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Students' Perception of ODL Using Telegram as a Japanese Language Learning Platform

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Abstract

Since the beginning of 2020 following the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, ODL has become the new norm in education either at the primary school level or in higher education institutions. This study is motivated to identify the student's perception of the teaching and learning platform chosen by the instructor so that the ODL session can be optimized and will successfully assist the students' attainment of the Japanese language course. The purpose of this study is to investigate how students perceive Telegram as an ODL platform for learning Japanese. This quantitative study used a 5-point Likert scale as an instrument. The survey was divided into five sections. Section A was the demographic profile, Section B was Learner-to-Learner Interaction, Section C was Learner-to-Instructor Interaction, Section D was Learner-to-Content Interaction and Section E was Learner-to-Platform Interaction. There are 26 items for the Four Types of Interactions. 186 students learning Introductory Japanese Level II participated in this survey. Data is analyzed using SPSS Frequency Statistics, Descriptive Statistics and Paired Samples T-Test. The findings of the study show that students agree with the choice of Telegram as an online Japanese learning platform and the interaction between students, instructors, content and platform is positive. It is suggested that qualitative studies are also conducted to explore more about their perceptions of Telegram being a platform for ODL.

Keyword: Online and Distance Learning (ODL), Telegram, Japanese Language, Learning Platform, Types of Interactions

Introduction

Background of Study

Online and Distance Learning (ODL) is a 100% virtual learning method with the help of devices and an internet connection without face-to-face interaction between students and instructors in the classroom, which provides flexibility about where to study, when to study and how to study. UNESCO (2002) defines ODL as access to education and training provision, without time and place constraints, and offers students flexible learning opportunities. According to Soetan

et al (2015), ODL is a pedagogical approach designed to allow students to study at home, in the office, or in the store, without having to attend a formal class in person.

The adaptation of new norms in teaching and learning becomes the driving force for ODL learning in the future in line with IR4.0 (Kechil et al., 2020). In Malaysia, Open University Malaysia (OUM) is the first institution to introduce ODL in 2020 which uses the latest Internet technology and enables access to education for all (Wei et al., 2016). In one of the public universities in Malaysia, ODL sessions have been applied for all courses since April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instructors at this institution have been given the autonomy to structure their own teaching platform using a variety of educational tools considering two factors, the flexibility of student and instructor time and the stability of the Internet.

To embark on ODL, the main challenge is how to make ODL work for all students and how to help students who do not have access to the Internet or technology to participate in ODL as the gap for technology and Internet access is an issue. Soetan et al (2015) discovered that unstable power supply, poor Internet service and high cost of personal computers are among the problems affecting ODL. Similarly, Ibrahim et al (2016) pointed out that the main disadvantage of using telegram as a tool for ODL is the Internet coverage. Mathew and Chung (2020) stressed that some students requested the lecturer not to use the live applications because it consumed a lot of mobile data. Another problem identified is insufficient preparation and training time for instructors (Kassymova, 2018; Aksarina et al., 2019) and adapting to existing curricula or developing new course syllabuses (Ngoasong, 2021).

As a platform for virtual teaching and learning sessions, some instructors opted for the popular video conferencing apps (Hendri et al., 2020), for instance Google Meet, Zoom, Cisco Webex, MS Teams, Skype and Facebook Live to conduct the synchronous class (Ya Shak et al., 2021; Hendri et al., 2020; Brahma, 2020; Naserly, 2020; Dharma et al., 2017; Iftakhar, 2016). On the other hand, some instructors resorted to messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Line, Facebook Messenger, Line and Viber (Rasiban, 2021; Prokopyev et al., 2021; Vahdat, 2020; Alahmad, 2020; Alakrash et al., 2020; Napratilora et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2016; Iksan and Saufian, 2012). Among the world's smartphone users, WhatsApp is the most popular application, followed by Viber and in third place is Telegram, even though Telegram has better security features than WhatsApp and Viber. Telegram was initialized in August 2013 by the Russian-born entrepreneur Pavel Durov (Sutikno et al., 2016).

