# Social Networking Sites (SNS) for Japanese Language Learning

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## Abstract

*Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become an integral part of modern society, influencing various aspects of life, including education. In language learning, SNS facilitates interactive, collaborative, and reflective learning experiences. This study aims to evaluate the use of SNS in enhancing learning both inside and outside Japanese language classrooms. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a survey method, utilizing a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Quantitative and qualitative data collected from 85 students in the Japanese Language Education Study Program were analyzed and presented narratively. The data were examined through the lens of SNS use in foreign language learning and its impact on language acquisition. The results reveal that most students frequently use SNS platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter for learning Japanese, both for classroom materials and independent study. Additionally, students reported that SNS use has contributed to improvements in their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in Japanese. Moreover, SNS has been identified as a motivational tool, fostering students' confidence in using the language both orally and in writing. These findings provide valuable insights for future research on the use of SNS as a learning medium in Japanese language education.*

## INTRODUCTION

The presence of the Internet has given rise to a digital revolution in communication and information-sharing activities. The need for an affordable, portable, and easily accessible information communication technology (ICT) platform gave birth to Social Networking Sites (SNS) (Chugh & Ruhi, 2017; Barrot, 2021; Dewanty, Haristiani, Sadewo, & Tasman, 2024).

SNS has been used by the world community to interact, communicate, work, and study, both for personal and professional use. SNS provides a social virtual platform that is participatory and collaborative so that users can be able to build and expand social networks without being limited by space and time (Abrahim, Mir, Suhara, & Sato, 2017; Barrot, 2021) using images, videos, text, sound or video (O'Reilly, 2007; Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). In other words, SNS is an online platform designed for user-generated content in the form of text, photos, audio, and video that is used to share with other users who are connected in online communities (Chisenga, Kedemi, & Sam, 2014; Citrawati, Suwastini, Jayanti, Artini, & Dantes, 2021).

The variations and features of SNS are very diverse, ranging from photo-sharing and video-sharing features such as Instagram, Youtube, and Tiktok, chat features such as WhatsApp, Line, and Telegram, as well as text-based features such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Liu & Ling, 2010; Brandtzæg, 2012; Aladjem & Jou, 2016; Alvarez-Valencia, 2015).

The variety of variations and features allows SNS to be used in various aspects of life for the majority of its users, including in aspects of learning and education (Pinto & Mansfield 2011; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Eriksson & Larsson, 2014; Chugh & Ruhi, 2017; Zincir, 2017; Chugh & Joshi, 2017). The existence of photo-sharing, video-sharing, and text-sharing or chat features from SNS can facilitate personal, communicative, and collaborative teaching and learning approaches (Hamat & Hassan 2019; McLoughlin & Lee, 2008; Subrahmanyam,

Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008). These features can be used for creating content, sharing learning materials, and interacting and socializing with students collaboratively (Hamid, Chang, & Kurnia, 2009; Mills, 2011; Christensen, 2015; Kitchakarn, 2016).

Meanwhile, several things need to be considered in the use of SNS in collaborative learning, including selecting the right SNS, the role of teachers and students in using SNS in the classroom and outside the classroom, feedback by the teacher, and selecting topics or, discussion material through SNS (Absalom & Marden, 2004; Cheng, 2010; Christensen, 2015; Vonderwell, 2003).

If these things can be applied properly, then the use of SNS in learning will create learning activities that allow students to socialize and share learning experiences, both from instructors and between students (Madge, Meek, Wellens & Hooley, 2009; Selwyn, 2009; Hamat & Hassan, 2019). Included in language learning, SNS features can function as platforms that are easily accessible and used to enhance language learning and also increase cultural awareness regarding the language being studied (Gonual, 2019; Dewanty, Deandra, Alika, & Farisya, 2021), by providing small or large control to learners both in class and in the classroom. outside the classroom (autonomous learning) (Vivian, 2012; Hamat & Hassan, 2019; Orsini-Jones, Brick, & Pibworth, 2013).

Students need to be exposed to as much of the target language as possible when they are learning a foreign language. Therefore, language learning not only studies the formal aspects of language but also its pragmatic and socio-cultural aspects (Aladjem & Jou, 2016; Verhelst, Avermaet, Takala, Figueras, & North, 2009).

