

Supplemental Vodcasts for Japanese Language Learners: Examining Students' Perceptions¹

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Abstract

This article reports on student perceptions of the use of vodcasts for university-level Japanese language courses. The students (n = 108) completed a 29-item survey, which included three primary themes as adapted from Stepp-Greany (2002): perceptions concerning interest and relevance of activities, perceptions concerning effects on learning, and perceptions concerning confidence as a learner and technical skills. In addition, students participated in focus groups. Data analysis revealed that the majority of students enjoyed viewing the vodcasts, and perceived them as interesting, relevant, and beneficial to the development of skills related to listening comprehension, culture, grammar, and vocabulary. Students also indicated that they prefer accessing vodcasts via direct link and streamed online. Future studies could include investigating the effects of implementing self-developed vodcasts, and vodcasts that focus on specific skill sets such as listening comprehension, speaking, or vocabulary acquisition.

1. Introduction

Recent advances in technology, including the increased availability of smartphones and mobile devices, have contributed directly to growth in the use of podcasts. Of the 2.6 billion podcasts downloaded in 2014, 63% of these were requested from mobile devices, an increase from 43% in 2012 (Libsyn Statistics, 2015). With such readily available access and widespread use of podcasts, many foreign language educators have successfully employed them as tools

¹ The author makes a distinction between “podcasts” and “vodcasts” (podcasts with video), and uses the former term when referring to the medium in general.

in support of language teaching and learning. For example, podcasts have been successfully implemented to support language learners' acquisition of pronunciation skills, listening skills, vocabulary, culture, and more (Abdous, Camarena, & Facer, 2009; Lord, 2008; Moura & Carvalho, 2012).

To date, a large portion of podcast-related research in foreign languages has focused on student motivation, attitudes, and perceptions (Chan, 2014; Chan, Chi, Chin, & Lin, 2011; Weinberg, Knoerr, & Vandergrift, 2011). However, some studies have investigated the benefits of podcast use in foreign language education (Flanagan & Calandra, 2005; Moura & Carvalho, 2012), use of podcasts incorporated into course curriculum versus used as course supplements (Abdous et al., 2009; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Schmidt, 2008), and the impact of podcast use on learning outcomes (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014; Hew, 2009; Ng'ambi & Lombe, 2012). Findings from such research have been encouraging enough to warrant further exploration of podcast use, especially for Japanese language learning, where podcast-related research is scant. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine university students' perceptions of podcasts with video (hereafter, vodcasts) in the elementary Japanese classroom. The research questions utilized for the study are:

1. To what extent do students perceive the vodcasts as interesting and relevant to their language learning?
2. How do students perceive the effects that using the vodcasts have on Japanese language learning?
3. How do students perceive the effects that using the vodcasts have on their confidence as language learners and users of technology?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Perceptions of Podcasts for Foreign Languages

While we are reminded that technology should serve language learning and not vice versa (Garrett, 1991; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2008; Stockwell, 2007), there are a number of benefits and characteristics of podcasts and podcasting that make them suitable and effective for use in education, and more specifically in foreign language education. Through a variety of surveys and interview protocols, studies on podcasts have revealed that their most appealing traits are portability, simplicity, convenience, ease of access, cost effectiveness, and time savings (Abdous, Facer, & Yen, 2012; Chan, 2014; Hew, 2009; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Schmidt, 2008). Advocates of podcast use in the classroom also point out additional benefits from a pedagogical perspective. These benefits go beyond their cost effectiveness and ease of generating and distributing content to include their ability to exceed temporal and spatial limitations of conventional face-to-face education (Carvalho, Aguiar, & Maciel, 2009), to restructure classroom face time (Lonn & Teasley, 2009), to provide opportunities for extending communication and interaction beyond the lecture experience (Gosper, Green, McNeill, Phillips, Preston, & Woo, 2008), and to allow learners control of their devices to play back multiple times, thus making them more compatible with their learning style and pace of learning (Abdous et al., 2012).

It has also been found that the use of podcasts in the foreign language classroom may lead to higher learner satisfaction and motivation. For example, in Weinberg et al.'s (2011) pilot of podcasts developed for 75 French immersion students, feedback solicited through questionnaires and discussions revealed that almost all students found the podcasts easy or very easy to watch. Furthermore, 66% - 82.3% indicated experiencing a medium, high or very high level of enjoyment from watching the podcasts. Similarly, data from Chan's (2014) study of video podcasting for German language beginners also revealed that students were highly satisfied with the mobile materials, with more than 60% of them agreeing to statements

such as “I enjoyed watching the vodcasts,” “I am now more open to learning through vodcasts in the future,” and “Watching the vodcasts has made me more motivated to learn the language.” Finally, in Moura and Carvalho’s (2012) study using the ARCS model of motivational design, which defines the learning cycle of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction as the four key strategies for promoting students’ motivation in learning, students expressed satisfaction with French and Portuguese podcasts incorporated into their curriculum. Comments that support that satisfaction included, “I improved French pronunciation and I learned more by using podcasts,” and “I liked listening and recording podcasts, it improved my reading skills.” Such findings support the development and use of podcasts in foreign language classrooms, as students satisfied with their experiences using this medium in their language learning might be more motivated to continue their language studies. This satisfaction could also be tied to the students’ perceptions of whether the podcasts were helpful and useful in support of their language learning; however additional research, such as that described in this article, is needed to verify this theory.

