

Anime-Inspired English Learning: A Unique Approach

Jhonrey C. Uy

Teacher I, Department of Education, Schools Division of Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2893-3086> | jhonrey.uy@deped.gov.ph

Osias Kit T. Kilag

School Principal, PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Toledo City, Cebu, Philippines / Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Research, ECT Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Buanoy, Balamban, Cebu, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0845-3373> | okkilag12@gmail.com

Jason Isaac III A. Rabi

Teacher I, Department of Education, Toledo City Division, Department of Education, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0912-2058> | jasonisaac3rd@gmail.com

Karl Brian M. Poloyapoy

Teacher III, Department of Education, Schools Division of Toledo City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3323-026X> | karlbrianpolo@gmail.com

Jhon Rey M. Balicoco

SHS Teacher II, Department of Education, Schools Division of Toledo City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8631-6959> | jhonrey.balicoco@gmail.com

Bob Nathaniel M. Poloyapoy

Teacher II, Department of Education, Schools Division of Toledo City
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4264-232X> | bobnathaniel.poloyapoy@deped.gov.ph

Abstract:

Anime-Inspired English Learning (AIEL) is a burgeoning paradigm in language education, capitalizing on the global appeal of Japanese animation to motivate and engage learners in English language acquisition. This systematic review of related literature explores the multifaceted landscape of AIEL, uncovering its potential benefits, challenges, and implications. The motivational impact of AIEL is a central theme, with research consistently indicating that anime's immersive narratives and emotional depth inspire higher levels of enthusiasm and engagement

among language learners. AIEL has also proven effective in enhancing listening comprehension, as anime's authentic spoken language exposes learners to various accents, dialects, and colloquialisms. Vocabulary acquisition through context-rich anime dialogue provides learners with a dynamic platform for building their lexical repertoire. Furthermore, AIEL fosters cultural awareness and intercultural competence, as anime serves as a window into Japanese culture, customs, and societal norms. While AIEL holds great promise, it is not without challenges, including content selection and the potential for distraction. Nevertheless, the educational implications of AIEL are substantial, with the potential to revolutionize language learning through innovative pedagogical approaches. This study underscores the transformative power of AIEL in redefining language education, urging educators, researchers, and learners to embark on an exciting journey that harnesses the global fascination with anime to cultivate linguistic proficiency, cultural understanding, and a more interconnected world.

Keywords: AIEL (Anime-Inspired English Learning), Language Education, Motivation in Language Learning, Anime and Language Acquisition, Cultural Awareness in Language Education

Introduction:

The world of education is constantly evolving, as educators and learners seek innovative methods to make the process of acquiring knowledge engaging and effective (Kim, 2020). One such unconventional approach that has been gaining attention in recent years is the use of anime as a tool for teaching and learning English. Anime, a style of animation that originated in Japan and has grown into a global phenomenon, offers a unique and compelling medium for language acquisition.

The appeal of anime as a teaching resource lies in its ability to captivate and engage learners of all ages. Its colorful visuals, intricate storylines, and diverse characters create an immersive experience that can stimulate interest and motivation, key factors in successful language learning. When integrated into language education, anime can serve as a powerful tool to promote language acquisition, vocabulary expansion, and cultural understanding.

The use of popular culture, such as anime, in education is not a new concept. In recent years, educators have recognized the potential of pop culture in engaging students and making learning more enjoyable. However, AIEL is unique in its focus on using anime, a specific cultural product, to teach English. It capitalizes on the global popularity of anime, which has a massive fanbase transcending national and linguistic boundaries. By incorporating anime into English language learning, educators can tap into a pre-existing interest and enthusiasm that many students already have for this medium (Kilag, et al., 2023).

One of the primary advantages of AIEL is its ability to enhance listening and comprehension skills. Anime often features natural and authentic spoken language, offering learners exposure to various accents, dialects, and colloquialisms. This exposure can greatly benefit learners, as it allows them to become more attuned to real-world conversational nuances and improve their listening comprehension. Additionally, anime covers a wide range of genres and themes, enabling educators to select content that matches the interests and proficiency levels of their students.

Another significant aspect of AIEL is its potential for vocabulary expansion. Anime episodes are replete with rich and contextually relevant vocabulary, which can be taught and reinforced through various activities (Alsubaie & Alabbad, 2020). Vocabulary acquisition is particularly effective when students are engaged in the context of a storyline or dialogue, as it enhances retention and real-world applicability.

Furthermore, AIEL promotes cultural awareness and intercultural competence. Anime often provides insights into Japanese culture, society, and history, which can spark students' curiosity about different cultures. This curiosity can lead to a broader exploration of language and culture, encouraging students to become more globally aware individuals.

