



Exploration Students' Experiences of Integrating Japanese Popular Culture Based Digital Content in Japanese Language Learning

Muhammad Thamrin^{1*}, Robihim², Kun Makhsusy Permatasari³

¹²³Program Studi Bahasa dan Kebudayaan Jepang, Universitas Darma Persada Jakarta, DKI Jakarta, Indonesia

*E-mail: muhammadthamrin91yokatta@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore students' experiences in integrating Japanese popular culture-based digital content into Japanese language learning and to examine its contribution to the development of communicative competence and intercultural awareness. A qualitative case study design was employed involving 40 third- and fifth-semester students enrolled in speaking-oriented Japanese language courses. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis of the Semester Learning Plan and students' speaking assignments, and were analyzed thematically through an interactive process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that Japanese popular culture-based digital content supports students' understanding of vocabulary, sentence structures, pronunciation, and the use of appropriate formal and informal expressions. The integration of such content also increases students' motivation and confidence in speaking and enhances their awareness of communication norms, social relationships, and cultural values in Japanese society. Furthermore, students demonstrate greater openness toward cultural differences and improved ability to reflect on similarities and differences between Japanese and Indonesian communication practices. However, students' interactive speaking performance and two-way communication skills remain limited, particularly in sustaining interaction, responding spontaneously, interpreting implicit meanings, and applying appropriate politeness strategies. Overall, the study concludes that while Japanese popular culture-based digital content is effective in fostering linguistic awareness and intercultural understanding, its impact on communicative competence requires structured pedagogical mediation, interaction-based learning tasks, and guided intercultural reflection.

Keywords: students' experiences, Japanese popular culture, digital content, Japanese language learning

Eksplorasi Pengalaman Mahasiswa dalam Mengintegrasikan Konten Digital Berbasis Budaya Populer Jepang dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Jepang

ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa dalam mengintegrasikan konten digital berbasis budaya populer Jepang ke dalam pembelajaran bahasa Jepang dan untuk meneliti kontribusinya terhadap pengembangan kompetensi komunikatif dan kesadaran antarbudaya. Desain studi kasus kualitatif digunakan yang melibatkan 40 mahasiswa semester tiga dan lima yang terdaftar dalam kursus bahasa Jepang berorientasi berbicara. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas non-partisipan, dan analisis dokumen Rencana Pembelajaran Semester dan tugas berbicara mahasiswa, dan dianalisis secara tematik melalui proses interaktif kondensasi data, tampilan data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa konten digital berbasis budaya populer Jepang mendukung pemahaman mahasiswa tentang kosakata, struktur kalimat, pengucapan, dan penggunaan ekspresi formal dan informal yang tepat. Integrasi konten tersebut juga meningkatkan motivasi dan kepercayaan diri mahasiswa dalam berbicara dan meningkatkan kesadaran mereka tentang norma komunikasi, hubungan sosial, dan nilai-nilai budaya dalam masyarakat Jepang. Lebih lanjut, mahasiswa menunjukkan keterbukaan yang lebih besar terhadap perbedaan budaya dan kemampuan yang lebih baik untuk merefleksikan persamaan dan perbedaan antara praktik komunikasi Jepang dan Indonesia. Namun, kemampuan berbicara interaktif dan keterampilan komunikasi dua arah siswa masih terbatas, terutama dalam mempertahankan interaksi, merespons secara spontan, menafsirkan makna implisit, dan menerapkan strategi kesopanan yang tepat. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun konten digital berbasis budaya populer Jepang efektif dalam menumbuhkan kesadaran linguistik dan pemahaman antarbudaya, dampaknya terhadap kompetensi komunikatif membutuhkan mediasi pedagogis yang terstruktur, tugas pembelajaran berbasis interaksi, dan refleksi antarbudaya yang terarah.

Kata kunci: pengalaman mahasiswa, konten digital, budaya populer Jepang, pembelajaran bahasa Jepang

Submitted
24/01/2026

Accepted
26/01/2026

Published
28/01/2026

Citation	Thamrin, M., & Robihim, R., & Permatasari, K. M. (2026). Exploration Students' Experiences of Integrating Japanese Popular Culture Based Digital Content in Japanese Language Learning. <i>Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra, Volume 5, Nomor 1, Januari 2026, 897-912</i> . DOI: https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v5i1.1285
----------	---

Publisher
Raja Zulkarnain Education Foundation

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology is currently significantly transforming the teaching and learning of foreign languages, including in Japanese language classes (Haleem et al., 2022). The digital era has expanded easy access to Japanese popular culture content such as anime, dramas, manga, and streaming videos, which are not only entertainment but also potential Japanese language learning media (Hatami, 2018; Wishnoebroto et al., 2017; Wisniawati et al., 2022). Furthermore, digital content provides language input that is authentic, contextual, and relevant to real-life communication practices, making it a potentially effective learning resource for improving communication competence, motivation and understanding of foreign cultures (Imura, 2018).

