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Using Anime in a Japanese 3 Classroom
to Increase Motivation and to Improve Cultural Knowledge

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Abstract

The author showed short segments of the anime, *My Neighbors the Yamadas* [ホーホケキョとなりの山田くん or *Houhokekyo Tonari no Yamadakun*] to a high school Japanese 3 class over a period of several months. At the end of this study, students reported an increase in motivation and could recall a variety of cultural information that they had learned through the anime. Students believed that viewing anime had positive effects on their Japanese proficiency, especially on listening comprehension and cultural understanding. They also recognized connections between the anime and the regular curriculum.

Despite intensive scaffolding, students were unable to understand much of the Japanese speech in the anime when viewing it without the use of subtitles. However, they were better able to make sense of scenes when provided with relevant cultural information. Even after viewing with subtitles, students occasionally demonstrated persistent misconceptions and superficial interpretations that could be attributed to a lack of cultural background or to strongly held stereotypes of Japanese life.
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Researcher Stance

Overview

When people ask what I do, and I reply that I teach Japanese, they often ask why students want to study this less commonly taught language. While I was studying for my teaching degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Professor Akira Miura told us that he had seen the interests of Japanese language students shift from literature to business and technology. By the time I graduated in 1997, the Japanese economic bubble had burst, and Japan had entered a long period of economic stagnation, but the rise of Japanese popular culture had begun. From karaoke to Nintendo to anime and manga, the Japanese invasion of our homes is complete. Ironically, the same pop culture has not yet secured a foothold in many Japanese classrooms.

“Manga” is an old Japanese word for amusing (or irresponsible) drawings, and it is now used for written comics and books. The word “anime” is a shortened form of the English word “animation,” and refers to animated cartoons. Both manga and anime are much more widely read and watched in Japan than their counterparts are in the United States. At 99%, Japan’s literacy rate is one of the highest in the world (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2013), but it would not be unusual to see an adult reading manga on the train instead of a novel, magazine, or newspaper. Although interest in
anime and manga perhaps peaks in the teenage years, it is possible to find manga on many subjects that appeal to many age groups. Given this wide array of material, it would be possible to find something to fit almost any taste, but many teachers hesitate to incorporate manga and anime into their curricula.

There are many reasons for this hesitation. Some Japanese teachers are reluctant to use these authentic materials because the vocabulary and grammar required for comprehension is beyond that of many learners. For example, the language used in anime is usually informal and much more difficult for beginners to understand than the polite level of language taught first in many courses. The speed of speech is also much faster than that to which they are accustomed. Manga, like other Japanese written materials, can be difficult for learners because of the complexities of the Japanese writing system; it is comprised of two sets of 46 phonetic characters (hiragana and katakana) and over 2000 ideographic symbols (Chinese characters or kanji). There are also some cultural barriers. The Japanese tolerate a level of sexual references, even in work meant for younger teenagers, which is not acceptable in the United States. Many anime and manga also show gender-bending characters that would make some Americans uncomfortable.
On the other hand, if we do not include these materials, we are neglecting the possibility of spontaneous learning. A number of times, students have used words in class that I know we have not studied yet, or they have asked me questions about Japanese culture that go beyond the textbook, and most often the sources of their information are anime, manga, or video games. If students are learning from these materials outside of class on their own, how much more might they learn from them in class with informed guidance from their instructor?

Dewey (1997) writes that even when education is based upon the personal experiences of the students, the guidance of adults should not be discarded. In fact, he posits that experiential methods of education may lead to and even require more and deeper contacts between educator and student (p. 21). This is perhaps because the student will need the guidance of the teacher to help navigate the ways new experiences may develop in contrast to the predictability of a canned curriculum.

Throughout my career as a Japanese teacher, students have come to me with questions about the language and culture in the anime they watch. When I have shown anime in the classroom, often discussions arise from observations that students make on points that I take for granted because of my greater knowledge of Japanese culture. The use of anime takes students
out of the controlled environment of the textbook, and gives them a more authentic experience. I cannot completely predict what will strike their interest; however, they will need my help more than ever to better understand what they encounter.

Moreover, I think the use of popular Japanese culture in the language classroom has a more fundamental rationale. In a student information survey that I have given to new students for several years, more than 95% have written that they watch anime and/or read manga; most of them also list wanting to understand anime and manga as one of their reasons for studying Japanese. Anime, manga, and video games (often based on popular manga) are interests that my students share; they make a community of male and female, athletes and geeks, rich and poor, black, white, Latino, and Asian.

Hayashi (2009) writes that a “classroom with students who are already motivated to learn the language” is “an ideal situation” for creating effective learning; she adds, “Grammar and vocabulary must be learned, but if the class provides nothing further, highly motivated students may lose their interest in learning Japanese” (p. 691). If students are coming to me because of their involvement in and identification with these forms of Japanese culture, a language course that does not make a connection to these interests may fail to engage these students. Languages are elective courses at
my school, and Japanese is not an easy language to learn; if I do not relate the course to the reasons that students choose it, then I cannot expect them to persevere.

**Background**

Dewey (1997) describes a common plight of language learners when he writes that skills that have been acquired through what is often known as “drill and kill” so often fail the learner when plunged into a real-life situation (pp. 26-27). I myself studied Spanish for four years in high school, made straight As, but was incapable of understanding—much less conversing with—the first Spanish person that I met. And yet, I have been in danger of perpetuating that dreadful tradition. I well remember my embarrassment when a student pointed out that he had been studying Japanese for several weeks, but had yet to learn how to ask, “Where is the bathroom?” This was a question that I had needed to ask very soon after arriving in Japan, so why did I not include it in my curriculum much earlier? Perhaps even more disturbing is the possibility that by tying the curriculum so closely to the textbook, I have been squandering the greatest gift my students bring me—their own interest in and enthusiasm for learning Japanese. By incorporating anime into the lessons, I hope to keep that love alive.
From the beginning, my students have been my teachers in anime and manga. When I began working at the school where I am now, one of my students was shocked that I had never seen the series *Sailor Moon*; the popularity of this anime enrolled many young American girls into the ranks of anime fans. With her friends, we made a habit of bringing our lunches and watching anime. This ultimately grew into a regular event known as Anime Lunch; the Japanese club sold ramen noodles and rice balls that we consumed while watching anime. The students brought the anime and voted on what to watch with the understanding that it must be school appropriate.

According to Dewey (1997), it is the educator’s job to create experiences that not only engage students in the moment but also draw them on to further their educations. In my own case, it is very easy to please students by showing anime; however, it is much more difficult to make the viewing of anime an interactive experience from which students learn. How many times have I overheard this conversation in the hallway: “What did I miss in class yesterday?” “Nothing. We just watched a movie.” No matter how educational the teacher thought the movie would be, it cannot be a passive experience for the students. They must be engaged, and they must take from that experience the skills to learn from future experiences.
Some years ago, I had a conversation with Dr. Yoshihiko Ariizumi, whom I met when he was an assistant professor of Japanese at Lafayette College. Dr. Ariizumi was showing short segments of anime at the beginning of class to his students, sometimes with subtitles and sometimes without. He felt that it improved their mood and increased their interest in class. I was intrigued by his ideas, but did not follow through. In the last few years I have occasionally shown parts of anime in class to illustrate some point; one year I showed a segment of *My Neighbors the Yamadas* [ホーホケキョとなりの山田くん or *Houhokekyo Tonari no Yamadakun*] to a Japanese 4 class because the anime used motifs from Japanese folktales that we had studied. Students asked for more, so from time to time, I would show other parts of the anime. Usually we would watch a segment once without subtitles, and then with subtitles. I did little pre-teaching, and students seldom understood what they had heard; one student even remarked that it was like hearing a completely different language.

His comment felt like an indictment, but became a call to action. It was clear that students should be exposed to more authentic spoken language earlier. However, knowing the vocabulary and grammar that they would have studied, I felt that it was too early to expect high levels of listening comprehension. On the other hand, anime is a great way for students to
witness Japanese culture; the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language designates learning about the culture of the target language as an important standard. Teaching culture can be challenging; it can be difficult to integrate it into the curriculum as something more than a sidebar in the textbook. In a movie or an anime, students can witness the culture for themselves, rather than simply read about it.

Of course, many of the anime that students choose to watch in their leisure time tend to be fantastic in nature (there appears to be a startling number of Japanese junior high school students with powers capable of saving the world), but as I mentioned above, students still notice details of culture that would never otherwise come up in class. *My Neighbors the Yamadas*, the anime I had used before, is humorous but realistic; would it help my students learn more about everyday Japanese life?

**Research Question**

I decided to follow Dr. Ariizumi’s methods and try showing short clips of anime. My intention was to focus on what kind of cultural knowledge students could acquire from viewing these clips on a regular basis, without making them the focus of entire classes. I also planned to use a variety of scaffolding techniques in order to see what would be most useful in helping them to understand what they heard and saw.
The research question is:

What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of Japanese 3 students when short clips of anime are shown as part of the classroom curriculum?
Literature Review

Introduction

Japanese, one of the less frequently taught languages in the United States, has been classified by The School of Language Studies of the Foreign Service Institute as one of the more difficult languages for native English speakers to learn. The Institute estimates that it will take about 1320 hours of study to reach advanced proficiency in Japanese, about twice that needed to reach the same level of proficiency in French or Spanish (O'Maggio-Hadley, 2000). According to Brown (2009), university students who study less commonly taught languages are more likely to have chosen those languages out of personal interest than students of commonly taught languages; they are also more likely to have studied a commonly taught language in the past. What, then, draws learners to the challenging study of Japanese?

Students' Motivations for Studying Japanese

Interest in Japanese popular culture. Fukunaga (2006) states that, "the availability of Japanese popular culture has changed Japanese-language students in the United States" (p. 207). He goes on to say that although, at one time, Japanese language students were primarily interested in business, it is now the case that pop culture—such as Japanese comics known as manga, Japanese animated cartoons known as anime, and Japanese fashion—
"has affected the demographics of JFL [Japanese as a Foreign Language] learners" (p. 206). In a study comparing university students of Japanese in 1989 and 2004, Hayashi (2009) points to the decline of the Japanese economy after 1989 as the reason that job opportunities requiring Japanese language proficiency had decreased. He goes on to say that the business majors previously found in the Japanese language classroom “were replaced by the anime generation and Nintendo® players” (p. 676).

The change in the motivations of Japanese language students reflects the remarkable increase in sales of manga and anime in the United States market. In 2003, Hayao Miyazaki’s Spirited Away won the Academy Award for “Best Animated Film.” According to Brienza (2009), manga sales grew 35% from $60 million in 2002 to $210 million in 2007, and only began to decline with the U. S. economy in 2008. Moreover, Brienza shows that the sales of manga in the U. S. only really began to take off when publishers stopped targeting the traditional comic book demographic of young white males, and began marketing titles like Sailor Moon to girls and women. Publishers also made the decision to package Japanese manga in book form, which gave them access to readers that would not normally be found browsing in comic book stores.
As part of a larger ethnographic study, Fukunaga (2006) interviewed three American college students, two male and one female, who came to their study of Japanese through their interest in anime and manga. All of the students interviewed expanded their knowledge of Japanese language and culture through viewing anime and reading manga. Fukunaga found that some students found a sense of community and identity among fellow fans of anime and manga. For others, although their initial interest in Japan came from these forms of entertainment, their Japanese studies broadened their interest; two of the three students interviewed chose to pursue careers related to Japan.

**Engaging student interest.** If love of Japanese popular culture is what attracts many learners to Japanese language classes, then it is possible that inclusion of real materials such as manga and anime in Japanese courses would motivate these learners. Several studies have been done on how students’ engagement with graphic novels such as manga can prompt them to write in English. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar (2003) observed a group of middle school students who wrote fanfiction as a pastime; fanfiction are stories that fans write that use the characters and settings from popular stories. Noting that these students wrote and shared fanfiction on their own initiative outside of class, the authors expressed their belief that a better
understanding by teachers of students' interest in fanfiction might "make school literacy instruction more responsive to learners' needs" (p. 557). Frey and Fisher (2004) observed students' interest in anime and manga, and chose to use graphic novels as writing prompts for their high school English language learners; the authors found that students wrote longer sentences and longer stories by the end of the study. They conclude, "Having begun with the idea that graphic novels were comic books at best and a waste of time at worst, we now realize the power they have for engaging students in authentic writing" (p. 24). These studies indicate that the use of manga can have a positive effect on student engagement.

In a study of foreign language students, Cochran and his collaborators (2010) found that the best predictive model for success in a second language course was positive attitude. In Tsang’s study (2012) of what motivated and de-motivated university students of Japanese, several students mentioned that they were motivated by teachers who used authentic materials, including dramas, anime, and manga, to make connections between the textbook and real Japanese (pp. 140-141). Choi and Yi (2012) write, “Students’ genuine interests in various pop culture texts can significantly motivate the students to engage in in-class learning; in addition, instructors’
willingness to value students’ out-of-school, pop culture-related materials is likely well perceived by students” (p. 121).

**Pitfalls in Use of Film or Anime in the Language Classroom**

Levi (2008b) writes, "For teachers of Japanese Studies, Asian Studies, or any kind of diversity studies, the rising popularity of anime and manga among young North Americans seems an opportunity too good to miss" (p. 1). She goes on to say, "There are, however, many problems inherent in using manga and anime as teaching tools" (p. 1). Among the problems she lists is difficulty in interpreting the references and messages that are culturally specific to Japan. In addition, she notes that many popular anime and manga are aimed at adult audiences and may contain sexual references and violence that are not appropriate for young students. Even anime and manga marketed for a younger audience "often contain some content, especially regarding nudity and gender-bending, that is controversial or transgressive for North Americans in ways it would not be for a Japanese audience" (p. 1). She suggests that teachers carefully consider the standards of their community when choosing anime for the classroom.

There are other pitfalls for language learners when watching films made for the consumption by native speakers. In a quantitative analysis of using film to teach English language learners, Tatsuki (1999) has listed a
number of barriers to listening comprehension. Some of these barriers were phonological misperceptions, based on lack of experience with language as spoken by native speakers, but others were based on lack of understanding of the background of the film. She writes, “When learners hear incorrectly or can not make sense of sounds, they panic and the result is a comprehension breakdown. The same kind of comprehension breakdown can occur when the learner sees unexpected behaviors or when the scene is so full of information that they have difficulty knowing what to focus on” (p.14). She suggests that in addition to pre-teaching vocabulary and idioms, it is important to teach about varieties of spoken language and about the film's genre, structure, and background. Bueno (2009) also argues that a variety of preparations are necessary for showing film even to advanced students at the university level; without careful preparation, including a variety of scaffolding techniques, she finds that students will not achieve high levels of comprehension. Scaffolding techniques suggested by Tatsuki and Bueno include pre-teaching vocabulary and idioms, providing transcripts, using cloze exercises (in which words are omitted from the transcript), sensitizing students to spoken forms of the target language, use of subtitles in both native and target languages, and multiple viewings.
Increasing Cultural Understanding

If it is difficult for learners at any but the most advanced levels to understand much of the target language they may hear in film, it is possible for even beginners to learn about the culture, even when viewing with subtitles. In "Standards for the 21st Century," the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (1996) includes culture among the "Five C's" of foreign language education, saying "Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs" (p. 3). The two standards for teaching culture are "practices and perspectives" or knowing "what to do when and where," and "products and perspectives;" products may be as tangible as a pair of chopsticks or as intangible as a dance. The perspectives in both standards should include the beliefs and values of the culture that are reflected in its practices and products (p. 7).

Coleman (2009) claims that while once Japanese language and culture instructors could assume that students shared a set of common assumptions, “Today, however, globalization and rapid social change in Japan and the United States have given us students who come to their first class with an unpredictable mix of perceptions of the Japanese people and their language,
from the clichéd to the sophisticated, from the dearly held belief to the casual opinion—or no perceptions at all” (p. 320).