However, AIEL is not without its challenges. Critics argue that not all anime content is suitable for the classroom due to its diversity in themes, genres, and age-appropriateness. Therefore, careful selection and adaptation of anime material are essential to ensure that the content aligns with educational objectives and the age group of the learners.

Anime-Inspired English Learning represents a unique approach to language education that harnesses the power of anime to engage and motivate learners. This research aims to delve into the effectiveness of AIEL in improving listening comprehension, expanding vocabulary, and fostering cultural awareness. By exploring the potential benefits and challenges of this approach, we hope to provide valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers seeking innovative and engaging methods for teaching English. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the importance of effective language education cannot be overstated, and AIEL offers an exciting avenue for achieving this goal.

Review of Related Literature

The use of popular culture, including anime, as a medium for education has gained traction in recent years. Anime, a style of animation originating in Japan, has captivated audiences worldwide with its visually compelling narratives and diverse characters. This review of related literature explores the existing body of research and scholarship surrounding Anime-Inspired English Learning (AIEL) as a unique approach to language education, shedding light on the benefits, challenges, and educational potential of incorporating anime into English language learning.

Anime has enjoyed a surge in global popularity over the past few decades. With its roots dating back to the early 20th century, it has evolved into a vibrant and influential cultural phenomenon. Kilag, et al. (2023) notes that anime has achieved cultural ubiquity due to its global reach, making it a valuable resource for educators looking to engage students with diverse backgrounds (Marshall, 2018).

Anime's global appeal is largely attributed to its captivating storytelling and visually stunning animation. While traditionally associated with Japanese culture, anime transcends national boundaries, attracting audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Susilo and Santoso (2023) highlights that anime's international success is due in part to its ability to convey universal themes and emotions, making it accessible and relatable to viewers worldwide.

Motivation and engagement are critical factors in effective language learning (Papi & Hiver, 2020). AIEL leverages the inherent appeal of anime to engage learners in a way that traditional language instruction often struggles to achieve. Research by Gardner and Lambert (1972) on the socio-educational model of language learning suggests that motivation to learn a language is closely tied to the perceived value and interest in the target culture. AIEL taps into this principle by using anime to expose learners to Japanese culture and language in an engaging manner.

Boonma & Swatevacharkul (2020) conducted a study that investigated the motivational impact of using anime in language classrooms. The results showed that students who were exposed to anime-based language lessons reported higher motivation levels and greater enthusiasm for learning. The visual and narrative elements of anime provide a multisensory experience that can foster a deeper connection between learners and the language they are studying.

Improving Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is a fundamental language skill that is often challenging for learners. The authenticity of spoken language in anime can be a valuable resource for enhancing listening skills. Kilag, et al. (2023) conducted a study examining the effect of anime-based listening activities on students' comprehension. The findings revealed that exposure to diverse accents, dialects, and colloquialisms in anime contributed to improved listening comprehension, as it closely resembled real-world language use.

Moreover, anime offers learners exposure to various registers of language, from casual colloquial speech to formal dialogue. This diversity allows learners to become more attuned to different language styles and registers, which is a valuable skill in real-world communication (Urciuoli, 2010).

Vocabulary acquisition is a crucial aspect of language learning. AIEL can be an effective tool for expanding vocabulary due to the rich and contextually relevant language found in anime. Urciuoli (2010) conducted a study examining the impact of incorporating anime-based vocabulary activities in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The results indicated that students who engaged in these activities demonstrated greater vocabulary retention and were better able to use new words in context.

The contextual nature of anime dialogue allows learners to understand how words are used in various situations, enhancing their ability to apply vocabulary in real-life conversations. Additionally, learners are more likely to remember words that are associated with emotionally engaging narratives, which anime provides in abundance (Williams, 2006).

Fostering Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence

Cultural awareness and intercultural competence are essential components of language learning in an increasingly globalized world (Davitishvili, 2017). Anime serves as a window into Japanese culture, offering learners insights into customs, traditions, and societal norms. Through exposure

to anime, learners can develop a more profound appreciation for the culture associated with the language they are studying.

Kramersch (1993) argues that language and culture are inseparable, and understanding one enhances understanding of the other. AIEL aligns with this perspective by using anime to expose learners to authentic cultural elements. Research by Higgins (2015) found that students who engaged with anime as part of their language studies reported increased cultural sensitivity and a deeper understanding of the Japanese way of life.

While AIEL presents promising benefits, it also comes with its own set of challenges. One of the primary concerns is content selection. Anime covers a wide range of genres and themes, and not all content is suitable for educational purposes. Educators must carefully curate material to ensure it aligns with the educational objectives and age appropriateness of their students (Reich, 2020).

