Journal of Japanese Language Education and Linguistics
Volume 8 No. 2, 2024, 139-152
e-ISSN: 2615-0840 p-ISSN: 2597-5277
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18196/jjlel.v8i2.23496
https://journal.umy.ac.id/index.php/jjlel/issue/view/1102

Shokubutsu da!: A Fun Learning for Young Learners to Learn Japanese

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Submitted: 2 August 2024, Reviewed: 8 August 2024, Edited: 23 August 2024, Accepted: 30 August 2024

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Abstract

Teaching Japanese to young learners is a challenge. Young learners need exciting media to learn Japanese vocabulary more easily. Hence, we created Shokubutsu da!, an animated video that is a smart learning media packed with exciting stories narrated in Indonesian, except the names of animal or plant characters are all Japanese. The video allows young learners to memorize Japanese vocabulary much more quickly. This research aims to determine the results of applying video learning Shokubutsu da! to young learners, namely kindergarten age. The method used in this study is qualitative-descriptive, which describes the implementation of animated video in class through observation. This study concluded that most children find remembering the Japanese vocabulary of plants and animals easy by watching the animated video Shokubutsu da!. The video can be more practical because young learners can self-learn, allowing them to play the video repeatedly at any time. Furthermore, the children were enthusiastic, as the video allowed them to have fun learning and memorizing Japanese vocabulary.

***Keywords:* Smart Education; Animated Video; Basic Japanese Vocabulary; Young Learners**

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INTRODUCTION

There are four skills in foreign language learning: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Zartashia Kynat Javaid et al., 2023). Vocabulary mastery is needed to support these four skills. Vocabulary is a significant element of learning a foreign language that deals with other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Nguyen Nguyen, 2021). Vocabulary is essential needed in learning the Japanese language. Learning Japanese vocabulary cannot be easy, especially considering the complexity of how Japanese is written and pronounced (Haristiani et al., 2016). Teaching a Japanese language to young learners is challenging because Japanese has never been learned. According to Kawachi-furlan (2019), Critical language education with children involves teaching vocabulary and grammar language, but it does not need to be restricted to it. Children learning a foreign vocabulary is considered foundational for language development (Butler, 2019).

Japanese vocabulary with complex pronunciation and writing make Japanese language learners experience obstacles in memorizing vocabulary. To overcome these obstacles, teachers must teach vocabulary using appropriate media. Media is a tool for teachers in the learning process. Suitable and attractive learning media will make students learn vocabulary more easily by memorizing. Unsuitable media causes students' motivation to drop, and they feel bored with learning (Liliana et al., 2020). According to Fitri and Ardipal (2021), learning media is an instrument teachers use to stimulate students' cognition, emotions, focus, and skills to facilitate the educational process. Yoko classifies media into four: audio media, audio-visual, media that independently includes games, role play, projects, and technology-based media (Savana & Pradana, 2021).

In the current technological era, teachers must be more innovative in designing material in the learning process so that students will more easily

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understand the material being taught (Nurwulan et al., 2020). Therefore, technology-based media is needed to teach foreign languages with multimedia. Teaching foreign languages using multimedia to young learners is essential so that learning is fun. Hijriyati (2017) states that children need exciting and fun learning. According to Hasan et al (2021), presenting material in multimedia products provides opportunities for students to process information in the learning process. This means that multimedia products provide an interactive channel for students to understand the material in various aspects, such as text, images, videos, audio, and animation.

Teaching Japanese vocabulary to young learners will be more fun and more accessible to memorize by using animated video media. Children love animated videos because they are an audio-visual medium with funny animations. Sari and Yatri (2023) state that animation media can increase interest and motivation and impact student learning outcomes. Animated videos are a well-known learning medium among children aged 5 to 10 years old (Rahayu & Fanreza, 2024). In several research that have been carried out on vocabulary mastery, animated videos are an effective learning medium to introduce vocabulary. According to Annisa and Muryanti (2022), animated videos are effective for introducing English vocabulary, and children's English vocabulary skills have increased by 85% compared to before. According to Kurniawati and Zanta (2023), animated videos can introduce vocabulary and are more effective than previous learning videos.

