



Student Motivation, Blended Learning & an iPod Project in Tertiary Japanese Language Teaching at ANU

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between student motivation and blended teaching and learning techniques, firstly by presenting the results of a survey carried out at the Japan Centre at the Australian National University in 2008 and then by presenting the results of an iPod Project trialled in the advanced Japanese language program in 2007 and 2008. The survey aimed to assess student motivation for learning Japanese and student attitudes to different teaching and learning methods and how that affected their motivation and satisfaction. The ‘iPod Pilot’ project aimed to demonstrate the usefulness of iPods and podcasting technology as a teaching and learning tool in advanced Japanese language teaching and learning, and its impact on student motivation. The primary goal of the project was to create an intensive Japanese language program for studying ‘out-of-country’ in Australia and to create a more up-to-date and flexible teaching and learning space by moving students from a controlled text-based environment to a more open ‘real’ exposure by providing easy access to authentic listening/viewing material, captured from TV news, movies and radio. Both the survey and the iPod project showed that students preferred a ‘blended’ learning approach, in which flexibility of delivery is increasingly important. Ongoing analysis of student motivation and effective teaching and learning methods through a longer-term survey will support future analysis and potential redesign of Japanese language programs.

1 Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between student motivation and blended teaching and learning techniques, firstly by presenting the results of a survey carried out at the Japan Centre, Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University in October 2008¹. The primary goal of the survey was to assess student motivation for learning Japanese and student attitudes to different teaching and learning methods and how that affected their motivation and satisfaction. An additional area of interest was whether students maintained their motivation and passion for studying Japanese throughout their degree. A secondary goal of the survey project was to review the role of technology – focusing on the provision of authentic materials, in successful teaching and learning – on student motivation. A further aim was to test the claim that authentic material increases student motivation, particularly at an advanced level. This article will also introduce the ‘iPod Project’ trialled in the Japan Centre, ANU in 2007–8, which aimed to demonstrate the usefulness of iPods and podcasting technology as a teaching and learning tool in advanced Japanese language teaching and learning, and its impact on student motivation. The primary goal of the project was to create an intensive Japanese language program for studying ‘out-of-country’ in Australia and to create a more up-to-date and flexible teaching and learning space by moving students from a controlled text-based environment to a more open ‘real’ exposure by providing easy access to authentic listening/viewing material, captured from TV news, movies and radio.

1.1 2008 motivation survey background

A literature review confirmed the value of collecting qualitative data in addition to quantitative data, and provided assistance with question design. For a discussion of collection of qualitative data: Crookes and Schmidt (1991) was studied and in regard to the question of design the work of Jansen et. al (2008) was taken into account. Reflecting this, the survey project focused on the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, to lay the groundwork in a longer-term project to assess the relationship between motivation and student learning. The understanding of student motivation and effective teaching and learning methods from the longer-term survey will support future analysis and potential redesign of Japanese language programs.

The definition of motivation employed in this article is drawn from Peacock's definition of motivation as inspiring "interest, persistence, attention, action, and enjoyment" in learners (Peacock, 1997, p. 1). Peacock in turn, bases his definition of motivation in the terms put forward by Crookes and Schmidt as "interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in class; persistence with the learning task, as indicated by levels of attention or action for an extended duration; and levels of concentration and enjoyment" (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991, p. 145). Both critics value interest and enjoyment very highly. Larry Vandergrift agrees with their assessment, stressing the importance of both *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation in successful L2 listening in his examination of the relationship between motivation and proficiency (Vandergrift, 2005, p. 71). Vandergrift based his formulation on the self-determination theory conceptualised by E. L. Deci and R. M. Ryan who divided the *intrinsic*, that is interest in an activity per se, from the *extrinsic* rewards of an activity. Deci and Ryan argued that intrinsic motivational satisfaction comes from a "sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness", while extrinsic rewards come from the social environment in the form of a good job or promotion, or in an even more internalised sense of being a good citizen, exerting personal choice, or the individual placing priority or value on the learning of a language (Vandergrift, 2005, p. 71). The danger to language learning of these extrinsic motivations is that once the external coercion is removed the desire to learn the language decreases. Under this paradigm, once we stop testing our students, and requiring them to attend language classes their motivation to study Japanese would decrease. Intrinsic motivational learning is more self-determined and is focused more on enjoyment and self-satisfaction. Vandergrift notes that, "language programmes emphasizing autonomy will likely foster student motivation, since perceptions of freedom of choice and perceived competence are linked to more self-determined forms of motivation" (Vandergrift, 2005, p. 73). Ryan and Deci argue that intrinsic motivation is "promoted in learning environments where the locus of control is clearly with the learner" (Vandergrift, 2005, p. 85). Larry Vandergrift, however, argues that extrinsic motivation – desire for good results and a good job after graduation – should not be ignored, noting in his study of French learners in Canada that the more extrinsically motivated the listener, the more likely they were to employ self-encouragement in the face of difficult material, maintaining their concentration and successfully evaluating the content (Vandergrift, 2005, p. 81).

1.2 Motivation survey project goals

This is the context, which informed the *ANU Japan Centre Motivation Survey*. Using the information drawn from the survey, we hoped to better understand what learning conditions promote autonomy and therefore increase motivation, and to evaluate the impact of this increased motivation on the students' learning. The motivational framework used to inform the project was based on a future goal of promoting *intrinsic* motivation by encouraging more learner control throughout the course, while bolstering the students' *extrinsic* motivation through appropriate assessment requirements. As a result the survey included questions that sought to assess the student's motivation in studying Japanese and their own assessment of their intentions and whether they felt that they had put their best efforts into their language learning.