In addition to student satisfaction, motivation, and perceptions of quality and usefulness, other factors such as personal preferences with regard to design (including content, length, and frequency of use) and distribution (medium for receipt and delivery) are also significant, yet under-researched elements of podcasting for foreign languages. Chan (2014) investigated a number of these factors in his study, in which students were encouraged to subscribe to and work independently with six 7 - 8 minute podcasts that were broadcast every two weeks. He then gathered qualitative and quantitative data via questionnaires and focus group sessions with the participants. In response to questions on design and technical quality, respondents were in agreement with statements on improvements in listening, pronunciation, and the helpfulness of information on German culture and society, but were neutral (neither agreeing or disagreeing) with statements on helpfulness with grammar,

vocabulary, and speaking. A large percentage of the participants, 72% - 91%, also held positive opinions on appropriateness of the number of podcasts, frequency and length, structure, relevancy to learning, and usefulness as a revision tool.

It is important to note that not all findings from published reports of language learning podcasts have produced such positive outcomes. One investigation conducted in a freshman English class at a Japanese university, for example, reported that 45.3% of the students found the podcast resources provided “not useful” (Monk, Ozawa, & Thomas, 2006). Similarly, Abdous et al.’s (2009) investigation of the use of podcasts in eight language and literature courses at an American university also produced negative responses. Students there were divided into two groups: those enrolled in courses in which podcasts were integrated into the curriculum and thereby compulsory, and those enrolled in courses in which podcasts were used as supplemental, non-compulsory materials. Although 65% of the former group and 54.5% of the latter group stated that podcasts were most useful for developing listening, vocabulary, and speaking and that they would likely enroll in courses incorporating podcasts, there was nonetheless a considerable number of students in both groups that did not access or listen to the podcasts at all. The authors attributed that outcome to the possibility that the participants might have experienced technical problems that prevented them from doing so successfully, such as their lack of know-how in downloading the podcasts or lack of appropriate technology. Although it appears reasonable to make this assumption, it is imperative that research documents this possible connection.

Lastly, a review of the related literature also serves as a reminder that the development of podcasts should be based on sound pedagogical principles and best practices in foreign language teaching, which include theories of constructivism, the use of authentic materials, mobile learning, and informal and lifelong learning (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Furthermore, inherent to such development is an understanding of students’ perceptions and needs coupled with clear objectives, explanations of content and benefits,

and the encouragement that they use the podcasts on a regular basis (Edirisingha, 2006). It seems clear, then, that podcast development should be based on a successful blend of technical know-how, a foundation of second language acquisition and pedagogy, and an understanding of educational psychology and the students we teach.

2.2 Podcasts for the Japanese Language Learner

Findings from these aforementioned studies contribute to what we know about how students perceive the use of podcasts for various languages, including predominantly English, French, German, and Spanish. However, such investigative findings in the field of Japanese language education are scarce. It is expected, therefore, that the findings of the research presented in this article will help further our understanding of podcasting for the Japanese language learner. Although a thorough search found no empirical studies of podcasts in the field of Japanese language education, a basic internet search did reveal a vast number and variety of Japanese podcasts available on YouTube, iTunes, and online language learning websites.

The more popular Japanese podcast series (see Appendix A), often include similar features: instruction for beginning through advanced levels, free limited accounts that offer access to downloadable resources, community forums and chatrooms, and energetic, charismatic hosts. In his examination of various language teaching podcasts, Rosell-Aguilar (2007) ranked Japanese101 as one of the “top of the pods” for its podcast-based language tuition model whereby the main basis for teaching centers on the podcast materials themselves, and includes additional best practice strategies such as a variety of native speakers of different ages, and slowed down, repeated pronunciation taking beginning learners into consideration.

Readily available Japanese podcasts beyond Japanese101 are not always, however, without shortcomings, which include varying costs to access them beyond the initial, free episodes, membership fees, lack of available information about developers’ backgrounds, and podcast topics or segments not suitable for minors. Several also

support Harris and Park's (2008) question of whether or not the development of podcasts is actually founded on pedagogically sound principles. Based on this need for a more disciplined, comprehensive pedagogy of Japanese language podcasting, and building on the defining characteristics of sound pedagogy the fundamentals of which underlie the principles of Task-Based Instruction and Communicative Language Teaching, three vodcasts were developed and implemented in this study, and are explained further in the next section.

3. Method

3.1 The Course and the Vodcasts

This study was conducted in the department of foreign languages at a large, southeastern university in the U.S. The courses included in the study were seven first-semester Japanese classes that were taught via the Communicative Language Teaching approach, as posited by Nunan (1991). The curriculum for the courses was based on the Japan Times' *Genki* textbook series. Classes met for 16 weeks with 2.5 contact hours per week. Via the vodcasts, the courses emphasized linking classroom learning with language activation outside the classroom.