On the other hand, in Japanese language education in Indonesia, the traditional focus of learning often remains on mastering linguistic structures such as vocabulary and grammar (Abidin et al., 2024; Damayanti et al., 2023; Kusumawati, 2019). However, language learning encompasses more than just linguistic aspects; it must also strengthen communicative competence and intercultural awareness as part of holistic language skills. Communicative competence encompasses the ability to use language effectively in social contexts, while intercultural awareness encompasses understanding the cultural values underlying language interactions (Lim & Griffith, 2016; McConachy, 2022; Vorweg, 2015; Xu et al., 2025). Previous research has shown that digital media can contribute to the development of students' intercultural competence and facilitate their interpretation of cultural symbols (Christopher, 2021). However, research specifically exploring the role of Japanese popular culture based on digital content in shaping Japanese language communicative competence and students' awareness of cross-cultural understanding remains scarce.

A study at Darma Persada University demonstrated that Japanese popular culture can be

used as a resource for Japanese language learning and improve academic achievement. However, this study used a quasi-experimental design and did not qualitatively explore students' experiences, particularly those related to the development of communicative competence and motivation (Makhsusy Permatasari et al., 2025). Other research has found that the Japanese language learning process must build cultural awareness and communication skills, and that using social media as a learning medium is quite effective (Widiati, 2025). However, studies that systematically integrate Japanese popular culture based on digital content into Japanese language learning and connect it to students' experiences remain lacking. More specifically, in the Japanese Language Department at Darma Persada University, learning has integrated various digital media. However, there has been little empirical research into students' experiences with the use of Japanese popular culture based on digital content in their learning process, and how this media use affects their communicative competence in Japanese and their awareness of Japanese culture. These findings make this phenomenon highly interesting for further in-depth study. This study examined students' experiences qualitatively. How can the integration of Japanese popular culture based on digital content into Japanese language learning activities improve communicative competence and intercultural awareness?

Therefore, this study aims to elicit students' perceptions regarding the comprehensive development of communicative competence and intercultural awareness through the integration of Japanese popular culture based on digital content into Japanese language learning activities. Therefore, this research can be empirically useful for curriculum development in universities related to the development of language competence and the implementation of cultural understanding of Japanese language learning, as well as the implementation of digital content in Japanese language learning.



Furthermore, research related to intercultural awareness, which contributes to strengthening communicative competence in Japanese language learning and the integration of digital content containing Japanese cultural information, has been scarce. Previous studies have concluded that integrating intercultural competence into the curriculum, with digital tools and culturally responsive materials, is essential for language education (Christopher, 2021; Cong-Lem, 2025; Makhsusy Permatasari et al., 2025). Similarly, other studies have concluded that Gen-AI and multimedia-based Japanese language instruction can improve intercultural communication adaptation and L2 motivation (Risda et al., 2025). Other studies have even concluded that students' intercultural communication competence will strengthen their relationships with their peers (D'Orazzi & Marangell, 2025; Munezane, 2025). This indicates a research gap that needs to be filled with a qualitative approach that can explore students' experiences and perceptions in depth. Therefore, this study has novelty, namely by empirically connecting students' experiences related to communicative competence and intercultural awareness through a qualitative approach that focuses on student experiences. This research study also explores students' experiences integrating content-based Japanese popular culture as a learning resource in the classroom. Furthermore, this research is situated within the specific context of University and examines several previous research findings related to this research theme. Thus, it can provide a contextual empirical contribution to the literature on Japanese language learning in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research approach is qualitative with a case study design. This method in-depth examines a case, such as an event, activity, or process occurring individually or in groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Clark, 2017). Therefore, the research focuses on exploring

students' experiences in learning Japanese through digital integration based on Japanese popular culture related to communicative competence and intercultural awareness. The research subjects were purposively selected from students taking Japanese language courses and directly involved in the use of anime, dramas, and Japanese-language digital videos as learning media. A total of 50 students were recruited from the odd semester of 2025-2026, namely semesters 3 and 5. Therefore, the primary data source was the students, and secondary data sources were the lecturers and teaching documents (Semester Learning Plan, teaching materials, digital media, and student assignment evaluation results). The research was conducted at Darma Persada University, Jakarta. The research instrument was the researcher, acting as the human instrument. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation study. The interviews explored, among other things, (1) experiences using authentic materials and digital content, (2) components of communicative competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic), and (3) dimensions of intercultural awareness (knowledge, attitudes, and cultural reflection) (Byram, 2021; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2008; Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Tomlinson, 2011). Data were analyzed thematically using an interactive analysis model through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions by coding based on the research themes (Miles et al., 2014). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking with informants to ensure the accuracy of the research findings.

