

A portrait of Japanese popular culture fans who study Japanese at an Australian university: Motivation and activities beyond the classroom

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Abstract

This article presents a quantitative study with a focus on portraying Japanese Popular Culture (JPC) fans who take a Japanese language course at a university. Questionnaires were administered to students who were studying Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) at a multi-campus university in Australia. 247 participants (which accounts for an 85.6 per cent response rate) responded to questions concerning interest in studying Japanese, future motivation and out-of-class activities related to JPC. Further data regarding JPC consumption in retrospect and perceived benefits of JPC in studying Japanese were collected from those who identified themselves as JPC fans. It revealed that nearly three-quarters of the students were self-claimed JPC fans. While both fans and non-fans showed high interest in the language, interest in traditional culture and travel to Japan, fans revealed substantially higher motivation than non-fans in all other accounts, namely future motivation. Non-fans, however, showed relatively high motivation only in future employment. A prominent finding was that fans were exposed to Japanese language far more frequently outside the classroom than non-fans of JPC. The most popular activities for fans were watching anime, listening to J-pop music and playing video games. Reading 'manga' was also a frequent activity but they were reading translated 'manga'. The findings suggest that future motivation associated with Japan and Japanese language is an important element in continuing Japanese language study. This article has implications for the role of popular culture in

foreign language (FL) education, in particular when many FL learners are interested in popular culture like JPC.

Keywords

Japanese language learners

popular culture

anime

manga

motivation

self-directed activities

beyond the classroom

Background: Global popularity of Japanese Popular Culture (JPC)

Since the 1990s, the Japanese words anime and ‘manga’ have become well-known to many people reflecting the fact that 60 per cent of animation shown on TV worldwide is Japanese anime (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007). JPC consumers play multiple roles as fans, students and producers of Japanese cultural content particularly in online activities (McLelland 2014). New terms such as fansub,¹ fanfiction² and scanlation³ were coined, depicting the fans’ vibrant participation in cyber space activities (see Brenner 2007).

JPC appeals differently to Asian and westerner consumers. While Asians enjoy JPC because of a similarity in ethnicity, values, tastes, and traditions and are inspired by Japanese economic success, westerners are fascinated by the differences from their own culture, and the fact is that to many, the old saying is true ‘opposites attract’

(Craig 2000: 16–17). It is not difficult to imagine that popular culture finds its way from entertainment to the education arena.

We have experienced the shift of motivation for learning from strategic and economic reasons in the 1970s and 1980s to interest in JPC (see Sugimoto 2009: 14; Mouer and Norris 2009: 361). Since the early 2000s, universities have been capitalizing on JPC to increase enrolments in Japanese language and studies courses (McLelland 2014). Some Australian universities have already put this into place by offering courses to teach Japanese through anime and ‘manga’ (see Armour 2011, for example). An increasing number of teachers of Japanese believe that many learners study Japanese language because of the interest in ‘manga’, anime and J-Pop (see The Japan Foundation, hereafter JF, 2011, 2013), even though ‘interest in the language’, ‘future employment’ and ‘communication in Japanese’ are equally strong reasons for learners being motivated to study the language.

Japanese language education in Australia

Australia holds the fourth place in the world following China, Indonesia and Korea in terms of number of learners (The Japan Foundation [JF] 2016). Japanese is the most commonly taught foreign language (FL) from primary to tertiary institutions (De Kretser and Spence-Brown 2010: 4) with approximately 300,000 learners in 2015 (JF 2016). Japanese is by far the most taught language other than English (LOTE) in Queensland and have the highest number of Japanese learners alongside Victoria (Spence-Brown 2016: 28). The number of students studying Japanese in primary and secondary dominates approximately 96 per cent of all Japanese learners (JF 2016). In other words, the number of students who study Japanese at the tertiary level is relatively small.

High attrition rate has been of a great concern at secondary and tertiary levels. Spence-Brown estimates that 90 per cent of LOTE students discontinue language study by Year 11 and the number of Year 12 students who study a language are very low (2016: 29). Recent survey results from JF also indicated a significant decline at universities, from 9682 students in 2012 to 6420 in 2015 (JF 2013, 2016). Although Japanese still has the highest enrolment among other FLs at universities, many cease their study after a year mainly because they take Japanese as an elective (Spence-Brown 2016).

Motivation and FL learning

One of the essential ingredients and catalysts to being successful in mastering a FL is having strong motivation reflected in learning behaviour. Baker and MacIntyre describe motivation as 'a driving force that initiates learning in the first place and sustains learning when the situation becomes difficult' (2003: 72). However, in reality, a continuation of FL learning does not have a clear-cut future in Australia where a 'monolingual mindset' (Clyne 2005: xi) is yet latent in the English-spoken country. Not like in countries where English is the first FL and required to study throughout the school education system, LOTE education in Australia is not compulsory for the entire school years and schools can choose any language from a wide range of FLs. Therefore, a number of flaws in educational and institutional policies (e.g. focus on STEM subjects and lack of support for LOTE) and the structural system (e.g. continuity of language study between institutions) have a significant impact on the number of enrolments in schools and universities (see Spence-Brown 2016). Consequently, what motivates students to continue their study under the adverse circumstances of FL education is of interest to many educators and researchers.