Anime and manga are themselves products of Japanese culture, and can be used to illustrate the other products, practices, and perspectives. Condry (2009) writes, "The most common way to teach anime is to use it as a window on Japanese society" (p. 1). Levi (2008b) also writes, "these expressions of Japanese views on their own world offer unparalleled insights into a culture that is notoriously difficult for North Americans to understand. Best of all, this is material that most students accept and watch or read on their own" (p. 1).

In contrast, Brienza (2009) argues that, even though the form and content of “manga retains significant degrees of ‘Japaneseness’” manga, as published in the U. S., is becoming just another category of book, losing its “cultural odor.” She concludes, “Therefore, even though we may all be looking at exactly the same pictures and reading exactly the same prose, there is no positive guarantee that, when we do so, we are seeing anything else besides our own, forever-separate selves reflected back at us” (p. 115). Brienza’s arguments about manga can be considered equally if not more true of anime, which is often dubbed into English, with American actors who frequently mispronounce the Japanese names. It is the teacher’s role to guide students
to find what is uniquely Japanese in anime and manga, and work to change students’ perspectives on themselves, as well as on Japan.

**Using Video to Teach Language and Culture**

Film has long been used in foreign language classrooms to teach a variety of skills, and many textbooks series now come accompanied by video materials. ACTFL has a cinema special interest group, and there are always many presentations on using video at the ACTFL conferences. Teacher preparation programs have also begun to instruct future teachers on how to use video in the language classroom. Sturm (2012) describes a graduate course in film pedagogy for French graduate students at Purdue University; the course was designed to meet a need for “the integration of culture and authentic texts in the L2 classroom by building on the principles and effective use of film in the L2 classroom” (p. 257). Sturm states that the same principles that apply to teaching with technology also apply to the use of film; among these principles is that film should be incorporated only with definite objectives in mind. She also states that film is “an efficient and effective link to the target culture(s)” for several reasons: its visual nature, its authenticity, its availability, and its attractiveness to students (p. 246).

Herron has written a series of articles on using film in French language classrooms; her research has included a wide range of students
from elementary school to college, and she has found that using film can be effective for teaching a variety of skills and knowledge. In an article published in 1999, she and her co-authors explored how video could be used to teach culture; their research examined how well university students in beginning French classes were able to retain cultural information after being shown a series of videos. They cite concerns that students watching video might be so busy processing language that they would not be able to process cultural information as well; in other words, they would be too busy trying to understand what people are saying to notice cultural context. However, their research showed that beginning students learned a significant amount of cultural information from watching video, even without teacher input. These findings also held true in a later study with intermediate-level students (Herron et al, 2002).

Levi (2008b) writes, "There are basically three ways to approach anime and manga in the classroom: 1) to focus on the content using approaches drawn from the social sciences, 2) to focus on the content using analytical methods drawn from literary and dramatic criticism, and 3) to focus on the anime or manga as a cultural document in its own right" (p. 1). For the first approach she gives examples of Japanese culture that students can observe in the popular anime, *My Neighbor Totoro*; these include *tatami* flooring, *shoji*
doors, and traditional Japanese bathing customs. Painlessly absorbing the quotidian details of Japanese life is something that students can accomplish by watching film, including anime.

Ning (2009) writes that the real challenge of learning "truly foreign" languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Korean, "lies not at the level of the linguistic code, but at the level of deeper cultural meaning" (p. 29). She gives the following example:

Whereas "I love you" generally elicits a positive reaction in the West—ideally a response in kind from the love object and perhaps a sympathetic "awww" from bystanders—it would not be improbable for "我爱你" to draw a response of nausea from a Chinese audience, both from the intended recipient of the message and from third parties . . .

In the Chinese context, the more circumspect "I LIKE you" (我喜欢你) has all of the emotive power of "I love you." (p. 29)

Ning goes on to describe a scene from the film Eat Drink Man Woman that she feels illustrates differences in expressions of affection. A happily married Chinese couple is parting for the day. The much younger wife uses the Chinese expression for "I love you," and her more traditional husband smiles and says nothing. Discussions about interpretations of this scene make the cultural point much more memorable to students than a teacher simply
telling that many Chinese do not say "I love you." Ning also describes how Chinese history and cultural beliefs can be taught through film. Film can be an excellent tool to prompt discussions of culture on higher levels of thinking. In a study of second language teachers and teacher educators' beliefs and practices in cultural education, Byrd and his collaborators found that both groups “identified perspectives as the most challenging cultural dimension to maintain over products and practices” (2011). Levi (2008a) has published a filmography that lists anime that can be used to teach about topics from history to modern Japanese school life to religion.

Summary
Interest in Japanese popular culture, including anime and manga, is bringing many students to the study of Japanese. Research indicates that use of these types of popular culture in the classroom can increase student engagement. Although learners may encounter barriers to understanding the language in anime, it can be a useful tool for exploring Japanese culture.
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This study examined the question, "What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences when short clips of anime are shown as part of the classroom curriculum?" Scenes from an anime (*Tonari no Yamadakun* or *My Neighbors the Yamadas*) were shown in class with and without scaffolding for understanding. Observations focused on students’ beliefs and attitudes toward learning Japanese, on students' progress in understanding spoken Japanese, and on students' grasp of Japanese culture.

Setting

This study took place at a four-year high school in eastern Pennsylvania. The school was a public high school with approximately 2800 students in grades 9 through 12. The school district served more than 9000 students from five municipalities that were ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. In addition to the high school, there were six elementary schools, one middle school, and one intermediate school in the district. In the year of this study, the high school schedule changed from nine periods of 41 minutes to five periods of 78 minutes. Many courses, including the Japanese course described in this study, changed from school year to semester length at the same time.
Participants

The research took place in a third-year Japanese class; to enter, students must have passed the second-year course or its equivalent. There were 8 students in this class—six males and two females. Two students were white, three were Asian American, one was Hispanic, and another was black. One of the Asian American students was of Japanese heritage. None of the students were officially classified as English language learners, although several students spoke other languages at home.

Procedures

Student questionnaires. At the beginning of the course, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire about their experiences related to Japanese language and culture, their reasons for taking this course, and their beliefs about learning Japanese (See Appendix A). In addition, the questionnaire asked about the students’ interests in manga and anime. At the conclusion of the project, students were asked to fill out another questionnaire about their beliefs about learning Japanese and their experiences in the course (Appendix B).

Incorporation of anime clips into lessons. The anime chosen for this study wasホーホケキョとなりの山田くん [Tonari no Yamadakun or My Neighbors the Yamadas]. It was based on a popular newspaper comic strip
about an ordinary Japanese family; although it is a full-length film, most of
the movie contains short comic vignettes of everyday family life. Much of the
dialog is in the informal mode of Japanese; this mode is introduced in the
third-year class. The characters generally speak standard Japanese, but they
occasionally use phrases from the Kansai dialect heard in the areas around
Osaka, Japan’s third largest city. Students needed preparation to understand
the dialect, because our textbook (Peterson & Hirano-Omizo, *Adventures in
Japanese 2*, 2004) was written in the standard dialect of the Kanto region
around Tokyo.

One to three clips or vignettes were chosen for each week of the study;
each clip was between about 1 to 5 minutes long. On most occasions, clips
were shown several times in the week. The anime activities were only one
part of the day’s lesson, and took about 15 to 20 minutes per lesson. A typical
lesson plan was as follows:
Day 1: The first time, the clip was shown without subtitles; following the
viewing, students were asked to share their impressions in discussion or
writing of what they saw and heard. These and other comprehension
activities were conducted in English. Often I would stop the clip before the
end and ask students for their predictions of what would happen. These and
other comprehension activities were usually conducted in English.
Day 2: Before showing the anime, I did any scaffolding I thought necessary for understanding; this could include new vocabulary and/or grammar, as well as cultural information (Appendix C). The next showing was usually without subtitles, and was accompanied by comprehension questions that included cultural questions as well as language questions. Comprehension questions were typically answered in writing and then shared orally in class discussion.

Day 3: On this day the clip was shown with English subtitles. Before showing the clip, I would elicit questions that students still had about the clip and write them on the board. After showing the clip, I would ask the class to answer their own questions.

**Assignments.** Students completed worksheets for the anime segments. Most of the questions on these worksheets were open-ended, but some were specific.

**Guided Discussion.** Each viewing of the anime was accompanied by guided discussion. Most of these discussions took place in English.

**Field log.** I kept a log of how students reacted to the anime and the lessons in language and culture accompanying it. The log included students' initial impressions of each anime clip, how they progressed with their understanding, and any discussions of language or culture prompted by the
anime. The log also included general impressions of the class and students, including occasions when what was seen in the anime applied to the other lessons and vice versa.

**Midpoint participant interviews.** Additional data were collected through the midpoint participant interviews.
Trustworthiness Statement

In order to ensure that the results of this study were trustworthy and valid, I followed a series of ethical guidelines. Before beginning the study, I obtained approval and written permission from Moravian College’s Human Subjects Internal Review Board (Appendix D). I also obtained permission from the principal of my school to conduct the study (Appendix E). I provided parents and students with an informed consent letter, explaining the purpose of the project (Appendix F). It explained that the anime project was designed to improve students’ knowledge of the Japanese people, language, and culture. The letter also explained that I would only use data from those students who had permission to be participants, that any student could withdraw from the study at any time, and that there were no rewards or penalties associated with participating in or withdrawing from the study. Furthermore, the letter explained that personal information would be protected by pseudonyms, and that all data would be kept in a secure location until the end of the study, when it would be destroyed. I also explained all of the above in class to students, and checked in periodically to be sure that they were comfortable with participation in the study.

During my research, I engaged in peer debriefing with fellow students and teacher researchers (Hendricks, 2009); these conversations gave me
insight into my own research and methods. Throughout the study, I engaged in persistent and prolonged observations, recorded in a detailed field log. I used a variety of data sources, including my observations and student artifacts. The latter included surveys of student attitudes toward language study, student work, and student interviews. I used triangulation of data from these different sources to validate results (Hendricks, 2009).

I engaged in continuous, ongoing reflective planning and worked to change the study design as necessary to collect more data, and to best fit the needs of the class (Hendricks, 2009). During interpretation of the data, I used member checks by sharing my interpretations with students who gave their thoughts on the data, the study, and my ideas. I analyzed negative cases that seemed to contradict other sources of information. When presenting my results, I took care to provide thick descriptions of the setting and the study in order to help the audience determine if the results of my study might be useful for their own classrooms (Hendricks, 2009).
**This Year’s Story**

**Background**

My Japanese language students’ fascination with anime and manga has been threaded through my experiences since I began teaching Japanese at the high school level. On the student information surveys [Appendix G] that I gave first-year Japanese students from 2007 to 2012, over 95% answered in the affirmative to the question, “Do you watch Japanese anime?” When asked why they signed up for Japanese class, many students traced their interest to anime that they enjoyed watching. Moreover, when asked to name some things they wanted to do with Japanese, or to list some ways in which they thought Japanese would be useful to them, a significant number answered that they would like to be able to understand the language they heard in anime.

I created extracurricular opportunities for students to share anime they love with me and with other students. The first of these was an informal gathering for lunch with a few students who were shocked that I had never watched the popular series, *Sailor Moon*; this series introduced many American girls to anime. Later, as a fundraiser for the Japanese club, students and I gathered for “Anime Lunch.” Once or twice a week, students brought anime to watch together, and the Japanese club sold ramen for lunch. I had
long advised the Japanese Club, but the year before this study, I finally yielded to student entreaties, and became the advisor to an Anime Club. This club watched anime together after school, and in the year of this study began creating their own characters and storyline for a live-action role-play that imitated some of the elements in the anime they love.

With all this obvious enthusiasm for anime, why had I resisted using it in the classroom for so long? One reason was undoubtedly a generation gap. Unlike my students, I did not grow up watching anime, reading manga, or playing video games. When I began learning Japanese, I was living in Japan, and I learned from textbooks and from my everyday experiences at home, work, and travel. Although I had enjoyed some anime when exposed to it, watching anime was not how I usually spent my leisure time. I certainly did not share the obsession that some of my students had with it.

Another reason might be called pedagogical habit. My initial Japanese language training was very traditional. The first texts I studied used the audio-lingual method, based on methods devised by the U. S. Army to quickly teach soldiers the languages they needed to fight World War II (Richards & Rodgers, 2002). The lessons were organized around drills, drills, and more drills. When I continued my studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, classes and texts were much more in line with modern language methods; we
watched several videos in and for class, but at that time anime was not included. If it is a truism that we tend to teach as we were taught, I tended to default to more traditional methods when teaching Japanese.

Another reason was that the language used in Japanese anime is really not that easy for beginning or even intermediate students to understand. As mentioned earlier, mastering Japanese requires many more hours than my high school courses entail. In spite of almost ten years of studying Japanese, I often had to watch anime with English subtitles in order to fully understand it. If students were to comprehend most of the language in a short segment of anime, I would have had a great deal of work to do in order to scaffold for understanding. However, when I began teaching at the high school, I was creating new courses, and was overwhelmed by the time-consuming business of preparation and grading. The idea of finding an appropriate anime, watching it many times, and preparing a variety of activities around it was more nightmarish than appealing.

In his chapter on Social Control, Dewey (1997) compares traditional schools unfavorably with children's games (p. 59). Games have intrinsic interest for children, but they are not scenes of chaos. They require children to interact in social groups, and for this, even impromptu games develop rules. Dewey does not want to exclude the teacher from the games, or put
them in the restrictive role of referee. Instead, he wants to include the
teacher in the group as someone who has the skills and ideas to make the
games even better.

My students had always been my teachers in the field of anime.
Perhaps I hesitated so long to include anime as a regular part of my class
because I would no longer be the expert. I needed to embrace the
contributions that students could make in this area, but they needed my
background to make the best sense of what they heard and saw.

**Introducing *My Neighbors the Yamadas***

Fast-forward about ten years. I had a decade of experience teaching
high school, and many materials prepared. I knew my textbook well enough
that if a student asked for a word, I could usually name the section of the text
in which it could be found. In other words, I was a little bored. One day while
I was at Kinokuniya—a Japanese bookstore with a branch in New York City—
I bought a DVD of an anime version of the long-running manga *Tonari no
Yamadakun (My Neighbors the Yamadas)*. I also bought the first volume of
the manga version of the movie. I was familiar with the manga because it
appeared as a four-panel comic in newspapers in Japan. Takashi Yamada is a
typical Japanese salaryman, and the comedy is based on situations in his
home and office. The main characters in the movie are Yamada, his wife Matsuko, his son Noboru, daughter Nonoko, and his mother-in-law Shige.

Some time after buying the DVD, I realized that there was an extended scene at the beginning of the anime that tied into a folktale section that I was teaching in my fourth year course. I showed that segment of the anime to the class; they liked it and asked for more. So throughout the rest of the school year, when we had an odd moment, I would show some short segments of the video, looking for scenes that tied into some part of the course. Students enjoyed viewing the anime, but expressed frustration that they seldom understood the language they heard. Despite this frustration, students were visibly engaged in watching, and often some part of the action or background would lead to discussions of particular modes of expression, and of Japanese culture and modern Japanese life.

I drew on these previous experiences using Tonari no Yamadakun with students to design my intervention. One of the barriers to understanding that students encounter with anime is that the language used tends to be more informal than that taught at beginning levels. I chose to introduce the anime when the third year students began to study the informal forms of verbs and adjectives. I also decided that instead of focusing
on listening comprehension, I would explore what students might learn about Japanese culture from watching and discussing the anime.

**The Students**

十人十色 [Juunin toiro] “Ten people, ten colors” (Japanese proverb).