RESULT

The Semester Learning Plan refers to the curriculum design established by the government and the limitations imposed by study programs. Digital media is left to the discretion of each

lecturer, and study programs do not restrict its use. This means that the need for digital media depends on the lecturers' level of teaching competence and their innovative teaching and learning processes. Meanwhile, the content of teaching materials has been designed to meet global needs to achieve the study program's vision and mission. Meanwhile, the evaluation of student assignments in the third and fifth semesters revealed several findings: 1) assignments focused on Japanese speaking skills showed a low level of two-way communication competence and lacked interactive skills; 2) students' understanding of cross-cultural concepts in Japanese language learning remained low and was not reflected in the separation of cultural uses within the Japanese language; and 3) final grades

for courses focused on Japanese speaking skills from the 40 students studied showed that 40% of students received an A grade, 35% received a B grade, 15% received a C grade, and 10% received a D grade.

Interview with colleagues regarding the integration of Japanese Popular Culture-Based Digital Content into Japanese Language Learning demonstrated positive views, with colleagues suggesting that the integration of digital content with popular culture could provide an authentic learning resource for students, relevant to global developments and the essence of Japanese culture, enabling students to experience the use of Japanese like native speakers.

The findings from interviews with the 40 students are presented in the table below.

Table 1
 Summary of Result Analysis Students Interview for Experience Using Authentic Materials and Digital Content Component

No	Subcomponents	Interview Question	Findings
1	General Experiences	What Japanese pop culture-based digital content is most frequently used in Japanese language courses?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anime 2. Dorama 3. YouTube Japanese social media
2	Learning Activities	What form of learning activities do you usually do after watching or accessing the content?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role play 2. Class discussion (group or classical), group presentation 3. Working on project assignments (e.g. making videos/dialogues)
3	Content Benefit	What piece of digital content has been most helpful to you in understanding Japanese?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Making reports and presenting them orally in class 1. Anime clips 2. Japanese YouTube learning channels 3. Short videos (TikTok / Instagram Reels in Japanese) 4. Japanese movies 5. Podcasts in Japanese 6. Japanese songs and music videos 7. Online learning platforms (e.g., learning apps or websites) 8. Digital news or Japanese online articles



4 Comparison of learning re-sources	How is your learning experience different when using digital content compared to just using textbooks?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I understand real-life language use better 2. I can understand cultural context more clearly 3. Speaking skills improve more than with textbooks only 4. Digital content sometimes makes learning less focused 5. I still prefer textbooks because they are more structured and clear 6. I feel more confident using Japanese in real situations
5 Context of use	In what learning situations do you find Japanese popular culture-based digital content most useful?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When practicing listening to natural Japanese spoken by native speakers 2. When discussing cultural topics related to daily life in Japan 3. When preparing for speaking or presentation activities 4. When working in group discussions or collaborative tasks 5. In project-based learning activities (e.g., video or dialogue creation)
6 The role of the lecturer	What is the role of lecturers in helping you understand the language and cultural context of the digital content used?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guiding class discussions about the meaning and messages of the content 2. Providing examples of how the expressions are used in real communication 3. Helping compare Japanese culture with Indonesian culture 4. Giving feedback on students' language use during follow-up activities 5. The lecturer's role is limited because students mostly learn independently

Table 1 shows that the integration of Japanese popular culture-based digital content provides clear benefits for building students' communicative competence and intercultural awareness, particularly by enhancing their understanding of authentic vocabulary, expressions, and discourse patterns, improving pronunciation and speaking confidence, and strengthening awareness of social norms, daily practices, and cultural values in Japanese society. Through activities such as role plays, discussions, projects, and presentations, students are able to relate language use to real communicative situations and compare Japanese and Indonesian cultural contexts, which supports the development of sociolinguistic and intercultural sensitivity. However, several limitations were also identified. Although students feel more confident and linguistically informed, their two-way communication and interactive speaking skills remain limited, especially in sustaining spontaneous interaction and responding appropriately in real-time communication. In addition, some students still rely on textbooks because digital content is perceived as less structured, and learning outcomes vary depending on how lecturers guide discussion, contextualization, and feedback. This suggests that while Japanese cultural digital content is effective in enriching linguistic input and cultural knowledge, its contribution to communicative competence and intercultural awareness is not automatic constrained without systematic pedagogical mediation, structured interaction-oriented tasks, and explicit guidance in interpreting cultural meanings and pragmatic norm.