Through SNS, language learners can find out the pragmatic and socio-cultural aspects of a language, so if the teacher wants to introduce these two aspects of the language in learning, the involvement of SNS in language learning becomes indispensable. Regarding the use of SNS in learning in general which states that SNS can support the creation of collaborative learning, language learning can also take advantage of SNS

features so that teachers and students can collaborate and discuss to support the improvement of their language skills (Aladjem & Jou, 2016; Wodzicki, Schwammlein, & Moskaliuk, 2012).

Previous studies on SNS in language learning (Hamat & Hassan, 2020; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Mitchell, 2012) shows that SNS is an effective choice of language learning tools. In addition, the results of other studies (Gamble & Wilkins, 2014; Dogoriti & Pange, 2013; Dizon, 2015; Kasuma & Tan, 2019; Roth & Sup-pasetseree, 2016) show that the use of SNS in learning can improve four language skills, according to with student responses in several studies (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Danh, 2020) who stated that they appreciated the "affordability" nature of SNS as one of the factors to support the improvement of language skills. Students also think that SNS is easier to use than the LMS owned by the school or university where they study, especially when using gadgets in learning (Matsushita, Nishihana, & Sakamoto, 2018).

Just like the use of SNS in language learning, SNS in Japanese language learning also has positive influences and impacts when referring to the results of previous studies (Danh, 2020; Tamara & Shishido, 2020; Hermawan, 2021; Leung, Hui, Luk, Chiu, & Ho, 2022; Mamat, Rashid, Paee, & Ahmad, 2022; Matsushita, Nishihana, & Sakamoto, 2018).

Some studies results (Danh, 2020; Tamara & Shishido, 2020) show that SNS positively impacted Japanese language learning activities, such as increasing vocabulary mastery, ability to write kanji and sentences, and increasing their motivation to read Japanese literature. In addition to the benefits of SNS in learning Japanese, Nishioka (2016, 2020) and Leung, Hui, Luk, Chiu, and Ho (2022) emphasize the importance of developing learner autonomy outside the classroom as well as within the classroom.

Although many research results show positive results, the use of SNS in learning Japanese seems to have drawbacks and problems (Jung & Onzuka, 2013; Matsushita, Nishihana, & Sakamoto, 2018; Mizumoto, 2012; Ota, 2011), such as the lack of feedback from teachers, limited cooperation and interaction between students and teachers, as well as the incompatibility of learning materials with the SNS content used.

Previous studies have discussed the use of SNS and the impact of its use in formal Japanese language learning such as in schools and informally such as in training institutions or tutoring places. However, there has been no research that specifically discusses the use of SNS and the impact of SNS use on formal Japanese language learners at the university level.

Therefore, this study aims to prove whether the advantages and disadvantages of using SNS in Japanese language learning in previous studies were also felt by Japanese language learners at universities, this study aims to find out student responses regarding the use of SNS in Japanese language learning, both in class and outside the class. It is hoped that with the results of student responses in this study, the use of SNS in Japanese language learning can be maximized as material and learning media in Japanese language learning at universities.

**METHOD**

This research is qualitative research using the survey method. The survey method was conducted to find out student responses regarding the use of SNS in learning Japanese, both in-class and outside-class learning. The questionnaires were then distributed to 85 students from the 2020, 2021, and 2022 batches of the UPI Japanese Language Education Study Program. UPI Japanese Language Education Study Program students were selected as the research sample because based on pre-research results, quite a number of them (almost 97%) used SNS in Japanese language learning activities.

The survey used is in the form of a digital questionnaire made in Google Forms, consisting of 3 aspects of questions, namely 1) Frequency of using social media in learning; 2) The use of social media for learning Japanese; and 3) Feedback and student opinions. The results of the questionnaire were then analyzed using theories

related to SNS and language learning, to find out what the use of SNS in learning Japanese in the classroom and outside the classroom is like.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study present the responses of participating students to the use of SNS in learning Japanese. The initial data contains a list of the types of SNS used by students, both in learning Japanese and in everyday life outside the learning context. Then, the results of the questionnaire reveal what the frequency of using SNS is like in their daily life, compared to the frequency of using SNS in their Japanese language learning.

Detailed student responses regarding the use of SNS for learning Japanese will also be disclosed in the results of this study. Finally, the results of the questionnaire in the form of feedback and student opinions will be explained and linked to findings from previous research which revealed that SNS can help practice Japanese language skills, increase confidence in using Japanese, and increase motivation in learning Japanese.