Video animation is a medium that may be used to aid in teaching and learning. Animated videos can play a role in the learning process and help teachers deliver material. Engagingly designed animations, such as those used in education, can prevent learning from becoming tedious and motivate students (Alifa, 2021). Children's educational animation videos are developed with five indicator aspects, namely the aspect of the need for teaching materials, the aspect of the need for teaching materials, the aspect of the need for the presentation of teaching materials, the aspect of the need for

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evaluation, and the aspect of product specifications for children's educational animation videos (Aini et al., 2023).

Based on the background above, introducing simple Japanese vocabulary to children requires animated videos. The young learners in this research are 4-5 years old. Vocabulary learning suitable for young learners is the basic vocabulary of plants and animals that children like. So, the author will make an animated video about plants and animals with an exciting and moral story. The animated video was made in Indonesian, but the names of the animal and plant characters are in Japanese. Animated videos are created with KineMaster, an app for creating videos. Hafizatul (2020) states that KineMaster is a professional and extensive video editing app for iOS and Android devices. Kinemaster has features that may make animated video content more visually appealing and high-quality, including multiple layers, multitrack audio, chromatic key, voice recording, and speed control (Andrasari, 2022).

The purpose of this research is introduce Japanese vocabulary to children for learning foreign languages other than English as a new curriculum trial in kindergaten. The video will be implemented at ABA Kaliduren kindergarten, and observations will include children's learning flow, participation, and enthusiasm for learning Japanese vocabulary. In addition, to find out if children can remember the vocabulary of these animals and plants in Japanese. The results of the research will be used as a basis for testing whether Japanese can be applied in ABA Kaliduren kindegarten.

METHOD

This study used qualitative research methods in which philosophical approaches were used to study scientific situations, such as observation, where researchers acted as instruments. These methods involve data-gathering procedures and qualitative analysis that focus on extracting

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meaning (Sugiyono, 2019a). In this case, the data gathering was obtained by observing how the video animation was employed in the class. To cover the focus of the research in creating and observing the learning process using the video, this study has research flow as follows:

The making of the video animation *Shokubutsu da !*

The video animation used in this research has made tailored to the student's needs, especially for young learners. The making process includes creating the characters, storyline, illustrations, and video editing.

The implementation of video animation *Shokubutsu* da!.

The implementation of video animation was observed throughout the learning process in the classroom. The aspects observed are the learning flow, including the opening, the main activity, the closing, and the learning assessment. Through the observation, the researcher also assesses the learner's participation and enthusiasm when the video animation is employed in the class.

According to Sutedi (2011), the sample is a subset of the population deemed representative and can be used as a data source. The sample for this study will consist of students from TK ABA Kaliduren. The sample consisted of 25 students. The sampling method employed in this investigation was a Simple Random sample.

The primary instrument utilized in this research is the researcher, accompanied by supporting instruments such as observation, questionnaires, and interviews. These tools are employed to get the necessary data. This study

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used observations to collect data about how video animation was employed in the classroom. The research was conducted using the Miles and Huberman methodology for data analysis processing. As stated by Miles and Huberman in 1984, as cited in Sugiyono (2019b) qualitative data analysis involves interactive and ongoing actions that continue until completion, ensuring that the data is fully saturated—data analysis activities, including data reduction, data display, and the formulation or verification of conclusions.

Figure 1. Research procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the results of this research regarding the video animation process and the implementation will be described as follows

The making of the video animation "Shokubutsuda!"

Video animation is one of the options from audio-visual media that can be used to help teachers effectively teach students. This study chose video animation as the learning media as it is suitable for young learners due to its ability to catch their attention and focus while learning Japanese vocabulary. The making of the video animation *Shokubutsu da!* went through several stages, as described below.

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Pre-production Stage

During the pre-production phase of 2D animation, the initial step involves identifying the animation theme, background ideas, and thoughts that will be incorporated into the tale the writer envisioned. In the pre-production phase, the story boarding, screenplay, and early design of characters and surroundings are created and developed.