Table 2
 Summary of Result Analysis Students Interview for Communicative Competence Component

No	Subcomponents	Interview Question	Findings
1	Linguistics	How does digital content help you understand Japanese vocabulary and sentence structure?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By making it easier to understand word meanings through visual and situational context 2. Digital content does not really help me understand vocabulary and structure 3. By showing how words and sentence patterns are used in real communication 4. By helping me recognize commonly used expressions in everyday situations
2		Do you feel your Japanese listening skills have improved after using digital content? Explain.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I can understand native speakers' speed of speech better than before 2. Visual context in the videos helps me guess meanings when I do not know some words 3. I am more familiar with natural pronunciation and intonation
3	Sociolinguistics	What did you learn about the differences in Japanese language usage depending on the person you're speaking to in class?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. I still find it difficult to understand fast or overlapping speech 5. I do not feel a clear improvement in my listening ability
4		Did you gain a better understanding of the differences between formal and informal language through digital content?	<p>I learned about</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. word choice and expressions when speaking with people of higher status or according to social role, 2. the use of respectful and humble expressions, 3. the importance of social status and position, and 4. I haven't learned much about the differences in language usage based on the audience.
5	Pragmatic	How does digital content help you understand how to convey a message?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is appropriate to use formal or informal expressions 2. Recognizing polite and casual forms more easily in real conversations 3. I can notice how speakers adjust their language according to relationships and setting 4. I can compare classroom language with real-life language shown in videos 5. I still feel confused about when to use formal and informal expressions 6. Digital content does not really help me understand these differences



	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Organize ideas in real conversations2. understanding how intentions are expressed clearly or indirectly3. adjusting their messages depending on the situation4. understanding how to express opinions and feelings more naturally5. recognizing how tone and facial expressions support the spoken message6. understanding how meaning can change based on context7. It helps me avoid overly direct or unnatural expressions
Do you feel more capable of using appropriate expressions for communication situations after participating in digital content-based learning?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. More confidently2. I can avoid expressions that may sound rude or unnatural3. More naturally in short conversations4. More confident initiating conversations in Japanese5. Digital content does not significantly improve my ability to choose expressions
How has this learning experience impacted your confidence when speaking Japanese?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Less afraid of making mistakes when speaking Japanese2. More comfortable responding spontaneously3. I can express my ideas more clearly than before4. I still feel anxious when speaking in front of others5. I still need more practice despite using digital content¹. This learning experience does not really affect my speaking confidence

The findings from the table show that the integration of Japanese cultural digital content contributes positively to the development of students' communicative competence and intercultural awareness by helping them understand vocabulary and sentence structures through visual context, recognize commonly used expressions, and observe how language is used in real communicative situations. Students also reported better awareness of pronunciation, intonation, and speech speed, as well as increased confidence when expressing ideas in short interactions. In the sociolinguistic and pragmatic dimensions, digital content supports students' understanding of formal and informal expressions, politeness, social roles, and how speakers adjust language according to relationships, status, and communicative situations, while also helping them recognize how intentions, emotions, and messages are conveyed directly or indirectly. However, the findings also indicate several limitations, as some students still experience difficulties in understanding vocabulary and listening to native speakers, feel confused when distinguishing appropriate formal and informal expressions, and struggle to select suitable expressions in context.

Moreover, interactive speaking skills remain limited, particularly in responding spontaneously, reducing speaking mistakes, and sustaining natural two-way communication. These results suggest that although Japanese cultural digital content is effective in enriching linguistic input and cultural understanding, its impact on students' interactive communicative competence and intercultural performance is not yet optimal and requires stronger pedagogical mediation and structured communicative practice.

Table 3
 Summary of Result Analysis Students Interview for Intercultural awareness Component

No	Subcomponents	Interview Question	Findings
1	Cultural knowledge	What knowledge about Japanese customs, values, or ways of life did you gain from the digital content used in the learning?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning daily routines and lifestyle in Japan, school and university life in Japan 2. Learning group-oriented values and social harmony 3. Learning communication manners in public and private spaces 4. Learning food culture and dining manners, festivals, traditions, and seasonal events
2		What cultural aspects do you think appear most frequently in the anime or dramas used in class?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal responsibility and self-discipline 2. Conflict resolution and indirect communication styles 3. Social rules and public behavior 4. Traditional customs shown in modern settings 5. Emotional expression and interpersonal sensitivity 6. I am not sure which cultural aspects appear most often
3	Attitudes towards cultural differences	How do you view Japanese culture after learning about it through digital content?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Japanese culture more interesting and relevant to learn 2. More open to cultural differences than before 3. More motivated to learn Japanese language and culture 4. Some cultural practices are difficult to understand
4		Does this learning influence your attitude towards cultural differences between Japan and Indonesia?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More respectful toward cultural differences 2. Communication styles differ across cultures 3. Accepting different values and social norms 4. More confident interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds 5. My attitude toward cultural differences has not changed significantly