The three vodcasts used for this study were developed to supplement the elementary-level Japanese curriculum, and similar to the classroom pedagogy, principles of Communicative Language Teaching guided their design. The vodcasts directed students to communicate in real-life situations through the use of authentic language in the performance of meaningful tasks. Utilizing text and images with voiceover, the vodcasts were correlated with course content, thereby reinforcing the vocabulary, sentence patterns, and cultural information provided each of the three textbook chapters covered in the course. The vodcasts were designed according to the template in Table 1, which demonstrates the progression from presentation of information to application of real-life language skills via scaffolding.

Table1. *Vodcast design template*

Segment	Description
1 - Greeting	Students view and listen to greeting and learning objectives
2 - Sample dialog(s)	Students listen at slow speed with English and Japanese subtitles
3 - Vocabulary	Students listen to key vocabulary items and repeat
4 - Sample dialog(s)	Students listen at slow speed with Japanese subtitles
5 - Grammar	Students view and listen to grammar explanations
6 - Sample dialog(s)	Students listen at slow speed with Japanese subtitles, then repeat the dialog
7 - Advanced dialog(s)	Students listen to dialog at natural speed (first time with no subtitles followed by listening comprehension quiz and answers; second time with English subtitles)
8 - How do you say...?	Students view three to five English phrases and visuals to translate to Japanese; students listen and repeat answer in Japanese
9 - What would you do...?	Students view and listen to intercultural tips; students view a scene and consider what would be culturally appropriate by answering true/false questions
10 - Create your own dialog	Following sample situations and requirements (key phrases/grammar to use, etc.) and explanation of assessment, students develop their own dialogs
11 - Closing	Students view and listen to closing

The objectives of the vodcasts, which ranged in length from 15 - 30 minutes, were:

1. To reinforce the vocabulary, sentence patterns and cultural topics introduced in the textbook (see Figures 1 and 2);



Figure 1. *Vocabulary introduction*



Figure 2. *Grammar explanation*

2. To provide opportunities for listening comprehension of additional natural speed conversations and oral practice of those conversations;

3. To incorporate more culture-related instruction beyond that included in the textbook (see Figures 3 and 4);

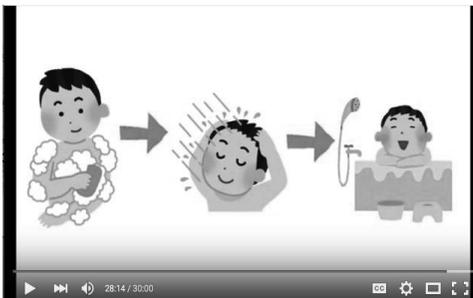


Figure 3. *Intercultural tips*

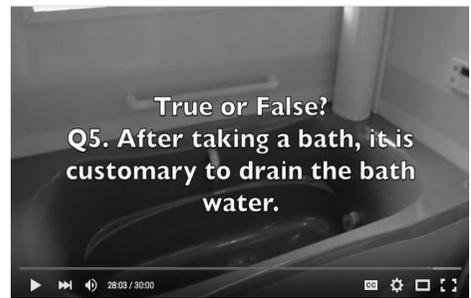


Figure 4. *Culture quiz*

4. To informally check students' understanding and usage of phrases, sentence patterns, and cultural topics (see Figures 5 and 6); and



Figure 5. *Grammar fill-in-the-blank*

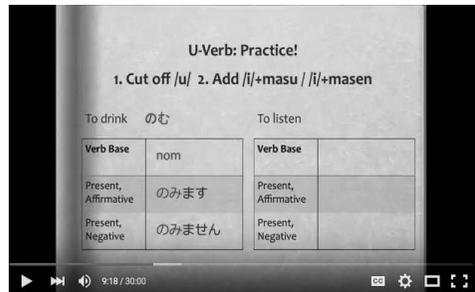


Figure 6. *Verb conjugation*

5. To provide opportunities for students to write their own scripts and act out their skits mirroring the advanced dialogs in the vodcasts.

Vodcast #1 was uploaded onto the university's iTunes U site for anytime, anywhere access and downloading. Vodcasts #2 and #3 were posted on YouTube as well as iTunes U. A "How to use this vodcast series" video providing an introduction to the vodcasts, explanations on downloading, instructions on where to find PDF files of related materials, and recommendations on how to use the resources most effectively were also available to the students on the university's online course management system. The vodcasts were made available to students from the start of each new chapter in the textbook. Students were encouraged to view and practice with the vodcasts, refer back to them at various times throughout the course, and complete two online vodcast quizzes per each vodcast. Students also had the option of posting questions and comments on an online discussion board. For the first two chapters, they were also required to develop and submit scripts of their own skits, and for the third chapter, to present the skits either in class or via a filmed recording.

3.2 The Participants

The participants of the study were 108 students from seven first-semester Japanese classes. Demographic information for the participants can be found in Table 2. The majority of the students were between 18 and 20 years old (60%), and 56% of the respondents were freshmen or sophomores. Most notably, 98 of the 108 students indicated that their main reason for taking a Japanese course was for personal interest.

