



The Utilization of the OJAD Website to Improve Japanese Speaking Skills in Vocational High School

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ABSTRACT

Japanese differs from Indonesian in letters, grammatical patterns, pronunciation, and vocabulary. These differences make students difficult to understand Japanese because some vocabularies are similar in pronunciation. For example, the word *ichi* which means one similar to the word *shichi* which means seven. Moreover, many students mispronounced long sound as short such as the word *ohayou* (good morning) which is pronounced as *ohayo*. Students also find it difficult to pause when pronouncing sentences in Japanese which produces unnatural accents. To overcome these problems, this study aims to use the OJAD (Online Japanese Accent Dictionary) website for learning Japanese, particularly to improve students' speaking skills. OJAD is a website in which there are various features and one of the features is the Suzuki-kun Prosody Tutorial. Through this feature, students will be able to practice pronouncing words or sentences in Japanese according to pronunciation accuracy, including accents and intonations. This research employs a descriptive qualitative study, with participants from grade X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap, Central Java. The results showed that after using the OJAD website, students' Japanese speaking skills improved, and able to pronounce Japanese with better pronunciation and intonation. In addition, learning Japanese using the OJAD website as a media lesson makes students more enthusiastic and enjoy learning Japanese. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for improving proficiency in Japanese, especially in terms of Japanese speaking skills.

KEYWORDS

Classroom Action Research (CAR); Japanese Speaking Skill; OJAD (Online Japanese Accent Dictionary); Vocational High School.

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INTRODUCTION

Japanese is one of the foreign language subjects taught at a Vocational High School in Cilacap, a region in Central Java, Indonesia. Japanese has differences from Indonesian, including the letters

used, grammatical patterns, pronunciation systems, and others (Minematsu, Hirano, Nakamura, & Oikawa, 2016). In addition, Japanese grammar patterns use the SOV (Subject, Object, Verb) system which is different from Indonesian which has an SVO (Subject, Verb,

Object) pattern. These differences become obstacles for students in understanding and mastering Japanese. There are some problems that researchers found when learning Japanese in class (Kamada, Kawaguchi, & Suzuki, 2013). First, the difficulty of students in pronouncing Japanese vocabulary, because there are some vocabularies that according to students are similar in pronunciation, for example in the word *kouchoushitsu* which means the principal's room, with the word *kyoushitsu* which means a classroom, the word *toshoshitsu* (library room) with the word *shokuinshitsu* (teacher's room). In addition, on the word *ichi* (one) and the word *shichi* (seven). Second, most students often read words that should be read long into short, for example, the word *ohayou* (good morning) is read as *ohayo*, the word *gakkou* (school) is read as *gakko*, then the word *houk* (broom) is read as *hoki*. On the other hand, students also read words that should be read short to be read long. For example, the word *kokonoka* (the 9th) is read as *kokoooka*, and the word *tokei* (clock) is read as *tookeii*. Furthermore, some words are pronounced incorrectly, such as the word *tsukue* (table) reads *tusukee*, *sensei* (teacher) becomes *sensai*, and so on. Third, most students find it difficult to make pauses when pronouncing sentences in Japanese, causing students' accents when speaking to be irregular. Accents in Japanese are very important because accents can differentiate meanings and can also affect the naturalness of speaking Japanese (Tadashi, 2013). This also reduces the accuracy of the pronunciation of words in Japanese.

Errors in the pronunciation of Japanese vocabulary caused students to not be fluent in speaking practice in Japanese (The Japan Foundation, 2011; Nugraheni, 2017). Speaking skills are one of the important aspects to support Japanese language skills. To overcome these problems, the authors are interested in conducting classroom action research with the theme "The Utilization of OJAD Website to Improve Japanese Speaking Skills in Vocational High School". The goal of this research is to explain the use of OJAD in improving the Japanese speaking skills of grade X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap. Then, describes students' impressions of using the OJAD website to improve the Japanese speaking skills of grade X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap.