5	Cultural reflection	Have you ever compared the habits or ways of communicating of Japanese people with the habits in Indonesia after watching this content?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Comparing how people show politeness in daily communication2. Comparing communication between seniors and juniors3. Comparing oral language and non-verbal communication4. Comparing classroom communication styles5. Comparing group interaction and teamwork behavior6. Do not make cultural comparisons
6		Was there a particular show that made you change your initial understanding or assumptions about Japanese culture?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It changed how I see relationships between people in Japan2. It changed my understanding of communication styles in daily situations3. It helped me realize that Japanese culture is more diverse4. It helped me understand hidden or implicit cultural meanings5. I realized that media portrayals do not always represent real life fully6. I do not remember any specific show that changed my understanding
7		How do you think this digital content-based learning helps you become more sensitive to cultural differences in communication?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It helps me notice different communication styles in various cultural situations2. It helps me consider the listener's background when communicating3. It helps me recognize cultural norms behind certain communication behaviors4. It helps me reflect on my own communication habits5. It helps me adapt my communication style in cross-cultural situations6. This learning does not really affect my sensitivity to cultural differences

The findings indicate that the integration of Japanese cultural digital content provides substantial benefits for developing students' communicative competence and intercultural awareness by expanding their cultural knowledge of Japanese daily life, values, social harmony, public and private communication manners, festivals, and social traditions, as well as by exposing them to frequently represented cultural aspects such as personal responsibility, indirect communication styles, emotional expression, and the coexistence of traditional values within modern contexts. This learning experience encourages more positive attitudes toward cultural differences, increases students' interest and motivation to learn Japanese,

and fosters greater openness and confidence when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. Students also demonstrate improved cultural reflection through comparing Japanese and Indonesian communication practices, including senior-junior relationships, family communication patterns, and group interaction norms, which supports their ability to interpret communication more contextually. Moreover, several students reported changes in their initial assumptions about Japanese culture and gained deeper awareness of implicit cultural meanings and communicative norms, contributing to more culturally appropriate language use. However, the findings also reveal notable limitations, as some students felt that their sensitivity to cultural differences did not change significantly and were unable to recall specific digital content that influenced their cultural understanding. In addition, while cultural awareness and reflection improved, the translation of this awareness into consistent communicative behaviour remains limited, indicating that the integration of Japanese cultural digital content alone is not sufficient to fully strengthen communicative competence and intercultural performance without structured pedagogical support and guided reflection activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of Japanese popular culture-based digital content is not only a learning resource but can also serve as a medium for building students' communicative competence and intercultural awareness in Japanese language classes (Yang et al., 2025; Zhang & Nagashima, 2025). This finding provides a new context for openness to information and technology. In other words, the findings of this study provide a different perspective on digital content as a learning medium and are considered quite effective in introducing natural, authentic language use and real-world communication

situations. From the students' experiences, it is known that digital content not only supports increased understanding of linguistic aspects such as vocabulary mastery, sentence structure comprehension, and pronunciation, but also strengthens pragmatic and sociolinguistic competencies, especially in understanding how meaning is conveyed appropriately according to context, interlocutors, and social relations. This finding is in line with various previous studies on technology-assisted language learning which confirm that authentic digital materials can bridge the gap between classroom language and real-world language use through the presentation of contextual and culturally grounded input. (Al-khresheh, 2024; Anchunda et al., 2025; Perez Peguero, 2024; Serpa et al., 2024).

The results of this study indicate that when lecturers actively integrate popular culture-based digital content and provide adequate pedagogical support, students become better able to interpret linguistic forms, understand situational meanings, and recognize cultural values contained in authentic discourse (Chung & Long, 2024; Hicham et al., 2025). Thus, learning will successfully achieve its objectives when adequate learning activities such as digital content are provided, but the lecturer's role in managing the class also impacts the achievement of learning objectives. Furthermore, a weakness found from the data analysis of this study is the low two-way communication skills and interactive skills of students. Students tend to be able to complete certain tasks, but still experience difficulties in maintaining interaction, responding spontaneously, and managing speaking turns. The results of this study show quite significant findings regarding the development of students' communicative competence because, based on student experience, digital content mostly improves aspects of understanding and awareness, but does not fully impact interactive performance if it is not