Telegram was chosen as the platform for ODL sessions for several Japanese language classes at this largest public university in Malaysia after taking several factors into account. Telegram does not automatically reveal phone numbers, communication archives are stored in the cloud, and Telegram can share documents, images and videos without size limits. Telegram is a multi-platform application that can run on Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Mac and Windows OS. Telegram accounts can be accessed from multiple devices and messages appear simultaneously on all devices and it provides a platform for chatting in groups of up to 5000 participants (Sutikno et al., 2016). Ibrahim et al (2016); Iksan and Saufian (2012) used Telegram in their teaching and learning sessions and they discovered that Telegram is a fast way and an easy platform to share information. Meanwhile, Alahmad (2020) stated that students can improve their English and motivate themselves to learn on their own.

Statement of Problem

Before COVID-19, classes at this public university were conducted face-to-face, using Blended Learning, sometimes using WhatsApp as an online communication platform with students, the university web as a medium for sharing teaching and learning materials, Marugoto as a textbook and sometimes Minato as an online learning material and PowerPoint slides as supporting material.

Problems arose when instructors were to shift from the familiar or one's comfort zone to a new challenging method and delivery. There were numerous platforms to choose from to be treated as the virtual classroom. On top of that, the instructors lacked the skills to operate the most suitable platform to carry out the teaching and learning sessions virtually. Notwithstanding with that, the shift to ODL and synchronous and asynchronous sessions was inevitable to replace the teacher-student live interaction. Mathew et al (2020) state that the factors that students like about ODL are that they are satisfied with the interaction, the choice of ODL platform as well as the method used by most lecturers who use asynchronous methods (video, voice notes or audio recordings) that are easy, thus can make them face lessons better. Eventually, in some classes, Telegram was used by some of the instructors as the platform for conducting the ODL session primarily to cater for the students' and instructors' time flexibility and their internet stability as per the university's suggestion.

At this university, what is the perception and how do students accept the use of Telegram as an ODL platform? How they interact with each other, with lecturers, with content and with Telegram itself. Did the instructor make the right choice to use Telegram? And can Telegram facilitate synchronous and asynchronous sessions?

Objective and Research Questions

In general, this study was conducted to explore how Japanese language is learned using Telegram. This study was made specifically to examine the following research questions:

- What is the student's perception of learning Japanese online and distance when using Telegram as a learning platform?
- What is the effect of using Telegram as the platform for online and distance Japanese language learning on student learning and interactions?
- Is Telegram the best online platform for teaching and learning Japanese?

Literature Review

Moore's Interaction Framework

Interaction and engagement are closely related to each other where they are, at times, interchangeable (Martin and Bolliger, 2018). According to Martin and Bolliger (2018), the development of interaction is important for online learning. In contrast to face-to-face delivery, blended and online course structures involve authentic pedagogical styles (Muir et al., 2022). Moore (1989) found that there are three types of interaction regarding ODL: Learner-Content Interaction, Learner-Instructor Interaction and Learner-Learner Interaction. Using Moore's (1989) concept as a foundation, Martin and Bolliger (2018) created the diagram below to show the relationship between learners, instructors and content. This framework has also been adopted by (Muir et al., 2022).

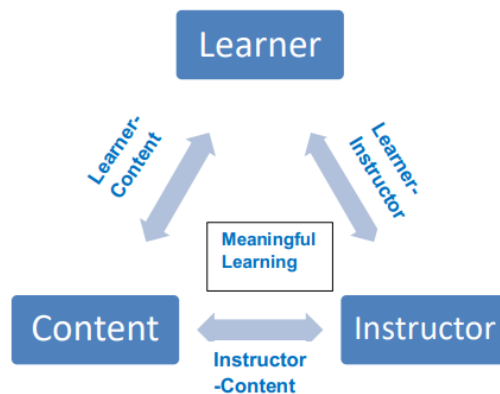


Figure 1 - Types of Interactions, based on Moore's Interaction Framework, in (Martin and Bolliger, 2018)

Figure 1 shows how each item has a two-way relationship with each other to create a meaningful learning experience. This reveals that interactions missing any item will not result in effective online learning.

Types of Interactions

Learner-to-Content Interaction

The method in which students involve themselves with instructional materials and prearranged activities are what we refer to as Learner-Content Interaction (Muir et al., 2022). Moore (1989) explained that the first category of interaction in online learning is between learner and content where changes in learner's comprehension, learner's outlook, or the cognitive pattern of the learner's mental state are the result of engaging rationally with content. The association of students and content is not shallow as shared stories of related content can result in higher engagement and connection of students to the materials (Solis and Turner, 2017). Solis and Turner (2017) elaborated that unlike the typical numerical grades, well-timed and friendly feedback provided students with formative direction and extended dialogue. On the other hand, Brown (2021) stated that Learner-Content Interaction involved items, such as, putting together realistic situations, providing well-thought-out dialogues, and engaging with content within more than one media format.