**Types of SNS Used by Students**

SNS is a social virtual platform that allows its users to interact with other users without being

limited by space and time (Abrahim, Mir, Suhara, & Sato, 2017; Barrot, 2021). Students as part of today's society whose life is attached to technology and gadgets, are also attached to the use of SNS in all aspects of their lives, both in the scope of personal use and its use in learning (Pinto & Mansfield 2011; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Eriksson & Larsson, 2014; Chugh & Ruhi, 2017; Zincir, 2017; Chugh & Joshi, 2017). Based on the statement regarding the use of SNS by students in general, in this study, one aspect of the questions in the questionnaire distributed to students was questions related to the types of SNS that were often used.

Questionnaire data about the types of SNS used by UPI Japanese Language Education Study Program students are divided into two types: SNS used in everyday life and SNS used in learning Japanese. Questions related to this type of SNS allow respondents to choose answers for more than 1 SNS so that the percentage results are obtained as shown in the graphs in the following figures.

The graph containing respondents' answers about the types of SNS used in everyday life is presented in Figure 1 below.
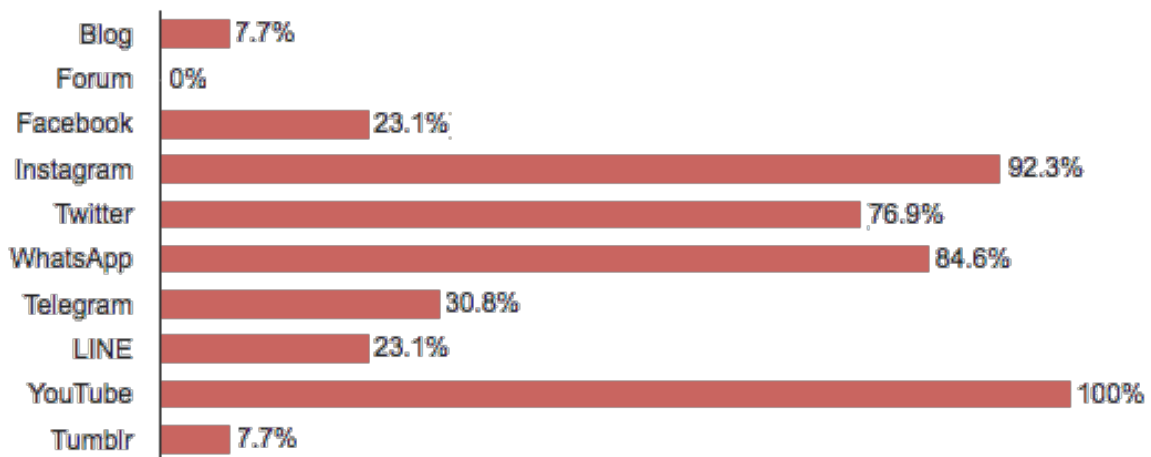


Figure 1: SNS that is often used in students' daily lives.

The graph in Figure 1 shows that the most frequently used SNS (besides for learning Japanese) by students is YouTube with a response percentage of 100%, which means that

all respondents frequently use YouTube in their daily lives. Followed by Instagram which ranks second as the most frequently used SNS, with a percentage of respondents' answers of 92.3%. This result is in line with the statement that SNS

with photo-sharing and video-sharing features are very popular and favored by users (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Liu & Ling, 2010; Brandtzæg, 2012; Aladjem & Jou, 2016; Alvarez-Valencia, 2015), because of these features makes it easier for users to be able to build and expand social networks (Abrahim, Mir, Suhara, & Sato, 2017; Barrot, 2021; O'Reilly, 2007; Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009).

In addition to the photo-sharing and video-sharing features, the text-sharing or chat features are also favored by the respondents of this study. As evidenced by what is presented in the graph above, WhatsApp is the third most frequently used SNS in everyday life (84.6%). The text-sharing or chat features on SNS make interactions between users more real-time, personal, and communicative so WhatsApp is still one of the types of SNS that is widely used by users around the world (Hamat & Hassan 2019; McLoughlin & Lee, 2008; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008).