1.3 Survey method

The *ANU Japan Centre Motivation Survey*, targeted all students of Japanese language studying at the Australian National University, built on the inventory of questions used in a recent ANU study on student retention and motivation, entitled “Retention in ANU Language and Culture Programs” to be completed at the end of 2008 (Jansen et. al, 2008). The data collection method employed was a self-reporting survey and one-on-one interviews, conducted in two stages:

1. Focus-group student interviews, to provide background information and help inform the development of the questionnaire;
2. A 15-minute online (Apollo[®]-based) anonymous questionnaire, both qualitative and quantitative of ANU Japanese language students.

1.4 Focus-group interview results

Three focus group interviews were held, with mixed year levels in each group, aiming to test and refine the draft questionnaire. The group interviews explored the students’ motivation for studying Japanese and their opinions about ANU Japan Centre teaching methods. Students were asked which learning methods they found most useful and to give their opinion on the use of technology in Japanese teaching and learning at ANU. The focus groups were also asked to complete and comment on a draft version of the online questionnaire, with the aim of refining any confusing questions, deleting any redundant questions, and identifying any missing issues that needed to be added to the questionnaire. Twelve students participated in the focus groups. Table 1 collates the participants by their year level. It should be noted that some students taking second and third year level Japanese courses are in fact first year students who have been placed into the course via the placement test.

| Year Level of Japanese course | No. of Students |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 st Year | 2 |
| 2 nd Year | 3 |
| 3 rd Year & Above | 6 |
| Year in Japan | 0 |
| Honours | 1 |

Table 1: Numbers and year level of students in focus groups

2 Survey results

The survey data collection began in October 2008 with messages posted on the Japan Centre WebCT site, in which has all students taking Japanese at ANU are registered. The online survey link was posted on this site and lecturers at all levels told students about the survey in-class and encouraged them to take part. A group email was also sent to all students encouraging them to participate in the survey. Seventy-four students took part in the online survey, out of a total of 320 students studying Japanese in 2008.

The survey was divided into four sections: (1) demographics; (2) motivation and Japanese at ANU; (3) teaching, learning and motivation and; (4) study habits. The demographics recorded personal data about each student, including their degree type, year level, Japanese language proficiency level enrolment status, number of years spent studying Japanese.

97% of the respondents were undergraduates and 76.7% were local Australian students, with international students making up the rest of the group. Students were enrolled in a variety of different degrees, the most common of which were: Asian Studies Degree (24.6%), Combined Asian Studies/Law (13.7%), Combined Asian Studies/Arts (19.1%) and Combined Asian Studies/Commerce (12.3%). Table 2 shows the year level of respondents.

| Year Level of Japanese course | % of Students |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 st Year | 32.9 |
| 2 nd Year | 31.5 |
| 3 rd Year & Above | 35.6 |

Table 2: Numbers and Year Level of students who participated in the survey

89% of the respondents were taking Japanese as a major in their degree, with the remainder were taking it as an elective course as part of another degree program. 71% of those surveyed had studied Japanese prior to attending ANU.

2.1 Motivation for studying Japanese

Students were asked to rate a series of statements about their motivations on a five point scale: not at all important; not very important; of some importance; very important and extremely important. The following table sets out the percentage motivations in order of importance ranking. Interestingly, if the 'very important' and the 'extremely important' ratings are added together, the highest percentage rankings were related to 'intrinsic' motivations, that is personal interest and desire, with the 'extrinsic' motivations of employment prospects and grades ranking lower.

| Motivation for studying Japanese | Not at all | Not very | Of some | Very | Extremely |
|--|------------|----------|---------|------|-----------|
| I like it. | 2.8 | 2.8 | 12.5 | 34.7 | 47.2 |
| I want to travel to Japan. | 2.7 | 5.5 | 27.4 | 34.2 | 30.1 |
| To participate in the ANU Year in Japan program. | 13.7 | 16.4 | 24.7 | 16.4 | 28.8 |
| I had been to Japan in the past, which stimulated my interest. | 26.4 | 4.2 | 8.3 | 34.7 | 26.4 |
| To understand the people, history and culture of Japan. | 2.7 | 8.2 | 30.1 | 38.4 | 20.5 |
| I have previously studied Japanese and thought it would be good to continue at university. | 19.7 | 4.2 | 21.1 | 35.2 | 19.7 |
| For employment prospects. | 9.6 | 20.5 | 30.1 | 30.1 | 9.6 |
| Because of the reputation of Japanese studies at ANU. | | | | 33.3 | 29.2 |
| I wanted to do Asian Studies (particularly Japanese) to complement my combined degree. | 25 | 22.2 | 26.4 | 15.3 | 11.1 |
| So I can read <i>manga</i> and/or watch <i>anime</i> . | 46.5 | 23.9 | 8.5 | 12.7 | 8.5 |
| I get good grades. | 23.6 | 18.1 | 40.3 | 11.1 | 6.9 |
| I have close relatives who are Japanese. | 80.8 | 5.5 | 8.2 | 0.0 | 5.5 |
| My friends are studying Japanese. | 79.2 | 8.3 | 11.1 | 1.4 | 0.0 |
| I am a native speaker of Chinese/Korean and thought it would be relatively easy. | 75.0 | 9.7 | 6.9 | 6.9 | 1.4 |
| Because I am part Japanese and feel it is an important part of my self-identity. | 90.3 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 2.8 | 4.2 |
| I have a Japanese boyfriend/girlfriend/partner/spouse. | 91.6 | 1.4 | 4.2 | 2.8 | 0.0 |

Table 3: Motivation for studying Japanese in order of preference

Students were asked to rank their interest in the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing, on a five point scale, from 'not at all interested' to 'extremely interested'. 'Listening'

outweighed all the other skills, second to ‘speaking’ showing that active communication with native speakers is a highly motivating factor.