Learner-to-Instructor Interaction

Previous scholars explained Learner-Instructor Interaction through examples of activity between students and their instructor. Moore (2018) described this interaction in his theory of transactional distance where courses with low structure but high dialogue, i.e., low transactional distance, have learners obtain information and supervision through regular continuing dialogue with their instructors. On the other hand, Martin and Bolliger (2018) explained that to make students' learning meaningful, students should be given opportunities to engage frequently with one another as well as instructors regarding their assignments, grades and course materials through effective online instruction. In addition, positive Learner-to-Instructor Interaction through caring about students and content could build an encouraging learning environment (Solis and Turner, 2017).

Learner-to-Learner Interaction

Among the strategies that can be used to facilitate Learner-to-Learner Interaction are creating collaborative introduction activities early in a course, employing video conferencing

or chat rooms, and utilizing discussion boards (Brown, 2021; Muir et al., 2022). When it comes to Learner-to-Learner Interaction, it is vital for activities that encourage interaction to be created as it nurtures the feeling of being connected and a sense of community as well as preventing possible boredom and loneliness in the learning environment. However, Moore (1989) stated that this third category of interaction was a challenge to the thinking and practice of teaching and learning in the 1990s. Even now, these challenges are still present and profound when creating meaningful learning is concerned. Moore (1989) explained that despite being vital in class, the interaction between students depends highly on certain factors like age and the objective of interaction.

Learner, Instructor and Content-to-Platform Interaction

Figure 1 above shows how the learner, instructor and content interact with each other. Despite the focus on online learning and frequent discussions by previous scholars, technological factors, particularly the Telegram platform, have not yet been included. According to Solis and Turner (2017), technology is a tool that can be used to encourage students and develop a more supportive classroom environment that consistently shows increased class engagement. In addition, students can improve their technology skills, as well as they are given the opportunity to communicate with the instructor when learning to use technology (Martin and Bolliger, 2018). Iksan and Saufian (2012) explained Telegram as a learning platform that is easy to handle, can be used in various types of communication devices and allows users to upload written, visual and audio materials. Students of English as a Foreign Language can use the Telegram platform to improve their English not only in the classroom, because it can encourage them to learn on their own and shift the role of the student (Alahmad, 2020). In fact, in Rasiban's (2021) study of the Telegram application in Japanese language learning, it was found that the overall results of the Japanese language test showed an improvement when compared to the pre-test scores of basic Japanese language skills. Therefore, when it concerns interaction in online learning, it is inevitable and necessary for a technological item, in this case the Telegram platform, to be included as part of this research.

Past Studies

Online and Distance Learning

When it comes to the study of ODL, previous scholars have discovered that online platforms or technologies have a positive perspective especially from students. However, there are also many other factors that play a role in effective online learning. Abas et al (2021) pointed out that teaching and learning Japanese online using videos and photos is the best way to learn about the culture and lifestyle. Mathew and Chung (2020) found that the implementation of YouTube as a teaching platform during COVID-19 was well received by university students. Mathew and Chung (2020) mentioned that the use of asynchronous methods, in the form of videos, voice notes or audio recordings, helps students in improving the students' ability to cope with the lesson as well as making it easier for them. Similarly, Weidlich and Bastiaens (2018); Sadeghi (2019) also stated the idea of how online learning is easy and flexible is often presented by students in their findings. Mathew and Chung (2020), who investigated university students' perspectives on the implementation of ODL during COVID-19, have used YouTube as a teaching platform and it delighted the students. However, there are many factors that require scrutiny when discussing effective online learning. Mathew and Chung

(2020) explained that the choice of engagement, platform and method implemented by teachers when implementing ODL increases the enjoyment of students' learning experiences.

Meanwhile, Markova et al (2017) discussed that the main motivations of students to choose professional studies through the online mode are the opportunity to include work in their studies, the opportunity to study in their residence, appropriate tuition fees and flexibility of learning time. They also discussed the important role of an effective teacher, technical support and faculty in distance learning. However, according to Weidlich and Bastiaens (2018), when using mediator analysis, it revealed that the transactional distance (TD) of student-student (the perception of psychological distance between students and their peers) does not have a prominent relationship with satisfaction.