Before this anime was introduced into the third year curriculum, I explained the project to my third year class. They all expressed an interest in participating, and quickly returned the consent letters with their parents’ signatures. The class consisted of eight students, two females and six males. Seven students were juniors, and one was a senior. The class also had a diverse ethnic and linguistic profile (Table 1).
Table 1

*Student Heritage and Linguistic Backgrounds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Heritage</th>
<th>First languages</th>
<th>Second languages (in addition to Japanese)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ren</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>English, Filipino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiko</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English (fluent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>European-American</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>English (fluent), Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sora</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Japanese-American</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroto</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>European-American</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazuya</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daichi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Initial student grouping.*
Much of the regular classwork at all levels of Japanese was done in pairs or small groups. These groupings were self-selected; I only assigned seats if I thought that a particular grouping was leading to academic or behavior issues. My third year students were well aware of that practice, and some sat with partners from previous years. Although the two girls, Akiko and Keiko had been in separate sections the previous year, they chose to sit together. This left six boys. Sora, Kazuya, and Daichi had sat near each other in Japanese 2 and sat together in a group of three at the beginning of J3. Jun and Ren had been partners in J2, and sat next to Hiroto, whose partner from previous years was not in this class. (See Figure 1.)

Akiko was a top student in a very small J2 class the previous year. Her older brother had also studied Japanese with me for four years before he graduated. Akiko had done very well in both Japanese 1 and 2. She was accustomed to being partnered with students who were not as strong as she was, and did a good job of explaining things to classmates. She was interested in anime and manga, but her real passion was video games, which she often played with her brother; some of these video games were from Japan.

Keiko did not have Akiko’s quick grasp of Japanese, but worked hard. She was a very feminine girl, who dressed attractively but tastefully—not always the case with high school girls. She was quiet, and hesitated to ask
questions of the teacher. Once she was paired with Akiko, she turned to her partner with questions; if they were both stumped, it was usually Akiko who turned to the teacher for clarification. They both sat far enough away from the boys that there was little interaction unless some class activity called explicitly for it.

As indicated in the chart, Keiko’s first language was Spanish, but she spoke English fluently. Later when we watched the anime in Japanese, Keiko was the student most likely to write an elaborate story about what we had seen; unfortunately, she was often mistaken in her interpretations. As I observed this pattern, I began to wonder if this form of interpolation was the mechanism she had employed in her early years of learning English. In contrast, her partner, Akiko, often reported only observable actions with no interpretations at all.

In the initial group of Sora, Kazuya, and Daichi, Sora sat farthest from me, and would sometimes be found gazing out the window. Sora’s mother was Japanese, and he was one of the few students I have ever had whose parent made him take Japanese. He was also the only student in the class who said that he did not currently watch anime or read manga, although he had watched anime as a child. In spite of his Japanese heritage, he was one of the weakest students in the class. According to his own confession, he had
not worked hard in Japanese 1 or 2, and as a consequence, entered Japanese 3 with a shakier foundation than his classmates. In the first week of class, he asked his guidance counselor if he could drop the course because he felt lost, and was concerned about his grade. He decided to stay in the course, and I offered to help him after school if necessary. He did not take me up on that offer, but I continued to check in with him to be sure that he was comfortable.

One factor that may have reduced Sora’s confidence was sitting next to Kazuya. Kazuya was an example of a type that I had seen in previous years; he was a very intelligent young man who made very good grades himself, but often spent time in class making jokes and distracting his less successful classmates. Moreover, in spite of my efforts, he would make fun of his classmates’ mistakes. This is a common type of male socialization in which friends jocularly abuse each other, but it was not very evenhanded because Kazuya would usually “come out on top.” I candidly urged Sora to sit elsewhere, but he preferred to sit with his friends until I rearranged seating late in the semester.

Kazuya was equally hard on himself, and had little tolerance for his own mistakes. He was very driven to achieve and perhaps the student in the class most concerned with his own grade. Interestingly, as we watched the
anime, Kazuya was the student most likely to focus on a family dynamic, centering on the parents urging the older son to study harder.

The last member of this trio was the sole senior, Daichi. He had also sat near Kazuya for the last two years. Daichi was kind and soft-spoken. He was usually prepared for class, and generally a B student. Upon a few occasions, I paired him with Keiko, and the two quiet souls seemed to thrive when working together. Most of the time he worked with Kazuya, who seemed to criticize Daichi less than Sora. Daichi was usually the recipient of Kazuya’s whispered commentary during class.

Ren was a dedicated student of Japanese, but he could quickly lose confidence when called on in class. He was diffident, and seldom asked questions. Therefore, he sometimes persisted in a misunderstanding too long. He was secretary of the Japanese Club in the year this research was done, and he was also an ardent fan of anime and manga.

Jun had been Ren’s partner in Japanese 2, but before the beginning of the anime project, they had a falling out. This led to Jun partnering with Sora partway through the course, a collaboration that worked well for both of them. Jun had been a member of Japanese Club, but this year put his energies into founding a new Asian-American Club at the high school. He was also on the swim team, and the conflicting pulls of sports and academics might be
one explanation of why he was not always conscientious in completing his work. This was true not only in Japanese, but also in other classes, and had a negative effect on his overall performance. Jun was a fan of anime, not only that of Japan, but also from other Asian countries.

Hiroto was the greatest anime fan in the class; when asked to make a list of anime or manga he liked, he listed twenty-four titles and then wrote “... and a bunch of others I don’t/can’t remember the name of.” The next day he told me that he had tried to write a complete list at home, and gave up at one hundred. He was a bright student who worked well with any partner, and did a good job of all assignments. I was sometimes concerned about his motivation because I saw him frowning or yawning. Upon inquiry, I found that he had a back problem that interfered with his sleep and left him tired most days. He and Ren got along very well, and would often laugh and joke during pair work exercises.

Getting Started

Before beginning the anime project, I introduced students to the informal forms of Japanese verbs. Jun observed that it sounded “more authoritative.” When I asked him to explain what he meant by that, he said, “more like what you hear on anime.” At the time I thought he meant more authentic, but I think there was also a sense in which anime is his authority
for Japanese speech. To give students a sense of what it would be like to converse in informal Japanese, for a few days I encouraged them to use these forms even when speaking to me. Although it would be common to use the informal when talking to classmates, students usually use more polite forms when addressing teachers and other older people.
Table 2

Results of Initial Class Survey: Survey Items 16, 17, and 19–25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. I enjoy learning Japanese</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I find that learning Japanese is hard.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I enjoy watching anime.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Watching anime helps me learn more Japanese vocabulary.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Watching anime helps me learn more Japanese grammar.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Watching anime helps me understand spoken Japanese.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Watching anime helps me understand more about Japanese culture.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I think what I learn from watching anime will be useful in my future study of Japanese.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I think that what I learn from watching anime will be useful outside of class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also before the beginning of the anime project, I gave students a survey of their anime viewing habits and their attitudes toward studying Japanese (Appendix A). One of the purposes of the survey was to establish a baseline for how much students enjoyed studying Japanese (Table 2). It was gratifying to read that six of the eight students strongly agreed and the remaining two students agreed with the statement, “I enjoy studying Japanese”. It was also somewhat disappointing to see that motivation was
already so high; it seemed that there would be nowhere to go but down on this survey item. It was intriguing to see that the greatest divergence of opinion was on the item about watching anime and learning culture; this would clearly be an item to watch in the final survey.

More promising were student answers to questions about their interests and goals. In answer to the request, “Name some things you would like to do with the Japanese language,” three students mentioned reading manga and watching anime among other goals. In the next item, “List ways in which knowing Japanese would be useful to you,” two students included reading manga and watching anime. In reply to the question, “What got you interested in Japanese before you actually started learning the language? Circle as many as apply,” seven out of the eight students circled anime and manga as two of their answers. The same seven answered yes to the question, “Do you watch anime now?” It was clear from this survey that students at this higher level retained the interest in anime and manga expressed by students who were just beginning their study of Japanese.

**Procedure**

The next day we began watching anime in class. For the remainder of the semester, I would show one or more segments of the DVD in the last twenty to thirty minutes of a seventy-eight minute block on two or three
days of the week. Many segments were organized much like a four panel comic strip, with a short set-up followed by the punch line. Therefore, each segment could be shown as a self-contained story with the same characters. None of the students had seen this anime previously.

Generally, I would give students a few questions to answer before viewing the segment. These questions would either be designed to activate background knowledge or to elicit predictions. Usually segments were first shown in Japanese without English subtitles. After viewing the segment, students would be asked post-viewing questions; often these post-viewing questions would be designed to gauge how well students had understood the gist of what they had heard and seen.

On the second day, the same segment or segments would be shown again. Sometimes this second viewing would again be in Japanese without subtitles; in those cases, additional vocabulary and/or grammar would be taught to help students better understand the scene. Sometimes there would be an activity they would complete while watching the segments (i.e., checking off the number of times they heard a new vocabulary word in a particular segment), but usually students would be given post-viewing questions to complete.
Finally, segments would be shown with English subtitles. If students had been asked to write predictions or to summarize the main action of the scene, they were often asked at this point to compare their earlier answers with their final understanding. As a class, we would discuss where they had been right and where they had gone wrong. We would try to discern some of the reasons that they had made mistakes in comprehension as well as why they had understood parts of what they saw and heard.

**Meet the Family**

千里の道も一歩から [*Senrino michimo ippokara*] “Even a thousand mile journey begins with one step” (Japanese proverb).

Before the first anime viewing, I was concerned with how to set some kind of baseline for students’ understanding of Japanese culture. For that reason, I gave pre-viewing questions designed to elicit a picture of students’ stereotypes of Japanese families and homes (Appendix H). On the first worksheet, I gave students a list of the members of the Yamada family, and I asked them, “What would you expect each of the family members to be like?” The answers to this first question turned out to be the best predictor of how a student would interpret the first viewing of the anime. The next question was, “What would you expect the family relationships to be like?” The third
pre-viewing question asked students what they might expect to see in the Yamada home, and asked them to list anything they might think of.

Students did not express any consistent stereotype of Japanese family relations. The worksheet for the first viewing informed them that the movie was “a humorous depiction of a typical Japanese family,” and some of the answers to the question of family relationships seemed to come from students’ expectations of a comedy. For example, Hiroto wrote, “based on the many, many anime I’ve seen, the families will be somewhat regular, but have outrageous and humorous quirks. . . . I think they’ll get into such insane situations and conversations that only Japan would consider them normal (in a good way, of course).” On the opposite end of the spectrum was Kazuya’s contribution, “A lot of arguing and dishonorable/shameful remarks towards each other. They may share or have a tense vibe in the atmosphere.” In contrast, Daichi wrote, “I would expect the family to get along perfectly.”

Because most of the anime takes place in and around the Yamada home, the next question was designed to give a picture of what students thought a Japanese home is like. In reply to “What might you expect to see in their home? List anything you can think of based on what you have studied in class and your other experiences,” student answers were clearly influenced by what had been studied in previous Japanese courses, but also seemed to
be influenced by stereotypes of Japan. The most frequently mentioned items were sliding doors (5) and tatami mat flooring (5); the typical low table and seating mats along with rice cookers and television sets received three mentions each. Two students mentioned an area for removing shoes before entering the home; also listed twice was a shrine, perhaps referring to the small Buddhist shrine to deceased relatives that can be found in many Japanese homes. Childhood and adolescence were represented with two mentions each of school uniforms, manga, video games, and Japanese dolls.

With the exception of the Japanese dolls, all of the above items mentioned in this pre-viewing activity were seen later in the Yamada family home. The same is not true of some other items that students listed, including kimono, koto, and shamisen; these were things associated with Japan but unlikely to be found in most modern Japanese households. The students’ imaginings of Japanese household included many of the basics; it remained to be seen if watching the anime would enable them to flesh out their images in more detail.

The first viewing of the anime was shown in Japanese without subtitles. These vignettes are narrated by the youngest member of the family, Nonoko, as an introduction to her family. In the first segment, the grandmother, Shige, is walking the dog around the neighborhood, and stops
to look at the neighbor’s chrysanthemums. She makes some admiring comments, but when the neighbor begins telling her the names of the flowers, she stops him to ask the name of the bug. He takes a closer look and finds a large caterpillar on one of his prized flowers. Shige adds further insult by speaking to the caterpillar and telling it to grow up to be a butterfly even more beautiful than the “gaudy” flowers. This scene establishes the character of the grandmother as someone who, perhaps because of her age, does not feel bound by the conventions of politeness. Her daughter Matsuko follows and apologizes to the neighbor for her mother’s behavior.

In the second segment, Nonoko and her mother Matsuko are in the living room. Matsuko is thinking aloud about what she should make for dinner that evening, saying that since she made curry last week and the day before yesterday, she’ll make curry today. In Japan, curry is generally made from a packaged roux, so it is considered one of the simpler dishes to make. This scene establishes the mother, Matsuko, as a lazy housewife.

The next segment is a conversation between father and son, in which Noboru asks his father if the things Noboru is studying are useful. His father, Takashi, tries to tell him that it is pointless to ask that question, because what seems useful now, may not be useful later; but what seems useless now may, in fact, prove useful later. Unfortunately, the father gets his sentences
completely twisted to the point that even his wife asks him what in the world he is trying to say. However, Noboru gets the point; he has to study anyway. This scene demonstrates that the father, in spite of his best efforts, can’t quite pull off the stereotype of strict Japanese father; it also becomes clear that the son is unlikely to prove a prodigy.

The post-viewing question was “Write down any language or cultural details you noticed while watching the first segments.” Students noted a motif of images from a Japanese card game, hanafuda. This game is described in our textbook, and we had tried playing it one class session. The cards have pictures of plants, birds, and other animals that would be as recognizable to most Japanese as an image of the queen of hearts would be to Americans.

Students also were able to tell that the father was talking to the son about studying because they recognized the Japanese word, benkyou, which is a noun for study. This fed into some students’ stereotypes of a strict father who “yells at him for getting bad grades” (Kazuya).

The next day we viewed the same segments for the second time. Before the second viewing, students were asked to write what they thought had happened in the first scene between the grandmother and the neighbor, and in the third scene between the father and son. Three students guessed
that the grandmother wanted to buy the flowers; Keiko had a rather elaborate scenario in which the grandmother wants to buy the flowers, although they are too expensive, and the mother stops the gullible grandmother from buying them anyway. Both Sora and Hiroto understood that the grandmother was admiring the caterpillar and not the flowers; in fact, Hiroto gave the best interpretation, saying, “She begins to compliment his stuff, he’s really proud, and it turns out she was admiring the bug on it.” Akiko limited herself to what she could observe from the body language of the characters: “The grandmother was asking questions about the garden and then said something rude. So the mom apologized to the neighbor.” Kazuya also understood that the mother apologized.

After viewing with subtitles, students were asked to write what parts of their predictions were correct, and which were mistaken. When the writing was finished, we shared these observations as a class. When I looked over these papers later, I found several instances of persistent misconceptions. Even though we had watched the anime with English subtitles and discussed the meaning, some students failed to fully correct their mental pictures of the action. For example, Daichi wrote, “I was right about the grandma being fascinated by the flowers, but I thought she was wanting to buy flowers when she was only disgusted by the bug on his flowers; basically criticizing them.”
Sora also wrote, “I was correct about how the grandma liked the flowers and asked about the bug.” In fact, the grandmother ignored the clearly beautiful flowers and focused all of her attentions and compliments on the caterpillar. These *persistent misconceptions* appear to have happened when the action in the anime was so contrary to their expectations, that they were unable to process that contradiction.

For the third watching of these three segments, I taught five vocabulary words that occurred multiple times in the first and third segments; these were common Japanese words that would be good additions to students’ everyday vocabulary. I asked students to listen for each word and to put a check mark next to it each time they heard it. Now that they had had a chance to understand the gist of the scenes by viewing with subtitles, my intention was to focus their attention on the language they heard. Only half of the students did as instructed; the other half of the class was too distracted by watching the action and reading the subtitles to accomplish this third task. It appeared that they were not yet prepared to focus on new Japanese words.

