

Japanese Language Learning Through Folklore Themed Instagram

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ABSTRACT

Due to the pandemic, learning and teaching activities are done online, including Japanese language education. The existence of advanced technology is needed for the sake of effective learning and teaching activities. Currently, social media also used as learning medium, and one of them is Instagram. There are many Instagram accounts which can be used for Japanese language learning medium. The purpose of this research is to analyze Japanese language learners' response of Instagram as language learning medium. The data in this study was obtained by distributing questionnaires to twenty high school students who learn Japanese or people who want to learn Japanese from the basic level. The questionnaire results showed that the respondents prefer interesting Japanese language learning medium such as Instagram which has many pictures, colorful designs, and the consistency of material uploaded. According to the respondents, Instagram is effective as a learning medium.

Keywords: Online learning, Japanese, Japanese learning, Instagram

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact countries around the world, causing learning and teaching activities to be carried out online. The use of technology during this time is essential in education. Most major can be taught online, including learning foreign languages as Japanese. In Japanese learning, there are four skills that must be considered, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Al-Ali, 2014). To improve those four Japanese language skills, the use of various kinds of digital technology is essential so that learning materials can be delivered to online learners. For example, giving Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) material using PDF, uploading listening material (*choukai*) using google drive, and so on (Gulati, Reid, & Gill, 2020).

Digital technology facilitates language teaching and learning activities. Even without the need for face-to-face contact, lessons can be delivered from the teacher to their students. Further, Halim and Hashim (2019) said that with the Internet, students can access various kinds of lessons, learning videos, and even learn about their culture. Learners can also interact with native speakers of the language they are learning, and indirectly learn the foreign target language. Regarding the Internet, social

media is also essential nowadays. The digital era as it is today caused high frequency on the use of social media. Almost everything is promoted through social media, with various types and features offered. No wonder people can spend hours and hours there. Departing from the popularity of social media, this study tries to find out whether social media is effective as a medium for online learning. The social media used in this research is Instagram, a place where you can upload photo, video, and audio galleries. In addition to many users, all the features mentioned above are very supportive as online learning media (Rakhmasari & Pratiwi, 2019).

There are many well-known Japanese learning media accounts on Instagram, with feeds that are very pleasing to the eye, designed in such a way and the materials they provide are varied (Muhlisian & Putri, 2019). These accounts mostly discuss Japanese in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and conversation with themes such as Japanese pop culture and everyday life in Japan. Apart from the themes carried by existing accounts, until now there has been no Japanese language learning account that carries the theme of folklore (<http://www.kotobites.com/>). Whereas Japanese stories and mythology are interesting things and can arouse the curiosity and interest of learners. Therefore, this study will explain how to design and create content on the

Japanese language learning Instagram account with the theme of folklore. This study will also explain whether Instagram is effective as a medium for learning basic Japanese language.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Learning Media

Creativity to develop teaching materials and media can increase motivation in learning (Kohnke, 2019). Therefore, teachers need to increase creativity to be able to carry out language learning activities effectively (Richards & Cotterall, 2016). The use of visual-based creative media such as icons and illustrations can support the delivery of material in language learning (Kusrini, Dewanty, & Hidayat, 2020).

2.2. Instagram in Language Learning

Instagram is popular with young people, the user majority aged 18-29 years old, and has active users reaching 300 million people per day. These advantages made Instagram a successful teaching platform (Khalitova & Gimaletdinova, 2016; Gulati, Reid, & Gill, 2020). Al-Ali (2014) stated that Instagram is a popular social media platform among young people, so it can be used as a learning aid and used as a communication tool between teachers and students. Instagram as a tool makes it easier for students to access information in the form of teaching materials in the form of photos, images and videos (Rasiban, Rahmayanti, Renariah, & Sutedi, 2021). Therefore, Instagram is a social media that can be used as an effective learning media (Muhlisian & Putri, 2019).

Social media including Instagram, used as a reminder of materials and the archiving of learning materials that have been selectively selected to help learners learn languages effectively (Muhlisian & Putri, 2019). In language learning, Instagram can be used as a tool to improve the ability of 4 language activities such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills. Al-Ali (2014) proves that Instagram is an effective tool so that students can experience new sensations in language learning. The visual elements contained in Instagram help students to create some creative contents so that students can strengthen 4 language skills through Instagram.