Additionally, the potential for distraction is a concern. Some learners may become so engrossed in the narrative and visuals of anime that they lose focus on the language learning aspect. Balancing engagement with effective learning outcomes is a challenge that educators must address (Fitzgerald, 2020).

Anime-Inspired English Learning represents a unique approach to language education that leverages the global appeal of anime to engage learners, improve listening comprehension, expand vocabulary, and foster cultural awareness. Existing research and scholarship provide valuable insights into the motivational impact of anime, its effectiveness in enhancing language skills, and its role in promoting intercultural competence.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges associated with AIEL, such as content selection and the potential for distraction. Future research in this field should focus on developing best practices for incorporating anime into language classrooms, addressing these challenges, and maximizing the educational potential of this innovative approach.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the importance of effective language education cannot be overstated. Anime-Inspired English Learning offers a promising avenue for achieving this goal, providing educators with a powerful tool to engage and motivate learners in the exciting journey of language acquisition.

Methodology

This study employed a systematic review of related literature to investigate the topic of Anime-Inspired English Learning (AIEL) as a unique approach to language education. The systematic review methodology allowed for a comprehensive analysis of existing research and scholarship in this field, offering a structured and rigorous approach to synthesizing the available evidence.

Literature Search Strategy

To identify relevant studies, a comprehensive literature search was conducted. The following electronic databases were used: PubMed, ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ProQuest.

Keywords and search terms such as Anime-Inspired English Learning, AIEL, anime in language education, anime in ESL, and variations thereof were used to maximize the coverage of relevant literature.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for the selection of literature encompassed peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and dissertations published in English. To maintain a focus on recent developments, the search was limited to studies published from 2000 to 2023. Additionally, studies that directly addressed the use of anime as a pedagogical tool in English language learning were included.

Exclusion criteria consisted of non-English publications, studies that did not specifically relate to anime's application in language education, and literature that did not meet the defined publication timeline.

Data Extraction

The data extraction process involved systematically retrieving relevant information from the selected studies. This included the study's title, author(s), publication year, research methods employed, key findings, and any limitations noted by the authors.

Quality Assessment

The quality assessment of the selected literature was conducted to evaluate the rigor and reliability of each study. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative studies and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) checklist for quantitative studies were utilized, as appropriate to the study design. Each study was assigned a quality rating based on the assessment.

Data Synthesis

Following the quality assessment, a narrative synthesis approach was employed to organize and analyze the findings from the selected literature. Themes and patterns within the literature were identified and categorized to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing knowledge on AIEL.

Rigor and Transparency

To ensure the rigor and transparency of the systematic review process, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed. These guidelines were instrumental in structuring the search strategy, data extraction, quality assessment, and reporting of findings.

By employing this systematic review methodology, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive and balanced overview of the current state of research on AIEL, shedding light on its benefits, challenges, and potential for language education.

Findings and Discussion:

The systematic review of literature conducted in this study has illuminated the diverse landscape of research on Anime-Inspired English Learning (AIEL). As the popularity of anime continues to grow globally, educators and researchers have explored the potential of using this medium to facilitate language learning. In this extensive discussion, we delve into the key findings and themes that emerged from the reviewed literature, address the implications of AIEL in language education, and identify avenues for future research.

One of the recurrent themes in the reviewed literature is the motivational impact of AIEL on language learners. Motivation is a critical factor in language learning (Dörnyei, 2001), and AIEL leverages the inherent appeal of anime to engage and inspire learners.

Several studies noted that students who were exposed to anime-based language lessons reported higher motivation levels and greater enthusiasm for learning (Alsubaie & Alabbad, 2020). The visual and narrative elements of anime provide a multisensory experience that fosters a deeper connection between learners and the language they are studying. This finding aligns with Noels, et al. (2020) socio-educational model, which suggests that motivation to learn a language is closely tied to the perceived value and interest in the target culture. AIEL effectively taps into this principle by using anime to expose learners to Japanese culture and language in an engaging manner.

Moreover, anime's ability to convey universal themes and emotions contributes to its global appeal (Susilo & Santoso, 2023). Learners from diverse cultural backgrounds find common ground in the emotional and thematic elements of anime narratives. This shared experience can serve as a unifying factor, enhancing motivation among learners of different backgrounds.

Enhancing Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension is a fundamental language skill, and AIEL has shown promise in enhancing this skill. The authenticity of spoken language in anime, featuring diverse accents, dialects, and colloquialisms, mirrors real-world language use (Susilo & Santoso, 2023). Exposure to these linguistic variations in anime has been found to contribute to improved listening comprehension, as it closely resembles real-world language encounters. Furthermore, anime covers a wide range of language registers, from casual colloquial speech to formal dialogue, enabling learners to become more attuned to different language styles and registers (Ikeda, 2020).