OJAD (Online Japanese Accent Dictionary) is a website developed by Professor Minematsu Nobuaki from Tokyo University Japan for

Japanese language learners who want to learn Japanese accents either independently or for Japanese language teachers who want to teach Japanese accents to their students (Minematsu et al., 2017). OJAD was first developed in Japan and then translated into 15 foreign languages around the world, including Indonesian. OJAD can be accessed at <http://www.gavo.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ojad/jpn/pages/home>.

On the OJAD website there are various features, one of them is Suzuki-kun's Prosody Tutorial. The Suzuki-kun Prosody Tutorial feature, it's easy to use in speaking practice because by using this feature, Japanese language learners can directly type the text, they want to learn the pronunciation of. Through this feature, students will practice pronouncing words or sentences in Japanese according to pronunciation accuracy, including accents and intonations (Nakamura, Minematsu, Suzuki, Hirano, & Nakagawa, 2013). By using the OJAD website in learning Japanese, it is hoped that will improve students' skills in speaking Japanese by the accuracy of their intonation. In addition, students are expected to be excited and even more confident when practicing speaking in Japanese.

Speaking skills in Japanese are called *Kaiwa*. According to Ogawa (as cited in Sunendar, 2014) explains that speaking skills are the ability to express various thoughts and opinions orally. Meanwhile, according to Heryati (as cited in Judiarsih, 2017), speaking skills are the ability to express ideas and thoughts by articulating vowel sounds or displaying the expression of these ideas and thoughts. In line with Slamet's opinion (as cited in Judiarsih, 2017, p.33) explains that speaking skills are the ability to express one's intentions, ideas, thoughts, or heart to others. Meanwhile, according to Matsumura, Yamaguchi, and Wada (1998), it is explained that "*Kaiwa* is a conversation between two or more people who come together to express something". In other words, Japanese speaking skills (*Kaiwa*) is an activity to express ideas and thoughts or something to others. However, we have to pay attention to accents and intonation when Japanese speaking practice.

Accents are very important in Japanese interaction because it is one of the determinants of word meaning. Kashima (2016) explains that in Japanese, an accent is related to linguistic and non-language information. Language information is divided into 2, namely the function of distinguishing semantically and syntactically.

Accents that distinguish semantically, for example, the words 尾張 “owari” (place name) and 終わり “owari” (finished), two sentences that have the same pronunciation, but differ in meaning. Syntactically distinguishing accents include the word 教育 “kyouiku” (education) and the sentence 今日行く “kyou iku” (Today I’ll go). In these two cases, the accent distinguishes the word *kyouiku* as a word and *kyou iku* as a sentence.

Meanwhile, intonation in Japanese is known as イントネーション (*intoneeshon*). Saito (2009) and Kashima (2002) define intonation as a pattern of high and low sounds at the level of a sentence or speech as a whole. Based on the type, Kashima (2002) divides Japanese intonation into five types, (1). Intonation goes up (2). Intonation doesn’t go up (3). Intonation down (4). Flat intonation (5). Overall intonation pattern.

Also, there is some research about the utilization of OJAD. Nakamura, Minematsu, Suzuki, Hirano, and Nakagawa (2013), through an investigation of 36 Japanese students with a basic knowledge of accent Japanese, showed high pedagogical effectiveness of OJAD. Nakamura et al. (2013) found that the performance of the reading tutor and synthesizer were 93,2% and 95,9% respectively much higher than the efficiency of native Japanese values.

Then, Date, Nakamura, and Minematsu (2019) in their research using the OJAD website showed that after using the OJAD Suzuki-kun prosody tutorial, the evaluation results given by native Japanese speakers to Japanese language learners from China showed better results than before using OJAD. As a result, after the text was registered and analyzed, an accent pattern appeared on the screen above the text equipped with audio so that students could practice by seeing the accent pattern and or by listening to the audio. Meanwhile, Hernawati and Aryanto (2021) in their research on OJAD determined the perceptions of Japanese language learners regarding the use of the OJAD website showed that OJAD was very helpful for Japanese language learners in understanding Japanese accents and being able to pronounce them better. The students also thought that OJAD was easy to use.