Several studies have suggested that Instagram can serve as an effective tool for language learning. Kamal (2019) presented the results of his research which showed that after using Instagram, there is a significant increase in students' vocabulary mastery. Students are interested in learning English vocabulary through Instagram because of four main factors: simplicity; accessibility; happiness; and student achievement in mastering vocabulary (Kamal, 2019). To master Japanese vocabulary and kanji, Muhlisian and Putri (2019) have

posted kanji via Instagram and adapted it to students' memory ability. The association of images, interesting videos and kanji writing sequence videos posted on Instagram, it is easier for students to remember kanji when taking quizzes in class. In addition to improving vocabulary understanding, Instagram has also been shown to improve comprehension skills and listening skills, especially the ability to understand certain opinions and information (Khalitova & Gimaletdinova, 2016). For speaking skills, Rakhmasari and Pratiwi's study (2019) explained that Instagram videos can be an alternative medium to practice and learn English speaking competence outside the classroom. Destari, Kusrini, and Sugihartono (2019) present several learning models on Instagram that can be an alternative and additional way to learn to write Japanese essays (*sakubun*).

3. METHOD

The method used in this research is qualitative with a descriptive approach. The process of finding materials, compiling materials, making Instagram posts, and the results of a survey of Instagram users will be described in this study.

Learning materials such as *dokkai* (reading), *kotoba* (vocabulary), and *bunpo* (grammar) are made in the form of photos and videos uploaded as Instagram posts on the @mukashi.banashi account. The @mukashi.banashi account presents learning materials related to different folktales every week. Japanese folklore taken from a site called *fuku musume douwa shuu*. The contents of the folklore were then modified and adapted to the basic level of Japanese. *Dokkai* (reading) learning material is made in the form of photos with added sound so that students can read the text as well as learn how to pronounce it. *Kotoba* (vocabulary) on photo slides containing illustrations and photos related to vocabulary and kanji. For *bunpo* learning material, the sentence patterns that appear in the *dokkai* learning material are explained by displaying an explanation of sentence patterns along with example sentences.

The research data was obtained by distributing questionnaires (Google form) to 20 @mukashi.banashi Instagram followers. Respondents are 20 high school students studying Japanese or people who want to start learning Japanese from the basic level. The questionnaire used was modified from Huda, Hikmah, & Rima (2017) and Mamolo (2019)'s research to evaluate language aspect, image appearance aspect, and material aspect in Instagram posts. Respondents were asked to provide their opinion on each item in the questionnaire by selecting an appropriate number among 1 to 4 scales. The data from the questionnaire were processed and described to determine the effectiveness of Instagram as a medium for learning Japanese.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Instagram in Language Learning

Before we start collecting the material needed for the substance of our post. We created and activated our Instagram account @mukashi.banashi, these name comes from the Japanese word “*mukashi banashi*” which means “an old tale”. The logo that we also used for profile picture is the symbol of a moon, soft-looking fonts, and the combination of yellow and purple colours to support our folklore themed Instagram account. The reason why we choose this logo is because reading some folklore is identical with bedtime. The account logo can be seen in Figure 1.

After we designed our profile pictures that goes well with the folklore themed, the feed is arranged in such a way that looks harmonious in terms of colour and the design. Every month, @mukashi.banashi carries a different folklore theme and titles. Mostly, for one theme requires 9 photos to upload. @mukashi.banashi reviews the uploaded Japanese folklore, starting from reviewing the grammar that was used in the story, the vocabulary, the Kanji contained in the story, as well as the culture. The searching of the material to be uploaded began with the selection of the folklore. If it has been determined, we can continue to decide the use of illustration and colours that suit our Instagram feeds. The folklore that we took for the materials came from a site called *fuku musume douwa shuu*. This site contains a collection of Japanese folklore with original illustrations, video and *Rodoku*. We also determine the grammar explanation, vocabulary, and kanji after analysing the folklore that we choose. By adjusting the materials with basic Japanese, we take some examples of grammar from *Shokyu Bunpo 1* book (by Herniwati et al., published 2018).



Figure 1 @mukashi.banashi Instagram account's profile picture.



Figure 2 Peach themed for Instagram posts.

As for the kanji, we took from a site named *JLPT sensei*. Every learning material we upload at @mukashi.banashi, was adjusted to the N5 level or basic level. We also use *furigana*, so the learners who can't read kanji can still take part in learning the Japanese language. In content creation, photos in our feeds are designed to have a connection to one and another to make it more interesting to look at (Prihatiningsih, 2017). For the first theme, the story that we use is the story of Momotarou, a child born from a peach. The cover of the content is designed pink because it has the same theme as the *momo* fruit (peach) that appears in Momotarou's story. An example of the colour of an Instagram post can be seen in Figure 2.

Our first educational post is a *dokkai* (reading) video. By animating the text of the selected story, the reading speed of the story is adjusted for the basic Japanese level. The audio can be turned on or off so that students can follow or correct if a word is read incorrectly. The second material is *bunpou* (grammar), we analyse the system and structure of the three sentences we took from the story. A brief explanation of the use of sentence patterns along with example sentences from reading material is also added to this material. For the third post we designed spacers to compliment the theme. An illustration of a pink-skinned Japanese boy got from the Canva app features. Then there is *hyouki* (kanji) material, we take three basic kanji characters from the story, then discuss its meaning, *kunyomi* (Japanese reading) and *onyomi* (Chinese reading), also how to write them in hiragana characters. Some examples of words that use kanji are also shown to make it easier for students to remember Kanji. Some screenshots of educational posts can be seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3 "Momotarou" Instagram posts.