In the past decade, motivation theories have been radically advancing through reconceptualization of L2 motivation by Dörnyei and his associates, reflecting the rapid changes in the modern globalized multilingual world. According to an early L2 motivation theory, the reason for studying the language was classified into two orientation types – ‘integrative’ and ‘instrumental’ defined by Gardner and Lambert (1972). The former refers to the desire to learn a language to meet and communicate with community members of the target language (TL); the latter refers to the desire to learn a language for pragmatic gains such as increased salary, career opportunities or good academic outcomes in school (Gardner 1985). Dörnyei (2009) argues that when a FL is taught as a school subject without any direct contact with its NSs, integrative orientation is irrelevant.

Dörnyei (2009) proposed the concept of a ‘L2 Motivational Self System’ by reframing the integrative motivation in a ‘possible/ideal-self’ perspective: *Ideal L2 Self* and *Ought-to L2 Self* (original emphasis). The *Ideal L2 Self* refers to what one would ideally like to possess and become (hopes, aspirations or wishes), whereas *Ought-to L2 Self* refers to what ‘one *ought to* possess to meet expectations and to *avoid* possible negative outcomes’ (Dörnyei 2009: 28–29, original emphasis). Thus, Dörnyei postulates that ‘the desire to reduce the discrepancy between one’s actual self’ and ‘the ideal/ought-to selves’ in future provides ‘incentive, direction and impetus for action’ (2009: 18, i.e. motivation). Dörnyei et al. also point out that ‘future-oriented students’ who ‘look ahead and set goals in the distant future in order to overcome the complexities of their present learning environment’ are more likely to be ‘persistent and obtain better academic results in the present’ (2015: 103).

Traditional motivational research has been based on data collected at one time from large numbers of subjects using questionnaires to find relationships between

variables. With the ‘motive-causes-behaviour’ template (Dörnyei et al. 2016: xii) in mind, this kind of research is primarily concerned with ‘the *cause* of behaviour rather than on the motivated behaviour itself’ (2016: 25, original emphasis). It is important to keep in mind that student motivation changes and fluctuates over time while learning (Larsen-Freeman 2015); therefore, motivational variables collected at a particular time only illustrate a fragmented aspect of motivation. Thus, finding reasons for studying Japanese will be insufficient if future ‘possible/ideal-self’ and the current behaviour of learners are not looked into.

Motivation and out-of-class activities

Learners who actively seek opportunities to access TL resources beyond the classroom are often equated with highly motivated, autonomous and successful language students (see Benson and Reinders 2011; Nunan and Richards 2015). Those who limit their learning only to when they are in the classroom tend to be limited particularly in productive skills compared to those who learn the language beyond the classroom (Benson and Reinders 2011; Sundqvist 2011). Learners of the Japanese language are known to engage in watching Japanese anime, reading ‘manga’, playing games and listening to J-pop outside the classroom (see Kumano and Hirokaga 2008, Northwood and Thomson 2010, 2012) but it is unknown whether they do this because of a desire to access the Japanese language. Kondō and Muranaka (2010), Northwood and Thomson (2012) and Williams (2006) demonstrated that those who are fans of JPC have a strong interest in studying Japanese or have high levels of motivation to continue studying, resulting in reaching higher proficiency in the language.

There have been very few empirical studies that have investigated popular culture and its influence on motivation in learning a FL and the activities they spend

time on doing related to the popular culture outside the classroom. In the Australian context, there are three major studies that are noteworthy in this regard. Northwood and Thomson found the extent of the JPC impact on Japanese learners in high schools (2010) and in universities (2012) and Armour and Iida (2016) examined JPC fans in the general public and focused on mainly examining whether participants were interested in initiating formal Japanese language study.

Northwood and Thomson (2010) investigated 464 students in high schools in the Sydney area who were learners of Japanese. In line with Williams' study (2006) in the United States, their major findings were that students with the intention of continuing Japanese study had higher levels of motivation and learner autonomy. They wanted to 'travel to Japan', had a 'interest in Japanese culture' and their top two frequent learning activities outside the classroom were 'watching Japanese TV programmes and DVD movies' and 'listening to Japanese songs'. In 2012 study, they found very similar results from university counterparts. They examined 164 learners of Japanese from four universities in Sydney. Those who intended to continue studying Japanese had the same reasons found in the 2010 study but the third reason was that they 'enjoy reading manga/watching anime and drama'. In relation to frequency of learning activities, both studies revealed that students enjoy and consume JPC outside the classroom on a weekly and monthly basis.⁴

Armour and Iida (2016) conducted an online survey to examine whether interest in and consuming 'manga' and anime lead JPC fans to the formal study of the Japanese language. They collected data from 451 Australian anime and 'manga' fans through anime/'manga' societies at universities, anime/'manga' fan communities and an anime distributor. The participants in this study were aged between 17 and 21. The majority of them were fans of both anime and 'manga' (87.4 per cent) and 77.4 per

cent of them had been watching anime for more than five years on average. They claimed that they had started watching anime on TV on their own or friends had recommended that they watch anime on TV (see Bailly 2011).⁵

