

Gamification Based Visual Novel as a Learning Medium for JLPT N3 Kanji

Nauval Nurtanza Mauludin

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia

Soni Mulyawan Setiana

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, West Java, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The study of kanjis is among the most difficult tasks in learning Japanese due to complicated shapes of characters, various readings, and different meanings. The purpose of the research is to analyze the possibility of using visual novel technology based on gamification as a tool for learning kanjis at the JLPT N3 level. The research methodology is qualitative descriptive analysis based on the study of the literature concerning previously conducted studies in relation to visual novels, gamification, and game-based learning in Japanese. According to the findings described in the scientific literature and other academic sources, it is possible to conclude that the usage of learning media based on visual novels positively influences students' motivation, engagement, and understanding of the material thanks to the combination of storytelling, images, and interaction. Additionally, such gamification features as levels, scoring, and feedback help students memorize the material better and motivate them to continue practicing.

Keywords: *Visual Novel, Kanji Learning, Gamification, JLPT N3, Digital Learning Media*

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has brought significant changes to the field of education, especially in terms of delivering learning material. Technology-supported learning media have facilitated an interactive, adaptive, and immersive learning experience for learners. Digital media, including interactive multimedia, educational games, and visual novels, is considered one innovation that has the potential to enhance the quality of learning in the digital age (Akbar, Mulyadi, & Shandi, 2021).

As regards learning Japanese, one of the issues that many learners usually encounter in their learning process is the ability to understand how to read kanji. The problem in reading kanji lies in the fact that kanji have very many unique features since each character is able to take different forms, pronunciations, and meanings, depending on its context of use.

Some researches have revealed that using interactive media for learning could lead to improvement in the understanding of kanji. Game-based media or gamification could increase student engagement in the process of learning, making the experience more exciting and enjoyable for the learners (Sonjaya, Marcheta, & Pratama, 2024). This means that gaming features such as interactive interaction would motivate the learner to practice continuously.

In addition to gamification, visual novels also have potential as interactive learning media. A visual novel is a digital medium that combines story elements, visuals, and user interaction through dialogue choices or branching storylines. This medium allows users to actively engage in the learning process so that the material can be understood more contextually. Research conducted by Sukma and Kholiq (2021) shows that the use of visual novels in learning can improve higher-order thinking skills through narrative-based material presentation.

Moreover, based on the research conducted by Nurhaliza and Setiana (2024), visual novels may improve the motivation of Japanese language learners through characters' dialogue and storytelling. From this background, this study will examine the possibility of integrating gamification-based visual novels as a learning medium for kanji at the JLPT N3 level through the review of several studies before. However, prior studies either discuss gamification and visual novels independently or explore language learning generally without considering the mastery of kanji in the JLPT N3 level. For instance, according to the research conducted by Sonjaya et al. (2024), gamification is significant in raising students' motivation levels, while Sukma and Kholiq (2021) discuss visual novels and their application in improving critical thinking skills. Additionally, other studies such as Mantelli (2023) explain game-based approaches in recognizing vocabularies; however, they neglect narrative media such as visual novels. In this regard, there is a need to conduct research on the integration of gamification and visual novels as a learning medium for kanji at the intermediate level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual Novels as Learning Media

The visual novel is considered a type of interactive digital media in which narrative aspects, visuals, and user interaction by making dialogue decisions or through story branches are combined together. This type of media has been primarily utilized in the digital gaming industry, but nowadays it is also possible to use visual novels as a learning media since they can provide contextual and interactive learning experience. According to research, the use of visual novels in learning activities enhances users' interaction (Deli, 2021).

Visual novels may aid learners in comprehending language structures and vocabulary through dialogue and plot displayed visually. The involvement in visual novels enables a learner to grasp the content better since he/she is directly engaged in the learning process.

Gamification in Learning

Game-Based Learning is one of the forms of learning where game concepts are integrated into the learning process. Concepts from games such as scores, levels, challenges, and rewards can be incorporated to motivate and encourage students during the learning process. This form of learning is seen to be successful due to its ability to make the learning process enjoyable for the student.

Game-based learning techniques have been shown to aid Japanese language acquisition by enhancing vocabulary recognition and kanji characters. Gamification makes it possible for learners to exercise their reading skills and recognize kanji characters using game-based applications (Mantelli, 2023).

Digital Learning Media

Digital learning media are digital devices used to transmit learning materials through use of technology in order to produce a more effective means of learning. The use of digital media allows for the inclusion of different features like texts, graphics, sound, video, and animations in the presentation of the learning material (Akbar et al., 2021).

Furthermore, there is the ability to have a flexible mode of learning based on the requirements of the learners when digital media is applied. Technology can make learning interactive and encourage independent learning among learners (Bawamenewi & Waruwu, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

The research employed qualitative descriptive analysis with a literature review strategy. Qualitative descriptive analysis is used to explore numerous previous studies regarding the implementation of visual novels, gamification, and game-based learning on Japanese language learning.