Respondents' answers about the types of SNS used in learning Japanese are presented in the graph in Figure 2 below.
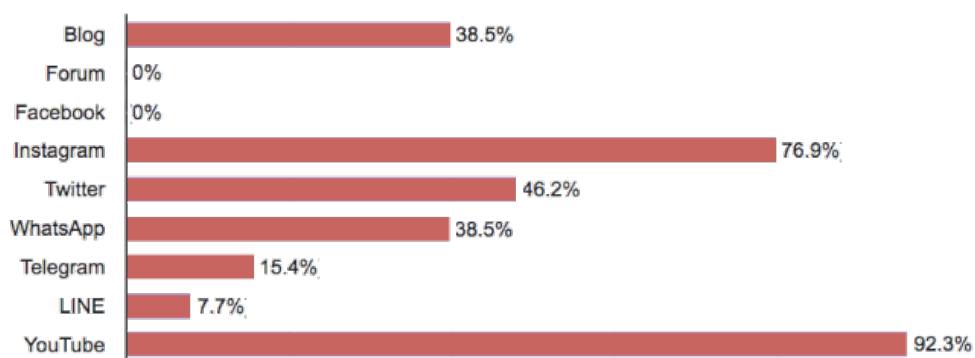


Figure 2: SNS that is often used in learning Japanese

As seen in Figure 2, the SNS that UPI Japanese Language Education Study Program students most often use in learning Japanese is YouTube, with an answer percentage of 92.3%. Respondents seem to frequently use YouTube and Instagram, both in their daily lives (as entertainment, hobbies, leisure time, etc.) as well as in Japanese language learning activities.

This result is in line with the findings of previous studies (Hermawan, Soepardjo, & Fanani, 2021; Mills, 2011; Christensen, 2015; Kitchakarn, 2016) which state that the features in SNS are based on photos, images, and videos such as YouTube and Instagram. can be used to access content, share learning materials, interact and socialize both with teachers, fellow students, and natively in the language being studied. Apart from YouTube and Instagram, the graph in the picture shows that respondents often use Twitter to learn Japanese.

The findings of previous research (Rosell-Aguilar, 2020) show that language learners, including Japanese, think that Twitter helps them learn new vocabulary and culturally relevant information from the language being studied. Twitter as an SNS with a text feature in the form of microblogging allows students to learn Japanese in class and outside of class by reading short blogs of Japanese-language Twitter users, exchanging short messages, and commenting on native posts (Fewell, 2014; Tanaka, 2015; Harmandaoglu, 2012; Miller, Morgan, & Koronkiewicz; 2018).

When compared with the graph in Figure 1, there are similarities in the types of SNS that are widely used by students outside of learning Japanese and in learning Japanese, namely YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. These data show that SNS is indeed proven to be used by students in all aspects of their lives, including in learning ((Pinto & Mansfield 2011; Cvijikj &

Michahelles, 2013; Eriksson & Larsson, 2014; Chugh & Ruhi, 2017; Zincir, 2017; Chugh & Joshi, 2017).

However, the results of this study's questionnaire data differ from findings in previous studies regarding SNS which are often and effectively used in language learning. Several previous studies (Kelly, 2018; Abrahim, Mir, Suhara, & Sato, 2018; Leung & Hui, 2022) stated that Facebook is an SNS that is widely used by students in language learning, and supports the principles of collaborative and contextual learning.

Meanwhile, the results of the questionnaire in Figure 2 show that Facebook is not used at all by students in learning, both inside and outside the classroom. Even though in everyday life outside of learning as many as 23% of students still use Facebook, the results of interviews with student respondents revealed that in the last 5 years, most of them had not opened Facebook or had any activities on it. Even some of them have deactivated their Facebook accounts.