The results of the study by Armour and Iida (2016) revealed that a majority of the fans have inconceivably invested their time in engaging with anime and ‘manga’ either every few days or on a daily basis with the help of subtitles and translation, with only a quarter of the fans actually having had the experience of taking a formal course in the Japanese language. 66.3 per cent of those who had not studied Japanese in the past indicated that they ‘hope’ to learn the language in the future. Another quarter claimed that they were self-taught in Japanese, but they had very limited proficiencies – understanding simple words and short utterances and reading kana.

Methodology

Research questions

These studies and recent motivation theories have provided a framework for the current investigation. It explores learners’ motivation for learning Japanese and future directions (possible/ideal-self), the extent of the participation in activities related to JPC and their beliefs about the benefit of JPC. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no study that has examined to what extent Japanese learners are JPC fans and how different they are from the non-JPC fans, even though the general assumption is that the majority of learners of Japanese are interested in JPC and consume JPC.

This investigation was guided by the following four main research questions:

1. To what extent of learners are JPC fans?
2. Do motivation in studying Japanese differ between JPC fans and non-fans? If so, are JPC fans more motivated than non-fans?

3. What types of JPC activities do learners engage more frequently in and how frequently do they engage in these activities? What activities do they engage in to expose themselves to or to use the TL?
4. Are the fans aware of any perceived advantages of being exposed to JPC? If so, what are they?

Instrument and procedures

A questionnaire (see Appendix) was designed and developed for the study and administered to students in first (Introductory) to fourth year courses (Intermediate-high) on two campuses, Campus A and Campus B. Both campuses offered identical courses in terms of content, assessment and materials to students. The students who agreed to participate in the study answered the questions regarding demographic details, motivation for studying Japanese and the extent of out-of-class activities related to JPC (Part A of the questionnaire). Further data regarding consumption of anime, 'manga' and drama and perceived advantages of JPC were elicited from those who identified themselves as fans (Part B of the questionnaire).

For the study, motivation is defined as current interest in learning Japanese and future 'possible/ideal-self' associated with Japan and Japanese. JPC artefacts, which surmized to influence specifically on language learning, were referred to as JPC: namely, anime, 'manga', drama, J-pop music and video games.

The questionnaires were distributed in class after two months into the semester when it was perceived that the novelty impact had worn away. In order to reach a high response rate, the questionnaires were distributed to the participants towards the end of the class and collected before leaving the class. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was explained and consent was received from

the participants. To collect unbiased views and not to skew towards JPC fans, the importance of participation among non-JPC fans was highlighted during the recruitment. The questionnaire took approximately five to ten minutes to complete.

Participants

A total of 249 students participated in the study (154 from Campus A and 95 from Campus B) and completed the questionnaires. The number accounts for 85.6% of the total 298 enrolments (160 first-year enrolments; 82 second-year; 46 third-year; and ten fourth-year) recorded at the university. Of all participants, 51% of them were in a first year course followed by 30% in second year, 16.6% in third year and 2.4% in fourth year. The proportion of female and male in the study was 49.4% and 50.6%, respectively, with an average age of 21.2. English was their first language for 74.5% and 73.7% of the participants were Australians. 47% of the participants were studying Japanese for the first time in the first year course. 53.9% of them have never visited Japan. A summary of demographic details appears in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic details ($N=247$).

	No.	%		No.	%
Gender	Major of study				
Female	122	49.4	Japanese	88	35.6
Male	125	50.6	Int. Bus./Rel.	29	11.7
			Linguistics	27	10.9
			Tourism	15	6.1
			Market/Account	13	5.2

			Psycho.	12	4.9
			IT/Multimedia	12	4.5
			Other	52	21
Age			University		
			year		
17–20	141	57.1	1st	103	41.7
21–25	81	32.8	2nd	88	35.6
26+	25	10.1	3rd	43	17.4
			4th	6	2.4
			Other	4	1.6
Nationality			Japanese		
			course level		
Australian	182	73.7	1st	126	51
Chinese	26	10.5	2nd	74	30
Taiwan	7	2.8	3rd	41	16.6
Korean	6	2.4	4th	6	2.4
Other	24	9.7			
Missing	2	0.8			
First			High school		
language			Japanese study		
English	184	74.5	None	116	47.0
Cantonese	31	12.6	1–3 years	83	33.5
Mandarin	7	2.8	4–5 years	48	19.5

Other	23	9.3
Missing	2	0.8

Length of stay

in Japan

None	133	53.9
Weeks	48	19.4
Months	50	20.2
1 year+	16	6.5

Findings

The results are based on 241 participants. For the data analysis, the participants in the fourth year course ($n=6$) were excluded because the number was too small to illustrate the cohort.

