you very much for this kind comment and for the constructive feedback.

**Change made:**

No specific manuscript change was required for this positive comment.

**Author 100150 Submission 100142**

**Referee 1. 2-3 sentence justification**

I am satisfied with the changes made and, therefore, I recommend publication. I am impressed by the level of nuance achieved by the author through the changes made. The final submission also shows very good command of academic writing and research methods. (One very minor editing error: page 6, full stop missing before 'Since ...').

Congratulations! I wish the author all the best in their studies and future career.

## Post-Review: *Anime as an Educational Approach for Language Learning*

Thank you for your time and energy in responding to our feedback. We appreciate the revisions made, though in those revisions, some further edits are needed. There are also still some glaring technicalities that need to be addressed before proceeding further. The graphs as previously mentioned, need to be corrected. Please add 5% for English in the chart, and for the 2<sup>nd</sup> picture, please explain what the green color is and add the 5% percentage for this as well in the pie chart.



Figure 4. Motivation to learn Japanese through anime

The introduction has been revised, though there are some repetitive words as shown below:

“This research aims to present how Japanese learners could use anime-integrated education and how it is beneficial for language acquisition. This research aims to investigate whether and how anime helps people remain motivated to learn Japanese and better understand the language and culture, and what the limitations of using anime as an educational tool for learning Japanese are.”

Please revise the above by reducing “this research aims” which is mentioned twice in the same paragraph. The paragraph is a bit complicated, perhaps try something like this?

“This research explores how anime can support Japanese language learning and benefit language acquisition by examining whether and how anime helps learners stay motivated, better understand Japanese language and culture, and recognize the limitations of using anime as a learning tool.”

On page 2, write what JFL stands for – can use JFL subsequently afterwards – JFL is spelled out on page 11 and should be done on page 2 instead.

Page 2: “Chan & Wong (2017), for example, have explained the impact of anime on linguistic skill development in terms of vocabulary recognition and listening comprehension [2].”

What does the [2] stand for? Delete?

On page 6: As participants were asked what language they usually watch anime in (audio), multiple responses were allowed Since...”

“..were allowed. Since..” (there should be a period after the word allowed)

On page 13: “Although anime-integrated learning is yet to be spread in educational curricula...” (is this a fact? Cite a source or change wording)

Citation challenges:

There are also still citation issues. Iida and Takeyama, 2022 is not mentioned in the bibliography (only in the text).

Citations, for example, should only be capitalized for the first word and after a colon (:)

Anime in schools: Going beyond globalization and standards.

Volume number should italicized, for example: 8(3)

Page numbers need to be fully included, for example: 485-495

Razali citation is not correct, it is from 2014. Please change in-text and also in bibliography

Razali, A. B. (2014). Online manga and anime in promoting language learning and literacy practices. *International Conference on Computers in Education*.  
<https://doi.org/10.58459/icce.2014.754>

Citation still missing information, please correct to the following:

Han, C. Y., & Ling, W. N. (2017). The use of anime in teaching Japanese as a foreign language. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(2), 68-78.

Ito (2012) in-text is different than the bibliography:

Ito, M., Okabe, D., & Tsuji, I. (Eds.). (2012). *Fandom unbound: Otaku culture in a connected world*. Yale University Press.

Please add all authors to the in-text citation. In general reviewing APA formatting would be helpful.

Thanks again for taking the time to go through many of our comments. We hope that our feedback has been helpful in supporting you in your journey. Well done and looking forward to seeing the revisions!