Due to the increasing popularity and necessity of online learning nowadays (Mathew and Chung, 2020) and many factors revolving around teachers, students, content and technology, the academic examination of online learning, i.e. the student's perspective, has proven to be prominent in creating a learning experience that mean Wei et al (2016) argue that the quality of online courses is ambiguous because through methods for various assessment components, they show that student performance in ODL environments is relatively similar to full-time settings. This creates more needs for online learning to be explored further, thus, this study aims to find out students' perceptions of ODL using Telegram as a Japanese Language Learning platform.

Telegram as Japanese Language Learning as a Teaching Platform

Several studies have been done to examine how Telegram has been used as the platform to teach Japanese online. One of the studies was done by Rasiban (2021) where she investigated how Telegram application effects on increasing Japanese language learning motivation and the learners' Japanese Language skills. For two months, a Japanese Language class called *Aya Nihongo's class* was conducted using Telegram with 70 Japanese language learners as respondents. By assessing their knowledge on *Hiragana*, *Katakana*, Japanese learning and interaction, the findings indicated that the use of Telegram platform has assisted in making the learning process as well as message and content delivery effective and punctual. Rasiban (2021) explained further that it is also vital for teachers to engage with students and monitor them to maintain this motivation consistently. The study of Vahdat et. al (2020) on the effect of Telegram on collocation learning of Iranian EFL students confirmed the effect of telegram on students' collocation knowledge.

On the other hand, Alahmad (2020) has conducted a study on the use of mobile phone applications in language classrooms. His analysis revealed that Telegram can be used by teachers as a platform for face-to-face coaching as well as assessment because of its friendly teacher-learner interaction features. Both Rasiban (2021); Alahmad (2020) have pointed out that some similarities exist when using Telegram as a language learning platform. Both found that Telegram has an advantage when it comes to storage because Telegram has a large cloud-based storage system. They also explained that teachers play an important role in using Telegram as a teaching and learning tool either for assessment (Alahmad, 2020) and sharing materials (Alakrash et al., 2020; Rasiban, 2021). Telegram is beneficial to students because it encourages them to acquire natural resources with various capacities in expanding their vocabulary (Alakrash et al., 2020). Statements from previous researchers reveal the beneficial factors of Telegram as a language learning tool that involves not only technical elements but

also learning interactions. Therefore, this study aims to see students' perceptions of the interactions that occur when using Telegram.

Students' Perceptions of ODL

Studies of students' perceptions of ODL show mixed reactions and feedback about online learning. Saidi et al (2021) conducted a survey involving 485 students from public and private higher education institutions. The results showed that undergraduate students, many of whom were taking online classes for the first time, preferred synchronous learning using Google Meet over other platforms. Meanwhile, 207 students surveyed by Maican and Cocorada (2021) also found synchronous learning through audio/video-conference platforms to be positive. However, they found technical problems a hindrance and the reporting demands of the assignment stressful. Maican and Cocorada (2021) further explained that the biggest stress factor and coping behavior affecting students while learning online is the accessibility of online resources and their enjoyment of online learning. In addition, Saidi et al (2021); Maican and Cocorada (2021) agree that despite the online learning environment during the pandemic, it is also expected that hybrid and blended learning is adapted during the post-pandemic.

Allam et al (2021) found that first degree students of the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies who had just registered and had to do online learning at the initial stage of the Movement Control Order (MCO) showed high computer/Internet literacy (CIL) proficiency. However, these students find it difficult to engage in self-directed learning (SDL) and have low learning motivation (MOL). They also found that students find their homes too un conducive to study and technological distractions are factors that lower their motivation to study (MOL). On the other hand, Martin and Bollinger (2018) found that all three interactions suggested by Moore (1989) were found in 155 respondents, especially learner-instructor interactions. On the other hand, Martin and Bollinger (2018) found that all three interactions suggested by Moore (1989) were found in 155 respondents, especially learner-instructor interactions. They suggest that instructors and instructional designers structure their online learning according to this engagement strategy. Previously, students concluded that there are many factors in online learning which are technical issues that are highly discussed as obstacles to online learning. Thus, this forms the relevance of this study where students' perception of ODL through Telegram can be a solution to meaningful online learning.