JPC fans in the Japanese courses

Almost three-quarters of participants (74.3%) indicated that they are fans of JPC. The overall ratio of students declaring themselves to be fans increased gradually by year level, 68.3% in a first year course to 85.4% in a third year course (see Figure 1).

Further analysis revealed that fans who have experience in studying Japanese at high school have a higher tendency to study Japanese longer at university: 40.7% in a first year course to 65.7% in a third year course are fans who studied Japanese at high school.

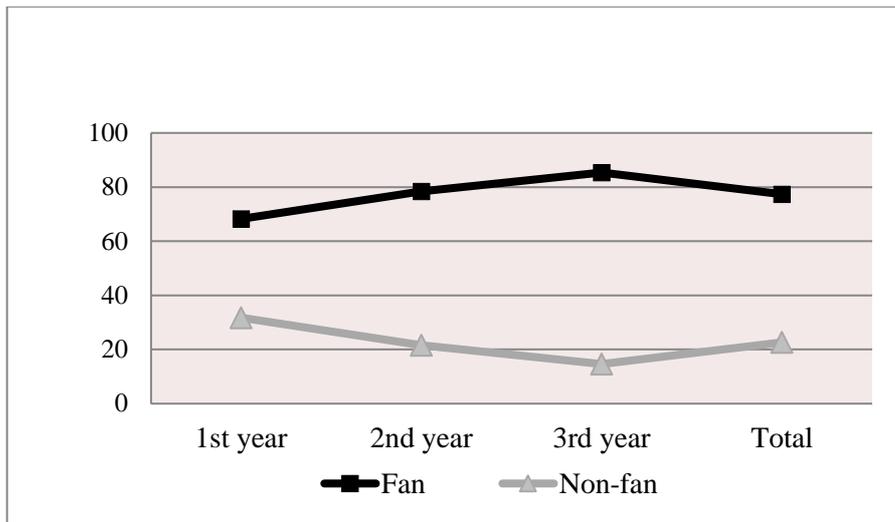


Figure 1: Ratio of fans and non-fans by course level ($N=241$).

Motivation and JPC

Eleven motivation variables were analysed to examine the main reasons for studying Japanese. Participants selected the most appropriate from a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly disagree’ (1 on scale) to ‘Strongly agree’ (5 on scale). Table 2 shows aggregated percentage of those who responded ‘agree’ (4 on scale) and ‘strongly agree’ (5 on scale).

Table 2: Motivation between fans and non-fans ($N=241$).

	Fan ($n=179$) (%)	Non-fan ($n=62$) (%)
Interest in Japanese language	99.6	96.3
Interest in trad. Japanese culture	87.5	81.9
Interest in JPC	87.2	47.4
Understand JPC	87.4	46.5

Travel to Japan	98.1	95.4
Study in Japan	71.3	63.2
Job security	76.4	76.9
Work in Japan	70.0	56.4
Long stay in Japan	73.8	52.1
Continue study at university	94.8	74.7
Study after graduation	76.9	58.9
Total average	83.9	68.2

Overall, fans indicated much higher motivation (83.9%) than non-fans (68.2%) in all accounts except ‘job security’ (76%), which was almost the same percentage. Regardless of being a fan or not, more than 90% of participants agreed that they have ‘interest in Japanese language’ and ‘travel to Japan’ and more than 80% agreed that they have ‘interest in traditional Japanese culture’. On the other hand, all remaining variables related to future directions, JPC fans consistently showed substantially higher motivation than non-fans: ‘continue Japanese study at university (94.8%)’, ‘work in Japan (70%)’ ‘continue study even after graduation (76.9%)’, ‘stay longer in Japan (73.8%)’ and ‘study in Japan (71.3%)’. It is intriguing to know that ‘work in Japan’ was much higher amongst fans (70%) compared to non-fans (56.4%) when ‘job security’ was equally high motivation for both groups (i.e. 76%). Another interesting finding is that ‘interest in traditional culture (87.5%)’ was equally high as ‘interest in JPC (87.2%)’ among fans, when non-fans showed substantially low ‘interest in JPC (47.4%)’.

Participation in JPC-related activities and exposure to the TL

The frequency of participation in JPC-related activities and the differences in exposure to the TL outside the classroom among fans and non-fans were compared. Participants evaluated their frequency of engagement in ten separate activities related to JPC using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all/never' (1 on the scale) to 'all the time/daily' (5 on the scale).

As one can expect, fans consistently rated participation in JPC activities substantially higher than non-fans (see Figure 2). This shows that non-fans hardly consumed JPC and had little exposure to Japanese outside the classroom. The most frequent activity that fans engaged in 'all the time' was 'watch anime in Japanese'. Fans also indicated that they 'often' 'read MANGA translated into another language' and 'listen to J-pop songs'. Less frequent activities ('sometimes') were 'play Japanese video games', 'watch drama in Japanese' and 'sing J-pop song'. It is interesting to highlight that fans frequently read MANGA in translated versions ('often') rather than in original Japanese versions ('rarely').