Table 2. *Overview of participants*

Gender	Male	66
	Female	42
Academic status	Freshman	29
	Sophomore	32
	Junior	31
	Senior	12
	Other	4
Main reasons for taking this course	Personal interest	98
	Academic requirement	42
	Recommended	8
	Other	2

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected for this study in two phases: an online survey and face-to-face focus groups with the students. The 29-item survey (see Appendix B) included three primary themes as adapted from Stepp-Greany (2002): perceptions concerning interest and relevance of the activities, perceptions concerning the effect on learning, and perceptions concerning confidence as a learner and technical skills. Only questions relevant to this research were taken from Stepp-Greany's original survey, which utilizes a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree. All students enrolled in the beginning level Japanese course were invited to participate in the study. Descriptive statistics

were then calculated to summarize the findings of the survey. Reverse coding was done on applicable items of the survey. The researcher then conducted focus group sessions, (the questions of which are found in Appendix C), followed by a thematic analysis of the participant responses in order to extrapolate supporting evidence for the students' perceptions of the vodcasts. Quantitative statistics of the data included computation of Pearson's correlation coefficient between the three sets of primary themes or domains. Confidence intervals of the means of the three domains were also calculated using the Bonferroni approach.

4. Findings

The findings presented here are culled from the survey, the focus groups conducted with the students, and the subsequent statistical tests and analyses. It is important to note that the student response rate for the survey was 69% of the seven classes included in the study. Because the focus groups were conducted during regular class time, participation approximated 100%. Background information provided by the students indicates that only a small portion of the participants (19%) had used audio or video podcasts to support a university course prior to the Japanese course under investigation here. Focus group discussions revealed that students mainly accessed the vodcasts at home, in the evenings, and on their PC. An occasional student would view them in between classes or just before their Japanese class, and some students accessed them via smart phones. In addition, a small percentage of students indicated that they would return to view the vodcasts even after the course ends.

4.1 Perceptions on Interest and Relevance of the Activities

As evident in Table 3, the overall reaction to the vodcasts was positive. The mean responses for all seven questions in this category were favorable (i.e., scores higher than a mean of 3.0). Responses indicated that more than 49% indicated enjoyment in viewing the vodcasts, in contrast to 18% who did not enjoy them. Sixty-five

percent said they would take another Japanese class that used podcasts. Through the focus group discussions, it was discovered that the convenience of any time / any place accessibility of the podcasts was a major boon to the students. They also appreciated being challenged to complete tasks that they perceived as more difficult than those in regular classroom activities. In addition, 59% of students rated the podcasts as relevant to what they were learning in class and to real-life situations, especially the intercultural tips and visuals. Comments that support those findings include:

[I used them to] fill in gaps whenever I don't understand something, [I'd]go back and use it as a reference.

It integrates you more into the language; it's like you're becoming part of it. [One advantage of the podcasts was] seeing language learned in class/text actually applied in real life situations.

The topics, themes, and vocabulary were all pretty good [in] the way it [sic] went along with the text; it was good to see them actually applied because it's a very good application of what's being taught.

When asked how they would describe the podcasts to an outsider, students said:

It's applied / integrated language learning. It shows you "this can be applied to this, which can be applied to all of this."

[It's a] great way of showing how people communicate in real-life scenarios.

Students expressed general satisfaction with the content, design, and length of the podcasts, but more importantly they were able to see the connection between the podcasts and application of the language in the real world. Last, it is also important to note the high percentage (41.7%) of the neutral response to item #5 in Table 3, asking if students enjoyed the course more because of the podcasts than they would have if there were no podcasts.

Table 3. *Perceptions on Interest and Relevance of the Activities*

Item no.	Survey statement	Percentage of responses					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	The vodcasts made the course more interesting.	7.4	12.0	33.3	30.6	16.7	3.37	1.12
2	I enjoyed viewing the vodcasts.	7.4	11.1	32.4	26.9	22.2	3.45	1.17
3	The information presented in the vodcasts was relevant to my real-life needs for utilizing Japanese.	3.7	5.6	31.5	42.6	16.7	3.63	.95
4	I would take another Japanese class that used vodcasts.	4.6	3.7	26.9	33.3	31.5	3.83	1.06
5	Because of the vodcasts I enjoyed the course more than I would have if there were no vodcasts.	8.3	17.6	41.7	19.4	13.0	3.11	1.11
6	If given a choice between viewing the vodcasts and not viewing the vodcasts, I would choose to view the vodcasts.	10.2	13.9	27.8	27.8	20.4	3.34	1.24

7	I thought the vodcasts were boring.	18.5	35.2	25.0	17.6	3.7	2.53	1.10
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N.B.: N= 108; 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

4.2 Perceptions Concerning Effect on Learning

Regarding the students' perceptions of the effects that the vodcasts had on their learning of Japanese, the quantitative data seen in Table 4 indicate somewhat favorable reactions. The mean response for seven of the 10 questions was positive (i.e., higher than 3.0). Roughly 69% felt that the vodcasts contributed greatly to their knowledge of Japanese, with percentages varying depending on the specific area of language learning. Vodcasts seemed to have the biggest impact on student perceptions of an increase in their knowledge of Japanese culture (62%), an improvement in their listening skills (52.8%), and the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary (52.7%). Approximately 37% agreed or strongly agreed that the vodcasts improved their reading and speaking skills. Vodcasts had the least impact on student perceptions of their improvement of writing skills, with only 26% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the vodcasts contributed to this skill.