Conceptual Framework

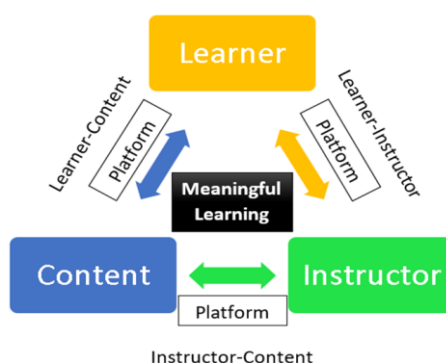


Figure 2 - Conceptual Framework of the Study: Learning Japanese Using Telegram Adapting Martin and Bollinger (2018)'s Interaction Framework, based on Moore (1989)'s Concept

Based on the discussion done in the previous sub-topic about Moore's Three Steps of Interaction (1989) and Martin and Bollinger's figure description (2018) about those steps, the figure above was created for the purpose of this study. Variables on the interaction between learners, instructors and content remain, however, due to the important discussion of technology (in this case, the Telegram platform) in previous studies, this research has included the platform as part of the interaction item. As can be seen in Figure 2, the platform plays an important role as a medium of interaction between items to form meaningful learning. Alahmad (2020) in his study suggested that instructors use the Telegram application as a complementary tool for face-to-face teaching and assessment. Therefore, using the above framework, this study aims to examine students' perspectives on Japanese ODL when using Telegram as a platform.

Methodology

Method of Data collection and Data Analysis

This quantitative study was conducted to explore students' perceptions of online and distance Japanese language learning when using Telegram as a learning platform, the effect of using Telegram as an online and distance Japanese language learning platform on student learning and interaction, and Telegram as the best online platform for teaching and learning Japanese. 186 respondents from various fields of Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities and Business and Management participated in this survey. The respondents were from all three levels of the Japanese language elective course, namely Level 1 (TJC401), Level 2 (TJC451) and Level 3 (TJC501). The instrument used is a survey (Table 1). It is designed based on Moore's (1989) Three Types of Interaction structured into a diagram by Martin and Bollinger (2018); Student-to-Student Interaction, Student-to-Instructor Interaction and Student-to-Content Interaction. Learner-to-Platform was added in this study making it 4 interactions. Section A of the questionnaire looked at the demographic profile of the respondents. Section B has five (5) items on Student-to-Student Interaction, Section C has eight (8) items on Student-to-Instructor Interaction and Section C has eight (8) items on Student-to-Content Interaction and Section E has five (5) items about Learner-to-Platform Interaction.

Table 1

Distribution of Items on Survey

SECTION	ITEMS	NO. OF ITEMS
A	Demographic Profile of Respondents	4
B	Learner-to-Learner Interaction	5
C	Learner-to-Instructor Interaction	8
D	Learner-to-Content Interaction	8
E	Learner-to-Platform Interaction	5
Total		30

A reliability analysis was done on the instrument to reveal a Cronbach alpha of .976; thus, showing a high internal reliability for the instrument. Data is collected via Google Form and

analyzed using SPSS version 26 Frequency Statistics for the demographic profile, Descriptive Statistics for all Likert's and Paired Samples T-Test for comparison between Learner-to-Learner Interaction and Learner-to-Instructor Interaction to reveal the percentage and mean scores.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.958	26

Table 2 shows the reliability analysis of the items for the quantitative instrument. This survey consisted of 30 items where 26 of the items are scale-types and the value for Cronbach's Alpha was $\alpha = .958$. The statistics here show that the internal consistency is excellent, thus indicating that the items are reliable.

Findings**Introduction**

This section begins with the analysis of data in the demographic profile using percentages and presented in the form of tables. The next section presents the analyzed data in the form of mean scores and presented in the form of tables too.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 3

Percentage for Gender

Gender		
	n	%
Male	57	30.6
Female	129	69.4
Total	186	100.0

Table 3 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. Majority of the respondents (69.4%, n=129) are female students while 30.6% (n=57) are males.

Table 4
Percentage of Faculty

Faculty		
	n	%
Science and Technology	47	25.3
Social Sciences and Humanities	117	62.9
Business and Management	22	11.8
Total	186	100.0

Table 4 unveils the faculty distribution of the respondents. Based on this, majority of the respondents (62.9%, n=117) are from the social sciences and humanities faculties, while 25.3% (n=47) are from science and technology faculties and 11.8% (n=22) are from the business and management faculties.