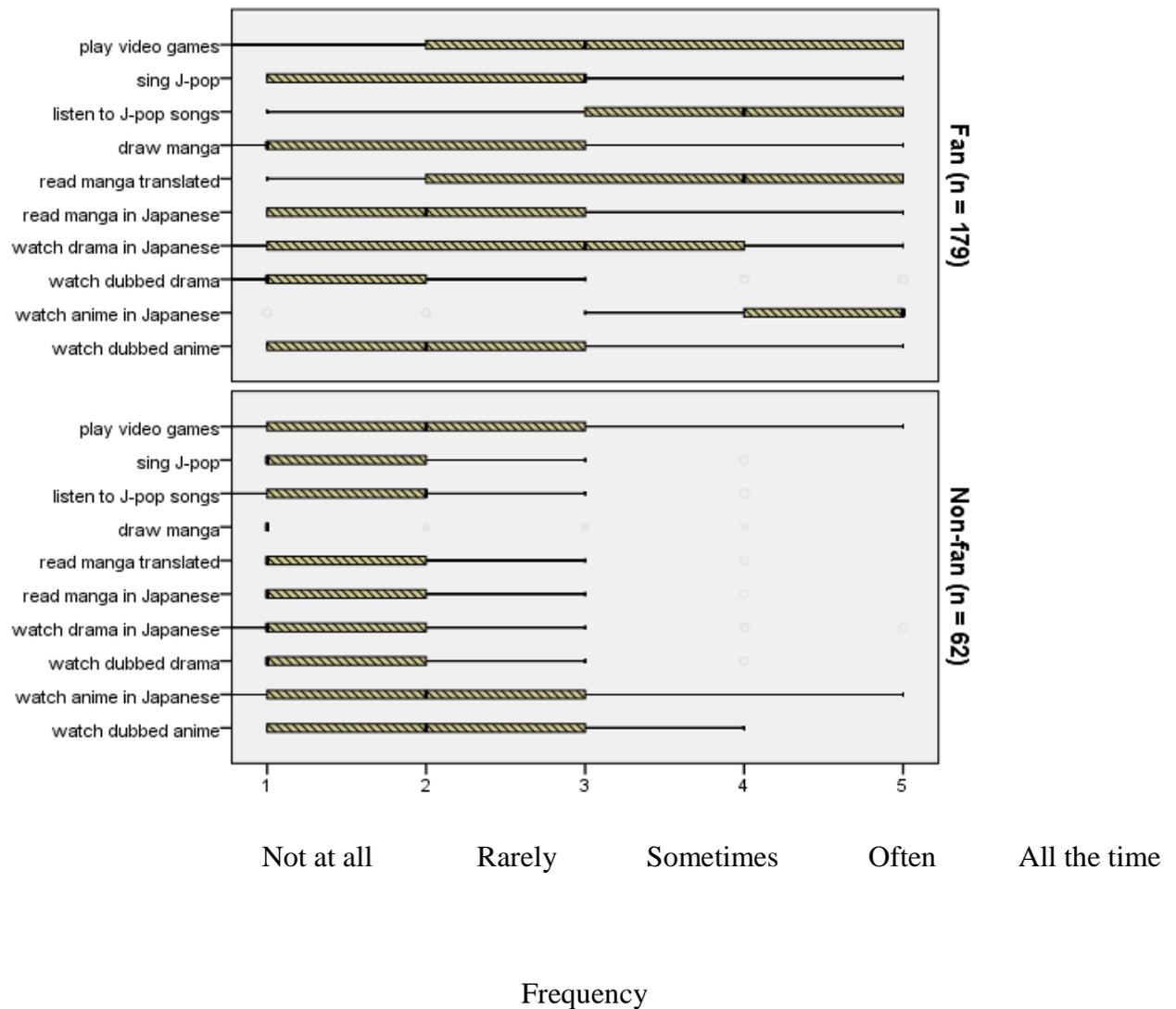


Figure 2: Frequency of JPC activities between fans and non-fans ($N=241$).

The frequency of exposure to the Japanese language was further analysed between fans and non-fans. Table 3 portrays the differences for each of the three course-year levels. It was important to examine by the year level as Japanese proficiency is expected to develop when they move to a higher level and this may influence on engagement in JPC activities. Exposure to the Japanese language is markedly greater for fans in all accounts compared to non-fans. However, second year fans showed higher mean scores than the third year cohort in ‘watch anime in

Japanese’, ‘listen to J-pop’ and ‘play Japanese video games’. On the other hand, participating in activities, such as, ‘reading manga in Japanese’ and ‘sing J-pop song’ showed gradual increases each year level.

For all year levels, it is noticeable that ‘watch anime in Japanese’ was the most popular activity where both fans and non-fans use the Japanese language. However, the difference in mean scores was significant: fans responded between 3.89 (sometimes) and 4.26 (all the time), whereas non-fans responded between 1.90 (not at all) and 2.50 (sometimes). Fans were also exposed to the Japanese language by ‘listen to J-pop’ and ‘play Japanese video games’ either often responding ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’.

Table 3: Mean scores of Japanese language exposure by activities between fans and non-fans ($N=241$).