Some of the previous research data above become the basis for the research concept to be carried out by researchers. The researcher is interested in using the OJAD website in teaching Japanese classes, especially in a Vocational High School in Cilacap, to help students improve their

Japanese speaking skills by being more creative and innovative. This study has several similarities and differences with previous research. The similarity is that researchers use OJAD as a medium to improve students’ Japanese language skills. The difference lies in the type of research and the object of research. The type of research conducted by researchers is class action research. This is done to get more optimal results because of the need for continuous habituation in learning the pronunciation of Japanese vocabulary which has many differences with Indonesian. Meanwhile, the object of research used by researchers is ten grade students of Vocational High School.

METHODS

Research Design

The classroom action research is designed based on Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2013) which is outlined in Figure 1.

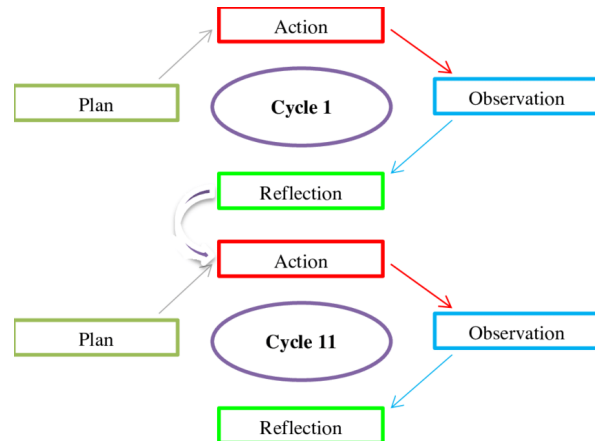


Figure 1: Classroom Action Research Design.

The following is an explanation of the classroom action research design from the figure above.

1. *Planning*, namely plan the utilization of the OJAD website.
2. *Implementing (acting)*, namely implementing the use of the OJAD website in teaching.
3. *Observing*, which is carried out to observe activities during the implementation of the utilization of the OJAD website.
4. *Reflecting*, which is to reflect on the utilization of the OJAD website.

This study was conducted in two cycles, consisting of three meetings with an allocation of 4 x @ 45 minutes because the Japanese language subject is conducted one lesson during the week and this research was conducted in two weeks. The pre-test was carried out in the first lesson in cycle 1, while the post-test was carried out in the third lesson (cycle II). The material used in this study is the theme “*Doko ni Arimasuka*”, Chapter 10 in the book “*Nihongo Kira Kira*” by Japan Foundation (2017).

Data and Data Sources

The data employed are (1) The implementation of Japanese language learning on the theme “*Doko ni Arimasuka*” using the OJAD website to improve the Japanese speaking skills of class ten grade students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap, (2) The value of students’ speaking skills is depicted through diagrams or graphs, and (3) Students’ impressions of learning after using the OJAD website were obtained by using a questionnaire.

The source of the data contained in this study is the text of speaking exercises in the book “*Nihongo Kira Kira*” (The Japan Foundation, 2017) with sentence patterns that indicate the existence of an object. The texts are as follows.

へやには、ほんや、いすや、かびん などが
あります。

Heya ni wa, isu ya, kabin nado ga arimasu.

In the room, there is a book, chair, vase, and so on.

かばんは、つくえの うえに あります。

Kaban wa, tsukue no ue ni arimasu.

The bag is on the table.

カレンダーは、かびんの よこに あります。

Karendaa wa, kabin no yoko ni arimasu.

The calendar is next to the vase.

Data Collection Procedure

The respondents of this research were 36 respondents which were students of Vocational High School in Cilacap. The data collection procedures to be carried out in this research are as follows: (1) Observation method, carried out to observe the attitudes of teachers and students during the implementation process. Utilization of the OJAD website to improve the Japanese speaking skills of grade X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap; (2) Documentation method, to obtain a list of student names and

grades before and after getting the action; (3) The Oral Test Method was carried out to obtain data in the form of the value of Japanese speaking skills of grade X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap; and (4) The questionnaire was used to obtain data in the form of students’ impressions of the application of the use of the OJAD website to improve the Japanese speaking skills of class X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap.