I have gone into detail about the events of the first week because it serves as an example of the work that we did in the weeks that followed, and also because student responses in this first week were the baseline for
subsequent observations. Moreover, two things that I noted in the first week recurred throughout the project. One of this was something I called persistent misconception, when students would persist in a misinterpretation of the meaning of a scene even after viewings with subtitles. The second of these was the limited amount of interaction that students were able to make with the spoken Japanese in the anime.

**The Philosopher**

In the second week we concentrated on one segment of the anime. In this scene, Noboru is reading a manga in the family room where other members of the family are present. He begins to speculate aloud. “If my father was intelligent and good looking, and my mother was stylish and a good cook, and if I’d been born into a richer family, my fate would have been completely different.” His mother tells him not to be an idiot—if he hadn’t had the parents he did, he wouldn’t be himself. His father agrees. Noboru vehemently disagrees, saying that he would be the same even if he had different parents. Then he walks out of the room, dreamily asking himself, “Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I?” His younger sister, Nonoko, arrives at an epiphany of her own, saying, “Oh, I see. So Mom and Dad must have gotten married [at some point].”
I felt that this scene should be particularly useful, because although some of the grammar was unfamiliar to students, the segment featured vocabulary that was familiar to them. There was an excellent chance that students would be able to piece together the meaning of the conversation from the vocabulary they knew. However, it took students several exposures to the anime to recognize the vocabulary that they had already learned.

On the first day I showed the scene several times. During the first viewing without subtitles, students were asked to write down any words that they recognized. Most were able to pull out the words for “mother,” “father,” and pronouns for “I” and “you.” Some also wrote down the question words for “what,” “who,” or “where.” Students also made a number of mistakes and wrote down words that did not appear. Some of these mistakes were clearly efforts to interpret unfamiliar words. For example, the word 運命 [unmei or fate] was misinterpreted as 梅 [ume or plum] or 上 [ue or up].

Students were also asked to write what they guessed had happened in the scene. Several students did not hazard a guess. Keiko, who had written a very long list of words with about 75% accuracy, made an elaborate scenario in which the mother interrupts Noboru as he’s reading the manga and scolds him for being weird, he feels like no one understands him, and leaves “because no one cares for his dream.” Once again Akiko stuck to what she
could observe and wrote that Noboru was reading the manga, started talking about it, then started talking to his parents while Nonoko played video games. Hiroto elaborated slightly by saying that Noboru was complaining about his parents and Nonoko realized something. Ren, who recognized the word かっこいい [kakkoii or cool], misinterpreted it to mean that Noboru actually thought that his father was cool. Jun guessed that Noboru was wondering about the things his parents wanted him to do. Once again this reflected a schema some students had that parents were constantly urging their children to work harder and do more.

That day we viewed the same segment a second time with subtitles until just before Noboru’s philosophical musings as he leaves the room. I turned off the subtitles at that point, and asked students to write down Noboru’s questions in Japanese. These questions used basic Japanese that students had already studied. In spite of the instruction to write in Japanese, most students wrote their own English translations of his questions, but their translations were largely accurate. Students were also asked what they thought Nonoko said at the end; six out of eight students understood that she was talking about her parents’ marriage, and four guessed that she was wrestling with the idea of what might have happened if her parents had not
married. However, two students wrote that Nonoko said, “mom and dad are not married.”

The next day we viewed the scene with subtitles and without stopping. Students were asked how they did on the task of understanding what was said at the end. Most assessed themselves positively on what Noboru said, but admitted that they were less accurate on Nonoko’s speech.

Their next task was taken from the day before, and they were asked again to write Noboru’s closing soliloquy in Japanese. This time they accomplished the task, and many wrote the English translations as well. By and large, these were accurate with some exceptions. Three students had failed to recognize the informal form 来た[kita or came] and were unable to write the second question correctly, ボクはどこから来たの？[Boku doko kara kitano? Or “Where did I come from?”] One student also confused the word ここ[koko or here] with the word for 高校[koukou or high school], and therefore couldn’t make sense of the question, ここはどこ？[Kokowa doko? Or “Here is where? /Where am I?”]

Then students were given the Japanese text for the first part of the scene, when Noboru speculates on how different his life would be if he had different parents. They worked in small groups to try to translate those phrases into English. When we came together as a class to review it, students
were able to make fairly accurate translations in spite of some unfamiliar grammatical constructions. In this case, although students had been unable to understand the spoken monologue while viewing the anime, the anime was very effective as a pre-reading activity.

After this activity, I thanked students for being open to, rather than intimidated by, attacking the meaning of scenes expressed in language that they haven’t studied. Hiroto said, “It’s no big deal. It’s just what we do when we watch anime on our own.” Throughout the project, I tried to ask students for their opinions about how the anime activities were going on a regular basis.

**Domestic Goddess?**

The next week I showed a series of segments entitled, “Domestic Goddess.” These feature the mother, Matsuko, in a series of misadventures that demonstrate her less than stellar housekeeping skills. Although the segments were shown first with and then without subtitles, the focus was on comparing the actions of this character with what would be expected from an ideal Japanese housewife. I was interested in seeing how exploring students’ cultural expectations for Japanese housewives, and if the viewing might spark a comparison of American and Japanese housewives.
In the first segment, Matsuko is watching television when she realizes that it is raining. She runs to bring in the laundry and is surprised that it is not hanging on the drying pole. She concludes that she had already brought it in, but then her mother scolds her for forgetting to hang it out in the first place.

In the second segment, Shige is going out and asks Matsuko if she wants anything. Matsuko can’t remember what she wants and follows her mother halfway down the street. Matsuko sees the bakery, and remembers that she wanted bread, heads to the bakery to buy it, when she realizes that she left without her purse and asks her mother for money.

In the third segment, Noboru arrives home from school and although his mother doesn’t answer when he calls, he finds that she has left a package of fresh udon noodles on the counter ready to be cooked. He prepares the noodles, planning to eat them all as a snack. As soon as they are ready, his mother shows up with a bowl, and he realizes that she had been lying in wait until the noodles were ready.

Noboru is again the victim of his mother’s cunning in a vignette that shows most of the family in the living room watching television while Matsuko is in the kitchen washing up the dinner dishes. When the rest of the family calls for tea, Matsuko says that she’s busy and one of them will have to
come for it. The family plays a game of rock, paper, scissors to decide who goes (a common Japanese way to settle these disputes) and Noboru loses. While he’s in the kitchen, Matsuko takes the tea tray and leaves him to finish the washing up.

In the last segment, the father, Takashi, comments to his wife that the bulb over the door is burning out. When she cannot find any spares, he advises her to take one from someplace where it is not being used. She goes upstairs to Noboru’s room, where he has fallen asleep over his studies, and she takes the light from his desk lamp.

Students were given a worksheet with two columns; one had the heading “Ideal,” and the other “Matsuko,” and they were instructed to write what is expected of the ideal housewife and what Matsuko does. Most students had similar notions of what the ideal housewife would do; Keiko and Sora, in particular, wrote excellent and detailed descriptions of what might be expected. However, what they wrote in the “Matsuko” column demonstrated that in spite of multiple viewings, there continued to be some persistent misconceptions and superficial interpretations. For example, Keiko said of the dishwashing scene, “Instead of getting up and giving tea to the family, she says she too busy washing dishes and makes them play rock, paper scissors.” In fact, her humorous departure from the ideal is when she
tricks her son into finishing the dishes for her. Of the shopping scene, Sora, wrote, "Forgets what she needs and the first thing she sees, she wants." In spite of having complete schema about what to expect, these two students seem to have missed the main point of those segments.

Moreover, even though most of the class understood Matsuko’s specific shortcomings in each segment, they missed a theme in the segments involving Noboru. Noboru appears to be an intermediate school student about 13 years old. At this age, Japanese students have begun the hard slog of preparing first for high school entrance exams, and then for college entrance exams. The stereotypical Japanese mother would be preparing snacks for her son and encouraging him to work harder. Instead, Noboru’s mother tricks him into doing her chores, and when she finds him sleeping when he should be studying, she does not wake him up—she steals the bulb from his lamp!

Why did no one in the class comment on this contradiction? We had discussed at length in this and earlier Japanese courses how important studying for the entrance exams is for Japanese students. In previous activities during this project, students, particularly Kazuya, had given answers that indicated a bias toward concluding that Noboru’s parents were urging him to study more. However, when they see Matsuko acting in contradiction to this expectation, they only note it in a superficial manner. A
deeper discussion would be indicated to encourage students to make the connection to prior information and to make generalizations.

**Marriage Yamada Style**

The next series of vignettes was entitled “Marriage Yamada Style.” As usual, we watched them first without subtitles, and students wrote their understandings of what had taken place. Most of these segments were not easy to understand from the action, and students expressed a lot of confusion, even after two viewings. The next day we watched them with subtitles, and students corrected their previous versions. At the end of this session, I asked students what they thought would help them understand better. This began the discussion in which Jun, in particular, expressed his frustration in the form of many suggestions. Several people said that they wanted to be taught the vocabulary and grammar in the segments. I had done this occasionally, but not every session. Jun said that he wanted the script with blanks in it; I explained that this was called a cloze exercise, and the others agreed that it would be useful.
**Failure of scaffolding**

猿も木から落ちる [Sarumo kikara ochiru] “Even monkeys fall from trees” (Japanese proverb).

The next week, I chose one of the previously viewed vignettes and worked several hours to write a transcript and create a cloze exercise, in addition to selecting vocabulary and grammar to highlight. In this scene, Mr. Yamada tells his wife that he is going out, and she asks him to pick up a few things. When she decides to write them down, he tells her not to bother and repeats the list back to her word by word. Next we see him taking off his coat after his return, telling his wife that he didn’t forget the list. He repeats it once more as his wife prepares to go out, and it becomes clear that while he had remembered the list, he had forgotten the shopping.

This scene lent itself to the cloze exercise because the same items are repeated over and over. Some of the items on the list were known vocabulary, and some others were words borrowed from English. Students already knew the gist of the scene from the previous week’s viewing, but wouldn’t remember all the details. I had great expectations for the success of this as a listening comprehension exercise. Instead it turned out to be the worst anime-viewing session in the course of the project.
The students and I went over the vocabulary and grammar. I made connections to prior knowledge. We read over the cloze before watching. We watched it as many times as students requested. In the end, most students managed to fill in most of the blanks correctly, but it was clear that they were not enjoying it. Students were not able to identify the loan words from English that I assumed they would. Heads were down. No one was smiling. Most eyes were averted from the screen, and on their papers.

Afterwards, I thought over what had gone wrong, and I realized that I had forgotten the purpose of the project. My focus should have been on teaching culture, and instead, it had been on teaching listening comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar. This was in spite of my knowledge that I myself had had to listen to the segment many times in order to perfectly understand each word.

In retrospect, there might have been segments that could be comprehended more easily, but the fact of the matter was that my students were not yet ready to understand normal spoken Japanese, and I had always known that. I reminded myself that increasing cultural knowledge and understanding was my focus, and increasing listening comprehension was just a possible side benefit. Nonetheless, I would find the focus slipping back to listening comprehension occasionally throughout the project.
Midpoint Participant Interview

The next week I sat down with the participants and conducted group interviews to obtain feedback on the project. This interview is transcribed from my notes. It does not include questions I asked for clarification. I tried to preserve students’ wording as much as possible. Hiroto was absent that day, and was not included in the discussion.
Table 3

Midpoint Participant Interview: Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your opinion of the anime project so far?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Akiko:</strong> I like it because it’s interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ren:</strong> It’s fun. We get to see and hear all the stuff we are learning. In their everyday lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun:</strong> It’s helpful in a way more than just grammar to understand culture better and eliminate bias towards Japanese culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kazuya:</strong> Well, it’s good for developing an attentive ear for Japanese, and for learning new vocab and getting used to how real Japanese people talk instead of the voices on the computer. You can pick up the tones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daichi:</strong> It’s a good break from learning out of book. It’s a good way to learn how a real Japanese person would speak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keiko:</strong> I agree with Daichi. It gives us an idea of how actual Japanese talk in real life. It helps us understand how they live from the anime. I like the exercises we do to comprehend. Overall it’s better for understanding Japanese language and grammar more holistically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sora:</strong> I agree with Daichi about getting a break from the book. Especially with a 78 minute class. It’s enjoyable and relaxing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers to this question were reassuring. In spite of the recent difficulties with listening comprehension, students enjoyed the anime project and believed that it was helping them improve their skills and knowledge in a variety of ways. Their viewpoint on how it was improving their listening skills differed from mine; they were more focused on the authenticity of what they heard.
Table 4

*Midpoint Participant Interview: Question 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has it been different from what you thought it would be? If so, how?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Akiko</strong>: Yes, it’s a lot harder. The characters speak really fast, and use different dialects. Which I should have expected because it’s normal. Except Nonoko, probably because her vocabulary is smaller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ren</strong>: Yes, they speak really fast. Even with all we’ve learned so far, you would think we could understand, but in reality we still have so far to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun</strong>: It actually wasn’t what I thought a stereotypical Japanese family would be—hence eliminating bias. The prompts always change, which makes you adapt and more or less improve as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kazuya</strong>: No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daichi</strong>: I was expecting an action anime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keiko</strong>: I thought it would be exactly what we’re watching, because you said it would be a normal Japanese family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sora</strong>: Yeah, when I think of anime I think of cute, big-eyed characters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to this question students were frank about their difficulties, but also about how the anime viewing was challenging their stereotypes.
Table 5

*Midpoint Participant Interview: Question 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think that watching anime in class has helped you stay interested in studying Japanese?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Akiko:</strong> I was already pretty interested, but I want to learn way more, so I really can understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ren:</strong> Anime is one of the main reasons I started. So watching it in class makes it more exciting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun:</strong> Yes, partly because I’m mostly interested in the cultural aspect of Japanese, and it connected with that interest and me personally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kazuya:</strong> Yes, ’cause you’re not listening to a robot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daichi:</strong> Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keiko:</strong> Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sora:</strong> Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was a ringing endorsement of the anime project, although not all students elaborated their answers. It was also intriguing that every reason given was different from the others.
Table 6

*Midpoint Participant Interview: Question 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you think watching anime has helped your knowledge of the Japanese language? Please give specific examples.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Akiko</strong>: How they actually say things differently from the textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ren</strong>: The particles in shopping list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun</strong>: Through anime it helps you improve not on grammar because you don’t use it to write. It helps you converse better in Japanese. It makes you adapt again and affects your understanding of Japanese, as in recognizing different kinds of Japanese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kazuya</strong>: Yes, distinguishing dialects. It’s not as structured as computer. You need an attentive ear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daichi</strong>: Yes, listening. ‘Cause it’s better than the book CD because these are more real. Sudden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keiko</strong>: I think that everyone has a different way of talking, and different areas have different dialects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sora</strong>: Basically the dialects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers to this question really focus on encounters with authentic spoken Japanese. In an article about rethinking Japanese culture, Tai (2003) recommends that teachers explore “the dynamics and multiplicity of language phenomena” (p. 22); she includes regional and generational differences in this category. One of the ways that she recommends doing so is by making use of movies. In the days prior to this interview, we had discussed Japanese dialects, because students had found some characters more difficult to understand than others. I had explained that the father and children speak the standard Tokyo dialect; this is the form of Japanese used
in textbooks as well. The mother speaks a regional dialect, and the
grandmother speaks a deeper version of the same dialect. We also discussed
how regional dialects in the U. S. and Japan can be used to define character
and for humorous effect. Students refer to that discussion in the interview.