The earliest step in the production process is story boarding, where the first animator standardizes frames with characters to ensure they fit and align properly, creating a symmetrical view. The storyboard is created using the Flipaclip application, utilizing an artificial ruler and adhering to a rational aspect ratio of 16:9, which is aligned with the dimensions of a smartphone screen or a conventional full HD video resolution. The storyboard serves to align the understanding of the animator and the audience, ensuring effective communication of the story's content.

Characters & Story Design

During the character design process, adjustments are made to align with the initial script of the plot. The character Saru, a mischievous monkey, is designed to be more prominent than other characters by incorporating amusing and unpredictable traits, such as annoyingly humorous and wayward behaviors. By default, the initial background in this procedure is set to blue. The blue background is a chroma key that will subsequently be replaced with the desired environmental background during the movie editing process. Utilizing a blue screen facilitates the manipulation of image opacity and character placement on the environmental background throughout the pasting process.

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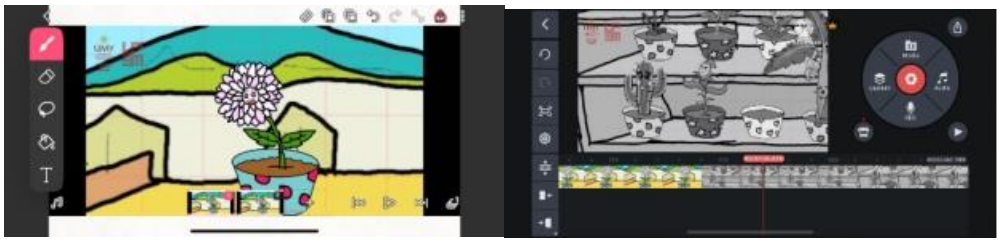

Figure 2. Production Stage of Making Video Animation "Shokubutsu da!"

Meanwhile, environmental backdrops are utilized as video settings to create a lifelike atmosphere for animated characters. The animation features a background on a riverside in the middle of a forest. The background is designed to provide a sufficient viewing distance, ensuring that the character is not affected by any distortion caused by the background. In a video, the figure is visually emphasized and typically stands out from the background, a technique known as depth of field. However, in this animation, ample space is provided to enhance the character's visibility and prevent the spectator from being distracted by the surrounding environment.

Production

In the production stage, the voice-over and editing process were executed by Kinemaster, an application for video editing. The reduplication and articulation correction work processes are carried out in numerous frames along with frame-by-second synchronization, character movement synchronization, voice synchronization with characters, and character layout. This step can make the character seem to move and be more alive. The video can be improved by editing out unnecessary frames, adding sound effects, adjusting color, and including watermarks as well as credits for sponsors and crew in the final version.

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Figure 3. Video Animation "Shokubutsu da!" made by Kinemaster

This text outlines the equipment and procedure for creating a brief animated video. The creation is accomplished using basic tools and programs without needing a license. Despite its limited functionality, this software can be accessed by anybody without requiring a license. Individual video production differs from corporate or non-profit video production due to its multiple objectives.

After the creation of *the Shokubutsu Da!* It was uploaded to YouTube so young learners could learn and watch the video many times.

The Implementation of the video animation "Shokubutsuda!"

The video animation of "Shokubutsu da!" was implemented in the class so young learners could learn Japanese vocabulary easily. The implementation occurred at TK ABA Kaliduren, with 23 kindergarten students in multiple meetings in March 2024. In general, the learning flows were as follows.

Figure 4. Learning Flow of Shokubutsu Da!

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At the beginning of the class, the teacher made an opening with a question related to today's learning topic to stimulate and catch the students' attention. The teacher then introduced all the Japanese vocabulary words, acting as the characters in the video animation. During this activity, the students were shown the characters individually and tried to pronounce them together. Subsequently, the students were drilled to recognize the picture and the characters' names before watching the video animation.