**Frequency of Using SNS in Learning Japanese**

In addition to a list of the types of SNSs used by respondents in learning Japanese, there is also data related to the frequency of SNSs used by students which includes daily, weekly, and monthly use. The frequency of using SNS in learning Japanese includes SNSs that have text and chat features such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and LINE, SNSs with photo and video sharing features such as Instagram and YouTube, and SNSs with blogging or micro-blogging features such as Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. Figure 3 below shows the frequency of using SNSs with text and chat features, namely WhatsApp, Telegram, and LINE for learning Japanese.
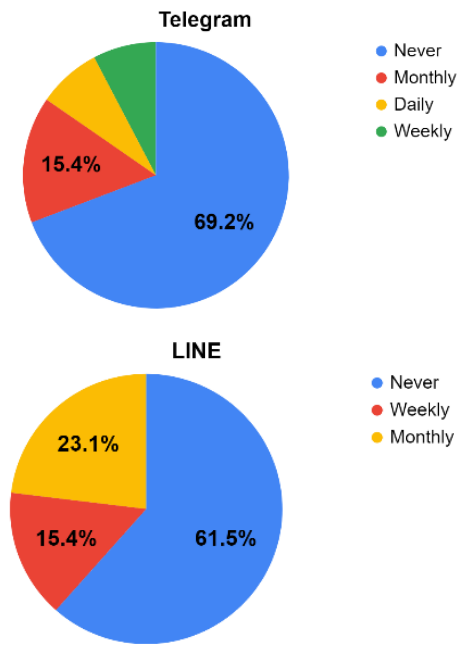


Figure 3: Frequency of using WhatsApp, Telegram, and LINE in learning Japanese.

In Figure 3 above shows that Whatsapp is the SNS that is most used daily in learning Japanese compared to Telegram or LINE. The opinions and findings of previous research (Hamat & Hassan 2019; McLoughlin & Lee, 2008; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008) state that SNS with text and chat features can facilitate a personal, communicative approach to teaching and learning, and collaborative. The results of interviews with respondents explain why WhatsApp is used more often and more in learning, because the process of exchanging messages is real-time and fast with lecturers and fellow students and does not consume a lot of quota, making students prefer to use WhatsApp compared to other chat-based SNS.
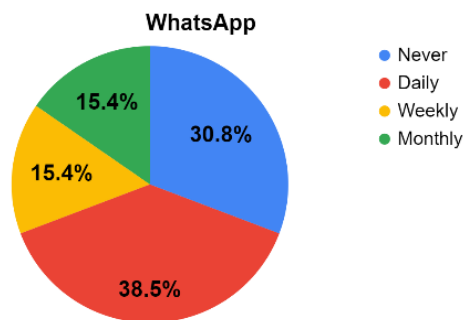
The frequency of using photo-sharing and video-sharing-based SNS (Instagram and YouTube) by students learning Japanese can be seen in the diagram in Figure 4 below.
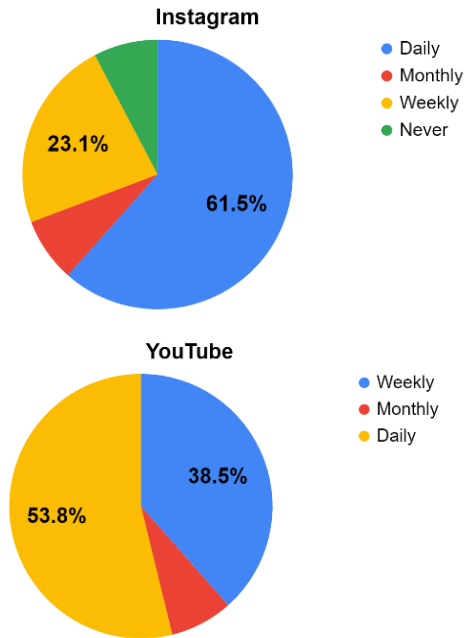
The frequency of SNS usage with blogging and micro-blogging features, such as Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, is illustrated in the graph shown in Figure 5.
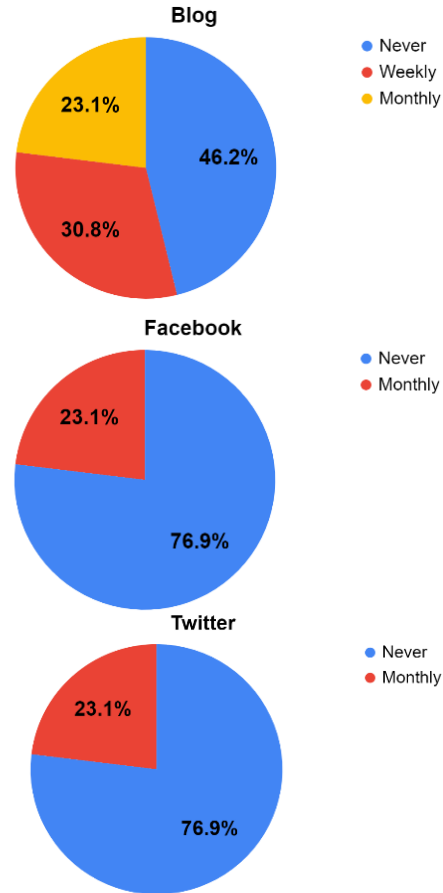


Figure 4: Frequency of using Instagram and YouTube in learning Japanese.