Ren’s answer refers to the grammatical part of the lesson in which we
used the cloze exercise. Particles are Japanese suffixes, some of which
function like prepositions in English but others have no English equivalents.
In the shopping list segment, the use of particles illustrated something that
we had studied recently in the textbook, and this seems to have made an
impression on Ren. This is one of many examples of Ren’s interest being
caught by something that doesn’t seem to have the same effect on the other
students. In this way, the authenticity of the anime worked to differentiate
instruction according to student interests.
Table 7

Midpoint Participant Interview: Question 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think watching anime has helped your knowledge of Japanese culture? How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Akiko</strong>: Yes. What the youngest member calls someone, everyone calls them. Mom, Dad, oniisan [older brother].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ren</strong>: Yes. <em>Itadakimasu</em> [said before meals]. When I first started watching anime I noticed ~san, ~chan. [Honorific and diminutive endings.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun</strong>: Yes. The simplistic clothing that everyone wore. There was not a lot of technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kazuya</strong>: The father is usually strict. He has high expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daichi</strong>: The family sitting together at the table [in the living room].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keiko</strong>: I think how they speak in a normal family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sora</strong>: The father is demanding. Taking off shoes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their responses to this question, students talked about a variety of different observations. Kazuya and Sora focus on the father’s high expectations of his son. Some students talked about the speech patterns they heard, while others talk about household practices such as taking off shoes when entering the house. That and the honorific suffixes are not new information, but watching the anime seems to have reinforced this knowledge.

Several things emerged from this interview. It was gratifying to hear that students were still unanimously in favor of the project. It surprised me to hear that despite the challenges in comprehending the previous week’s segment, students were convinced that the anime was increasing their
listening comprehension skills, and they were specific about the ways in which it did so. It seemed that I was less tolerant of their difficulties than they were. I was encouraged, but still determined to refocus attention on cultural understanding.

**Seasonal Themes**

The next week was the week before winter break, so I chose to show some segments based on the theme of winter and other seasons. I wanted to help students recognize the elements in the anime that would alert a Japanese viewer to the season. Three segments were shown without subtitles on the first day.

The first segment depicts the family kneeling on the floor in a circle around a stack of post cards. Noboru is holding a stopwatch, and at his signal, the father begins to quickly divide the post cards between the family members, calling their names. When he finishes the stack, Noboru announces the time, and that it is a new record. The father basks in the admiration of his family.

An American audience would be puzzled about why the family had so many postcards, but a Japanese audience would immediately recognize them as 年賀状[nengajou] or New Year’s cards. The custom of sending New Year’s cards is similar to that of sending Christmas cards in the U. S., except that
New Year’s cards in Japan are held by the post office to be delivered on New Year’s Day. This was all information that had been taught in previous courses. It also tied into the current textbook unit, comparing Christmas in the U. S. and New Year’s celebrations in Japan. Most Japanese do not celebrate Christmas because only a small percentage of the Japanese population is Christian.

After viewing once without subtitles, the majority of students did understand that the father was distributing New Year’s cards. The remainder thought that he was dealing some kind of card game, possibly because he does use some flourishes reminiscent of a professional card dealer. Given the lack of context in the segment, this indicated that students were making a connection between what they had studied in class and what they saw in the anime.

In the next segment the family is watching television in the living room. The father gets up to get some tea, and the other members of the family shower him with requests for cake and other things. There is a Japanese proverb, 立っている者は親でも使え[Tatteiru monowa, oyademo, tsukae] which translates as “Anyone standing, even a parent, can be used;” this segment is a clear illustration of that saying. The students were asked to list the items requested, but cake was the only one guessed correctly. Two
students erroneously thought that he had been asked to clean the toilet because they mistook the unfamiliar word 煤油 [toyu or kerosene] for the more familiar トイレ [toire or toilet.] Once again, the listening comprehension exercise was not very successful.

Students were also asked to list some of the things they saw in the Yamadas’ living room that are not usually found in a home in the U. S. They listed the kotatsu, a low table that has a quilt over it and a heating element underneath it; this makes it the natural gathering place for the family in winter. They also mentioned the zabuton which are cushions used for seating, the tatami mat flooring, and the kerosene stove with a teapot steaming on it. They were shocked that the kerosene stove was allowed in the house, and we had a discussion about safety issues. In addition to the danger of house fires, there are a number of deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning in Japan every year. I explained that the kind of stove seen in the anime was the old-fashioned kind that I had when I was in Japan, but that more modern models had a number of safety features built in. This was a good example of a discussion of cultural products, and it was prompted by a simple question that focused on these products.
The Rainy Season

The next segment took us to a different season. This segment is entitled 「春雨」[Harusame] or “Spring Rain.” In this segment, the father is coming home from work, and as he exits his train, he finds that it is pouring rain and that he has forgotten his umbrella. He calls home to ask his wife to bring him his umbrella. She says that she is busy and asks Noboru to do it. Noboru refuses, saying that he is studying. The grandmother jumps into the argument, telling Matsuko that a wife should meet her husband with an umbrella. As the argument progresses, Takashi becomes increasingly irritated and shouts that he’ll just buy an umbrella at the store. His wife asks him to pick up some pork while he’s there. He calls her an idiot, and hangs up.

Next we see Takashi at the supermarket. He picks up an umbrella, walks past the meat display, and then walks back to it. We see him buying the meat and the umbrella, and beginning his walk home. He looks down the street and an expression of surprise comes over his face.

I stopped the anime at this point and asked students to write two things—a summary of what they thought happened in that segment, and what they thought would happen next. Three students guessed that Takashi had called home asking for an umbrella, although one thought that he had called home to ask what the family needed from the store. They all realized
that an argument had taken place, but no one was sure exactly why. Jun’s understanding of the scene was most complete: “Dad called mom about bringing him an umbrella and Mom asks Noboru to do so but he was studying and Grandma mentioned ‘taking a break’ Dad mentioned that he was at the スパー [supaa or supermarket] so he buys an umbrella there but he also gets food there (maybe fish or pork?).” Although not complete, this was an impressive degree of comprehension.

Predictions of what would happen next ranged from, Jun’s “Dad will get splashed with water probably,” to Ren’s “When he gets [home] he’ll find out the [sic] there’s already meat there or the family doesn’t [sic] want it,” to Sora’s “He is going to go to the bar instead of going home.” Daichi thought that Takashi would go to other stores and continue shopping, and Akiko predicted that he would “arrive home and yell at his family for not being helpful.” Hiroto predicted that Takashi would “see a friend or something” and get “cheered up.” Kazuya’s prediction was shortest and most accurate, “He gets picked up.”

The next day’s lesson was an important one for the project and for me personally. It was the day that the principal had chosen to make a formal observation of my teaching. This was the same principal who had approved
my research request, and she was interested in seeing the anime lessons in progress. It also turned out to be a turning point in the study.

In the first part of the anime portion of the class, I introduced three new vocabulary words, and together we reviewed five previously studied words that appeared in the “Spring Rain” segment. I reminded students of a previously studied grammar structure, combining the verb 持つ [motsu] or to carry, with verbs of going, coming, and returning, to make compound verbs meaning to take, bring, or bring home. In addition, I gave them cultural background by telling them about the Japanese custom of a wife meeting her husband at the station with an umbrella, a duty that is passed on to the children when they grow older. We discussed the romantic cliché of sharing an umbrella and how that can be seen in other anime, including *School Rumble* and *My Neighbor Totoro*.

At this point we watched the segment one more time without subtitles, and continued past the moment when Takashi pauses with a look of surprise. He sees his wife and children walking towards him, dressed for the rain and carrying an extra umbrella. As he joins the family, he hands his wife the bag with the meat she requested, and a haiku appears on the screen, as the narrator reads, "春雨や／物語行く／蓑と傘" [Harusameya/
Students were asked to write answers to four questions about what had happened, and this time their answers were almost uniformly accurate. They all understood that Takashi had called home asking to be met with an umbrella, decided to just buy one because the family was arguing about meeting him, that his wife asked him to buy some food, and that his family decided to come and meet him after all. As a post-viewing activity, I asked students to write their own translation of the haiku at the end of the scene.

This lesson was really successful by a number of measures. First of all, the students made a clear improvement in comprehension from the first viewing to the second, even without subtitles; they also remembered the cultural information and referred to it in both a later anime session and on the final survey. I also felt confident that we had achieved the lesson objective. Finally, the observing principal was impressed by what she saw, and said that she would like to see that kind of student engagement and learning throughout the school. Knowing that I owed her good opinion to my students’ performance, I brought them cookies later.
Analyzing a Successful Lesson

「失敗は成功の元」 [Shippaiwa seisounomoto] "Failure is the origin of success." (Japanese proverb).

Why was this lesson more successful than some of the others? I had identified and taught the new vocabulary and reviewed the old, and I had taught relevant grammar as well. However, I had done the same in the far less successful shopping list lesson. Although this type of scaffolding may have been useful to them, what I did this time was identify and discuss an important element of the cultural background. Once this was fully understood, the action largely spoke for itself. Complete listening comprehension became unnecessary; in fact, the comprehension of the action led to better understanding of the speech.

This would only be possible in certain segments. For example, the segment in which the father memorizes a shopping list but forgets to go to the store, was much more dependent on language to be understood. No cultural translation was necessary; the joke would be the same if the Yamadas were an American couple. When, however, I showed vignettes with important cultural elements, such as the New Year’s segment and the spring rain segment, students did best if they recalled previously learned cultural
information—i.e., the custom of New Year’s postcards—or when cultural information was explicitly taught and discussed before viewing.

Subsequent anime lessons supported these conclusions. When students viewed a segment in which Noboru returns home deliriously happy and carrying a box of chocolates, the students who remembered that in Japan boys receive chocolates from girls on Valentine’s Day were those who understood the scene best. We viewed a scene in which a girl gives Noboru her umbrella so that she can try to share an umbrella with a boy she fancies; our discussion about the romance of sharing umbrellas in the spring rain lesson helped students understand her motivation, and the humor when her crush turns her down.

Further confirmation came when we watched a long scene entitled “Ginger Morning.” The sequence of events in this scene centers on the Japanese folk belief that eating too much ミョウガ [myouga or Japanese ginger] makes people forgetful; as each member of the family begins their daily routine, they each forget something—shoes, lunch, etc. Before watching this scene, students were asked what they though would be the result of eating too much ginger. After discussing their answers, I explained the Japanese belief. With that background information, students easily followed the comedy of errors in the extended scene even without subtitles. They
were also able to pick up some of the everyday vocabulary used as family members leave the house.

**The Final Stretch**

Students continued to show a desire to watch this anime; on the Friday after winter break, when I began a transition from one part of my regular lesson to another by saying, "Well, now it’s time for . . ." students said, “Anime!” To my chagrin, that had not been my plan at all, and I had left the DVD at home. However, the semester was coming to a close and it was soon time to try to evaluate what improvements had been made in students’ cultural knowledge and comprehension skills.

After watching several segments organized around the Yamadas’ household routine, I asked students a number of questions about Japanese houses in particular and the Yamadas’ household in particular. I then asked students to write next to their answers how they had learned this information—textbook, class, anime, or some other source. Sora listed family as one of his outside sources, because part of his family is Japanese. There was no clear pattern of what information had been derived from what sources. For example, different students wrote that they had learned about the custom of taking off shoes and putting leaving them in the *genkan* or foyer from class, anime, or family. One exception was the *kotatsu* or low table
seen in the Yamadas’ living room. Not all students remembered the word, and two confused it with the kerosene heater in the same scene, but students who remembered it listed anime as their source. According to this survey, anime was important either as the original or supporting source of cultural information.

Not all student answers were accurate and some errors persisted in spite of what they saw in the video or what they had been taught in class. For example, in answer to the question, “What does Mrs. Yamada use to dry the laundry?” all students correctly wrote that she hung it up to dry, but six explicitly mentioned a clothesline, and no one mentioned the laundry pole that appears in several scene. I had not brought the difference between the Japanese and American equipment to their attention, and they had not noticed it on their own.

Another error was the definition of futon, a word that entered English from Japanese. Both the pronunciation and the bedding itself have changed in the translation. Futon in Japan are thinner than their American counterparts, and are usually laid on the floor at night for sleeping, and stored in a closet during the day. This had been discussed after viewing one of the early episodes of the anime, but only two students correctly identified the Japanese version of the futon and its use. Both of these persistent
misunderstandings could be attributed to a failure to correct their schema based on what they saw and heard.

It was time to wrap up the anime project. I broke from procedure, and showed students a long section of the anime with subtitles. The episode shows how the family copes with a noisy group of teenage *bosozoku*, a type of motorcycle gang in Japan. Although students enjoyed watching in this way, I was unable to get far with a discussion of how the characters felt and reacted; students were much more interested and surprised to learn that there were gangs in Japan, and we discussed those. In retrospect, they were more interested in an aspect of Japanese society that was familiar to me, but unfamiliar to them. This was an example of a discussion sparked by use of authentic material—one that I would have been unlikely to initiate myself.

**The Exit Survey**

Then it was time for the exit survey. Comparing the results of the ten questions asked on both the initial and exit survey, very little had changed. As predicted after the initial survey, students who strongly agreed with the statement, “I enjoy learning Japanese,” dropped from six to four, but they simply moved into the category of “Agree.” Interestingly the number of students who agreed with the statement, “I find learning Japanese is hard,” also decreased, causing an increase in those who neither agreed nor
disagreed. Students almost uniformly agreed or strongly agreed that watching anime had helped them learn more vocabulary and grammar, and all agreed or strongly agreed that it had helped them understand spoken Japanese and Japanese culture. With one exception, students agreed that what they had learned from watching anime in class would be useful in their future study of Japanese and outside of class.
Data Analysis

Analysis of Field Log, Class Discussions, and Student Assignments

Each viewing of the anime in class was accompanied by class discussions and individual assignments. Discussions were recorded in my field log. I began a field log before the anime project began, and continued making entries until the end of the semester. Entries in the log were dated, allowing me to easily match them to lesson plans and student assignments. This class was the last of the day, so most observations were written immediately after school; some observations were written while students were engaged in writing or group activities. Occasionally I would stop in the middle of discussion to note what had been said. I am not adept at keeping detailed journals, so I would often jot observations on student worksheets and other materials instead.

Immediately after most viewings of the anime, students would be given worksheets to complete either individually or occasionally with partners. These assignments formed the basis of class discussions, and then were collected before the end of class and reviewed immediately. Using sticky notes, I would code student responses and write other observations for inclusion in the field log. These assignments gave me the clearest picture of what students understood of what they saw and heard, the extent to which
instruction and scaffolding increased their comprehension, and where the
gaps and failure of interpretation lay.

From these discussions and assignments, a number of findings
emerged. When viewing most segments, students were still unable to
comprehend the meaning of the speech they heard in the anime. This held
ture even after they had been given linguistic scaffolding. In contrast, they
were often able to comprehend the meaning of the action in the anime, after
receiving instruction in the cultural background. Nevertheless, even after
watching with subtitles, certain persistent misconceptions and superficial
interpretations persisted; some of these reflected incomplete cultural
understanding, and others reflected strongly held stereotypes.

**Analysis of Midpoint Participant Interviews**

At the midpoint of the study, I interviewed students in groups to elicit
their feedback on the project. By analyzing their comments, I was able to
assess what they felt were the positive and negative points of the activities.
Although their comments were positive overall, I used their suggestions to
redesign some of the lessons that followed.

I interviewed students in small groups and asked five questions about
the anime project. The small group format turned out to be a good choice,
because students were able to discuss and build upon classmates’ answers.
One student was absent; so there are only seven possible responders. These answers are summarized in Tables 8 to 12.