In the next activity, the video animations were played. On the first showing, the students were enthusiastic about the animation and focused on the characters they had seen before. In the second show of the video animation "Shokubutsu da!" the teacher used the play and pause technique to throw questions and engage students to pronounce the character shown on the screen. While explaining the storyline, the teacher subconsciously influences the students to memorize the characters, which are the Japanese vocabulary. Ultimately, by the end of the learning process, the students were given a direct quiz that included listening and guessing the characters' names by what was shown on the screen. During this activity, the teacher assessed the student's achievement in memorizing and understanding the Japanese vocabulary.

While the students enjoyed the video animation, as young learners, their focus and attention spans are quite short. That is why the teacher needs to keep checking on the students to ensure they are still engaging in the learning process. The ice-breaking between sessions and the quiz helped the students engage more as the questions were thrown to them so they could answer in haste. Whoever successfully gave the right answer was given a token of appreciation such as healthy snacks or merely applause. The learning process ended with the teacher concluding today's topic and a positive closing statement followed by cheerful greetings.

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Table 1. Quiz Results

No	Japanese Vocabularies (Shokubutsu da!)	English Meaning	Quiz results (%)
1	Saboten	Cactus	50
2	Himawari	Sunflower	45
3	Bara	Rose Flower	80
4	Daria	Dahlia Flower	30
7	Tomato	Tomato	100
8	Tomorokoshi	Tomorokoshi	35
9	Banana	Banana	100
10	Take	Bamboo	70
11	Chiri	Chili	80
12	Saru	Monkey	60
13	Wani	Buaya	72
14	Cho-cho	butterfly	90
15	Shika	Deer	75
16	Hebi	Snake	53
17	Ushi	Cow	100

Looking at table 1 for the student's Quiz results, it can be seen that their progress in understanding the vocabulary varied. The percentage of students who can answer the quiz correctly is shown in the last column. By rank, the plant vocabulary that was thought of as challenging to memorize is Himawari (45%), Daria (35%), and Tomorokoshi (30%). While the students were enthusiastic when watching the video animation and could recognize the characters in their first language, the foreign concept of unfamiliar words made them stumble on memorizing it. In addition, the word "tomorokoshi" was longer than corn, which is hard for them to remember. Interestingly enough, even though "Kusa" is shorter than "tomorokoshi" it was considered the most difficult vocabulary to memorize. The result showed that the children have an easier time memorizing animal vocabulary that is more familiar than plant vocabulary. The sole reason was that the students were unfamiliar with the words and struggled to associate them with their previous vocabulary knowledge. However, it can be concluded that more than half of the vocabulary was memorized by more than 50% of students.

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In the quiz results, most children can learn Japanese vocabulary, and the quiz scores show that children can memorize Japanese vocabulary easily. This proves that animated videos for vocabulary learning are more effective for young learners. Pujiani et al. (2022) also found that animation videos are effective online learning tools for young learners, since they effectively enhance student motivation to learn. The animated video was also more effective for remembering Japanese vocabulary than other media. It is seen from the results of research conducted by Tan & Wibowo (2015) that the use of quartet card game media does not affect the ability to remember Japanese vocabulary.

Shokubutsu Da! is a smart learning that can improve the vocabulary of young learners on YouTube. Alobaid (2020) said that compared to other language learning resources available in the learners' surroundings, multimedia educational tools created by information and communication technology (ICT), such as the popular platform YouTube, are often favored over other sources. Therefore, these tools can be more effective and are highly recommended for language learners and teachers who aim to improve writing fluency.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, most children can quickly memorize the Japanese vocabulary of plants and animals by watching the animated video *Shokubutsu da!*. This can be seen from the quiz results, where the students memorized most of the words. Only a few percent were found to have difficulty remembering the vocabulary for various reasons. The positive responses from the students were also shown during the lesson in the class, as the children were enthusiastic. The video allowed the students to have fun learning and memorizing the Japanese vocabulary more easily. Furthermore, young learners can see video animation on YouTube as learning media in self-learning, allowing them to repeat the video anytime.

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