| Japanese language skill | Not at all | Not very | Somewhat | Very | Extremely |
|---|------------|----------|----------|------|-----------|
| Speaking Japanese | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.8 | 28.8 | 64.4 |
| Understanding other speakers (listening skills) | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.2 | 22.2 | 73.6 |
| Reading Japanese | 0.0 | 1.4 | 12.5 | 37.5 | 48.6 |
| Writing Japanese | 1.4 | 4.1 | 24.7 | 31.5 | 38.4 |

Table 4: Japanese language skills ranked in order of interest

When asked if their motivations for learning Japanese had changed over the course of the degree, the importance of exchange to Japan and contact with native speakers was highlighted: “The Year-in-Japan challenged me as it showed how much – despite my attempts not to – I had approached Japanese as simply another subject. Being immersed in the culture and language for a longer period of time than previous trips changed my perspective on how I want to learn a language and what really works for me. If I were to learn another language, I would complete basic beginners and go to travel/work/live in the country of that language much sooner than I did with Japanese.” Some students, however, found the heavy load of university-level Japanese study to be motivationally draining.

Student comments also showed that university had focused their interest in Japanese allowing them to better understand the future goals of their study, what had often begun with a broader interest in Japan was given focus through university-level study: “When I came to ANU I viewed Japanese as a compliment to my main degree. I choose it out of a broad interest in Japan, begun by having been to Japan and enjoying *anime* and *manga*. Since then it has become much more of a focus of my degree and learning Japanese is simply part of my life. I also have a number of good Japanese friends, including my girlfriend, all of whom it is enjoyable to communicate with in Japanese. Broadly speaking, the more I’ve studied Japanese, the more my interest has grown, the more I’ve realised that there is much more interesting things in Japanese culture than just *anime* and *manga*, and the more I’ve come to see it as a future career path.” Thus, communicating with Japanese people and living in Japan can be said to be important motivating factors.

2.2 Teaching, learning and motivation

In third section of the survey focused on teaching and learning practice and motivation, students were asked for short line responses on (1) the most effective and least effective Japanese language learning tasks/activities; and (2) if the motivation, which originally led them to take Japanese at ANU had changed.

Listening, through Japanese movies, TV programs and radio programs was highly rated: “Listening practice has improved my speaking and listening Japanese skills the most,” and “Watching Japanese television programs. Feels like you’re not studying but all the while there are kanji up on the screen. And I think it helps you learn natural ways of speaking and slang.”

Speaking, particularly spontaneous conversation exercises, was rated the other most effective skill: “spontaneous conversation rather than repetitive drills [are best] – this allows incorporation of previous learnt grammatical rules and forces you to use previously learnt vocabulary in a semi natural way”; and “regular oral activities to become more fluent in the language in a practical context [are best]. Also, tasks and activities that relate to more practical situations (getting around, transport, how to act with superiors, etc) are most effective as people are more inclined to do better as they can see themselves applying it.”

More traditional teaching and learning methods were also valued, with repetitive memorisation activities and grammar rating a number of mentions with comments including: “Repetitive exercises are important – at an age where picking up language no longer comes naturally, one has

to beat it into oneself. Due to the lack of comprehensive on-paper explanations of verbs, forms, and constructing sentences, being taught these things are also beneficial.” Some students felt that enforced in-class practice was very important, arguing that weekly in-class quizzes provided a good learning incentive: “Practice, as in tutes [is what counts]... because you are forced to think about the concepts you are learning about and apply them to what you want to say.”

When asked about the least effective activities, many students commented that there were none in particular, however, rote learning activities and unguided activities rated the most mention with comments such as: “books full of tasks are daunting”; “unguided language exchange doesn’t work well”; “quizzes can be ineffective as once it is over it is all forgotten”.

Students were also asked to rate the effectiveness of various teaching and learning activities on a five-point scale: ‘not at all effective’ to ‘extremely effective’. The winners in this category were activities involving direct teacher contact: feedback, availability and small group classes. Electronic delivery of lectures via DLD (digital lecture delivery) is clearly not very attractive to learners, who rate teacher contact very highly.

| Teaching and learning activities | Not at all | Not very | Somewhat | Very | Extremely |
|---|------------|----------|----------|------|-----------|
| Timely feedback | 1.4 | 4.1 | 11.0 | 46.6 | 37 |
| Availability of teacher contact | 2.7 | 1.4 | 21.9 | 42.5 | 31.5 |
| Small group tutorials/seminars | 0.0 | 1.4 | 21.9 | 41.1 | 35.6 |
| Individual oral presentations | 1.4 | 6.9 | 20.8 | 45.8 | 25 |
| <i>Sakubun</i> (compositions) | 4.2 | 4.2 | 22.5 | 47.9 | 21.1 |
| In-class quizzes | 2.8 | 7.0 | 25.4 | 42.3 | 22.5 |
| Repeated pattern drilling | 2.8 | 7.0 | 26.8 | 40.8 | 22.5 |
| Hand-in homework | 4.2 | 6.9 | 26.4 | 43.1 | 19.4 |
| On-line quizzes/homework | 4.2 | 12.7 | 26.8 | 36.6 | 19.7 |
| Group oral presentations | 2.8 | 16.7 | 26.4 | 30.6 | 23.6 |
| Language Lab classes | 7.2 | 10.1 | 36.2 | 31.9 | 14.5 |
| Lecture style delivery of course grammar and function | 1.4 | 8.5 | 43.7 | 39.4 | 7.0 |
| Formal exams (during exam period) | 1.4 | 17.8 | 35.6 | 34.2 | 11.0 |
| In-class role playing | 2.9 | 7.2 | 37.7 | 44.9 | 7.2 |
| In-class pair work activities | 4.2 | 18.3 | 32.4 | 40.8 | 4.2 |
| Take-home exams | 7.1 | 11.4 | 38.6 | 31.4 | 11.4 |
| In-class survey/interview activities | 2.9 | 18.6 | 37.1 | 35.7 | 5.7 |
| Discussion Board participation | 27.9 | 35.3 | 20.6 | 16.2 | 0.0 |
| Recorded DLD | 20.8 | 25 | 38.9 | 12.5 | 2.8 |