accompanied by structured speaking practice, interaction-based tasks, and reflective feedback. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that students' understanding of cross-cultural concepts in Japanese language learning remains relatively low, as reflected in the interview data. Although many students reported gaining new cultural knowledge and becoming more open to cultural differences, some students still felt uncertain about interpreting implicit meanings, social norms, and culturally based communication strategies. This situation reinforces institutional findings that cultural understanding has not been fully internalized and systematically reflected in students' language use. In other words, students possess cultural knowledge at the declarative level, but still face challenges in applying this knowledge when selecting expressions, managing politeness strategies, and interpreting indirect communication in Japanese. This gap highlights the importance of more explicit integration of intercultural reflection in speaking assignments and assessment systems. The findings of this study also reinforce previous research that emphasizes that utilizing digital content and popular culture can connect language learning to students' everyday experiences and global cultural realities. When learning materials are relevant to the world students encounter, learning becomes more meaningful and motivating, helping students view Japanese as a living language, not simply an academic object (Hein et al., 2021; Ji & Shapii, 2024; Shadiev & Yang, 2020). However, the negative findings in this study also reveal pedagogical challenges that require attention. Students stated that speech speed, the use of informal expressions, slang, and the highly context-dependent meaning often hinder comprehension. These difficulties are inherent to authentic media. In the context of globalization and technological openness, this study emphasizes that digital transformation in language learning cannot be understood solely as the use of new media, but

rather as a comprehensive shift in teaching practices, task design, and assessment strategies. In an era of globalization and open digital access, this approach is key to ensuring that Japanese language learning is not only responsive to technological developments but also prepares students to communicate authentically and participate meaningfully in a diverse global environment (Busso & Sanchez, 2024; Cui, 2024; Sasanti, 2022).

The novelty of this research lies in the empirical finding that the integration of Japanese popular culture-based digital content has a greater impact on improving students' language comprehension, pragmatic-sociolinguistic awareness, and cultural knowledge, but does not optimally enhance two-way communication skills and interactive oral skills. Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital content-based learning is proven to be highly dependent on the lecturer's pedagogical role in mediating linguistic meaning and cultural context, as well as on task design that emphasizes interaction and reflection. This confirms that the use of popular digital content has the potential, but is not automatically transformative without structured learning support.

The implications of this research analysis indicate that Japanese language learning based on popular culture digital content needs to be more systematically directed to support the development of interactive communication skills and the application of intercultural competence in language practice. Lecturers need to design learning activities that focus on authentic interactions, such as conversation simulations, guided discussions, and project-based assignments that require the use of expressions appropriate to social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, this research suggests the importance of strengthening the role of lecturers as pedagogical facilitators, providing linguistic scaffolding and cross-cultural reflection so that students not only understand the content and

culture of digital content but also transform it into contextualized communicative competence.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating Japanese popular culture-based digital content into Japanese language learning positively contributes to improving students' language comprehension, particularly in vocabulary, sentence structure, pronunciation, and understanding the use of language varieties in context. Furthermore, this study also found a lack of understanding of the concept of strengthening pragmatic and sociolinguistic competencies related to students' cross-cultural communication competencies. This has the effect of increasing intercultural awareness and teaching Japanese values, customs, and communication patterns. Thus, this situation provides students with opportunities to improve their interactive communication skills. However, this study also found some students struggling with spontaneous expressions, understanding implicit meanings, and applying politeness strategies and language use appropriate to the cultural context of Japanese. Therefore, the use of digital content cannot stand alone but requires the role of the lecturer as a learning mediator who provides linguistic scaffolding, cultural explanations, and systematic reflective guidance.

The results of this study can be further developed and studied in Japanese language learning, which can be designed by integrating popular culture-based digital content into learning designs, particularly in areas such as oral interaction, collaboration, and real-life communication in the classroom. Digital content based on popular culture can be used not only as a learning resource for students to watch but also as an assessment technique or learning activity in the classroom. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen lecturers' competencies in digital pedagogy, especially in selecting content appropriate to

students' ability levels, managing the complexity of authentic language, and guiding cross-cultural reflective discussions. Meanwhile, for study programs, research results can be used as a guideline in creating or considering policies for lecturers' professional development, both in teaching and technology competencies. Study programs also need to encourage alignment between learning outcomes, digital content-based learning strategies, and assessment systems that emphasize interactive communication skills and the application of intercultural competencies. For future researchers, it is recommended to examine in more depth digital content-based learning models specifically designed to improve two-way communication skills, for example through task-based or project-based learning designs that focus on cross-cultural interaction and reflection, and involve a wider number of participants so that the findings can be more robustly generalized.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to all students involved during the data collection process, study programs, colleagues, and researchers who collaborated effectively in completing this research.