Action Plan

The action plan of this research consists of a planning stage, action stage, observation stage, and reflection stage which is outlined in Figure 2.

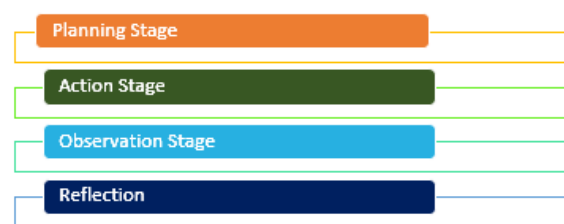


Figure 2: Action plant chart.

Planning Stage includes collecting data obtained through observation techniques, carrying out an oral pre-test, and developing a lesson plan using the OJAD website to improve speaking skills and making an observation sheet.

During the Action Stage, the teacher and collaborators explained the technical use of the OJAD website. After that, the teacher teaches Japanese using the OJAD website and asks students to practice using OJAD. The teacher also gives feedback to students after they practice using OJAD.

During the Observation Stage, the teacher observed the implementation of teaching by using the OJAD website to improve students’ speaking skills, filled out the observation sheet, and observed student activities during practice to imitate the pronunciation of words or pronunciation of sentences in Japanese according to the results of the analysis on the Suzuki-kun Prosody Tutorial feature in the form of audio and the teacher walk around during student activities.

During the Reflection Stage, the teacher and collaborators evaluated learning by using OJAD to improve the speaking skills of grade X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap. The teacher also analyses the implementation of KBM and carries out reflection on learning using OJAD to improve students’ speaking skills.

Success Indicator

The indicator of success in this study is if in one class students succeed in imitating the pronunciation of Japanese words or sentences that have been made according to the right Japanese accent so that they can achieve mastery learning skill scores of 80% by obtaining a minimum score of 76 (minimum score in Japanese subjects). Thus, it can be interpreted that students' Japanese speaking skills increase.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis procedure used in this research is a descriptive qualitative analysis and statistical qualitative. Qualitative descriptive analysis techniques were taken from the data contained in the observation sheets, documentation archives, and questionnaires given to students. Then the statistical qualitative analysis technique was obtained from the scores of students' oral test scores in practicing speaking Japanese.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Use of OJAD to Improve Japanese Speaking Skills

First, researchers have given a pre-test to determine the readiness of students before learning to use the OJAD Website (Online Japanese Accent Dictionary) in learning Japanese. At this stage, the students were given a text in Japanese “*Doko ni Arimasuka*” theme. The range of values is 1=very unnatural, 2=unnatural, 3=fairly natural, 4=natural, and 5=very natural. Then the average value of each student was taken. The results of the pre-test and post-test can be seen in the following Figure 3.

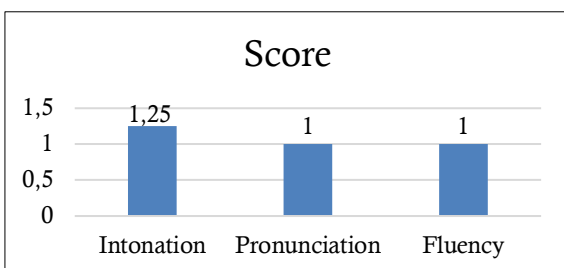


Figure 3: The Result of Pre-Test Before Using OJAD.

From Figure 3, we know that students' Japanese-speaking skills are still low. Almost all the students don't know how to speak in Japanese with good accuracy of Intonation and pronunciation. This causes students to be less fluent when practicing Japanese speaking. From this data, it becomes a foothold for researchers to make optimal use of the OJAD website in Japanese language learning. The use of the OJAD Website in learning Japanese was carried out for three meetings, which were divided into two cycles. The first cycle was held on May 21, and the second cycle was held on May 24, 2022.

On the OJAD Website utilizing the Suzuki-kun Prosody Tutorial feature to make it easier for students to improve their Japanese speaking skills. The first cycle of Japanese language learning using the OJAD website was held on Saturday, May 21, 2022, at Vocational High School in Cilacap. In this activity, the researcher and the lecturer introduced the OJAD website for learning Japanese. The researcher and the lecturer introduced the features found on the OJAD Website. Researchers and lecturers guide students in using each feature on the OJAD website.