Table 5: Teaching and learning activities in order of preference

Students taking the motivation survey were asked to rate the importance of a number of learning activities/tools/aids in helping them to study Japanese effectively on a five point scale of importance. Here a good textbook and worksheets were rated very highly, with DLD and online study sites again rating poorly. It should be noted that access to the Japan Centre iPods was only available to advanced level students (after the completion of the iPod Project – which is discussed in detail in the second section of this article – the iPods were made available to advanced students for loan), which may account for the very low score of this learning tool.

| Learning activities/tools/aids | Not at all | Not very | Somewhat | Very | Extremely |
|---|------------|----------|----------|------|-----------|
| Good textbook | 0.0 | 1.4 | 12.5 | 30.6 | 55.6 |
| Workbooks and worksheets (with sample answer sheets provided) | 1.4 | 4.2 | 12.5 | 34.7 | 47.2 |
| Sound file listening practice (CD, On-line, radio etc.) | 0.0 | 2.8 | 19.4 | 33.3 | 44.4 |

| | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Regular homework | 1.4 | 1.4 | 20 | 41.4 | 35.7 |
| Electronic dictionaries | 4.2 | 5.6 | 14.1 | 28.2 | 47.9 |
| On-line access to 'real' media: Japanese TV, radio, newspapers or film clips | 1.4 | 2.8 | 26.4 | 27.8 | 41.7 |
| On-line dictionaries | 5.6 | 4.2 | 23.6 | 29.2 | 37.5 |
| E-Book/Course materials available on WebCT | 2.8 | 12.5 | 25 | 38.9 | 20.8 |
| Reading Japanese print media (newspapers and/or magazines etc.) | 1.4 | 4.2 | 36.1 | 25 | 33.3 |
| Watching Japanese TV drama or anime | 5.6 | 6.9 | 33.3 | 23.6 | 30.6 |
| Flash cards | 8.3 | 12.5 | 27.8 | 31.9 | 19.4 |
| On-line quizzes | 5.6 | 16.9 | 29.6 | 31 | 16.9 |
| Paper dictionaries | 2.8 | 8.5 | 31.0 | 38.0 | 19.7 |
| Posted Lecture Notes/Powerpoint slides | 2.8 | 8.3 | 41.7 | 23.6 | 23.6 |
| Own MP3/MP4 player to listen to or watch audio/movie files | 21.1 | 18.3 | 19.7 | 28.2 | 12.7 |
| Reading Japanese <i>manga</i> | 20.5 | 13.7 | 30.1 | 20.5 | 15.1 |
| Online study sites (aimed at non- native students of Japanese) | 11.3 | 19.7 | 36.6 | 18.3 | 14.1 |
| Online Japanese sites (aimed at Japanese native speakers) | 12.9 | 28.6 | 28.6 | 21.4 | 8.6 |
| Attendance at Japan-related events (films, Japan club events etc.) | 10.1 | 18.8 | 43.5 | 21.7 | 5.8 |
| Access to Japan Centre iPods | 27.1 | 25.7 | 24.3 | 17.1 | 5.7 |
| DLD lecture recording | 13.9 | 16.7 | 44.4 | 18.1 | 6.9 |

Table 6: Learning activities in order of preference

When rating their most indispensable study tools/activities, regular homework, a good textbook was highly valued: “a good text book that has clear explanation is vital as it essentially provides the information at the time it is needed/convenient, and in a non linear fashion. I.e. you can flip to the area you need to look at/reference without waiting for a sound file or movie file to get to that place”. Students preferred a textbook because it provided easily accessible information. A good dictionary – particularly the electronic ones – was also highly ranked, because electronic dictionaries “make reading faster and I can look up the meaning of individual kanji etc. and really get the meaning”. Worksheets were also regarded as very important, because “while it is easy to understand something when you are told it in a lecture it’s not easy to remember to apply it in conversation... practice on extra worksheets were very helpful.”

Access to real media created for Japanese native speakers was regarded as “indispensable to becoming really good at Japanese”. This student noted that “in order to reach a level where you can communicate with Japanese people in the same way you communicate with people in your native language I think it is indispensable to have access to newspapers, radio, TV etc. that has been created for Japanese native speakers not students studying Japanese.”

When asked whether technology had a positive impact on their motivation to study, the majority of the students argued in favour of technology, as not only did it provide “easier access” and “more convenient” but it brought their language teaching to life – “into my 'real day-to-day life” – and provided “a much greater variety of materials to consider and enjoy in the learning process” and consequently increased “curiosity and interest”. Comments included: “The use of technology such as the iPods or having the internet links to Japanese radio programs etc. has increased my motivation to study Japanese because it has made me aware of the world outside textbooks. In the world outside textbooks my Japanese ability really needs to improve a lot and knowing this motivates me to study.”

One student, however, stressed the important point that motivation came more from human contact, noting that technology was only a secondary tool: “I use technology much more now than before I began at ANU but I do not think that this has increased my motivation to study Japanese. For me motivation comes from personal contact- the feeling that I get when someone clearly understands or is able to hear that I have studied or understood a concept. This is a much greater motivator for me to study than anything I could get from technology.”

2.3 Study habits

In the final section of the survey students were asked a number of questions about the technology used in Japanese language teaching at ANU and the own personal study habits. With regard to technology, 69% of students most commonly used a PC computer, with Macintosh accounting for only 15%. 89% of the respondents had a broadband connection where they lived, and 87.5% rated the overall level of difficulty of engaging with the technical requirements at ANU as either ‘not at all difficult’ or ‘not very difficult’. 54.6% felt that the technical requirements of a course had ‘never’ or ‘very rarely’ hindered their learning, as opposed to only 7% who felt that it had hindered them ‘often’ or ‘very often’.