Table 5
Percentage of Current Semester

Current Semester		
	n	%
Semester 1 - 3	134	72.0
Semester 4 - 6	41	22.0
Semester 7 and above	11	5.9
Total	186	100.0

The current semester of the respondents is distributed in Table 5. Based on the table, most of the respondents (72%, n=134) are from semesters 1 to 3, while 22% (n=41) are from semesters 4 to 6. Only 5.9% (n=11) are from semesters 7 and above.

Table 6

Percentage of Level

Japanese Language Level		
	n	%
TJC401	82	44.1
TJC451	57	30.6
TJC501	47	25.3
Total	186	100.0

Table 6 reveals the data for the Japanese language level taken by the respondents. According to this, majority of the respondents (44.1%, n=82) are taking TJC401, while 30.6% (n=57) are taking TJC451 and 25.3% (n=47) are taking TJC501.

Findings for Learner-to-Learner Interaction, Learner-to-Instructor Interaction, Learner-to-Content Interaction and Findings for Learner-to-Platform Interaction
Findings for Learner-to-Learner Interaction

Table 7

Mean for Learner-to-Learner Interaction

Learner-to-Learner Interaction			
	N	M	SD
Does learning Japanese online using Telegram could promote peer-to-peer understanding?	186	4.19	.859
Are you more likely to ask for help from your peers during online Japanese classes?	186	4.07	.948
Do you think that the sense of community has helped you to engage in online Japanese classes?	186	4.26	.736
Do you think that support from peers motivates you to complete tasks in online Japanese classes?	186	4.31	.705
Do you think that support from peers prevents you from dropping out of Japanese classes?	186	4.37	.702

Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics on the Learner-to-Learner Interaction. As per the data presented, the item 'do you think that support from peers prevents you from dropping out of Japanese classes?' recorded the highest mean of 4.37 (SD=.702) with the item 'are you more likely to ask for help from your peers during online Japanese classes?' recorded the lowest with 4.07 (SD=.948). The other items recorded mean values ranging between 4.19 and 4.31.

The findings here indicate that the students on average agree that interaction between learners are maintained through online learning and through Telegram.

Findings for Learner-to-Instructor Interaction

Table 8

Mean for Learner-to-Instructor Interaction

Learner-to-Instructor Interaction			
	N	M	SD
Do you find it easy to communicate without any hesitations with your instructor during the online Japanese classes?	186	4.22	.857
Do you find it easy to communicate freely with your instructor after the online Japanese classes?	186	4.32	.808
Does your instructor maintain the ongoing interactions with the students after online Japanese classes?	186	4.51	.668
Do you think it is easy to give feedback on Japanese lessons using Telegram?	186	4.30	.878
Does your instructor's teaching method encourage students' active participation during online Japanese classes?	186	4.40	.821
Do you feel encouraged by your instructor to keep being engaged during online Japanese classes?	186	4.41	.809
Do you think that Telegram is an effective and convenient platform for online Japanese classes?	186	4.23	.976
Do you feel that feedback from your instructor on your performance during the online Japanese classes are clear and positive?	186	4.45	.771

Table 8 displays the descriptive statistics on the Learner-to-Instructor Interaction. Based on the data presented, the item 'does your instructor maintain the ongoing interactions with the students after online Japanese classes?' recorded the highest mean of 4.51 (SD=.668) with the item 'do you find it easy to communicate without any hesitations with your instructor during the online Japanese classes?' recorded the lowest with a mean value of 4.22 (SD=.857). The other items scored mean values ranging from 4.23 to 4.45. This indicates that when it comes to learner-to-instructor instruction within the online platform and via the application of Telegram, the students on average are in agreement that interactions are positively occurring.

Table 11
Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interaction

Paired Samples Statistics				
		M	N	SD
Pair 1	Learner-to-Instructor	4.35	186	.642
	Learner-to-Learner	4.24	186	.624

Table 11 describes the average mean value for Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interaction. Based on this, the Learner-to-Instructor has a higher mean value (M=4.35, SD=.642) than Learner-to-Learner Interaction (M=4.24, SD=.624) when it comes to online Japanese classroom interaction with the application of Telegram.