REFERENCES

- Abidin, Z., Pusdiklat Bahasa, M. M., & Kemhan, B. (2024). Analisis Penggunaan Bahasa Jepang Sebagai Bahasa Pengantar pada Kursus Intensif Bahasa Jepang. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Pertahanan*, 1(2), 73–78. <https://doi.org/10.63210/JP3.V1I2.107>
- Al-khresheh, M. H. (2024). Bridging Technology and Pedagogy from a Global Lens: Teachers' Perspectives on Integrating ChatGPT in English Language Teaching. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 6, 100218, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CAEAI.2024.100218>



- Anchunda, H. Y., Prachanban, P., Sawangmek, T., & Anchunda, S. (2025). Development of a Culturally Responsive, Technology-Assisted Peer Coaching Collaborative Program to Enhance Foreign Teachers' Instructional Skills and Learner Empowerment in Thailand. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 12, 102035, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SSAHO.2025.102035>
- Busso, A., & Sanchez, B. (2024). Advancing Communicative Competence in the Digital Age: A Case for AI Tools in Japanese EFL Education. *Technology in Language Teaching and Learning*, 6(3), 1–17.
- Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Multilingual Matters
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/APPLIN/I.1.1>
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2008). Rethinking the Role of Communicative Competence in Language Teaching. *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning*, Springer, 41–57. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_3
- Christopher, A. (2021). Using Digital Media for Promoting Student Intercultural Awareness in Japan. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 30(2), 117–138. Waynesville, NC USA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). Retrieved February 27, 2026 from <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/218773/>.
- Chung, D. T. K., & Long, N. T. (2024). Language Learning Through a Cultural Lens: Assessing the Benefits of Cultural Understanding in Language Education. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 7(07), 5345-5352. <https://doi.org/10.47191/IJSSHR/V7-I07-82>
- Cong-Lem, N. (2025). Intercultural Communication in Second/Foreign Language Education Over 67 Years: A Bibliometric Review. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 54(1–2), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2025.2456265>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications Inc.
- Creswell, J.W., Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing & Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. New York:: Sage Publications.
- Cui, J. (2024). Japanese Language Teaching and Learning in the New Media Era. *Lecture Notes on Language and Literature*, 7(2), 180-186. <https://doi.org/10.23977/LANGL.2024.070229>
- Damayanti, E. S., Haania, A. Z., Setyawan, K., & Megan, G. (2023). Japanese Language Learning Media in Indonesia at the High School/SMK/equivalent Level Curriculum K13 and Merdeka. *Lingeduca: Journal of Language and Education Studies*, 2(2), 144–157. <https://doi.org/10.55849/LINGEDUCA.V2I2.299>
- D'Orazzi, G., & Marangell, S. (2025). The Role of Intercultural Communicative Competence in Student-To-Student Interactions at an Internationalized University. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 54(1–2), 46–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2025.2462099>

- Haleem, A., Javaid, M., Qadri, M. A., & Suman, R. (2022). Understanding the Role of Digital Technologies in Education: A Review. *Sustainable Operations and Computers*, 3, 275–285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SUSOC.2022.05.004>
- Hatami, W. (2018). Popular Culture of Japanese Anime in the Digital Age and the Impact on Nationalism of Young Indonesian Citizens. *Journal of Social Studies (JSS)*, 14(1), 37–47. <https://doi.org/10.21831/JSS.V14I1.21652>
- Hein, R. M., Wienrich, C., Latoschik, M. E., Hein, R. M., Wienrich, C., & Latoschik, M. E. (2021). A Systematic Review of Foreign Language Learning with Immersive Technologies (2001-2020). *AIMS Electronics and Electrical Engineering* 2021 2:117, 5(2), 117–145. <https://doi.org/10.3934/ELECTRENG.2021007>
- Hicham, K., AlQbailat, N. M., Ismail, I. A., Qpilat, N. M., Al-Khawaldeh, N. N., Al-Shboul, O. K., & Masrar, F. Z. (2025). Interculturalizing ELT: Culture-Based Classes to Enhance Language Skills and Intercultural Communicative Competence Dimensions. *Ampersand*, 14, 100221, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.AMPER.2025.100221>
- Imura, T. (2018). A Portrait of Japanese Popular Culture Fans Who Study Japanese at an Australian University: Motivation and Activities Beyond the Classroom. *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, 4(2), 171–188. https://doi.org/10.1386/EAPC.4.2.171_1
- Ji, Y., & Shapii, A. B. (2024). A Systematic Review of Integrating Culture into Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 6(3), 213–229. <https://doi.org/10.30564/FLS.V6I3.6677>
- Kramersch, C. (1993). Teaching Language Across the Cultural Faultline. In *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford:Oxford University Press.
- Kusumawati, M. (2019). An Inquiry on Japanese Language Education in Indonesia: A Focus on the Curriculum and Its' Implementation. *JAPANEDU: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran Bahasa Jepang*, 4(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.17509/JAPANEDU.V4I1.16658>
- Liddicoat, Anthony., & Scarino, Angela. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. Wiley-Blackwell. <https://books.google.com/books/about/Intercultural+Language+Teaching+and+Learning.html?id=Z6QCNw>
- Lim, H.-Y., & Griffith, W. I. (2016). Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence in Foreign Language Learning. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 4(11), 1030–1035. <https://doi.org/10.13189/SA.2016.041110>
- McConachy, T. (2022). Language Awareness and Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revisiting the Relationship. *Intercultural Learning in Language Education and Beyond: Evolving Concepts, Perspectives and Practices*, 22–40. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800412613-009>
- Miles, M., Huberman, A., & Saldanña, J. (2014). Sampling: Bounding the Collection of Data. In *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. SAGE.
- Munezane, Y. (2025). Conceptualizing Intercultural Communicative Competence in Higher Education in the Japanese Context: Insights from Language Learners, Practitioners, and Public Arena. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, 101205, 1-11.