Figure 4 "Momotarou" story text.

For the core post, we've included the original text of Momotarou's story, complete with *furigana* to help basic learners read well. Original text of Momotarou's story can be seen in Figure 4.

The next post is *Kotoba* (Vocabulary) in Figure 5, we list three basic words of the story, along with writing, Latin, and illustrations to help remember them.



Figure 5 Vocabulary post.



Figure 6 Culture material post.

As for the culture material, the theme raised is about *kibi dango*, as seen in figure 6. *Kibi dango* is a sweet snack which is also an important part of the story. The topics discussed regarding *kibi dango* were the ingredients, the original shop, the taste, and the price. It is hoped that after the knowledge of Japanese culture being introduced, it can increase students' interest in the culture.

Every time a lesson based on the story finished, @mukashi.banashi account conducts an evaluation with an Online Quiz, which is held via Google forms and can be done at a predetermined time. There are 20 questions and a prize of thirty thousand rupiah, which is handed over via e-commerce balance to the student who manages to get the highest points. For the first online quiz, the students were quite enthusiastic.

4.2. Instagram Account @mukashi.banashi as a Medium for Learning Basic Japanese

After uploading learning materials with the theme "Momotarou" for 1 week on Instagram, The questionnaire was distributed to 20 followers of the Instagram account @mukashi.banashi to find out their opinion about the content of the Japanese language learning materials that have been made. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions that were distinguished into 3 aspects, namely language appearance, image appearance, and material aspects. Plus, an item about critics and advice from Followers were added. Followers were asked to provide their opinions on each item in the questionnaire by selecting appropriate numbers among 1 to 4 scales with description for each number namely 1=Does not agree, 2=Not quite agree, 3=Agree, 4=Very much agree.

Based on the data we have obtained, it can be stated that 100% of respondents know Instagram. However, even though respondents know Instagram, not all of them are active users of this social media. Only 40% of respondents are active Instagram users. In addition, respondents also know about various kinds of Japanese learning accounts created on Instagram. 55% of respondents follow these various Japanese learning accounts.

Results from the survey shows that image appearance and material aspects obtained good responses and categorized as “high”, thus @mukashi.banashi’s Instagram post can be used as a Japanese language learning medium. The use of illustrations and colors obtained “high” results, because respondents liked the illustrations and colors. The illustrations and colors are said to be able to help respondents in learning something. Because *Mukashi Banashi* carries the theme of Japanese folklore, apart from learning Japanese, we also provide content about Japanese culture. Material aspects obtained good responses and categorized as “high” because respondents were interested in learning the culture. However, the language appearance aspect obtained a lower score than the other two aspects. It is because there are several items which obtained less favourable responses namely concerning font size in the Instagram post, and balance of text and image sizes. Regarding the effectiveness of using Instagram as a medium for learning Japanese, critics and advice from 12 out of 20 respondents said that using Instagram for learning media was quite effective. Some respondents said that by using Instagram, the material presented was very concise and interesting. There are also those who have a different opinion nowadays. A lot of young people open social media more often than books. Perhaps social media was considered more interesting than books for them. On the other hand, some respondents said that the use of Instagram was less effective because material uploads could be buried by uploads from other accounts, lack a deep understanding of the material, or could be interrupted by other application notifications that could distract respondents.

4.3. Discussion

This study describes whether a Japanese language learning account that carries the theme of Japanese folklore can attract learners' interest and arouse learners' curiosity and interest in Japanese, and effective as a medium for learning basic level Japanese. In accordance with the results of research by Al-Ali (2014), Muhlisian and Putri (2019), Rakhmasari and Pratiwi (2019), and Kamal (2019), which states that the use of Instagram is effective as a foreign language learning. This study's results showed that by using Instagram, the material presented was very concise and interesting. On the other hand, some respondents said that the use of Instagram

was less effective because there were a lot of distractions from the posts of other Instagram accounts. Even so, Japanese materials packaged with fairy tales or folklore themes through Instagram social media can be made with the appropriate depth of material, which is expected to be a new breakthrough in long-term learning media in the future.

5. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Japanese language material that is packaged consistently with the theme of folklore through social media Instagram can be a new breakthrough in long-term learning media. An Instagram account with the theme of folklore is considered quite effective as a medium for learning basic Japanese. There are still many stories and mythologies that can be picked up, and over time the difficulty level can be adjusted.

In addition to uploading posts on the timeline, materials can also be uploaded to the Instagram story feature so that students don't miss out on material updates. The Instagram story feature can be used as a solution for the possibility if learning materials are buried in content from other accounts in the learner's timeline.

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