Below are student comments related to these four areas or skills:

Viewing the vodcasts assisted me greatly in learning about the grammar and vocabulary of Japanese.

It was a good listening comprehension tool.

It's good to see the mouth moving, facial expressions, and body language, so that you can mimic what you saw.

It was nice to see the cultural aspects than just being taught straight language.

Convenience and general satisfaction with the vodcasts notwithstanding, just slightly more than one third of the students (36%) admitted to viewing the vodcasts only once due to their busy schedules, and even a smaller percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing (16.7% and 15.7% respectively) that they would return to the vodcasts even after the course ends. This phase of the research also found a large percentage of neutral responses (40%) for the 10 survey questions.

Table 4. *Perceptions Concerning Effect on Learning*

Item no.	Survey statement	Percentage of responses					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
8	I put more time into the course because of the vodcasts.	14.8	18.5	53.7	13.0	0	2.65	.89
9	The information I reviewed and learned from viewing the vodcasts contributed greatly to my knowledge of Japanese.	4.6	12.0	34.3	31.5	17.6	3.45	1.06
10	I learned a lot about Japanese culture from viewing the vodcasts.	3.7	8.3	25.9	42.6	19.4	3.66	1.01
11	My listening skills improved as a result	6.5	2.8	38.0	36.1	16.7	3.54	1.02

	of viewing the vodcasts.							
12	My speaking skills improved as a result of viewing the vodcasts.	5.6	13.9	43.5	30.6	6.5	3.19	.95
13	My reading skills improved as a result of viewing the vodcasts.	5.6	19.4	38.0	25.0	12.0	3.19	1.06
14	My writing skills in Japanese improved as a result of viewing the vodcasts.	6.5	28.7	38.9	20.4	5.6	2.90	.99
15	Viewing the vodcasts assisted me greatly in learning about the grammar and vocabulary of Japanese.	5.6	6.5	35.2	33.3	19.4	3.55	1.05
16	I returned to view the vodcasts more than once.	17.6	18.5	26.9	18.5	18.5	3.02	1.35
17	I think that I will return to view the vodcasts even after this course ends.	20.4	20.4	26.9	16.7	15.7	2.87	1.35

N.B.: N= 108; 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

4.3 Perceptions Concerning Confidence as a Learner and Technical Skills

The quantitative data in Table 5 reveal the overall positive effects of vodcast viewing on students' confidence in general, ranging from confidence in their ability to learn independently, with 48.2% agreeing or strongly agreeing, to confidence in their ability to use technology effectively, with 38.9% agreeing or strongly agreeing. In addition, student confidence was boosted in various aspects of their language learning, ranging from confidence in listening skills (59.2% positive responses), to confidence in speaking skills (41.6% positive responses), both of which are slightly higher than students' perceptions of their skills improving in these same areas (37% and 53% respectively). There was also a positive student response with regard to "learning to find the meaning of words or phrases that were difficult" (49.1%) and "gaining confidence in ability to do Japanese language activities" (40.7%). Neutral responses that held a greater percentage than either positive or negative responses accounted for only three of the 12 items (25%) in this category of data.

Results also indicated low degrees of frustration from viewing the vodcasts and having to use the Internet to do so, with nearly 68% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Almost the same percentage (66.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey item on feeling frustration from being required to view vodcasts for this course, and an overwhelming 74% stated they did not feel that viewing the vodcasts was difficult to complete.

The focus group discussions uncovered some reasons for students' frustration and dissatisfaction with regard to the vodcasts. These mainly dealt with having to access and download the first vodcast through iTunes. Vodcast #2 and #3 were made available on YouTube in addition to iTunes, and a vast majority of students voiced their preference of this additional alternative medium in the discussions with comments such as:

[1] had difficulty accessing anytime I wasn't using an Apple software or laptop. It didn't load correctly or it would freeze.

If I didn't have to download iTunes/podcasts [for Vodcast #1], I would have accessed it more often.

Down loading the vodcast was a pain. You should of [sic] used YouTube for all vodcasts, not just the last 2.

Table 5. *Perceptions Concerning Confidence as a Learner and Technical Skills*

Item no.	Survey statement	Percentage of responses					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
18	By viewing the vodcasts I learned to find the meanings of words or phrases that were difficult.	2.8	7.4	40.7	38.0	11.1	3.47	.89
19	By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my abilities to do Japanese language activities.	3.7	10.2	45.4	32.4	8.3	3.31	.90
20	By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese reading skills.	3.7	15.7	39.8	27.8	13.0	3.31	1.01
21	By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese writing skills.	4.6	25.9	44.4	17.6	7.4	2.97	.96
22	By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese speaking skills.	3.7	11.1	43.5	29.6	12.0	3.35	.96
23	By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese listening skills.	3.7	7.4	29.6	40.7	18.5	3.63	.99
24	By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my ability to learn independently.	3.7	10.2	38.0	31.5	16.7	3.47	1.01