- <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SSAHO.2024.101205>
- Perez Peguero, L. (2024). The Impact of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning on Bilingual Education. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)*, 12(04), 3340–3350. <https://doi.org/10.18535/IJSRM/V12I04.EL05>
- Permatasari, K. M., Thamrin, M., & dan Kebudayaan Jepang, B. (2025). The Consumption of Popular Pop Culture in Japanese Language Culture Learning at the University. *Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra*, 4(3), 517–527. <https://doi.org/10.55909/JPBS.V4I3.732>
- Risda, D., Syihabuddin, Nurdin, E. S., & Malihah, E. (2025). The Impact of Intercultural Japanese Language Teaching Based on Gen-AI and Multimedia on Intercultural Communication Adaptation, Learning Motivation (L2), and Japanese Language Proficiency. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 24(7), 256–277. <https://doi.org/10.26803/IJLTER.24.7.13>
- Sasanti, N. S. (2022). Japanese Language Learning Consistency in the Digital Era. *Jurnal Lingua Idea*, 13(2), 207–219. <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.JLI.2022.13.2.6325>
- Serpa, S., Vătămănescu, E.-M., Yu, J., Bekerian, D. A., & Osback, C. (2024). Navigating the Digital Landscape: Challenges and Barriers to Effective Information Use on the Internet. *Encyclopedia 2024, Vol. 4, Pages 1665-1680*, 4(4), 1665–1680. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ENCYCLOPEDIA4040109>
- Shadiev, R., & Yang, M. (2020). Review of Studies on Technology-Enhanced Language Learning and Teaching. *Sustainability, Vol. 12 (2), 1-22*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU12020524>
- Tomlinson, B. (2011). *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Vorwerg, C. (2015). Communicative Competence: Linguistic Aspects. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences: Second Edition, 1*, 294–301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.53042-6>
- Widiati, S. W. (2025). Desain Pemelajaran Antarbudaya Bahasa Jepang Menggunakan Media Sosial. *Hikari: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Kebudayaan*, 5(1), 368–382. <https://doi.org/10.37301/HIKARI.V5I1.61>
- Wishnoebroto, W., Prabowo, R. M., & Jhon, A. (2017). The Influence of Cosplaying in Increasing Japanese Language and Culture Learning at Binus University. *Humaniora*, 8(4), 329–338. <https://doi.org/10.21512/HUMANIORA.V8I4.3872>
- Wisniawati, W., Rasiban, L. M., & Dewanty, V. L. (2022). Using Anime to Enhance Learning Motivation and Japanese Listening Skills. *IJECA (International Journal of Education and Curriculum Application)*, 5(2), 155–163. <https://doi.org/10.31764/IJECA.V5I2.9836>
- Xu, H., Wang, Y., & Ma, J. (2025). A Comprehensive Review of Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL Education and Global Business. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 1–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2557608>
- Yang, Z., Champakaew, W., & Charubusp, S. (2025). Cultivating Intercultural Communicative Competence in Chinese General University Students Using the Triad-Layers Model. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 25(4), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.vi.1206>



Zhang, J., & Nagashima, L. (2025). Bridging Cultures: A Japanese Student's Path to Intercultural Communication. *Education Sciences*, 15(9), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/EDUCSCI15091205>