In this activity, students practice using the OJAD website to recite a simple discourse taken from the theme *Doko ni arimasuka*. Here is an example of texts that students create to learn how to pronounce using the OJAD website.

いまには、テレビや、たなや、せんふうきなどがあります。

Ima ni wa, terebi ya, tana nado ga arimasu.

In the living room, there are television, rack, and so on.

テレビは、つくえのうえにあります。

Terebi wa, tsukue no ue ni arimasu.

Television is on the table

せんふうきは、たなのとなりにあります。

Senpuuki wa, tana no tonari ni arimasu.

The fan is next to the rack.

The text is inputted into the OJAD website on the Prosody tutorial *Suzuki-kun*, and then on the *Suzuki-kun*, the pronunciation method will be analyzed. In the next step, the text that has been analyzed is then created as an audio file and the audio file can be downloaded by students thus that students can learn and practice independently or as a group to recite the discourse text they have created. Figure 4, Figure 5, and Figure 6 show the process of using the OJAD website.



Figure 4: OJAD preview website.



Figure 5: The preview of the prosody tutorial *Suzuki-kun*.

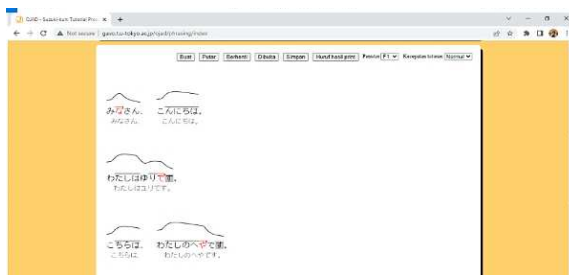


Figure 6: *Suzuki-kun* analysis result.

Through the audio files that they have downloaded, they will understand how to pronounce the text that has been converted into audio, and they can also understand the long or short reading of the words/sentences they have written.

The results of the study were taken from the analysis of the post-test 1 (Cycle I) and post-test 2 (Cycle II) assessments of 36 Respondents (students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap). The assessment was carried out on 2 variables, namely intonation, and pronunciation. Intonation is assessed based on the accuracy of high and low notes during pronunciation, while pronunciation points are assessed based on accuracy in pronouncing Japanese vowels and consonants as well as an assessment of the pronunciation of

special Japanese sounds (*tokushuon*) which include *choo'on*, (long sound), *sokuon* (geminate consonant) and *hatsuon* (the “n” consonant). Values are obtained from the results of the assessment of 2 evaluators on each student’s pronunciation results. The range of values is 1=very unnatural, 2=unnatural, 3=fairly natural, 4=natural, and 5=very natural. Then the average value of each student is taken. The results of post-test 1 (cycle I) can be seen in Figure 7.

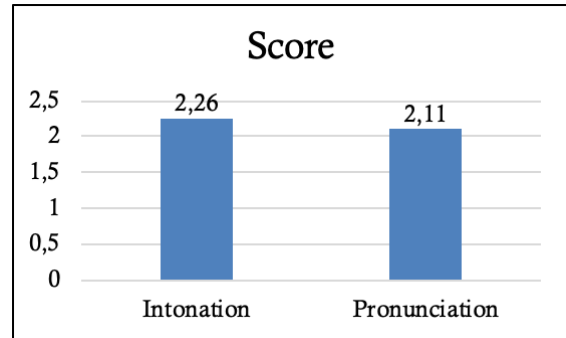


Figure 7: The result of the post-test 1 (cycle 1).

From Figure 7, we know that after using the OJAD website the student’s result of Japanese Speaking skills in the first cycle increased from the pre-test. However, the result was not good enough because most students practice Japanese speaking unnaturally. Then, some students can practice Japanese speaking fairly naturally. This happened because the students felt that they lacked Japanese speaking practice. Therefore, in the second cycle, researchers improve learning by using the OJAD website by increasing the time for practicing Japanese speaking in class.