25	I was frustrated by viewing the vodcasts.	31.5	32.4	23.1	8.3	4.6	2.22	1.12
26	I gained confidence in my ability to use technology successfully.	9.3	13.9	38.0	20.4	18.5	3.25	1.18
27	I was frustrated by having to use the Internet and computer to view the vodcasts.	49.1	18.5	19.4	8.3	4.6	2.01	1.20
28	I was frustrated by having to view vodcasts in this course.	43.5	23.1	23.1	6.5	3.7	2.04	1.13
29	I felt viewing the vodcasts was difficult to complete.	52.8	21.3	17.6	6.5	1.9	1.83	1.05

N.B.: N= 108; 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

Finally, as Pearson's r computations in Table 6 illustrate, there is fairly strong uniformity among the relationships between the domains. Furthermore, as Bonferroni's approach in Table 7 portrays, the confidence intervals of each of the domains are all indicative of positive perceptions by the students, suggesting that the population means of all three domains are likely between 3 and 4 on the Likert scale.

Table 6. *Pearson's Correlation Coefficient*

Domain	By Domain	Correlation	p-Value
Confidence and Technical Skills	Effect on Learning	0.782	< 0.001
Confidence and Technical Skills	Interest and Relevance	0.7590	< 0.001
Effect on Learning	Interest and Relevance	0.818	< 0.001

Table 7. *Confidence Intervals using the Bonferroni Approach*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Domain 1	Interest and Relevance	3.56	0.72	3.36	3.76
Domain 2	Effect on Learning	3.36	0.89	3.14	3.58
Domain 3	Confidence and Technical Skills	3.22	0.77	3.01	3.43

5.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of the use of vodcasts as a supplemental tool for university-level Japanese language courses. The research questions guiding this investigation specifically aimed to discover students' perceptions in the areas of:

1. interest and relevance to their language learning,
2. effects on different skills in their language learning, and
3. effects on their confidence as language learners and users of technology.

The findings from this study indicate strong correlations between each of the domains, indicating an overall consistent perception of the vodcasts relative to the three areas investigated. Findings are consistent with those in earlier investigations on podcasts and vodcasts in the foreign language classrooms (Abdous et al., 2012; Chan, 2014; Hew, 2009; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Schmidt, 2008): Students overall enjoyed the vodcasts, appreciated the convenience of accessing them at any time and any place, and were satisfied with their content, design, and length. In addition, nearly

two-thirds of the students indicated that the vodcasts were relevant to what they were learning in class and to real-world application of the language, and would take another Japanese class that used vodcasts. This supported Weinberg et al.'s (2011) study in which tailor-made podcasts were developed for French immersion students, and suggests that self-produced customized podcasts or vodcasts may be more suitable and well-received by our students—an encouraging justification of podcast and vodcast development and use that can be extended to instructors and students of any foreign language.

Furthermore, a large percentage of students noted the positive effects that the vodcasts had on their Japanese language learning, particularly on their knowledge of Japanese language and culture. While over half of the students felt the vodcasts contributed to an improvement in their listening skills and to their acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, a smaller percentage perceived them to be helpful in improving their speaking and reading (37%), and not surprisingly - since writing was not emphasized in the vodcasts - even less (26%) in improving their writing skills. The results corroborated similar findings in Moura and Carvalho's (2012) study using French and Portuguese podcasts, where there was a level of variation among the students regarding how they perceived the effects of the podcasts on specific linguistic skills. Without empirical data to measure actual gains, it is not possible to verify whether the students' perceptions were accurate or if such linguistic gains were in fact made. However, it is possible that these differences in perceptions may be attributed to the students' individual preferences and characteristics, and by connection how they worked through the vodcasts.

The findings regarding perceived confidence as a learner closely mirrored the findings in the area of effect on learning in all four linguistic skills, ranging from improved confidence in writing (25% positive) to improved confidence in listening (59.2% positive). The findings on the items related to frustration in using technology to view the vodcasts were overwhelmingly negative. Such results should not have been unforeseen given the age range of the

participants in this study, and the reminder that not only has technology been an inherent part of these millennials and Generation Z'ers, but also a major influence in their lives, sophisticated technical skills and learning preferences. This implication adds to the necessity of further investigation of the development and implementation of vodcasts in other foreign language classrooms so that we may better reach the digital natives we teach today.

The Bonferroni's approach to confidence intervals of each of the domains confirmed students' positive perceptions of the vodcasts observed in the survey. The 95% confidence intervals indicate the population means of all three domains would likely fall within positive ranges (above 3.0).

Finally, congruent with negative feedback obtained from previous studies on language learning podcasts (Monk et al., 2006; Abdous et al., 2009), not all reactions from participants in this research were positive. For example, students had strong feelings about having the vodcasts streamed online and available via direct link rather than hosted on iTunes U. It may have been that their dissatisfaction and frustration with iTunes was strong enough to have had a negative effect on other areas such as the infrequency of viewing the vodcasts, or their perception of the degree to which the vodcasts affected their language learning.

5.1 Limitations

Although this study yielded insightful findings, it is not without limitations, the most notable of which might be that all of the data collected were self-reported and therefore may be biased by several factors. For example, students may have reported what they thought the researcher wanted, especially considering that the researcher was also the coordinator of the Japanese program at the university. Furthermore, the data were based entirely on student *perceptions*: No actual linguistic outcomes were collected or measured, and therefore the students' perceptions cannot be verified as

accurate.