Table 8

*Midpoint Participant Interview: Opinions of Anime Project*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your opinion of the anime project so far?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable</td>
<td>“Interesting,” “fun,” “a good break from learning out of a book,” “enjoyable and relaxing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening practice</td>
<td>“Good for developing an attentive ear,” “getting used to how real Japanese people talk,” you can pick up the tones”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally informative</td>
<td>“It’s helpful . . . to understand culture better and to eliminate bias towards Japanese culture”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties to other parts of curriculum</td>
<td>“We get to see and hear all the stuff we are learning, in their everyday lives.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ answers to this question seemed to fall into four categories. They said that the anime project was an enjoyable break from other class activities; they said that it was good practice for understanding Japanese as it is spoken by native Japanese speakers; they said that they were learning about Japanese culture; and they said that they liked the connections between the anime and their other lessons. I drew two positive conclusions from these answers. First, students were clearly enjoying the anime viewing, but second and more importantly, they were engaged in using the anime for learning.
Table 9

*Midpoint Participant Interview: Contrast with Expectations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has it been different from what you thought it would be? If so, how?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>“It’s a lot harder.” “You would think we could understand, but in reality we still have so far to go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in speech</td>
<td>“The characters speak really fast, and use different dialects.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
<td>“Wasn’t what I thought a stereotypical Japanese family would be—hence eliminating bias.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anime stereotypes</td>
<td>“I was expecting an action anime.” “When I think of anime I think of cute, big-eyed characters.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity to expectations</td>
<td>“No.” “I thought it would be exactly what we’re watching, because you said it would be a normal Japanese family.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although I have separated them into five categories in the table above, student answers to this question were really about two things: the difficulty of understanding normal Japanese speech, and the contrast with their stereotypes about Japanese families and about anime. I concluded from these answers that the anime viewing had changed some students’ preconceptions of spoken Japanese and of Japanese culture. However, two students did not see a contrast between expectations and reality.
Table 10

Midpoint Participant interview: Anime and motivations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think that watching anime in class has helped you stay interested in studying Japanese?</th>
<th>Interest in increasing skills</th>
<th>“I was already pretty interested, but I want to learn way more, so I really can understand.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest in anime</td>
<td>“Anime is one of the main reasons I started. So watching it in class makes it more exciting.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in culture</td>
<td>“Yes, partly because I’m mostly interested in the cultural aspect of Japanese…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in real Japanese</td>
<td>“Yes, ‘cause you’re not listening to a robot.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although all student answers to this question were affirmative, three students simply answered, “yes” with no explanation. The other four students each had a different reason for why the anime viewing helped them maintain interest. This indicates that one of the advantages of using authentic materials such as anime was that each student could take something different from the encounter, according to his or her interests.
Table 11

Midpoint Participant Interview: Anime and Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you think watching anime has helped your knowledge of the Japanese language? Please give specific examples.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic speech patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These answers mostly reflect student reactions to encountering authentic Japanese speech. Students made a number of references to how authentic speech differs from that in the textbook, and a number of references to dialect. We had recently discussed how the speech in the textbook reflects the standard Kanto dialect, while some of the characters speak in the Kansai dialect. The remaining answers focus on the challenge of listening to authentic speech versus the canned speech of the textbook CD that I play on my computer. Even though student answers in a previous question addressed the challenges of understanding authentic speech, the answers to this question indicate that they felt that it was useful to grapple with it despite the difficulties.
Table 12

*Midpoint Participant Interview: Anime and Cultural Knowledge*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think watching anime has helped your knowledge of Japanese culture?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic cultural practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonlinguistic cultural practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural perspectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every student questioned was able to list something that they had learned, and most of the answers were different; the only answer that was repeated was about how strict and demanding the father is. Answers covered cultural practices, products, and perspectives. Once again the responses to this question indicate that there everyone found something worth learning from what they heard and saw in the anime.

**Analysis of Student Surveys**

Immediately before beginning the anime project, students completed an information form accompanied by a ten-question survey [Appendix A]. Those ten questions were repeated in slightly altered forms at the conclusion of the project [Appendix B]. The initial answers were used to gauge students’
current interest goals for Japanese study, interest in anime, and beliefs about Japanese language learning. The initial and final surveys were compared for changes in students’ beliefs about the role of anime in their language learning. These comparisons were used to chart both general and individual trends in attitudes toward anime and Japanese language learning. The graphs that follow are comparisons of the results of the two surveys.

**Figure 2. Survey Item 1**

The first item on both surveys was, “I enjoy learning Japanese.” On both surveys, all students either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, from the initial survey to the concluding survey, the
number of student who strongly agreed with this statement declined by two, and the number of students who agreed with this statement increased by two. This is puzzling given the context; students repeatedly said that they enjoyed the anime project, but this does not seem to have had a positive effect on their enjoyment of learning Japanese. My first thought was that this is because the Japanese 3 course is significantly more difficult, and more grammar-heavy than Japanese 1 or 2. There is some support for this theory from the data in the next two survey items.
Figure 3. Survey Item 2

The next item was the statement, “Learning Japanese is hard.” The degree of agreement with this statement increased from the initial survey to the exit survey. Looking at the individual data, four students moved one step to the left on this index. I attribute this to the increased demands of the higher level course; Japanese 3 students are usually those who have done very well in the first two levels, and they often find the increased difficulty of the third level course more of a challenge than they expected.
In this item, students were asked to circle which of the four modes they thought was the most difficult to learn. They could circle more than one; no student circled more than two. One student changed her choice from listening to writing; none of the other students who had thought that listening was difficult changed their minds. The same was not true of speaking; two students dropped speaking from their list, and one changed his choice to writing. The change in attitude toward speaking and writing is unlikely to be related to the anime project, because neither skill was used often in the anime-related activities. Other classroom activities must be credited with this change.
Figure 5. Survey Item 4

The item on the first survey was, “I enjoy watching anime.” The item on the second survey was altered to “I enjoyed watching anime in class.”

Upon consideration, it is clear that this is not quite the same question. However, it is interesting that there was a clear increase in the number of students who said they enjoyed watching anime in class over those who said they enjoyed watching it before the anime project. Two possible explanations come to mind. Students may have enjoyed discovering more about the Japanese language and culture through anime; they may have enjoyed looking more closely at each segment. On the other hand, they may simply have positive feelings about watching anime in class because of the welcome break in routine; one student mentions this on a later question.
This item was changed from "Watching anime helps me learn more Japanese vocabulary," on the first survey, to "Watching anime in class helped me learn more Japanese vocabulary," on the exit survey. Here we see a slight increase in agreement overall. A look at individual results reveals that two students went down a degree of agreement while one student went up two degrees, and another went up one degree, so there was a little more volatility than the graph suggests. These results seem inconclusive.
Figure 7. Survey Item 6.

The original question was, “Watching anime helps me learn more Japanese grammar;” the exit question was, “Watching anime in class helped me learn more Japanese grammar.” All of the movement in the individual data was positive, and some of it was significant. One student moved up three degrees of agreement, another moved up two degrees, and two students moved up one degree. Despite very little effort on my part to teach or drill students in the grammar in the anime, students felt that they had made improvements. This might be because I did make an effort to make connections between the forms that they had studied and the language that the characters used in the anime. In particular, connections were made between the informal verb forms and everyday speech.
The question on the initial survey reads, “Watching anime helps me understand spoken Japanese;” the question on the exit survey was changed to “Watching anime in class helped me understand spoken Japanese.” Again the graph reflects a slight movement toward agreement. In fact one student moved down one degree of agreement while another moved up two. It is surprising that there was not a clear movement to the left here, because during the group interview at the midpoint of the study, students stated clearly that they believed that watching anime helped improve their listening skills. However, there was already a high level of agreement with this statement, so perhaps little movement should have been expected.
Figure 9. Survey Item 8.

The original survey item was “Watching anime helps me understand more about Japanese culture;” the exit survey item was, “Watching anime in class helped me understand more about Japanese culture.” As cultural understanding was a focus of this study, it was gratifying to see the positive movement on this item. Examination of the individual data showed that all movement was towards agreement; no students moved down in degrees of agreement. Three students moved up one degree of agreement; one student moved up two degrees from “Neither agree nor disagree” to “Strongly agree;” and a fifth student made a complete about-face from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” Student opinions on this item were clear and positive.
The original statement was, “I think what I learn from watching anime will be useful in my future study of Japanese.” This was altered in the exit survey to “I think what I learned from watching anime in class will be useful in my future study of Japanese.” Once again the overall movement on this item was toward agreement. A look at the individual data shows that one student moved down a degree of agreement, while another moved up one degree—effectively cancelling each other out. However, two students moved up from “Neither agree nor disagree” to “Strongly agree.” All students ended the project agreeing that they had learned something they could use in future studies.
Figure 11. Survey Item 10.

The original statement was worded, “I think that what I learn from watching anime will be useful outside of class.” The statement on the exit survey was, “I think that what I learned from watching anime in class will be useful outside of class.” There was a slight movement toward agreement here. A look at the individual data reveals that two students moved up from “Neither agree nor disagree,” and one student moved down, for a net difference of one. This item indicates that students were not strongly convinced of the relevance of the anime and associated activities to their own lives outside of Japanese class. This is a little surprising in view of the fact that in the original student information forms, five expressed an intention of
traveling to Japan. A better knowledge of Japanese culture, including everyday Japanese lifestyles, would seem to be useful for this ambition. It is likely that students interpreted this question in the light of their everyday lives, rather than their stated goals for Japanese study.
This chart compares degrees of agreement on the eight survey items discussed above that referred to anime. To construct this chart, each degree of agreement was assigned a numerical value from 1 for “Strongly disagree” to 5 for “Strongly agree,” and the scores for each student were totaled. The highest possible score for agreement was 45, and the lowest was eight; a score of 24 would indicate neutrality. All scores on the final survey are above the neutral score, indicating overall agreement with the positive anime statements.

*Figure 12. Survey Comparison by Student*
It is evident from this table that the movement toward agreement was positive overall; only two students made no net increase in agreement, and one decreased slightly by one degree. However, what is much more striking is that two students, Sora and Jun made really important increases in agreement overall. In particular, Sora went from being largely neutral on most items to strong agreement. Jun was more volatile, with increases and decreases in agreement on various items, but his overall increase in agreement was triple that of any student other than Sora. This would indicate that these two students in particular felt that they had gained from this project.

Exit Survey—Open-ended Questions

Tables 13-19 contain students’ verbatim answers to questions about their experiences watching anime in class and what they believed they had learned.
Table 13

Exit Survey: Memories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you think of watching this anime in class, what is the first thing that you remember?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenes</strong></td>
<td>“I will remember the scene where the mother and father fought over the TV remote.” “I remember that one scene where the mother gets the TV remote since we saw it so many times.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme song</strong></td>
<td>“The Anime’s Theme Song;” “The intro, it was so catchy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture</strong></td>
<td>“The Japanese [sic] culture and how its [sic] different from ours,” “The lifestyle, culture, and ways of speaking of the Japanese.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>“I remember watching a short clip of an episode and writing what I understand and got out of the anime”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td>“Also, how difficult it was to figure out what certain characters were saying.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Repetition.** When asked what they would remember about the anime, three students referred to the anime theme song; it is so catchy that a student who had seen the anime in class two years before can still hum the song. Three students referred to a specific scene that we saw multiple times. The remaining answers referred to learning about Japanese culture, lifestyle, and language and how they learned it. These answers make the perhaps obvious point that students remembered best what they had seen and heard most often; this can be seen in the responses to subsequent questions as well.
Table 14

*Exit Survey: Motivation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think that watching anime in class increased your motivation to learn Japanese? Please explain.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivated to understand anime</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, it made me want to try to actually understand the things characters say.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes. It motivated me to understand what they say and to increase my inner Asian in terms of knowledge.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Kind of, because while watching anime, I’d like to relate what I’ve learned to my ability to understand anime.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I guess. I wanted to learn it for the sake of learning it, but I also wanted to be able to watch unsubbed anime as a bonus (among other things) by the end.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, watching this anime made me realize I [am] still a long way before I can fully understand the Japanese language.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivated to travel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Kind of. It made me more motivated to travel there more.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivated by culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“. . . we got the witness the life of a real Japanese [sic] family.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, because it was very interesting and showed Japanese culture.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivated by enjoyment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, it increased my motivation to learn Japanese, because it made it more fun…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Also, it was a nice break from what we usually do.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Motivation.** The responses to this question made it clear that students believed that watching the anime motivated them to learn, because they wanted to understand the characters in the anime. In other words, as posited at the beginning of this study, using anime in the classroom proved to be an intrinsic motivator. Other students wrote about their interest in
learning more about Japanese culture—the other focus of this study. One student became more interested in traveling to Japan. Last but certainly not least, students enjoyed learning from anime.
Table 15

*Exit Survey: Vocabulary Examples*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can you recall any specific Japanese words or phrases that you remember from watching this anime?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shopping list episode</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home and family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative responses</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vocabulary.** This question asked students for specific vocabulary they could recall. The replies were a mixed bag. Three students couldn't recall anything in particular. Three other students remembered vocabulary from a shopping list in a scene for which they did a cloze exercise. Although they and I both found that lesson frustrating, it would seem that through the amount of repetition, they retained some of the vocabulary. On the other hand, two students wrote the vocabulary in English rather than Japanese, and Daichi recalled the Japanese word, きゅうり [kyuuri] or cucumber as curry, so their recall could be questioned.
I was encouraged by the students who answered with きをつけて [Ki o tsukete—Take care.], ただいま [Tadaima—I'm home], and other everyday phrases; when students understand these phrases used in context, they accomplish both linguistic and cultural objectives.
Table 16

Exit Survey: Grammar Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can you recall any specific Japanese grammar that you learned from watching this anime?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal style</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grammar.** Earlier in this survey, all but one student agreed or strongly agreed that they had learned more grammar from the anime watching, but on this question, half of the students could not think of any examples. Three other students referred to the informal speech patterns used by characters. The remaining student referred to the use of particles. Particles are grammatical suffixes that are sometimes similar to prepositions in English, but also have a number of other functions, such as designating the direct object of the verb. Because many particles do not have equivalents in English, their usage is difficult for native speakers of English to master. This student had also referred to particles in the Midpoint Participant Interview—
another example of how each student took a little something different from the experience.

Table 17

*Exit Survey: Japanese Family Life*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Can you recall anything about Japanese family life that you learned from watching this anime?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daichi</td>
<td>“Sitting down on the floor to eat.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>“Use of kerosene heaters. Somewhat awkward in normal situations, as in, too formal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sora</td>
<td>“If you share an umbrella with a girl it’s a sign of love.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiko</td>
<td>“I learned the Japanese used electric to stay warm, and had a special entrance where they placed their shoes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazuya</td>
<td>“Very collective society; did everything I expected a Japanese family to be like, stereotypically.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroto</td>
<td>“The whole “umbrella” thing. There’s also the heater, and the judo/dancing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko</td>
<td>“The mother is expected to be good with domestic things, children are expected to study for entrance exams.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ren</td>
<td>“The way they call each other in the household.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Japanese Family Life.** This question begins to explore what students recall from the cultural information in the anime lessons. The most striking thing about the responses to this prompt are their variety; collectively, students recalled a wide range of details from a number of different scenes. However, all of the answers reflect cultural information that appeared multiple times in the anime, and were often highlighted in discussions. Repetition seems to feed recall in these examples.
Japanese Homes. Table 18 is a table of students’ answers to a question about Japanese homes, asked before the first anime viewing in order to gauge students’ knowledge of Japanese households. Table 19 compiles the answers to the post-project question about Japanese homes. Some students repeated parts of their answers; these repetitions have been put in bold-faced type.