	Fan ($n=179$)			Non-fan ($n=62$)		
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Watch Anime in Japanese	4.05	4.26	3.89	1.90	2.50	2.33
Watch Drama in Japanese	2.82	2.72	2.74	1.65	1.75	1.83
Read Manga in Japanese	2.02	2.21	2.40	1.43	1.50	1.33
Listen to J-pop	3.41	3.81	3.71	1.88	1.69	1.83
Sing J-pop	2.52	2.62	3.00	1.45	1.50	1.50
Play Japanese video games	3.29	3.43	3.29	1.75	2.31	2.00

Note: 1=Not at all, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often and 5= All the time.

Characteristics of JPC fans

JPC fans ($n=179$) who responded to questions regarding consumption of anime, 'manga' and drama and the perceived benefits of JPC in learning the language were further examined.

Fans spent most time predominantly on consuming anime compared to 'manga' and drama. Although the vast majority of fans have experience 'watching anime' (97.4%) and 'reading manga' (85.5%), much fewer have experience 'watching drama' (67.6%). Despite the fact that many fans watched anime and read 'manga' in the past, more than 64% of fans indicated that they spend most of their time consuming anime. Those who spent most of their time on 'manga' and drama was relatively smaller, 11.7% and 14.5%, respectively.

The starting age of consuming JPC varied (see Figure 3). Fans who start consuming JPC after 21 years of age were few. Most of the fans seem to start from anime then 'manga' to drama. They started watching anime early on (mean age of 9.9) and they move on to 'manga' (mean ages of 13.6) and drama (mean ages of 16.1) later in their teens. In fact, 59.2 % of fans began engaging in anime first then moved on to 'manga'. The range of starting age clusters was between 6 and 15 for anime (67.9%), and between 11 and 20 for both 'manga' (80%) and drama (82.7%). These indicate a clear trend in the order of JPC consumption.

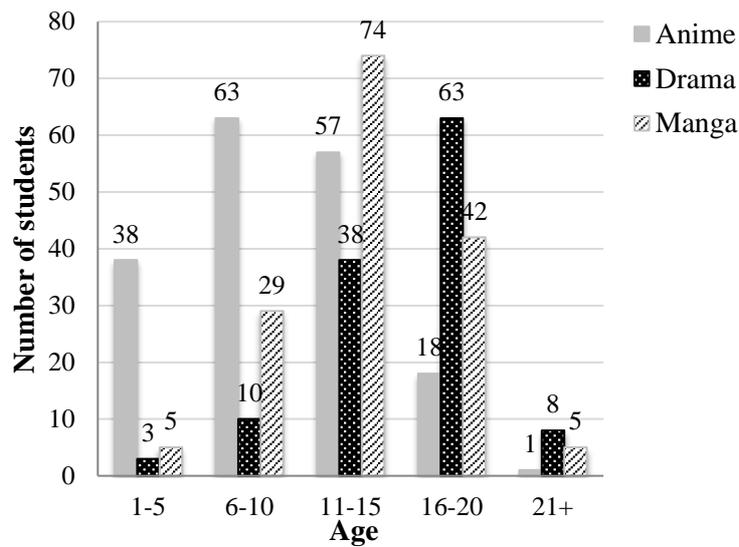


Figure 3: Starting age of JPC among fans ($N=179$).

Favourite titles of anime, ‘manga’ and drama were analysed based on the frequency (see Table 4). The participants listed their three favourite titles for each type of media. *Naruto*, *One Piece* and *Death Note* appeared in both anime and ‘manga’. In fact, 40.2 per cent of fans indicated that they consume anime and ‘manga’ of the same titles. However, drama did not share the same titles in anime or ‘manga’.

Table 4: Top five favourite JPC titles.

	1	2	3	4	5
Anime	<i>Naruto</i>	<i>One Piece</i>	<i>Death Note</i>	<i>Full Metal Alchemist</i>	<i>Neon Genesis Evangelion</i>
MANGA	<i>Naruto</i>	<i>One Piece</i>	<i>Bleach</i>	<i>Death Note</i>	<i>Fruit Basket</i>
Drama	<i>Hana yori dango</i>	<i>Hana kimi</i>	<i>Legal High</i>	<i>Gokusen</i>	<i>Litre of Tears</i>

Perceived advantages felt by fans were investigated. Participants selected the most appropriate from a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly disagree’ (1 on the scale) to ‘Strongly agree’ (5 on the scale) to rate their ability to understand Japanese people, culture and language, to listen and speak Japanese due to being exposed to anime, ‘manga’ and drama. Table 5 shows aggregated percentages of those who responded ‘agree’ (4 on scale) and ‘strongly agree’ (5 on scale).

Overall, more than half of the fans indicated that they thought their ability in understanding, listening and speaking Japanese have benefited due to consuming JPC. In particular, the vast majority of fans agreed that their listening skills (87 per cent) and understanding Japanese culture (80.7 per cent) benefited from JPC. It is interesting to note that ‘understand Japanese language’ was considered to be the least beneficial among other variables.