Asked about the type of computers they accessed the most, laptops won out by a large margin as seen in the following table.

| Which computers do you use most often? | Never | Very rarely | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
|--|-------|-------------|--------|-----------|-------|------------|
| Own personal laptop computer | 20.5 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 4.1 | 2.7 | 69.9 |
| Own personal desktop computer | 32.9 | 16.4 | 4.1 | 6.8 | 12.3 | 27.4 |
| ANU library desktop computers | 4.2 | 12.5 | 9.7 | 36.1 | 27.8 | 9.7 |
| Residential college desktop computers | 52.1 | 5.5 | 6.8 | 16.4 | 17.8 | 1.4 |
| ANU 24 hour access computer labs | 22.2 | 25 | 18.1 | 23.6 | 9.7 | 1.4 |

Table 7: Frequency and type of computer usage

Asked where they chose to study, their own room in their place of residence proved by far the most popular.

| Where do you study? Please indicate how often you study in the following places? | Never | Very rarely | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
|--|-------|-------------|--------|-----------|-------|------------|
| In my own room at my desk (whether in family home, college or share house etc.) | 4.1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 12.3 | 13.7 | 67.1 |
| Library | 24.7 | 18.6 | 12.0 | 22.5 | 12.5 | 9.7 |
| At home on the lounge | 33.3 | 8.3 | 13.9 | 29.2 | 5.6 | 9.7 |
| At home at the kitchen table | 51.4 | 2.8 | 12.5 | 19.4 | 6.9 | 6.9 |
| Japan Centre <i>Yukari no ma</i> (common <i>tatami</i> room) | 69.9 | 9.6 | 6.8 | 4.1 | 6.8 | 2.7 |
| Residential College Library or Computer Room | 59.7 | 8.3 | 9.7 | 13.9 | 5.6 | 2.8 |
| While commuting | 45.1 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 16.9 | 5.6 | 1.4 |
| In a coffee shop | 52.8 | 13.9 | 6.9 | 20.8 | 4.2 | 1.4 |
| Exercising (gym or jogging) | 83.3 | 6.9 | 8.3 | 0.0 | 1.4 | 0.0 |

Table 8: Where students prefer to study

Other places specified, included “in bed,” “in the office” and “on the deck in the back yard.”

2.4 Conclusions drawn from the survey

The survey results outlined above, show that intrinsic motivations focused on enjoyment and self-satisfaction, far outweighed extrinsic motivations such as employment prospects. This is a positive sign for Japanese Studies at ANU, as it has been shown that ‘intrinsic’ motivation stays with the learner throughout their life, well beyond the scope of ‘extrinsic’ motivations, which change as life stage and career changes.

This survey was, however, only the first stage in an assessment of student motivations, and longer-term data collection is required. One weakness was that the anonymous survey targeted all students of Japanese, making it difficult to compare the effectiveness of the different teaching and learning methods and tasks used in the lower levels with those of the more advanced levels. The timing of the survey was another issue. Future surveys should be held at a different time in the academic year. In October, students in Australia are very focused on their final exams and have less time to participate in this kind of survey. As 71% of those surveyed had studied Japanese prior to attending ANU, it is important to engage a larger and more diverse group in future surveys, as those with prior knowledge of Japan may have different motivations.

3 The iPod Project: Enhancing motivation through exposure to ‘real’ media

The second part of this article, examines the *iPod Project* carried out in 2007–8 in a third year Japanese language course, *Advanced Japanese: Speech and Presentation*. This project provides another window through which to analyse student motivation and blended learning techniques. The three main goals of the project were to:

1. Provide easy access to ‘real’ Japanese audio/video material
2. To develop student skills so that they were able to deal directly with this ‘real’ material—given that they cannot always understand everything.
3. To motivate student learning and engagement with Japan

The broader aim of the project was the use of ‘real’ Japanese media to encourage students to engage on a deeper level with Japanese life, society and culture. The use of “authentic texts by speakers of the target cultures and other cultures, rather than the use of texts that have been produced to illustrate what it is thought learners should learn or might expect to learn about a culture” (Ackerley, 2007, p. 353) proved an important tool for encouraging students to avoid cultural stereotypes and to engage more fully with the issues.

The inclusion of NHK TV news clips served two purposes, motivating students not only to develop their linguistic skills but also their intercultural awareness. The use of these news media files allowed for the selection of topics of concern in contemporary Japan and of interest to students in Australia, such as: the aging society, the declining birth rate, the imperial household and succession issues, education and bullying in schools, popular culture, global warming, Japan’s engagement with environmental issues, the workplace in Japan, and issues of gender both in the workplace and in society more broadly. In their evaluations, the students noted that they could readily identify with the topics discussed and that this motivated them to learn the vocabulary and engage in the video content so that they could put their own opinions across.

Another benefit has been to allow students easy access to far more listening material on a much greater variety of topics that was possible in the past. As the material is not produced for students of Japanese but rather for the general Japanese viewing public, it included a variety of tones, speeds and accents which gave the opportunity for much greater exposure to different types of Japanese: regional dialects, generational differences, news presenters versus the person in the street.

In order to encourage students to engage with this ‘real’ media, the program needed to encourage them to break away from the security of textbook based learning – in which it is possible with study to gain almost 100% understanding – to the more fear-inspiring ‘real’ world Japanese media, in which they would have to swim less comfortably at only 60–70% comprehension. Both their confidence and motivation would play a part as they were grappled

with the content. Inspiring students to take more control of their own learning, required the program, the teachers and the students to step beyond the traditional teaching space, in order to provide support and encouragement outside the classroom context (Trinkle, 2005, p. 22). The project goals reflect ANU's commitment to student's self-directed learning – one of the five foundation objectives for education at ANU – and ANU's aim to create “discovery-based learning environments, rather than environments in which the student is merely a passive recipient of information” and to provide students with “technology-enabled opportunities for learning” (“A Plan for Management of Education at ANU to 2007”, 2007).