Table 18

*Household Description: Before*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>What might you expect to see in [the Yamada] home? List anything you can think of based on what you have studied in class and your other experiences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daichi</td>
<td>Kimono, Japanese table, Dolls (Japanese dolls), school uniforms. Manga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>Traditional Japanese house with tatamy mats and pillows for chairs and possibly a tv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sora</td>
<td>A low table with seat pads around it, sliding paper doors, video games/game systems, TV, cool toilet, plants, rice cooker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiko</td>
<td>I expect to see an overall plain design to the house . . . with their matted homes and sliding doors. There will also be a little table where they sit down to eat no chairs. And there might be plants around the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazuya</td>
<td>Incense, Japanese temple/shrine, koto, shamisen, rice pot, kimono, Japanese dolls, action figures, video games, yen, fans, atami mats, school uniforms, manga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroto</td>
<td>Sliding doors, tatami mats, low beds, small TVs, books here and there, a small kitchen, a fridge, maybe a family room with a couch, etc. Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko</td>
<td>They probably have tatami beds and mats to sit or sleep on. They also could have an area to take their shoes off before entering the house. Probably have a one story home and sliding doors. Lots of rice and Japanese food such as sushi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ren</td>
<td>A shrine, a rice cooker, their shoes on the front door, manga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19
*Household description: After*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Can you recall any specifics about Japanese homes that you learned from watching this anime?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daichi</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>Kerosene heaters. Family table with heater right under. Heated tatamy [sic] mats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sora</td>
<td>They sit on mats, take their shoes off before entering the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiko</td>
<td>I learned that <strong>Japanese homes are very plane</strong> [sic] and there are not many decorations, the homes are spacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazuya</td>
<td>They had the low seats, hung clothes on clothing lines, and had an old-fashioned firestove or fireplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroto</td>
<td>The heater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko</td>
<td>They use clotheslines and sit on mats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ren</td>
<td>They [sic] are some Japanese homes that still uses [sic] a sliding [door] as compared to a regular one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of cultural products and practices are mentioned on both the before and after questions; these include tatami mats, seating cushions, and sliding doors. However, most students who included these things in answers to the second question had not listed them in answer to the first question. There were only a few students who repeated parts of their answers on both the pre- and post-viewing question. This may indicate that what some students knew before the anime viewing, other students learned through the viewing.

Most of the details that students mention are centered on the Yamada living room. This was the location of many of the segments we viewed, and students seemed to picture it when writing their answers. It included tatami
mat floors, a low table and seat cushion, a sliding door, and an old-fashioned kerosene heater. Kazuya somewhat inaccurately describes this as a firestove or fireplace. Two students mentioned the use of clotheslines to dry clothes; in fact, Mrs. Yamada uses drying poles. These answers demonstrated some misconceptions that persisted in spite of the anime lessons.
**Table 20**

*Japanese School Life*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Can you recall any specifics about Japanese school life that you learned from watching this anime?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umbrella sharing</td>
<td>Learning about the love umbrella comes to mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing of umbrella between schoolmates. No uniforms for elementary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniforms and shoes</td>
<td>There are school uniforms. Have the same back packs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I learned that students usually walked to and home from school, and students are allowed to walk around campus to get to their other classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They wear uniforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No because I already knew that they wear uniforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They have tiny lockers that store their shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other comments</td>
<td>[They] are very serious and strict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The seniors are idiots &amp; the teachers are creepy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Japanese School Life.* As already mentioned, the references to sharing umbrellas or 愛がさ [aigasa or love umbrella] refers to cultural discussions centered around two segments of the anime. These episodes made a lasting impression on students. Several students mention school uniforms; this is information that, as Akiko points out, had already been covered in a previous course. The fact that elementary students don’t usually wear uniforms was new information. The shoe lockers had also been discussed in a previous course, but this custom was brought up in discussion after we saw them in the anime. This may be an example of how visual images make the cultural information easier to recall.
One student wrote about how serious and strict the students/schools are; this impression is intriguing because only one segment featured a teacher being strict, and this was clearly during a final examination. This is not the only example of how a student’s stereotype of the Japanese as studious and serious shaped what he interpreted from the anime. On the other hand, the answer that seniors are idiots and teachers are creepy is based entirely on one small part of one short segment, and cannot be generalized.
Table 21

**Seasonal Customs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Can you recall any specifics about Japanese seasonal customs that you learned from watching this anime?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umbrella sharing redux</td>
<td>Sharing umbrella’s [sic] in the rainy season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing of umbrella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Year’s customs</td>
<td>Clean the house and make tuns [sic] of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I learned that the Japanese play hanafuda on new years day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine’s Day</td>
<td>. . .that for valintines [sic] girls give a gift to the boy, and the boy gives a gift to the girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First snow</td>
<td>They don’t care if it snows, TV is king.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>They sometimes wear yukatas during particular seasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative responses</td>
<td>“No.” “No.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Seasonal Customs.** Although we spent several lessons on Japanese seasonal customs, it would seem that students did not recall them as such. Two students have no answer at all, and two recycle their answers about sharing umbrellas. The two answers about New Year’s customs are not drawn from the anime itself; they are taken from the textbook lesson about Japanese New Year’s customs. One student’s response about Valentine’s Day conforms most closely to what we observed and discussed in the anime lesson. The comment about first snow once again referred to the action in a single segment that is not generalizable to the Japanese people as a whole. The comment about wearing *yukata* (or summer kimono) is an intriguing one,
because we only touched upon this custom briefly in discussion; what this student remembered best was not confined by the class focus.
Table 22

*Japanese Food*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can you recall any specifics about Japanese food that you learned from watching this anime?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snacks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miso soup and rice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Japanese Food.** We watched several segments devoted to food toward the end of the anime project, and these clearly influenced most of the answers. One referred to a segment in which the father brings home cake as a surprise for his family, and they are immediately suspicious (but more than willing to eat it anyway.) Another referred to a single segment in which Mr. Yamada is offended because his wife offers him nothing but a banana or a red-bean pastry to eat after he returns late from a hard day of working (and drinking). One list of foods appears in a segment that features a traditional Japanese breakfast. Another student’s mention of seaweed (nori) comes from this segment as well. She also referred to an extended episode based on
folklore that eating too much ginger makes one forgetful; this was featured in one of the cultural discussions. Yet another student referred to portion sizes and healthful foods; this was not really part of the anime discussion, and this answer seems to come mostly from class discussions outside of the anime project.

The multiple comments about pouring the miso soup into the rice referred to a segment in which the father solemnly explains to his son the right way to mix miso soup with rice. What students did not mention was that part of the humor comes from the fact that mixing the two is considered bad manners, as the mother indicates with her attitude. This may be another example of superficial understanding, but it may also just be that students are embracing the humor of the segment.

The answers to these questions were encouraging because of the variety; most of the students seemed to have taken something different from what we saw and discussed during the project. This indicates that they were engaged as individuals, and not simply regurgitating information that I had given them about the anime or about Japanese culture. In particular, Ren and Keiko recalled a diversity of information. On the other hand, in this question as well as some others, student responses did not reflect the anime lessons, but were drawn from other parts of the Japanese course.
Table 23

*Final comments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are there any other comments you would like to add?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affirmative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really enjoyed doing this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This was a very nice project. It offered a change of pace in this class I hope you do this again in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, but there's no place to put them. <em>Thumbs up</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I LOVE J3!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No comment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Left blank]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Left blank]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Left blank]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Comments.** Unfortunately, students were a little pressed for time by the time they reached this part of the survey, and several students left this item blank. However, those who did take the time to write comments were uniformly encouraging. It is clear from this and other items that the students enjoyed the project, and one makes it clear that his enjoyment extended to the course.

**Summary.** Looking at the results of the initial and final surveys, it is clear that students believed that the anime viewing was both enjoyable and helpful to their learning. The results of the specific questions about what they remembered learning showed a diversity of answers, which indicates a variety of experience with the anime. Although some students did not have answers to some questions, the majority of students were able to think of
something to say on most of the topics. In particular, students seem to have
good recall of Japanese homes, Japanese school life, and Japanese food. These
were aspects of Japanese culture that appeared repeatedly throughout the
anime, and this repeated exposure may be key to students’ recollection. On
the other hand, these are also topics that have been discussed in lessons
outside of the anime project, and even in previous Japanese courses.
Background knowledge may be responsible for students’ ability to retain
what they viewed in the anime.

**Codes, Bins, and Theme Statements**

On a weekly basis, I analyzed the field log and student assessments,
and assigned analytic codes. At the midpoint of the study, and again at the
end of the study, I organized these codes into bins to help me see the
relationship between the observed behaviors and results (Figure 13).
Research Question:
What are the observed behaviors and reported experiences of Japanese 3 students when short clips of anime are shown as part of the classroom curriculum?

Figure 13. Graphic Organizer for Codes and Bins.
Theme Statements

Motivation

Students were positively motivated by the anime activities. This was indicated by self-report, active engagement during the anime viewing, by conscientious completion of the assignments, and by positive changes in language learning beliefs.

Scaffolding

Despite intensive scaffolding (including activating prior knowledge, pre-teaching new vocabulary and grammar, using cloze scripts, and multiple viewings), students were unable to understand most of the Japanese speech in the anime when viewing without the use of subtitles. However, they were better able to make sense of scenes when provided with relevant cultural information.

Misinterpretations

Even after viewing with subtitles, students occasionally demonstrated persistent misconceptions and superficial interpretations that are clearly due to a lack of cultural background. Other misunderstandings could be attributed to strongly held stereotypes of Japanese life.
Retention

At the end of the anime study, students could recall a variety of cultural information that they had learned. They were less able to recall specific vocabulary and grammar.

Language Learning Beliefs

Although occasionally discouraged by their inability to understand anime without subtitles, students believed that viewing anime had positive effects on their Japanese proficiency, especially listening comprehension and cultural understanding. They also recognized connections between the anime and the regular curriculum.
Findings

Motivation

Students were positively motivated by the anime activities. This was indicated by self-report, active engagement during the anime viewing, by conscientious completion of the assignments, and by positive changes in language learning beliefs.

In a study of foreign language students, Cochran and his collaborators (2010) found that the best predictive model for success in a second language course was positive attitude. Based on discussions with Dr. Miura (University of Wisconsin) and Dr. Ariizumi (Lafayette College), research by Hayashi (2009) and Fukunaga (2006), and my own observations, I knew that interest in anime and manga was the motivating force that brought many students to Japanese courses. Research by Chandler-Olcott with Mahar (2003) and Frey with Fisher (2004) indicated that interest in anime, manga, and graphic novels motivated students to write more in English, both in and outside of class. My research was designed to see if students in my Japanese 3 class would be motivated by the inclusion of anime in the curriculum.

A variety of student reports and behaviors clearly indicated that students found the anime activities motivating. This effect was seen throughout the study, despite reported difficulties in comprehension.
Students stated that understanding anime was more difficult than they expected, they frankly reported a number of barriers to comprehension, but they still demanded more.

Why were students willing to tolerate material that was more difficult than the rest of the curriculum? I would argue that the answer is two-fold. First, as students repeatedly said, they enjoyed the variation in the routine. Secondly, they appreciated the opportunity to grapple with authentic materials. As Dewey writes,

How many students, for example, were rendered callous to ideas, and how many lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them? How many acquired special skills by means of automatic drill so that their power of judgment and capacity to act intelligently in new situations was limited? How many came to associate the learning process with ennui and boredom? How many found what they did learn so foreign to the situations of life outside the school as to give them no power of control over the latter?


**Scaffolding**

Despite intensive scaffolding (including activating prior knowledge, pre-teaching new vocabulary and grammar, using cloze scripts, and multiple
viewings), students were unable to understand most of the Japanese speech in the anime when viewing without the use of subtitles. However, they were better able to make sense of scenes when provided with relevant cultural information.

Research by Tatsuki (1999) and Bueno (2009) indicates that learners struggle with a number of barriers to understanding when watching film in a second language. The first difficulty that my students recorded was the sheer speed of speech by native speakers. Other difficulties they encountered included the use of dialect and colloquialisms; these were among the barriers that Tatsuki lists. Both Bueno and Tatsuki highlight the importance of scaffolding to help students interpret what they see and hear correctly. However, I found that providing scaffolding of the language that students heard was not as successful as scaffolding the cultural background. Tatsuki also points to this conclusion when she writes that learners' expectations and assumptions will affect their understanding.

**Misinterpretations**

Even after viewing with subtitles, students occasionally demonstrated persistent misconceptions and superficial interpretations that are clearly due to a lack of cultural background. Other misunderstandings could be attributed to strongly held stereotypes of Japanese life.
Subtitles were among the forms of scaffolding recommended by Bueno (2009), and I employed them throughout the project. However, I was surprised to find that even with the help of English subtitles and discussion of the anime in English, student assignments often revealed what I have called *persistent misconceptions*—in other words, students would continue to misunderstand what had happened in the anime. Most instances of this appeared to be due to either strongly held stereotypes (for example, that Japanese parents are always nagging their children to study), or by the unexpected behavior of the characters (for example, when the grandmother compliments the caterpillar instead of the flowers). In addition, students sometimes expressed *superficial interpretations* of the action in the anime; the lack of deep understanding was sometimes attributable to a lack of cultural understanding.

**Retention of Information**

*At the end of the anime study, students could recall a variety of cultural information that they had learned. They were less able to recall specific vocabulary and grammar.*

According to student self-report, students remembered few vocabulary words or grammar patterns that were encountered in the anime, including those highlighted in class activities accompanying the anime
viewing. Classroom observations also revealed little incorporation of new vocabulary and grammar into student speech and writing.

On the other hand, students demonstrated recall of a variety of cultural information found in the anime. Some of this information had been highlighted in class discussion, some had been taught in other lessons, but some appeared to result from students’ own observations. In multiple articles, Herron and her collaborators (1999; 2002) have shown that “context-rich” video can be an effective tool for students to learn about the target culture. My results seem to be in line with her findings.

**Language Learning Beliefs**

*Although occasionally discouraged by their inability to understand anime without subtitles, students believed that viewing anime had positive effects on their Japanese proficiency, especially listening comprehension and cultural understanding. They also recognized connections between the anime and the regular curriculum.*

Students’ language learning beliefs were solicited in an initial survey, a midpoint participant interview, and an exit survey. On each of these occasions, students overwhelmingly indicated that they believed that they improved their language and cultural skills by studying anime. Student comments also indicated that they recognized how what they heard in the
anime was tied to the regular textbook-based curriculum. This has important implications for future learning. If I have been successful in showing students how they can improve their knowledge and skills by using anime, it is more likely that they will be able to continue to use authentic materials to learn. Conversely, by making the connection between what is in their textbook and what they find in anime and manga, I have established the relevance of the regular curriculum. This should encourage them in their academic study of Japanese.
Next Steps

Culture and the Curriculum

When I went to my principal for permission to do this study, she asked me a question that I did not expect, but that I should have expected, “Will this interfere with the curriculum?” I probably looked remarkably foolish for a few moments as my mind slipped a gear. She followed up with the observation that this was a question that the parents would have for me as well.

I was ill-prepared to answer this question, because I had been in the often enviable position of being the sole arbiter of the Japanese language curriculum at my school. There were no other Japanese language teachers, nor had any of my administrators offered judgments on what I should teach. There was, at the time of this writing, no mandated state test for Japanese, and I did not have an Advanced Placement course. Frankly, when I first took the position, the lack of guidance caused me a great deal of anxiety.

There were, however, both national and state standards for all world languages, and I worked hard to keep my curriculum in alignment with these. One of the standards that I had always felt I needed to do a better job at teaching was culture. After all, I remember very little of my high school Spanish, but I still remember two of the Spanish songs we learned. But
language teachers need to go much farther than that in teaching culture. At the end of the anime project, my students appeared to have improved and solidified their knowledge of some of the cultural products and practices of Japan, but Kubota (2003) states that “teachers and students need to explore multiple perspectives and to critically examine plural ways of representing perceived cultural facts” (p. 84). Cultural education is something that can and should affect students’ perspectives long after the conjugations of irregular verbs have been forgotten. If my first thought after my principal’s question was, “But I AM the curriculum!” my current thinking is, “But culture IS the curriculum.”

I plan to continue to incorporate culturally rich materials, like anime, into more of the curriculum. However, it will be important to develop better assessment instruments as I do so. The assessments used in this study were informal; I did not have clearly defined goals. I wanted to know what students learned, not if they learned what I wanted. In the future, I will draw on my experiences in this study to establish goals and to create assessments for these goals.

**Authentic Materials and the Curriculum**

Another way in which the anime filled a gap in the curriculum is by exposing students to authentic Japanese speech patterns. In a survey of
popular Japanese language textbooks, Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003) found that the textbooks tended to present a simplified picture of the Japanese language, and by implications Japanese society; in particular, they noted an overemphasis on formal speech and silence about dialects and other variations. It is particularly important that teachers like me, who are not native speakers of the target language, use authentic materials like anime and manga in order to better equip our students to encounter real Japanese. Otherwise, students will experience embarrassment—as I did, when I was unable to understand the first Spaniard I met. During the anime project, my students struggled to understand what they heard, and I need to find better strategies to help them comprehend.