Table 12
Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interaction

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	liitotal - llitotal	.11505	.53298	.03908	.03795	.19215	2.944	185	.004

Based on the differences presented in the previous Table 12, a paired-samples t-test revealed a significant difference between the Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interaction, $t(185) = 2.944$, $p < .05$. This indicates that the average sum of means for Learner-to-Instructor (M=4.35) was significantly higher than Learner-to-Learner Interaction (M=4.24). The findings of the study state that students are more likely to use Telegram in interaction with the lecturer (Learner-to-Instructor) than in interaction with each other (Learner-to-Learner).

Findings for Learner-to-Content Interaction

Table 9

Mean for Learner-to-Content Interaction

Learner-to-Content Interaction			
	N	M	SD
Do you feel that it is important to get an overview of the content of Japanese lessons?	186	4.67	.535
Do you think that the synchronous activities (ie: online discussions) could offer immediate assistance for Japanese classes?	186	4.37	.694
Do you think that the asynchronous activities (ie: assignment) could offer immediate assistance for Japanese classes?	186	4.30	.685
Do you think that the activities could improve your understanding of Japanese lessons using Telegram?	186	4.44	.756
Do you think that your learning experience is more entertaining because the videos and pictures could be shared during the Japanese lessons using Telegram?	186	4.47	.714
Do you think that you could access and refer to the previous notes and do revisions conveniently using Telegram?	186	4.60	.661
Do you think that you are able to understand Japanese lessons better because you could listen to the audio or explanations multiple times using Telegram?	186	4.61	.625
Do you feel that the ease of online content is important when using Telegram?	186	4.41	.781

Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics on the Learner-to-Content Interaction. Based on the data, the item 'do you feel that it is important to get an overview of the content of Japanese lessons?' recorded the highest mean score of 4.67 (SD=.535) while the item 'do you think that the asynchronous activities could offer immediate assistance for Japanese classes' recorded the lowest mean of 4.30 (SD=.685). Nevertheless, the other items featured recorded mean values ranging from 4.61 to 4.37. These items were measured using a Likert scale with 1 as Strongly Disagree, 2 as Disagree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Agree and 5 being Strongly Agree. As per these findings, it can be read that the students agree with all these items, thus indicating that they perceive the application of Telegram as a learning platform to learn Japanese online being positive.

Findings for Learner-to-Platform Interaction

Table 10

Mean for Learner-to-Platform Interaction

Learner-to-Platform Interaction			
	N	M	SD
Do you think that Japanese lessons could be done at any time and place using Telegram?	186	4.49	.759
Do you feel that it is easy to study Japanese online as Telegram has unlimited storage and could save lots of lesson materials (slides, notes, links, audio files etc.)?	186	4.56	.697
Do you think that Telegram is user-friendly that could help and assist your understanding on learning Japanese online?	186	4.40	.788
Do you feel that learning Japanese online using Telegram would not stress you out in dealing with Internet connectivity problems?	186	4.37	.817
Do you feel that it is less data consuming using telegram for online Japanese classes compared to other platforms?	186	4.47	.722

Table 10 shows the students' perception of Telegram being a platform for online Japanese learning. Based on the data presented, the item 'do you feel that it is easy to study Japanese online as Telegram has unlimited storage and could save lots of lesson materials?' recorded the highest mean of 4.56 (SD=.697) while the item 'do you feel that learning Japanese online using Telegram would not stress you out in dealing with Internet connectivity problems?' recorded the lowest (M=4.37, SD=.817). The other items recorded mean values ranging from 4.40 to 4.49. The findings here indicate that on average the students agree with Telegram being a platform for online Japanese learning.