3.1 Pedagogical considerations of the iPod Project

Students participating in the iPod Project had already completed approximately 450 classroom hours of Japanese at the ANU and were at approximately Level 2 of the Japanese Proficiency Level Test. The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (日本語能力試験 *nihongo nōryoku shiken*), or JLPT, is a standardized test to evaluate and certify the language proficiency of non-native Japanese speakers. It is held once a year and administered by the Japan Foundation. The JLPT has four levels beginning at level 4 and progressing to level 1 (See <http://momo.jpf.go.jp/jlpt/home.html>). With an enrolment of 40 students, the course was made up of three hours of class per week: a Monday seminar, a Thursday tutorial and a Fortnightly two hour presentation session. With only three hours of face-to-face teaching per week, most of the student engagement with the material was in their self-study time, as shown in Fig. 1.

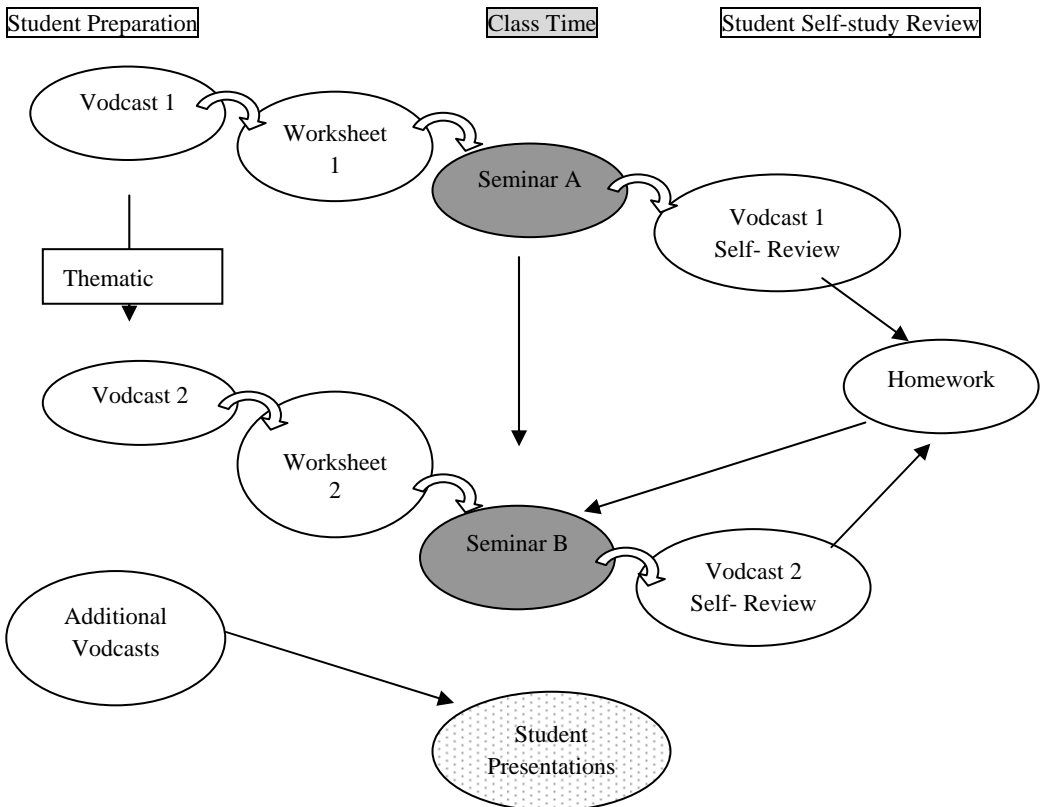


Fig. 1 Vodcast integration into the course structure

The term 'vodcast' is made of the words 'video' and 'podcast' and for the purposes of this article is defined as a 'movie podcast'. A 'podcast' is the broadcast of an audio or movie file via an RSS feed, which makes it available for download.

On average, students were required to watch four clips a week. Worksheets, made up of specific vocabulary questions, content summaries, fill-in-the-blank exercises and comprehension questions, had to be completed before attending classes. The worksheets were reviewed at the beginning of each class and sample answers were posted on the course site after the class. Before class, students would typically watch the clip once and then again pausing it a number of times, before completing the worksheet. As the students were engaging with difficult material the worksheets helped them structure their response and to overcome their fear of coping with the material, a fear that arose from the speed of the natural delivery or the difficulty of the content. On average students watched the clips 4–5 times.

There were a number of proficiency levels in the course, as some students had entered university with no prior knowledge of Japanese, while others had also studied Japanese at high school and/or been on exchange to Japan. The provision of both the iPods and streamed clips available via WebCT meant that weaker students could watch the clips as many times as they liked while the stronger students could move on to the next activity. Group presentations were heavily weighted in the course assessment as these encouraged students to work together, gathering opinions and debating their positions before presenting their findings to their fellow students in class. Working in groups of three or four, students were free to set the topic for their presentation. Each group was required to carry out interviews on their chosen topic and then to incorporate extracts from these interviews into their presentations. The presentations had to include an introduction to the topic, a presentation of the various sides of the argument (which must incorporate the interviews) and then a concluding argument presented by the group. In some cases, recording their presentation as a podcast clearly reduced the stress of performing in public for group presentations and so allowed the students time to focus on the language of their presentation. Students surveyed reported a significant rise in motivation as a result of these presentations. Using group presentations in this manner is a proven teaching and learning strategy for as D.H. Jonassen notes, presentation to an audience of "their peers (and the instructor) is an important step in creating the sense of authenticity that comes from knowing that the instructor will not be the sole audience for their work" (Hernández-Ramos, 2007, p. 37) and provides the students with a 'real' context in which to use their Japanese.