Regarding the results of the survey, eight of the 29 survey items (27.6%) produced neutral responses (a 3 on the Likert scale). One can theorize the rationale for such responses. For example, students could passively watch the vodcasts without having to actively produce the language until Vodcast #3, when they were required to perform a skit, perhaps justifying why a majority of them were neutral on the item, “my speaking skills improved.” However, without delving into the reasons for the many neutral responses on the survey in the focus group discussions, the study cannot point to conclusive explanations. Finally, the interpretability of results may be limited due to the design and content of the vodcasts as well as the context of the courses, students, and design of the study itself.

5.2 Conclusion

Newer technologies are forcing educators to change the way we think about teaching and learning, and to grapple with the question of how and what we will change about our curriculum as learning expands beyond the walls of the classroom. As such, the use of podcasts and vodcasts to supplement face-to-face instruction has become common practice, especially for commonly-taught languages. To date, research has corroborated that podcasts/vodcasts can be effective tools, especially, for example, in building students’ vocabulary (Abdous et al., 2009; Moura & Carvalho, 2012). However, as it relates to Japanese language learning, there is relatively little published research or documented uses of podcasts.

This study investigated the use of vodcasts as a supplemental tool for students learning Japanese at the university level, and as one of the first studies related to vodcasts for Japanese language learning, it may serve as a starting point for future research, including vodcast development and implementation in other foreign language classrooms. Data analysis revealed that students enjoyed viewing the vodcasts and perceived them to be interesting and relevant to real-life

needs using Japanese. Although there was some variability in the students' responses, the students generally reported that the vodcasts were beneficial to the development of skills related to listening comprehension, culture, grammar, and vocabulary.

These findings warrant potentially beneficial explorations in the development of pedagogically sound, interesting, relevant vodcasts that can be used as supplements or integrated into Japanese and other foreign language programs. More rigorously designed investigations should be conducted to identify how these media can be used to produce learning gains in foreign language classrooms that may be documented. Future research should examine more cause-and-effect approaches that include pre- and post-tests that document gains in specific linguistic skills. With the use of technology in daily life becoming more prevalent, and the needs and learning preferences of our students reflecting this change, academic podcasting /vodcasting for both commonly- and less-commonly-taught languages may be the solution beyond the classroom walls and on the horizon.

Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of Japanese Podcasts Currently Available Online

Podcast	Description	Levels
JapanesePod101 http://www.japanesepod101.com/	This is a language course podcast and accompanying website. It provides a combination of audio and video lessons.	Newbie ~ advanced
Erin ga Choosen www.erin.ne.jp	This is a language learning resource website developed by the Japan Foundation. Its major contents are drama-like podcasts of 9~25 minutes.	Basic (non-newbie) ~ advanced
Yes Japan http://www.yesjapan.com/	This is a textbook and workbook series with an interactive language education website. It includes 500+ videos on Japanese language and culture topics of 5~20 minutes.	Beginner ~ expert
Learn Japanese Pod http://learnjapanesepod.com/	This is a website with podcasts that introduce situational Japanese phrases and vocabulary with natural dialogs. English and Japanese transcripts are available for each conversation.	Complete beginner ~ advanced
JapanCast http://japancast.net/JC2/	This is a website that includes podcasts on iTunes and conversation lessons. The lessons cover customs, culture, language and news from Japan.	Beginner ~ intermediate

Appendix B: Student Survey

Please take a moment to complete this survey to let us know what you think of the vodcasts.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

1. What is your gender?
 male
 female
2. What is your academic year? (Check one)
 freshman
 sophomore
 junior
 senior
 other (specify: _____)
3. What is your major? _____
4. What is your age group? (Check one)
 18 years or under
 19-20 years
 21-25 years
 26-29 years
 30 years or older

STUDENTS' DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS:

1. What are your main reasons for taking this course?
 fulfillment of major or academic program requirement
 recommendation of advisor, faculty or friend
 personal interest
 other (please specify) _____

2. Compared to other courses you are currently taking, how much time do you spend on this course? (Check one)
 much more time
 somewhat more time
 same amount of time
 somewhat less time
 much less time

3. Prior to this course, have you used audio or video podcasts to support a university course? If so, what course(s)?

4. How frequently did you view the vodcasts? (Check one)
 never
 once or twice
 three to five times
 more than five times

5. Did you subscribe to the vodcast, and if so, which software did you use?
 yes, _____
 no

6. What equipment or device did you use to view and study with the vodcasts? (Check all that apply)
 personal computer (lap top or desktop)
 cell phone/smart phone
 iPod
 iPad
 other (please specify) _____

7. How did you use the vodcasts? (Check all that apply)
 for clarifying concepts covered in class
 for review of class and text material
 for preparing for tests
 for listening when I missed a class

___ for studying with other students
 ___ other: _____

PERCEPTIONS OF THE VODCASTS

Circle the answer that best represents the extent of your agreement with each statement.