However, the result of post-test 1 (cycle I) was not good enough, therefore, after the second cycle (cycle 2) which was held on May 24, post-test 2 was held again to find out the results achieved by students after using the OJAD website on the Japanese language learning. The results of post-test 1 and post-test 2 as a whole can be seen in Figure 8.

From Figure 8, it can be understood that in both variables, namely intonation, and pronunciation, the post-test 2 scores experienced a significant increase from the post-test 1 scores. In the intonation variable, the post-test 1 value which was originally only 2.26 rose to 3.67, while in the pronunciation variable, the post-test 1 value which was originally 2.11 increased to 3.53 in the second cycle.

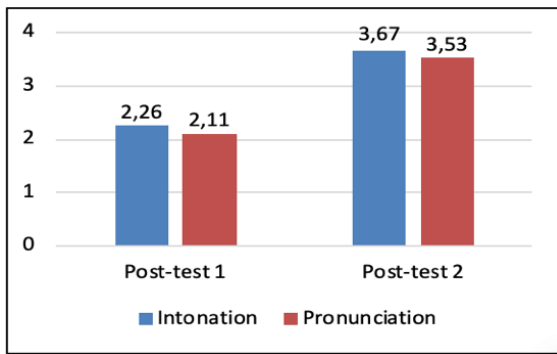


Figure 8: The result of post-test 1 and post-test 2.

Based on the results of the scores of the pre-test (Figure 3), post-test 1 score in the first cycle, and post-test 2 in the second cycle above, it can be concluded that there is an increase in the intonation and pronunciation of sentences in Japanese, and they can pronounce them better than before. Most of the students admitted that they could pronounce the Japanese sentences that he wrote with better pronunciation than before. Furthermore, based on the data from the pre-test scores in the first cycle and the post-test in the second cycle on intonation in pronouncing sentences in Japanese also showed a significant increase, because on average some students also admitted that they said sentences in Japanese with more natural narrative intonation than before. The data also shows an increase in students' Japanese speaking skills after practicing speaking using the OJAD website. From the data above, it can be concluded that OJAD is a significant resource in terms of overcoming these obstacles. This is proven by the results of the practice assessment that most students have reached passing grades.

Student's Impression on the OJAD Website Utilization to Improve Japanese Speaking Skills

Researchers distributed online questionnaires after students finished practicing speaking Japanese with the help of the OJAD website. It aims to determine the student's impression of the use of the OJAD website in helping to improve their Japanese speaking skills. Based on the results of the questionnaire that the researchers distributed to students via Google form. The result can be described as follows.

The first is about the impressions of learning Japanese using the OJAD website. The result of

impressions of learning Japanese using OJAD can be seen in Figure 9.

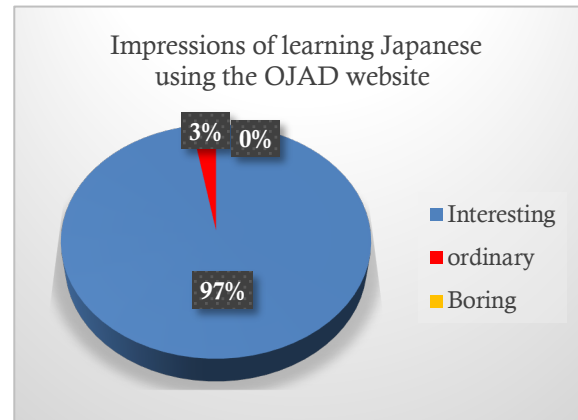


Figure 9: The result of impressions of learning Japanese using the OJAD.

Based on the data in Figure 9, the impressions of 34 students stated that using the OJAD website in learning Japanese to improve Japanese speaking skills was fun. Meanwhile, 2 students stated that learning Japanese by using the OJAD website felt normal.

Secondly, is about the OJAD website can help practice speaking Japanese words and sentences as seen in Figure 10.



Figure 10: The result of using OJAD on students' Japanese Speaking Skills.