Figure 5: Frequency of using Blog, Facebook, and Twitter in learning Japanese.

It can be seen from the graph in Figure 4 that more than half of the respondents use Instagram and YouTube daily for learning. From the interview results, information was obtained that lecturers often use teaching materials and teaching media in the form of YouTube videos to learn Japanese in the classroom. YouTube and Instagram are also used quite frequently for video assignment submissions, especially for Kaiwa (Japanese Conversation) coursework.

The results of the questionnaire data prove the findings of previous research (Hamid, Chang, & Kurnia, 2009; Mills, 2011; Christensen, 2015; Kitchakarn, 2016) which states that photo-sharing and video-sharing features like those of Instagram and YouTube can be used for making content and learning materials. Questionnaire data shows that Instagram is used more daily (61.5%) than YouTube (53.8%). This is probably due to the many Japanese learning accounts that have sprung up on Instagram, as well as Japanese-language content in Instagram's Reels feature.

Compared to the other SNSs previously described, blog-based or micro-blogging-based SNSs such as Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter are not used daily, but are often used monthly. Although in the SNS data used by respondents in learning Japanese, Twitter is one of the most used SNSs (ranked 3rd most) besides YouTube and Instagram, it seems that students do not use Twitter daily, but they use it monthly.

Although previous research (Fewell, 2014; Tanaka, 2015; Harmandaoglu, 2012; Miller, Morgan, & Koronkiewicz; 2018) stated that Twitter helps students learn Japanese in class and outside the classroom by reading short blogs of Japanese-language Twitter users, exchanging short messages, even commenting on native posts,

but the interview results show that students more often use photo-sharing and video-sharing-based SNS (Instagram and YouTube) than Twitter in learning Japanese, because SNS with a lot of text such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter takes more time to be able to read existing texts, compared to just viewing photos or videos.

**Use of SNS for Japanese language learning**

Based on data on the types of SNS used and the frequency of SNS use, students were asked to provide information related to the use of SNS in learning Japanese, both for learning in the classroom and outside the classroom. Table 1 below shows how often students use SNS in learning Japanese inside and outside of lectures, as well as whether students use SNS in learning to interact with lecturers and classmates.

**Table 1: The use of SNS for learning Japanese.**

| No | Statement | Often | Always | Rarely | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Using SNS to learn Japanese | 15.4% | **53.8%** | 30.8% | 0% |
| 2 | Using SNS to study Japanese language course material | 15.4% | **53.8%** | 30.8% | 0% |
| 3 | Using SNS to study Japanese outside language course material | 30.8% | **46.2%** | 23.1% | 0% |
| 4 | Use SNS with classmates to learn Japanese | 7.7% | **53.8%** | 38.5% | 0% |
| 5 | Use SNS with lecturers to learn Japanese | 7.7% | 38.5% | **53.8%** | 0% |
| 6 | Use social media to complete assignments in Japanese language courses | **46.2%** | 30.8% | 23.1% | 0% |

The results of the questionnaire in table 1 above show that as many as 53.8% of students always use SNS to learn Japanese, including in studying materials related to lecture material. Even outside of lectures, as many as 46.2% of students seem to always use SNS to study Japanese even though the Japanese material found on SNS is not related to lecture material. The results of the questionnaire prove findings about the existence of features on SNS that have a small to large impact on learning in the classroom and outside the classroom

(autonomous learning) (Vivian, 2012; Hamat & Hassan, 2019; Orsini-Jones, Brick, & Pibworth, 2013).

Table 1 also shows that 53.8% of students always use SNS to interact with classmates when studying Japanese. From the percentage of data from the questionnaire results, even though as many as 46.2% of students often use social media assistance to complete Japanese language lecture assignments, 53.8% of students rarely interact with lecturers via SNS. Both of these data support the results of interviews with student respondents who stated that they completed assignments by searching for material and answers on SNS or asking and discussing with friends, but they did not use SNS to ask questions or discuss with lecturers.