SA = Strongly Agree
 A = Agree
 N = Neutral

D = Disagree
 SD = Strongly Disagree

Category -- Perceptions Concerning Effect on Learning
1. I put more time into the course because of the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
2. The information I reviewed and learned from viewing the vodcasts contributed greatly to my knowledge of Japanese. SA A N D SD
3. I learned a lot about Japanese culture from viewing the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
4. My listening skills improved as a result of viewing the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
5. My speaking skills improved as a result of viewing the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
6. My reading skills improved as a result of viewing the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
7. My writing skills in Japanese improved as a result of viewing the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
8. Viewing the vodcasts assisted me greatly in learning about the grammar and vocabulary of Japanese. SA A N D SD
9. I returned to view the vodcasts more than once. SA A N D SD

10. I think that I will return to view the vodcasts even after this course ends.
SA A N D SD

Category -- Perceptions on Interest and Relevance of the Activities

11. The vodcasts made the course more interesting.
SA A N D SD

12. I enjoyed viewing the vodcasts.
SA A N D SD

13. The information presented in the vodcasts was relevant to my real-life needs for utilizing Japanese.
SA A N D SD

14. I would take another Japanese class that used vodcasts.
SA A N D SD

15. Because of the vodcasts I enjoyed the course more than I would have if there were no vodcasts.
SA A N D SD

16. If given a choice between viewing the vodcasts and not viewing the vodcasts, I would choose to view the vodcasts.
SA A N D SD

17. I thought the vodcasts were boring.
SA A N D SD

Category -- Perceptions Concerning Confidence as a Learner and Technical Skills

18. By viewing the vodcasts I learned to find the meanings of words or phrases that were difficult.
SA A N D SD

19. By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my abilities to do Japanese language activities.
SA A N D SD

20. By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese reading skills.
SA A N D SD

21. By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese writing skills. SA A N D SD
22. By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese speaking skills. SA A N D SD
23. By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my Japanese listening skills. SA A N D SD
24. By viewing the vodcasts I gained confidence in my ability to learn independently. SA A N D SD
25. I was frustrated by viewing the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
26. I gained confidence in my ability to use technology successfully. SA A N D SD
27. I was frustrated by having to use the Internet and computer to view the vodcasts. SA A N D SD
28. I was frustrated by having to view vodcasts in this course. SA A N D SD
29. I felt viewing the vodcasts was difficult to complete. SA A N D SD

Appendix C: *Student Focus Group Questions*

1. In your own words, could you describe your experiences with the vodcasts? How would you describe the vodcasts to an outsider?
2. Could you describe how you accessed the vodcasts? What devices did you use? When and where did you typically access the vodcasts?
3. Do you feel that the vodcasts helped you to develop better Japanese language skills?
 - a. Have they helped you to learn and retain certain skills or essential concepts?
4. What do you feel were the advantages and disadvantages of the vodcasts?
 - a. How would you suggest to create or present the vodcasts differently next time?
5. If you did not use the vodcasts created for this course, what is the reason you did not?
 - a. Did you have any problems downloading or viewing the vodcasts? If so, can briefly explain?
6. Do you have any suggestions for using iPads or other devices or technology not used in this course that would help students to improve their Japanese skills?

Appendix D: *Vodcast Template Used for Design Purposes*

Introduction of Vodcast: Greeting; Learning Outcomes and Objectives

I. Presentation of Sample Dialog(s)

- Slower speed; with English and Japanese subtitles*
- For listening only

II. Presentation of 10 ~ 15 Key Vocabulary Words*

- Listen and repeat (x2)

III. Presentation of Sample Dialog(s)

- Slower speed; with Japanese subtitles only

IV. Explanation of Grammar Points*

- Explanations (voiceover)
- Highlights from the dialog

V. Presentation of Sample Dialog(s)

- Slower speed; Japanese subtitles only

VI. Presentation of Advanced Dialog*

- Natural speed with more conversational vocabulary words
- 1st time: without English subtitles; 2nd time: with English subtitles
- Listening quiz and answers

VII. Presentation of 3~5 English phrases / visuals from the Advanced Dialog (How would you say...?)

- Students translate to Japanese
- Answer in Japanese (listen and repeat)

VIII. Presentation of Intercultural Tips / Cultural Encounters (What would you do?)

- 2-min Culture Tip, from topics such as:
 - greetings, bowing, limited display of public affection, time of day to use “*konban-wa*,” etc., saying greetings once per day, etc.
 - education: *kyoiku-mama*, education hell, *juku*, entrance exams, school levels
 - Japanese bathrooms, use of handkerchiefs, pocket tissues, *onsen*, etc.
 - public transportation and train boarding/riding etiquette, rush hour, “pusher” station attendants, etc.
 - restaurant etiquette: no tipping, no free refills, chopsticks etiquette, *oshibori*, *mihon*, etc.
- “Cultural Encounter”: A character in the vodcast (who is a student of Japanese) faces various situations where he must consider cultural differences and act appropriately. Vodcast viewers are asked true/false questions on what the student should do.*

IX. Challenge to Create your own dialog

- 2~3 sample situations and requirements of the student-created dialog
- Assessment explanation

X. Closing of the vodcast

* posted on D2L (course management system) and available for downloading

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