In response to Research Question 1, students' perception of Online and Distance Japanese learning when using Telegram as a learning platform is positive when they agree with all Learner-to-Content Interaction items where all eight items scored more than 4.30 min. For Research Question 2, the data is based on findings from Learner-to-Instructor Interaction and Learner-to-Learner Interaction to answer the research question. On average, students agreed that learning and student interaction were positively affected using Telegram as a platform for Online and Distance Japanese language learning for the Learner-to-Instructor Interaction item. Likewise for Learner-to-Learner Interaction, students on average agree that interaction between them is maintained through online learning and through Telegram. Therefore, based on these findings, and to respond to Research Question 3, the findings (Learner-to-Learner, Learner-to-Instructor, Learner-to-Content, and Learner-to-Platform) show inclination for Telegram being a suitable online application for the learning of Japanese language.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study show that students on average agree with the choice of Telegram as an online Japanese learning platform through the four interactions, i.e., Learner-to-Learner Interaction, Learner-to-Instructor Interaction, Learner-to-Content Interaction and Learner-to-Platform Interaction. For Learner-to-Learner Interaction and Learner-to-Instructor Interaction, the findings are in accordance with the study conducted by Ibrahim et al (2016) which according to them Telegram can improve the learning process and increase interaction between students and lecturers. In addition, ODL using Telegram can promote student-centered learning, encourage wider student participation and allow deeper discussions to occur. Meanwhile, Zanne et al (2022) mentioned that respondents agreed that ODL facilitated greater participation and interaction between students and instructors. Luan et al (2020) also confirmed that behavioral engagement perfectly mediated the relationship between teacher and peer support. This is further emphasized with the paired samples t-test where the students are more in agreement on the application of Telegram for Learner-to-Instructor interactions. On the other hand, while claiming that students feel a prominent level of openness during ODL shown by student-to-student engagement as well as student-teacher engagement, Tahir et al (2021) found peer involvement as a key factor in increasing openness and being motivated during ODL sessions. Additionally, Haythornthwaite et al (2000) stated that close contact between students is important during online learning to avoid feeling isolated and dropped out. The findings for Learner-to-Content Interaction are supported by Tahir et al (2021) in their study that connectedness is demonstrated in ODL through student engagement and content. Activities can improve students' understanding of the subject and getting an overview of the content is important before the class starts (Zanne et al., 2022). According to Pham and Nguyen (2021), students value strong interaction with course content in improving their background knowledge. On the other hand, the finding for Learner-to-Platform Interaction shows that using Telegram as an ODL platform has various pedagogical benefits and facilitates effective Japanese language teaching because Rasiban (2021) asserted that the effect of the Telegram application can increase Japanese language learning motivation and students' Japanese language skills. Alahmad (2020) claimed that Telegram has a friendly teacher-learner interaction feature that is beneficial as a teaching and learning tool. Besides, Ibrahim et al (2016) stated that the Telegram application is a convenient tool for sharing information. Thus, based on the findings of this study, it is shown that Telegram has positive effects especially in the field of foreign language learning on language skills, subskills, and other related language pieces (Vahdat et al., 2020).

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Online teaching is different from face-to-face teaching, therefore, if instructors try to use the same method in both, they will find their teaching lacking (Brown, 2021). Technology should not be inhibited in the classroom, but instead, create opportunities to prepare students with critical thinking questions and then allow them to use their technology tools to find practical solutions (Solis and Turner, 2017). In addition, improving Learner-to-Content Interaction through approaches, such as personal support, stimulation of student engagement and encouragement of student communication, can help students' participation in class (Muir et al., 2022). Apart from that, instructors need to plan their class time management and discourse engagement well because instructor facilitation is found to be important for meaningful online learning (Martin and Bollinger, 2018). As the endemic phase of COVID-19

approaches, many researchers are beginning to have different opinions about how education should move forward. Due to the progressive nature of online education, instructors must strive to continue to create more structured methods to build classroom value in online learning that we can achieve in the physical classroom (Brown, 2021).

Therefore, from this it can be promoted for the application of Telegram in the online teaching of Japanese language. Following the COVID19 pandemic where online education has been placed more emphasis upon and with the availability of a wide variety of applications for online learning, language learning institutions and language learning instructors may consider Telegram as a promising tool as well. Nevertheless, with the findings of the present study, it would be suggested for experimental research to be carried out in further assessing the effectiveness of Telegram. Furthermore, as this study is quantitative in nature, having qualitative data such as via semi-structured interviews for triangulating the findings could paint a clearer picture on the effectiveness of the application.

Limitations of Study

This research is not without its limitation. This research provides data only in quantitative analysis. In-depth interviews with students are recommended to examine details about their perceptions of online distance learning. Moreover, the study sample in this study covers a variety of Japanese students. Therefore, studies that focus on specific levels of Japanese mastery would be highly recommended. In addition, this study which is almost the same as the study of Brown (2021); Muir et al (2022), adopting a framework constructed by Moore (1989) and later brought into the picture by (Martin and Bollinger, 2018). Thus, more research should begin to investigate the *Interactivity/Community Process Model for Online Educational Environments* as suggested by (Lear et al., 2010).

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