No	Author & Year	Research Focus	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
1	Mantelli (2023)	Game-based kanji/vocabulary learning	Experimental/application-based	Improves speed and accuracy in word recognition through interactive exercises	Shows effectiveness of game-based learning for kanji recognition
2	Sonjaya et al. (2024)	Gamification in kanji learning	Quantitative/implementation study	Gamification elements increase motivation and engagement	Supports use of gamification elements (points, levels, feedback)
3	Sukma & Kholiq (2021)	Visual novel in learning	Development research	Visual novels enhance higher order thinking through narrative	Shows potential of narrative-based learning media
4	Deli (2021)	Visual novel interface in learning	Descriptive analysis	Visual novel interaction increases user engagement	Supports usability and engagement aspect
5	Nurhaliza & Setiana (2024)	Visual novel in Japanese learning	Quantitative	Increases motivation and through story and character interaction	Reinforces motivational impact of visual novels
6	Udjaja et al. (2022)	Game-based learning in Japanese	Experimental	Improves overall language learning outcomes	Supports broader effectiveness of game-based learning

The table presents the comparison of research focus, methods, and findings from each study, which serves as the basis for identifying research gaps and evaluating the potential integration of gamification-based visual novels in JLPT N3 kanji learning.

DISCUSSION

After studying the results of the researches described in the Methodology section, it becomes evident that not only the use of gamification but also the use of visual novel learning methods plays an essential role in Japanese language acquisition, especially regarding motivation, engagement, and understanding.

As seen in studies dealing with gamification, for example, Sonjaya et al. (2024), it is clear that the use of game features, including points, levels, and feedback mechanisms, leads to higher motivation and engagement among learners. Likewise, the work of Mantelli (2023) reveals that the use of games can help enhance vocabulary recognition in terms of accuracy and speed of memorization.

Conversely, research involving visual novels, including Sukma and Kholiq (2021) and Deli (2021), demonstrates the effectiveness of narrative learning. Learners can relate to the content using the narratives, dialogues, and interactions within visual novels, which promote context comprehension and cognitive thinking processes. Similarly, Nurhaliza and Setiana (2024) assert that visual novels have the potential to boost learners' motivation via character and narrative development.

Additionally, Udjaja et al. (2022) further corroborate the efficiency of game-based learning in enhancing the overall skills in Japanese, supporting the hypothesis that technology-based and interactive media could be used to develop an engaging learning environment.

Nonetheless, despite the positive implications revealed by these studies, it should be noted that past literature mainly revolves around either gamification or visual novels. There are currently few instances wherein a study has considered the integration of the two media forms within one learning technique.

Thus, incorporating gamification in visual novels used for educational purposes can have great potential as a means of combining the benefits of both methods. Gamification can serve as an effective motivational mechanism, and visual novels will help achieve learning objectives and give the learning process context. This combination can not only motivate students but also help them learn Japanese kanji better.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that there is much possibility that visual novels based on the concept of gamification could serve as learning media for kanji learning at JLPT N3 level. The incorporation of stories, visual images, and gaming elements could potentially motivate learners, encourage their engagement in kanji learning, and improve their kanji recognition skills. According to the findings from the analysis of previous studies' results, it can be inferred that learning media that utilizes the visual novel concept could offer an innovative alternative in the learning process of the Japanese language, specifically kanji learning.

REFERENCES

- Akbar, M. R., Mulyadi, & Shandi, S. A. (2021). Literature review of graphic learning media in language learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 11(2), 46 55.
- Bawamenewi, A., & Waruwu, Y. (2023). Development of language learning media through digital transformation based on e-learning. *Ghâncaran: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, Special Edition Lalongét IV, 58 66. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ghancaran.vi.11739>
- Deli, D. (2021). User interface analysis in game-based visual novel English learning media. *Journal of Applied Informatics and Computing (JAIC)*, 5(1), 9 20. <https://doi.org/10.30871/jaic.v5i1.2749>
- Mantelli, A. (2023). The Kanji Game: An online word recognition application for SL Italian learners of Japanese. *Kervan: International Journal of African and Asian Studies*, 27(1). <https://doi.org/10.13135/1825-263X/7699>
- Nurhaliza, R. S., & Setiana, S. M. (2024). Influence of the Visual Novel Game Project Sekai: Colorful Stage! as audio-visual media for motivation to learn Japanese vocabulary. <https://doi.org/10.34010/565tbr91>
- Sonjaya, I., Marcheta, N., & Pratama, M. R. (2024). Application of learning material with a gamification model approach as an innovation in learning Japanese kanji letters. *International Conference on Teaching, Learning and Technology (ICTLT 2023)*. [10.2991/978-2-38476-206-4_28](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-206-4_28)
- Sukma, A. K., & Kholiq, A. (2021). Development of SI VINO (Physics Visual Novel) to train higher-order thinking skills of high school students. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Fisika*, 5(2), 123 137.
- Udjaja, Y., Suri P. A., Gunawan R. S., & Hartanto F. (2022). Game-based learning increases Japanese language learning through video games. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications (IJACSA)*, 13(2). [10.14569/IJACSA.2022.0130268](https://doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2022.0130268)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nauval Nurtanza Mauludin, Email: nauval.63822042@mahasiswa.unikom.ac.id

Nauval Nurtanza Mauludin is a final-year student currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Japanese Literature at Universitas Komputer Indonesia.

Prof. Dr. Soni Mulyawan Setiana, S.Pd., M.Pd., CIRR, email: -

Prof. Dr. Soni Mulyawan Setiana, S.Pd., M.Pd., CIRR is a lecturer in the Japanese Literature program at Universitas Komputer Indonesia.