Based on the data in Figure 10, it can be concluded that according to 36 students, the OJAD website can help them practice pronouncing words and sentences in Japanese. The data above shows the usefulness of the features on the OJAD website to make it easier for students to practice saying words/sentences in Japanese. OJAD website

makes it easy to understand the intonation and pronunciation of sentences in Japanese well.

Based on the data in Figure 11, a total of 36 students stated that the OJAD website made it easier for them to understand the intonation and pronunciation of sentences in Japanese well. They admitted that pronunciation and intonation when speaking Japanese got better than before, followed by better word-pausing.



Figure 11: The OJAD website eases understanding the intonation and pronunciation of sentences in Japanese better.

Thirdly, Figure 12 presents how the OJAD website can help improve Japanese speaking skills.

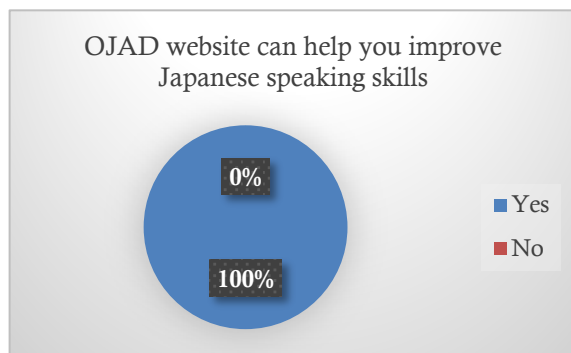


Figure 12: The OJAD website can help you improve your Japanese speaking skills.

Based on the data in Figure 12, as many as 36 students stated that the OJAD website helped them improve their Japanese speaking skills. This is proven by the convenience of the Suzuki-kun Prosody Tutorial feature found on the OJAD website, making it easier for students to practice speaking Japanese through audio files from the text that have been analyzed by the OJAD website. This makes it easier for students to pronounce sentences in Japanese with more precise intonation.

Fourthly, the use of the OJAD website in learning Japanese makes them more enthusiastic about learning Japanese, as seen in Figure 13.

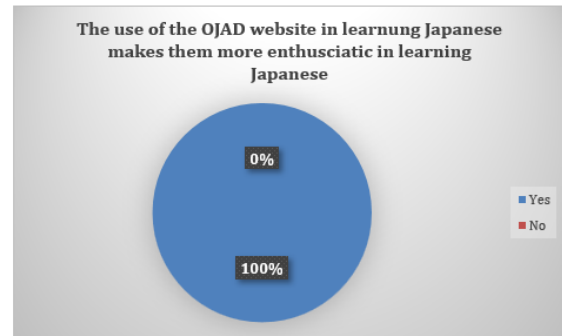


Figure 13: The use of the OJAD website in learning Japanese makes them more enthusiastic about learning Japanese.

Based on the data presented in Figure 13, 36 students stated that the use of the OJAD website made students more enthusiastic about learning Japanese. This is proven by the ease of use of various features contained on the OJAD website so that they are also more enthusiastic about learning Japanese.

The following is a summary of data in the form of suggestions and criticisms on the use of the OJAD website in improving Japanese speaking skills, which are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Critic and advice on the use of OJAD.

Critic	Advice
The writing is all in hiragana so sometimes you have to look for the meaning of the letters to be able to read them, if you don't memorize the hiragana letters it becomes difficult to read.	Include Romaji in Japanese vocabulary that reads hiragana/katakana/kanji to make reading easier
OJAD website cannot analyze text/sentences written in Romaji (alphabet)	Add a feature that can analyze Romaji (alphabet) writing
Lowercase font size when opened on a cellphone	Add other interesting features, so that you can add references to learning Japanese

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the above explanation, with the OJAD website as a learning medium to improve Japanese speaking skills, it can be

concluded that with the OJAD website, students' Japanese speaking skills increase, which means students can pronounce Japanese sentences with better pronunciation and intonation than before. Furthermore, there is an improvement in the Japanese speaking skills of grade X students of a Vocational High School in Cilacap. In addition, learning Japanese by using the OJAD website as a media lesson makes students more enthusiastic and feel fun when learning Japanese. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for improving proficiency in Japanese, especially in terms of Japanese speaking skills.

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