I think that one important strategy will be introducing anime or other video earlier in my course sequence. Even students in Japanese 1 can listen for everyday expressions such as greetings, and anime can be an excellent source for context and variations. If I expose students to authentic speech from the beginning, they should be better able to cope with it as their studies advance.

**Combining Anime and Manga into the Curriculum**

When I bought the DVD of the anime, I also purchased the first volume of the manga. I only used that manga for one activity, and I think it might
have been an opportunity to exploit the combination of anime and manga to teach reading as well as listening. Choi and Yi (2012) found the use of pop culture materials in the curriculum increased Korean language literacy in a class of heritage learners. In the future, I would like to use the two forms—anime and manga—to initiate a “virtuous cycle,” in which the viewing reinforces the reading and the reading reinforces the viewing. Unlike young children, adult language learners are usually visual learners, and this strategy could help students better retain the vocabulary and grammar heard in the anime. Moreover, Japanese is a difficult language to learn to read, and student interest in manga can help spur them to increase their literacy.

**Anime IS the Curriculum**

For years I wondered, as my principal did, if using anime or other similar materials would take too much time and not leave enough for the “curriculum.” It was my responsibility to determine what the curriculum was, and my lack of self-confidence had led me to think that the curriculum was the textbook. When I finally listened to what students had been telling me, I initiated the anime project. The result has left me wondering, “How about taking this a lot farther?”

I think that after I have integrated anime and manga into all course levels, I would like to take it a step farther and put anime, manga, and other
forms of Japanese popular culture at the heart of the curriculum. Tsang (2012) cautions against the overuse of non-textbook materials, citing a student who did not feel motivated to learn the language by a high school teacher who often showed Japanese dramas. Tsang suggests that these materials “must be accompanied by actual learning in order to promote motivation” (p. 140). As mentioned early in this paper, there are anime and manga that appeal to a wide variety of interests and spark discussion on a range of topics. A children’s video like となりのトトロ [Tonarino Totoro or My Neighbor Totoro] could be used as a basis for thematic units about home, religion, or education and childcare. If I want to both motivate my students to learn and to give them better tools for learning, I believe that anime and manga can be the foundation on which to build better courses.
References


http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/content.cfm/anime_filmography_1
http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/content.cfm/anime_and_manga_its_not_all_make-believe


Resources


Appendix A

Student Information Form

Student name: ___________________________  Grade: Circle 11 12
Japanese class name: ______________________

Japanese Language Background

1. Do you speak Japanese at home?  Circle Yes or No
2. Does anyone in your house speak Japanese?  Circle Yes or No
   If yes, then who? _______________________________________
3. Do you have any relatives in Japan?  Circle Yes or No
   If yes, then who? _______________________________________
4. Have you ever been to Japan?  Circle Yes or No
   If yes, then write why and for how long.
   _________________________________________________________

5. Your first language(s) is/are
   _________________________________________________________
   Other languages that you use are
   _________________________________________________________

6. Do you read Chinese?  Circle Yes or No.
   If yes, tell me about how you learned Chinese.
   _________________________________________________________

7. Name some things you would like to do with the Japanese language.
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________

8. List ways in which knowing Japanese would be useful to you.
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________
   • Anime
   • Manga
   • J-drama
   • J-pop
   • Japanese friend
   • Japanese culture
   • I am interested in languages in general.
   • I want to travel in Japan.
   • It provides better job opportunities.
   • I am interested in Asian countries.
   • Other (Please explain below)

10. What are some reasons that make you want to continue studying Japanese right now?
   • I enjoy learning Japanese.
   • I want to become more proficient in Japanese.
   • I am interested in Japanese or languages in general.
   • I want to understand Japanese culture more.
   • I want to travel to Japan.
   • I want to work or study in Japan.
   • It provides better job opportunities.
   • Other (Please explain below)
11. What do you think is the most effective way to learn a language?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

12. Do you watch Japanese anime now? Circle Yes or No
   If yes, what language do you use?
   Circle English or Japanese w/subtitles

13. Do you read Japanese manga? Circle Yes or No


15. What are some anime or manga that you like?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Circle the words or phrases below that describe what you think about learning Japanese. In some cases you may circle all that apply.

   ![Strongly agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

17. I find that learning Japanese is hard.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

18. The hardest part of learning Japanese is:
   ![listening](listening)  ![speaking](speaking)  ![reading](reading)  ![writing](writing)

19. I enjoy watching anime.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

20. Watching anime helps me learn more Japanese vocabulary.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

21. Watching anime helps me learn more Japanese grammar.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

22. Watching anime helps me understand spoken Japanese.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

23. Watching anime helps me understand more about Japanese culture.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

24. I think what I learn from watching anime will be useful in my future study of Japanese.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)

25. I think what I learn from watching anime will be useful outside of class.
   ![Strongly%20agree](Strongly%20agree)  ![Agree](Agree)  ![Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree](Neither%20agree%20or%20disagree)  ![Disagree](Disagree)  ![Strongly%20disagree](Strongly%20disagree)
Appendix B

Circle the words or phrases below that describe what you think about learning Japanese. In some cases you may circle all that apply.

1. I enjoy learning Japanese.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

2. I find that learning Japanese is hard.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

3. The hardest part of learning Japanese is:
   listening  speaking  reading  writing

4. I enjoyed watching anime in class.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

5. Watching anime in class helped me learn more Japanese vocabulary.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

6. Watching anime in class helped me learn more Japanese grammar.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

7. Watching anime in class helped me understand spoken Japanese.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

8. Watching anime in class helped me understand more about Japanese culture.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

9. I think what I learned from watching anime in class will be useful in my future study of Japanese.
   Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree

10. I think what I learn from watching anime in class will be useful outside of class.
    Strongly agree  Agree  Neither agree or disagree  Disagree  Strongly disagree
What are some of your thoughts as we conclude the Anime Project?

1. When you think of watching this anime in class, what is the first thing that you remember?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

2. Do you think that watching anime in class increased your motivation to learn Japanese? Please explain.
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

3. Can you recall any specific Japanese words or phrases that you remember from watching this anime?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

4. Can you recall any specific Japanese grammar that you learned from watching this anime?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

5. Can you recall anything about Japanese family life that you learned from watching this anime?
_______________________________________________________________________
6. Can you recall any specifics about Japanese homes that you learned from watching this anime?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

7. Can you recall any specifics about Japanese school life that you learned from watching this anime?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

8. Can you recall any specifics about Japanese seasonal customs that you learned from watching this anime?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

9. Can you recall any specifics about Japanese food that you learned from watching this anime?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

10. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

Please write your e-mail so that I can contact you.

_______________________________________________________________________

大変お世話になりました。どうも有り難うございました。
(You've been a great help. I am deeply grateful.)
Appendix C

あたらしいたんご
えき train station
tもってあう to bring to meet
tつゆ rainy season (literally "plum rain")

おぼえている？[Do you remember?]
Write the definitions for the following review words.

かさ ______________________________
あめ ______________________________
でんしゃ __________________________
でんわ ____________________________

ぶんぽう
Remember that the ~TE form of the verb can be is used to combine with other verbs. One verb that is frequently used in this way is もつ／もって [to have, to carry]. What would be the meaning of the following combinations.

もってあう to bring to meet
もってかえる __________________________
もっていく __________________________
もってくる __________________________
ぶんか  [Culture]

Mr. Yamada calls home because he is stuck at the train station in a downpour without his umbrella. Japanese viewers would immediately associate his predicament with the June rainy season or つゆ.

Sharing an umbrella in a sudden summer downpour is a romantic cliché that you may have seen in other anime; an episode in School Rumble revolves around the machinations of the main character Tenma Tsukamoto as she tries to engineer sharing an umbrella with her crush, Karasuma. Meeting her husband at the station with an umbrella is a sign of a devoted wife, and this job is taken over by children as they grow old enough; there is a scene in My Neighbor Totoro in which the girls, Satsuki and Mei, wait at the bus stop for their father with an umbrella.

1. What happens when Mr. Yamada calls home from the station?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

2. What does he decide to do?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

3. What does his wife ask him to do?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

4. What happens on his way home?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
しゅくだい

At the end of this segment, there is a haiku by the poet Buson. The subtitles translate it as:

A spring shower
Dressed for rain
Talking as they go

Here is the Japanese version with the English definition of each word:

はるさめや
ものがたりゆく
みのとかさ

As you can see, the translation in the subtitles is somewhat different from the original Japanese. Write your own translation below. (You don't have to use the haiku pattern of 5-7-5.)
Appendix D

Dear Deirdre,

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has accepted your proposal, “Using Anime in the Classroom.” A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Co-Chair, Dr. Adams O’Connell, for the duration of the time of your study and for up to one year from the approval date indicated by the date of this email.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into topics other than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be. Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this email notification, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation, awaiting HSIRB approval of the changes.

We do still need to collect your electronic signature, so please respond to this email with your name and project title in the subject line. Dr. Shosh can provide his electronic signature by replying to this email with his name in the subject line. Your replies will serve as your signatures.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Virginia Adams O’Connell
Co-Chair, HSIRB
Moravian College
hsirb@moravian.edu
voconne1@moravian.edu
(610) 625-7756

________________________________________
Appendix E: Principal's Consent Letter

November 12, 2012

Dear [Principal's Name],

I am a graduate student at Moravian College, and as part of my graduate program, I will be doing research on what I can do to better educate our students. My research topic is using Japanese anime [animated cartoons] to teach language and culture. I will be doing this research during the first semester of this school year.

I would like your permission for my project. All students will be filling out surveys of their opinions about learning the Japanese language. Then they will participate in classroom activities centered around watching short clips of Japanese anime. Many students watch anime in their free time, and I believe that they will enjoy learning from anime in class. I have chosen this research project because I believe that watching anime will teach students more about Japanese culture and everyday Japanese life. In addition, students will have a chance to hear and practice Japanese speech that is more authentic than that found in most textbooks. Any anime shown will be appropriate for school.

Inclusion in the research will have no effect on grades, etc. All students in the class will participate in the same class activities, but I will only use data about students with parental permission. (The parent letter is attached.) There will be no penalty for any student who chooses not to participate in the study at any point.

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at school at 610-250-2481 or at home at 610-997-0152; my e-mail is sumpter@moravian.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor at Moravian College with any concerns. He is Dr. Joseph Shosh, and may be contacted by e-mail at jshosh@moravian.edu or by telephone at 610-861-1482.

I hope that you will give your permission for this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter
Japanese Instructor

I give my permission for the project described above.

Signature: [Redacted]  Date: November 6, 2012
Appendix F: Parental Consent Letters

November 13, 2012

Dear parent or guardian,

My name is Deirdre Sumpter, and I am the Japanese teacher at [redacted] High School. I am also a graduate student at Moravian College. As part of my graduate program, I will be doing research on what I can do to better educate our students. My research topic is using Japanese anime (animated cartoons) to teach language and culture. I will be doing this research during the first semester of this school year.

I would like your permission for your student to participate in my project. All students will be filling out surveys of their opinions about learning the Japanese language. Then they will participate in classroom activities centered around watching short clips of Japanese anime. Many students watch anime in their free time, and I believe that they will enjoy learning from anime in class. I have chosen this research project because I believe that watching anime will teach students more about Japanese culture and everyday Japanese life. In addition, students will have a chance to hear and practice Japanese speech that is more authentic than that found in most textbooks. Any anime shown will be appropriate for school.

Inclusion in the research will have no effect on grades, etc. All students in the class will participate in the same class activities, but I will only use data about your student with your permission. You may withdraw your permission at any point in the study. (Please do so in writing for my records; this will prevent any confusion.) There will be no penalty for any student who chooses not to participate in the study at any point.

All the research is based on regular classroom activities so there are no anticipated risks. It is important to protect the privacy of students, so in my report, their identities will be protected by use of pseudonyms. Data will be kept in a locked drawer and destroyed at the end of the study.

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at school at [redacted] or at home at [redacted]; my e-mail is sumpter2@moravian.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor at Moravian College with any concerns. He is Dr. Joseph Shosh, and may be contacted by e-mail at jshosh@moravian.edu or by telephone at [redacted]. Concerns may also be addressed to my principal, [redacted] at [redacted].
Parental Consent Letters: Signature Pages

I hope that you will give your permission for your student’s participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject's legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: [Redacted] Date: 11/14/12
I hope that you will give your permission for your student's participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject's legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: [Redacted] Date: 11/3/12
I hope that you will give your permission for your student’s participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject’s legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: [Redacted] Date: 11/13/13
I hope that you will give your permission for your student's participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject's legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: [Redacted] Date: 11/14
I hope that you will give your permission for your student’s participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject’s legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: ___________________________ Date: 1/15/12
I hope that you will give your permission for your student’s participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject’s legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: __________________________ Date: Nov. 13, 2012
I hope that you will give your permission for your student's participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject's legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: ____________________________ Date: 1/20/12
I hope that you will give your permission for your student’s participation in this study. You may do so by signing below and returning this form to me; please keep the second copy for your records.

Thank you,

Deirdre Sumpter

I attest that I am the subject’s legally authorized guardian (representative), that I read and understood this consent form, and that I received a copy.

Legal representative signature: [Redacted] Date: 11-13-12
Appendix G: Standard Student Information Form

Student Information Form

Japanese 1

School name: ______________________

Student Name: ____________  Grade: Circle 9 10 11 12

Japanese name choices:
1. _________  2. _________  3. _________

Japanese Language Background

1. Have you ever taken any Japanese language courses before? Circle Yes or No
   a. If yes, tell me about where and how long? ____________

2. Do you speak Japanese at home? Circle Yes or No

3. Does anyone in your house speak Japanese? Circle Yes or No
   a. If yes, then who? ______________________

4. Do you have any relatives in Japan? Circle Yes or No
   a. If yes, then who? ______________________

5. Have you ever been to Japan? Circle Yes or No
   a. If yes, then write why and for how long.
       ______________________________________________________________

6. Your first language(s) is/are ____________

7. Other languages that you use are ______________________

8. Why did you decide to take this Japanese course?
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
9. Name some things you would like to do with the Japanese language.
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

10. List ways in which knowing Japanese would be useful to you.
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________

11. Do you watch Japanese anime? Circle Yes or No
   a. If yes, what language do you use?
      Circle English or Japanese w/subtitles

12. Do you read Japanese manga? Circle Yes or No
   a. If yes, what language do you use?
      Circle English or Japanese.

13. Do you read Chinese? Circle Yes or No.
   a. If yes, tell me about how you learned Chinese.
      ____________________________________________

14. What are some anime or manga that you like?
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________

15. Is there anything else that I, as your teacher, should know about you that might affect your performance in this course?
Appendix H

Today we will begin viewing となりの山田くん (known as My Neighbors The Yamadas in English). This is a full-length movie that is based on a daily four-panel comic that appears in major Japanese newspapers. Most Japanese would be familiar with this comic.

One of our purposes in watching this will be to observe and discuss aspects of Japanese culture. This is supposed to be a humorous depiction of a typical Japanese family. What would you expect each of the family members to be like? Write your ideas next to the names below.

Main Characters:

しげ（おばあさん） ______________________________
たかし（おとうさん） ______________________________
まつ子（おかあさん） ______________________________
のぼる（おにいさん） ______________________________
のの子（いもうとさん） ______________________________
ポチ（いぬ） ______________________________
What would you expect the family relationships to be like?

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

What might you expect to see in their home? List anything you can think of based on what you have studied in class and your other experiences.

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

Post-Viewing Notes:
Write down any language or cultural details you noticed while watching the first segments.

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________