4 Implementation of the iPod Project: Distribution

The project was faced with the difficult question of how best to provide student and teacher access to 'real' media. Technology could provide one answer and has the added benefit of keeping up to date and meeting students expectations of interactive, multimedia based teaching and learning. Journalists such as Sheena Maclean writing for *The Australian* have increasingly noted the appeal of podcasting, stating that it is now "rapidly moving from the realm of hip and hype into serious media". (Maclean, 2006; King, 2007, pp. 58–61). Yet the question remained about how best to 'integrate' the technology into the curriculum, thereby allowing students to focus on their language learning. Was the production of pod/vodcasts a realistic assessment task for students—both technically and with regards to content? The project team decided to use only software currently available on the ANU E-Learning Network as this was already supported by the ANU IT systems in the hope of simplifying the students' need for technical support. In the past, valuable class time was used to review the listening/viewing material, often twice. It was difficult to make the material available outside of class, either for preparation before class or for review after class. With improved technology it is now possible to make the movie clips and podcasts easily available for the students to access outside of class.

The first technical hurdle was the *distribution*. Flexibility and easy access to the movie and sound files was of primary importance. Short NHK clips were captured from free-to-air SBS

television edited into MP4 format and then posted on ANU's streaming server. Under the Australian copyright legislation, educational institutions can copy and redistribute clips taken from free-to-air broadcast TV and radio if used for educational purposes within an intranet site, such as the course WebCT site. Consultation with the ANU legal office was vital to the success of the pilot. A script was created to allow students to download an iTunes subscription link which gave them access to a folder entitled, "Media Links of Japanese Semester 1, 2007" in which all the files (both MP4 and MP3) were placed. This enabled students to download and store the files in their own iTunes, which could then be watched on their borrowed iPod, wherever and whenever they wished. Links to all files were also placed on the course WebCT site via the university streaming server, to provide even greater flexibility. Students could choose to listen to or view the material on a computer (either at home or in one of the university computer labs) without downloading the file. All the pod/vodcasts remained available on line and for download via iTunes for the duration of the course, although it proved necessary to increase the student download quota during the course. NHK news clips were used more frequently than radio podcasts as the students found these TV clips easier to engage with. In their on-going feedback and in the final survey students commented that the video element helped to make their engagement with this 'real' media less daunting. NHK commonly uses subtitles in their news broadcasts which gave the students a double opportunity to interpret meaning: they not only heard the news presented but were also able to simultaneously read the summary of the main points. This made it easier for the students to learn new vocabulary, as they could pause the clip to copy down new words and phrases, which they found difficult to catch aurally.

For the flexible access to work, the pilot team needed to work together with the central ANU IT support staff to work out how best to integrate these new 'listening/viewing' materials into the students e-learning environment in a manner which worked within the ANU-wide e-learning system. This required the testing of different software, hardware, platforms and access modes, in order to assess how these different elements fit with the pedagogical aims.

4.1 Implementation of the iPod Project: Production

The second technical hurdle was *production*, as the student podcast/vodcasts were a major part of the assessment requirements. There were three main types of presentation: speaking together with a Powerpoint demonstration which included embedded movie and sound files; presenting a radio-like podcast and then answering questions from the audience; showing a movie presentation which incorporated the student interviews, extracts from source clips and a concluding group summary.

These presentations proved by far the most technologically challenging part of the pilot. In the creation of the presentations, students used a variety of different software programs to edit their interviews, and the source sound or movie files. The pilot project included funding for some technical support, which was used to hire a technical assistant for up to six hours per week, to provide some one-on-one assistance to the presenting groups. The range of student technological expertise was an unexpected benefit and resource. Some students showed a high degree of conversance with both software and hardware tools that went far beyond our expectations. Others, however, found the technology difficult. Most students were comfortable with MP3 players, however, few had ever used a movie iPod, and still fewer had worked with sound and movie file editing. A one-hour training session was provided at the beginning of the course, and students were given technical assistance from the course IT support. On average each group received about one hour of assistance with editing, uploading or any other technical issue. In addition to the IT support, help files (How to Upload; How to Subscribe to the iTunes Link etc.) were posted on the course WebCT site. While these tools were certainly of benefit, in retrospect more time should have been spent at the beginning of the course showing the students the practicalities of how to edit files, post them on the course site, and download them to their iPods.

The course evaluation survey indicated that while 70% had used an MP3 player before, only 12% had used a movie iPod prior to the course. 90% were familiar with Powerpoint as a

presentation tool, however, this decreased to 60% for iTunes and Quicktime and even less for such editing software as GarageBand. Prior to the course most of the students were more familiar with PCs as this seems to be the platform of choice in most high schools and is cheaper if students are purchasing their own computers. The pilot support was focused on the Macintosh platform, as the audio and movie editing software was easier to use and more integrated into the system software, and was available on all university machines.

4.2 Evaluation of the iPod Project

Evaluation of the project was carried out through on-going student feedback elicited in class, staff feedback elicited at the weekly staff meetings, individual interviews and anonymous (Apollo[®]-based) survey. The response rate for the on-line survey was 24 of 40 students. Five one-on-one student interviews were also carried out. One problem with feedback was the 60% response rate on the survey. Also, in the future it would be better to conduct the student feedback interviews with a 'neutral' party rather than the main course teacher as this would be better for obtaining honest feedback.

The evaluation focused on whether the teaching/learning strategy (see Fig. 1) was effective and, whether the technology was effectively and efficiently integrated into the course. From the teaching perspective the main benefit of this teaching method was that presentation of new podcast material was not limited to class time. The use of the pod/vodcasts allowed the students to access the material whenever and wherever they liked outside of class time. As a result students could be required to complete preparatory worksheets before class, and to review the clips before completing their homework assignments. Class time was freed up to focus on discussion of the broader issues rather than spent either playing the clip through, or just working on the linguistic details of what was being said. This allowed the course to move beyond just language study to a discussion of broader social issues in Japanese, which was valued very highly in the evaluations.