This finding proves the shortcomings of using SNS in language learning, namely the lack of feedback from teachers due to limited collaboration and interaction with teachers (Jung & Onzuka, 2013; Matsushita, Nishihana, & Sakamoto, 2018; Mizumoto, 2012; Ota, 2011).

**Feedback and Student Opinion**

In addition to identifying the types of SNS used in learning Japanese and knowing the frequency of using SNS in learning Japanese, data were also obtained about student feedback and opinions regarding the use of SNS in learning Japanese. Table 2 below provides students' feedback and opinions about SNS in learning Japanese, whether SNS helps them train and improve their Japanese language skills, and whether the use of SNS is related to students' motivation to be able to use Japanese.

**Table 2: Students' perception of the use of SNS for learning Japanese.**

| No | Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----|-----------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | SNS helps practice Japanese writing and reading skills | 30.8% | 46.2% | 23.1% | 0% |
| 2 | SNS helps practice Japanese listening and speaking skills | 30.8% | 30.8% | 30.8% | 7.7% |
| 3 | SNS improves the ability to communicate in Japanese | 23.1% | 46.2% | 30.8% | 0% |
| 4 | SNS improves the ability to write and read in Japanese | 15.4% | 53.8% | 30.8% | 0% |
| 5 | SNS increases the confidence to communicate in Japanese | 15.4% | 38.5% | 46.2% | 0% |
| 6 | SNS increases motivation to communicate in Japanese | 15.4% | 53.8% | 30.8% | 0% |
| 7 | SNS increases motivation to read and write Japanese class material | 7.7% | 61.5% | 30.8% | 0% |
| 8 | SNS makes learning Japanese more fun | 38.5% | 38.5% | 23.1% | 0% |
| 9 | Social media has made learning Japanese easier | 23.1% | 38.5% | 23.1% | 15.4% |

Statements 1 and 2 in Table 2 above show student responses about the role of SNS in helping them practice the 4 Japanese language skills, namely writing, reading, listening, and speaking. As many as 46.2% of students agree that SNS helps them to practice Japanese writing and reading skills, but it seems that students still think that SNS does not really help much in practicing listening and speaking skills, marked by the answer "disagree" to the statement as much as 30.8%, followed by the answers "strongly agree" and "agree" by 30.8% as well. 46.2% of students think that SNS helps them to improve their communication skills in Japanese, especially in communicating through writing and

reading comprehension, according to the data results in statement 4.

Even so, Table 2 shows that almost half of the student respondents (46.2%) disagree that SNS can increase their confidence in communicating using Japanese. This is possibly caused by the results of the data in statement 2 which states that SNS does not help students practice listening and speaking skills, so students also feel less confident in communicating orally in Japanese. Although SNS is considered unable to increase confidence in communicating in Japanese, 53.8% of students agree that SNS does motivate them to communicate in Japanese.

About learning in the classroom or lectures, 61.5% of students agree that SNS increases their motivation to write and read Japanese language lecture materials because SNS makes learning more fun and easy, as indicated by the results of the questionnaire in statements 8 and 9.

The student perceptions of SNS in learning Japanese that have been described above prove that SNS can indeed facilitate teaching and learning approaches that are personal, communicative, and collaborative (Hamid, Chang, & Kurnia, 2009; Mills, 2011; Christensen, 2015; Kitchakarn, 2016) through features such as photo-sharing, video sharing, text sharing and chat or messaging (Hamat & Hassan 2019; McLoughlin & Lee, 2008; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008). The results of student responses in Table 2 are also in line with scientific findings (Gamble & Wilkins, 2014; Dogoriti & Pange, 2013; Dizon, 2015; Kasuma & Tan, 2019; Roth & Sup-pasetseree, 2016; Harrison & Thomas, 2009) which shows that the use of SNS in learning can improve the four language skills.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the questionnaire data, it is known that UPI Japanese Language Education Study Program students often use SNS to learn Japanese, both for lecture material and material outside of lectures. YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter are the most used SNSs for students to learn Japanese. From the results of the student response questionnaire, they argue that the use of SNS can train and improve Japanese language

skills. Although the results obtained were that SNS was considered to be less able to increase students' confidence to communicate in Japanese, SNS is actually considered capable of motivating them to be more confident in using Japanese in the future regarding listening, writing, and reading skills. The results of the students' perception from this study are expected to contribute as a basis and background for research related to the effect of using SNS in learning Japanese.

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