Table 5: Perceived advantages felt by fans ($N=179$).

	Agree d (%)
Understand Japanese people	68.9
Understand Japanese culture	80.7
Understand Japanese language	56.9
Listening in Japanese	87.0
Speaking in Japanese	62.5

Discussion

Findings of this article further support previous studies that have investigated motivation and participation in activities related to JPC outside the classroom. First of all, the widely accepted assumption that many learners of Japanese are interested in JPC is supported. In the study, three-quarters of students claimed themselves as being JPC fans. However, JPC was not the primary motivator to study the language for fans.

Both fans and non-fans have very high interest in the language itself, travel to the country, traditional Japanese culture and a future job using the language. Overall, fans tend to be much more motivated than non-fans in all accounts – particularly in future orientation. Fans who have a clearer vision, in some way, associated with Japan and the Japanese language in the future may have chosen to continue studying more than those who lack them. The increase in the proportion of fans in the Japanese courses by year level possibly indicates that fans tend to continue to study. Further analysis revealed that students who studied Japanese in high school and continue to study Japanese to a higher level at university are likely to be JPC fans. Therefore, this corroborates with previous findings in that JPC fans are highly motivated in studying Japanese and tend to continue their studies at university (Northwood and Thomson 2010, 2012; Williams 2006).

It is also striking to find that linguistic/racial backgrounds and the location where the data were collected may not be related to high levels of motivation amongst JPC fans. It is possible for this to be considered because the majority of the participants from Brisbane and the Gold Coast in my study were Australians who speak English as a first language (74.5 per cent), whereas participants in Northwood and Thomson's (2012) study in Sydney had Asian backgrounds, they were mainly from China and Korea (65 per cent), but the results yielded were the same.

It is a natural course of events that fans spend more and more time on consuming JPC. Fans spend a substantial amount of time frequently engaging particularly in watching anime, reading 'manga' and listening to J-pop songs. Frequency of engagement in JPC activities was a great contrast to non-fans. Fans have considerable exposure to the language and culture through anime and J-pop music on a daily to weekly basis. Consequently they may have felt that intensive and long-term engagement with JPC outside the classroom has led to the development of their receptive skills such as listening to the Japanese language and understanding Japanese culture and society.

Anime has proven to be the most favourite JPC media by far as fans spend more time watching anime than reading 'manga' or watching drama series. While anime and drama are viewed much more frequently in Japanese (possibly with the help of subtitles), 'manga' are read more frequently in translation. The explanation as to why fans read translated 'manga' may be due to difficulty in obtaining the Japanese versions outside Japan. Most 'manga' that one will find in bookstores and libraries are in English in Australia. Another possibility is that original Japanese MANGA does not come with translations so it may be too taxing for learners to read through by themselves therefore they choose to read translated 'manga'.

Although popular culture can make the curriculum more relevant to students' lives and increase interest and motivation to learn the language (Harklau and Zuengler 2003: 227), it is important to note that not *all* students (25 per cent in my study) are interested in JPC. Non-fans who have not been exposed to JPC intensively from a young age for an extended period of time may be unable to share the same sentiment as fans and this may create a rift between them in the classroom. Non-fans may find JPC materials in classrooms unattractive or irrelevant and lose interest in study (Northwood

and Thomson 2012; Williams 2006). It appears that it may be safe to use dramas considering fans start watching them usually later in their teens and drama series are independent from anime and MANGA series. Another possible resource could be quiz or variety shows that deal with themes such as travel and traditional culture, which may be of interest to both fans and non-fans alike. Variety shows may be useful for beginner learners as the speech often appears in Japanese subtitles with animated effects.

Conclusion

This article has presented a portrait of JPC fans who enrolled in Japanese language courses at an Australian university. To portray JPC fans, a questionnaire was administered and data were analysed. First, motivation and participation in JPC activities beyond the classroom were examined by comparing between JPC fans and non-fans who are not interested in JPC. Then characteristics of JPC fans were further looked into.

In summary, a large number of JPC fans exist in Japanese language courses and they are more motivated and engaged substantially with JPC activities, in the past as well as at the time of data collection, than non-JPC fans. This does not imply that non-fans are unmotivated to learn Japanese, as they are equally interested in the language, traditional culture, travel to Japan and employment that may relate to their studies. However, they were less able to envisage future association ('possible/ideal-self') with Japan or Japanese study in comparison to fans. This may account for increases in ratio of JPC fans by year of study – JPC fans keep continuing to study Japanese. This article yielded important results relating to JPC fans in the Japanese language courses, yet the nature of the study is exploratory and further investigation would be indispensable.