Further, listening to the selected authentic clips clearly made it easier for students to choose material of greater complexity for their own presentations. Encouraged by their achievements and overcoming their fear of the 'real' media, the students were able to apply their improved learning strategies to more and more clips. The course structure allowed the students to continually practice and improve their learning strategies, and this improvement can be seen in how they evaluated the iPod project in comparison to their past courses and methods of studying Japanese. Some of the students associated their improved learning strategies with longer memory retention, noting that they were now "better able to guess" the content, which allowed them to engage with the material on a deeper level and engage more with the cultural context. One student noted that "although hard at first, more and more I have found I can understand what is being said in very fast natural speech. While I may not understand the meaning of what is being said straight away, I find I am now better at hearing all the sounds and words being said."

Although student self-assessment of their own improvements does not provide proof of actual improvement it does give an indication of the satisfaction achieved in the course and the subsequent impact on self-motivation. 92% of the students judged that their listening skills had improved as a result of the course.

Two points were rated very highly in the student feedback. Firstly, the access to 'real' material, which dealt with current social issues was rated most highly: "Using recent or relevant 'real life' issues is a great way to generate interest in studying at this level, in using the skills we've learned so far and improving them." The news clips served both as a means of developing linguistic skills and to develop a better intercultural awareness. The use of such material is all too often seen as too difficult for non-native students to deal with, however, exposure to these authentic materials was very highly valued in the course surveys, and in a number of cases the reason this course was judged to be one of the best language courses undertaken in three years of study at university.

I really liked this course. I think it is one of the best courses I've done at university ... because we're listening to files from Japan, from the news, things that Japanese people are actually watching and ...

we are starting to talk about contemporary social issues and other things as well. It is a bit boring to always be doing just language courses. (Student A. Interview, July 6, 2007)

Students wanted to engage in advanced debate about social and cultural issues facing contemporary Japan, and this course provided them with the vocabulary and language modelling to allow them to do this.

Secondly, flexibility of access also rated very highly. With regard to flexibility, the students fell into two distinct groups. The first group preferred to study at a desk in front of a computer with their notes and dictionaries spread around them. This group did not make great use of the iPods, using them mainly for file storage and to record interviews. They preferred to access the course files on their own computer screen. The second group was made up of students—predominantly female—who preferred to study in a more relaxed mode, such as with a laptop and a small electronic dictionary. This group used the iPods a great deal. Quite a number of the students used the iPods to watch the clips for the first few times, either at home or travelling to university but preferred the larger screen of a computer when they were completing their worksheets or working on their presentations. The iPods were also used to play the clip to their interviewees before asking them for their opinions, which proved highly beneficial, as the student did not then have to influence the interviewee with their own opinion by first summarising a clip. One of the students was a mature age student working full time, who found the flexible delivery extremely beneficial, as she was able to access the materials when her schedule allowed. Although some had found the technology requirements of the course rather daunting, by the end of the course it no longer seemed so difficult: “I was initially concerned at having to use so much technology in the course (especially having to make a podcast for the presentation) but the technology didn’t turn out to be an issue at all.” In the final assessment, the new blend of technology and traditional learning was rated as “much better than a traditional language course” because “I learn more about modern culture this way. Best way to learn natural, normal Japanese.”

4.3 Future considerations for the iPod Project

Pedagogically, the major difficulty arose from the different linguistic levels of students in the course. This made the materials very difficult for some, who found the course very daunting at the beginning. The weaker students felt they were struggling to just keep up and found it hard to engage with the topics in depth. On the one hand some students were asking for additional material while on the other, students felt overwhelmed and unable to complete the material required.

The integration of the podcasts into the curriculum was overall, viewed very positively, and there were few technical problems associated with the distribution and access to files. The two main technical problems were both associated with production: firstly providing sufficient support for the podcast presentations and second software difficulties stemming from a lack of familiarity with Macintosh software. The project team was unable to provide across-the-board software support, which unfortunately added to the student stress levels. The production elements of the course proved time consuming for students and in the future greater planning needs to go into this aspect of the course to allow the students to better focus on the linguistic aims. Better initial training in practical file management, access and editing using course supported hardware and software, together with enhanced technical support, including online manuals, should ameliorate these problems in future. Consideration should also be given to providing multi-platform support. Close and effective working relations with University wide IT staff, and funding for a dedicated part-time IT support officer, were important. Introducing this level of flexible access required an increase in the student download quota and storage quota, and placed a degree of pressure on existing University systems.

5 Conclusions

The student assessment of the *iPod Project* add further weight to the responses received in the *ANU Japan Centre Motivation Survey*, which show that *intrinsic* motivations focused on enjoyment and self-satisfaction outweigh *extrinsic* motivations and further, that flexibility of access is very important to study satisfaction.

These two projects are, however, only the first step in an ongoing analysis of student motivation and Japanese language teaching and learning. Surveys by themselves are not a sufficient measure of student outcomes, and clearly, more linguistic research needs to be conducted in the form of base levels and testing improvements to see whether or not second language acquisition has actually occurred. This, however, lies beyond the scope of the initial stage of the project. Collection of more empirical data and more in-depth data analysis, with a focus on learning outcomes, is an important future step.

Overall the ANU Japanese iPod Project succeeded in creating a more flexible teaching and learning space. The flexible access to files was a great success, and even the hiccups to do with the presentations were largely overcome by the conclusion of the pilot. The iPod Project demonstrated a good model for the integration of technology into the teaching and learning of the Japanese language, and for motivating students to learn and use language in action.

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