The impact of popular culture on FL learning is well grounded. Popular culture can motivate learners to explore the TL beyond the classroom, to continue to study and to associate their future strongly with the language and TL country. If students enjoy and spend a considerable amount of time on popular culture outside the classroom, this can lead to reaching higher levels of proficiency more so than students who do not seek these sorts of opportunities (see Sundqvist 2011, for example). Unlike English where learners have to study the language as subject in many countries and the global influence of American popular culture is undeniable, FL learners in Australia have to face the obstacles of whether they (can) continue or discontinue the study. If engaging in activities related to popular culture is one of the tools that can lead to continuation of a FL study in adverse circumstances, it is worthwhile for research and discussion on using popular culture in FL teaching and learning to be continued. Thus, exploring the role of popular culture in language curriculum is a necessary step in modern FL education, especially when ‘technology and the Internet have dramatically expanded both the scope and nature of these opportunities’ beyond the classroom (Nunan and Richards 2015: xii).

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Appendix

Questionnaire

- a. Gender (Male Female)
- b. Age ()
- c. Nationality ()
- d. First Language ()
- e. Major ()
- f. Campus (Nathan Gold Coast)
- g. Year at university (1st 2nd 3rd 4th other)
- h. Current Japanese course (1032LAL 2032LAL 3040LAL 3042LAL)
- i. Length of Japanese study at high school () yrs
- j. Length of stay in Japan (0 week/s month/s year/s)

Motivation

SA=strongly agree A=agree N=Not sure D=disagree SD=strongly disagree
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I study Japanese because:

1. I am interested in Japanese (language).
2. I want to travel to Japan.

3. I want to study in Japan in the future.
4. I want to get a better job (it will look good on my CV).
5. I want to work in Japan.
6. I want to stay/live in Japan more than a few years.
7. I am interested in traditional Japanese culture (e.g. temples, shrines, kimono, tea ceremony, zen, martial arts, calligraphy, flower arrangement, samurai)
8. I like Japanese pop culture.
9. I think Japanese pop culture is cool.
10. I want to understand the Japanese language as it appears in Japanese pop culture (J-pop music, video games, drama, anime, manga).
11. As far as my degree program allows, I will continue to study Japanese.
12. I am intending to study Japanese after graduation.

Activities and frequency

1= not at all/never	2= rarely/a few times a year	3= sometimes/monthly
4= often/weekly	5= all the time/daily	

13. I watch dubbed* Japanese anime. *voice over in another language
14. I watch anime in Japanese (with or without subtitles).
15. I watch dubbed* Japanese drama.
16. I watch drama in Japanese (with or without subtitles).
17. I read manga in Japanese.
18. I read manga translated into English or languages other than Japanese.
19. I draw manga.
20. I listen to J-pop songs.
21. I sing J-pop.
22. I play Japanese video games.

I am a fan/enthusiast of Japanese anime, drama and/or manga.

- No – Thank you very much for your participation. This is the end of the questionnaire.
- Yes – please continue and complete the short questions on the next page.

PART B

- a) Among anime, drama and manga, which do you spend most time in enjoying it?
(anime drama manga)
- b) How many Japanese anime have you seen? Approximately _____ series or episodes.
- c) I started watching Japanese anime when I was about _____ years old.
- d) Please list your favourite anime in order up to three.
- e) How many Japanese drama have you seen? Approximately _____ series or episodes.
- f) I started watching Japanese drama when I was about _____ years old.
- g) Please list your favourite drama in order up to three.
- h) How many Japanese manga have you read? Approximately _____ volumes.
- i) I started reading Japanese manga when I was about _____ years old.
- j) Please list your favourite manga in order up to three.

Advantages of knowing anime, drama and manga

SA=strongly agree A=agree N=Not sure D=disagree SD=strongly disagree
--

- k) I can understand Japanese people better because I have been exposed to anime, drama and/or manga.
- l) I can understand Japanese culture better because I have been exposed to anime, drama and/or manga.
- m) I can understand Japanese language better because I read manga.
- n) I have a better listening skill in Japanese because I watch anime and/or drama.
- o) I can speak Japanese better because I mimic what's in anime and/or drama?

Notes

¹ Anime that has been translated and subtitled by adding English subtitles by fans for fans and made it available online for free (it can be released within two hours after broadcasting on the TV). In this way fans do not have to wait until the English version becomes available on the market when it is released much later overseas (Kumano 2012).

² It is a creative writing piece based on or inspired by original books, movies and TV shows. It is written to fill in the gaps in the original work such as before, between or after the original works which were not fully explained or creating backgrounds for characters (Brenner 2007: 202–03)

³ It is a combination of scan and translation. 'Manga' that has been scanned and translated by fans for fans by replacing the Japanese text with English text using image editing software (Brenner, 2007). Then this is republished freely on the Internet

(Mouer and Norris 2009: 361) and can be viewed before the latest ‘manga’ are sold in the bookshops in Japan (Kumano 2010).

⁴ In the 2010 study involving high school learners, the mean score of ‘watching Japanese TV and DVD movies’ was 3.51 and ‘listening to Japanese songs’ 3.4. The 2012 study involving university students showed similar mean scores on these items, 3.75 and 3.61, respectively. That suggests that they were consuming on a weekly or monthly basis.

⁵ Bailly (2011) found motivation among high school students who study Japanese is associated with emotion and socialization. She argues that Japanese learners want to study the language because they want to be close to a friend who loves JPC (2011: 123).