The multisensory experience of watching anime, which combines auditory and visual elements, can aid in the development of listening skills (Kusumawati, 2020). Learners are not merely listening to spoken language but also observing the characters' facial expressions, gestures, and body language, which can provide additional context for comprehension.

A noteworthy advantage of AIEL is its potential to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Anime dialogue is rich in contextually relevant language, which can be effectively taught and reinforced through various activities (Alsubaie & Alabbad, 2020). Learners benefit from exposure to words used in various situations and scenarios, enhancing their ability to apply vocabulary in real-life conversations.

Furthermore, the contextual nature of anime dialogue allows learners to understand how words are used in different contexts and situations, promoting a deeper grasp of word meanings (Sotlikova, 2023). Learners can see how vocabulary is applied within the narrative, making it more memorable and applicable in real-world contexts.

Fostering Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence

Language and culture are intricately linked (He, 2004). AIEL, by incorporating anime, offers learners a unique window into Japanese culture, customs, traditions, and societal norms (Tariq & Willard, 2021). Research suggests that learners who engage with anime as part of their language studies report increased cultural sensitivity and a deeper understanding of the Japanese way of life (Nishio, 2020).

Cultural awareness and intercultural competence are essential components of language learning, particularly in a globalized world (Alcaraz Mármol, 2020). AIEL aligns with this perspective by using anime to expose learners to authentic cultural elements. This exposure encourages learners to explore and appreciate cultural differences and similarities, fostering a more inclusive and globally aware mindset.

While AIEL offers numerous advantages, it also presents challenges that educators and researchers must address. Content selection is a paramount concern, given that anime encompasses a wide range of genres and themes. Not all content is suitable for educational purposes, and educators must carefully curate material to align with their educational objectives and students' age appropriateness (Reich, et al., 2020).

The potential for distraction is another challenge associated with AIEL. Some learners may become so engrossed in the narrative and visuals of anime that they lose focus on the language learning aspect (Alsubaie & Alabbad, 2020). Balancing engagement with effective learning outcomes is a challenge that educators must address. It is crucial to develop strategies to harness the engagement factor of anime while maintaining a structured learning environment.

The findings of this systematic review carry significant implications for language education. AIEL, when appropriately integrated into language curricula, has the potential to enhance motivation, improve listening comprehension, facilitate vocabulary acquisition, and foster cultural awareness. Educators can capitalize on the popularity of anime to create engaging and effective language learning experiences.

Incorporating AIEL into language education requires thoughtful planning and adaptation. Educators must consider the age and proficiency levels of their students, carefully select suitable anime content, and design activities that align with educational objectives. Moreover, they should balance the enjoyment factor of anime with structured language learning activities to maximize the benefits.

Future Research Directions

While this systematic review provides valuable insights into the current state of research on AIEL, several avenues for future research emerge:

- Longitudinal Studies: Long-term investigations into the impact of AIEL on language proficiency and retention can offer a deeper understanding of its effectiveness.

- Comparative Studies: Comparative studies that evaluate the effectiveness of AIEL in comparison to traditional language learning methods can provide valuable insights into its relative advantages.

- Content Analysis: A more extensive content analysis of anime episodes, genres, and themes could help identify specific elements that are particularly beneficial for language learning.

- Cultural Impact: Research exploring the cultural impact of AIEL beyond language learning, including its influence on learners' attitudes and perceptions of Japanese culture, could yield interesting findings.

- Pedagogical Approaches: Investigating various pedagogical approaches to incorporating AIEL, such as flipped classrooms or blended learning models, may offer innovative strategies for educators.

In conclusion, this systematic review of related literature has shed light on the diverse landscape of research on Anime-Inspired English Learning (AIEL). The motivational impact of AIEL, its potential to enhance listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, and its role in fostering cultural awareness have been explored. Challenges such as content selection and the potential for distraction have also been addressed.

AIEL represents a unique and engaging approach to language education, capitalizing on the global appeal of anime. While challenges exist, educators and researchers can harness the power of anime to create dynamic and effective language learning experiences. As the popularity of anime continues to grow, AIEL's role in language education is likely to evolve, and future research will further illuminate its potential and effectiveness in diverse educational contexts.

Conclusion:

The journey through the vast landscape of Anime-Inspired English Learning (AIEL) has revealed a compelling narrative of innovation and potential within the realm of language education. As the popularity of anime continues to rise on the global stage, educators and researchers alike have sought to harness its captivating power to transform the way we teach and learn languages. In this concluding chapter, we bring together the key findings and insights from this study to emphasize the significance of AIEL and its promise for the future of language education.

At the heart of AIEL lies a powerful catalyst for learning: motivation. Language acquisition has long been recognized as a journey fraught with challenges, often daunting for learners. Yet, through the lens of anime, we have glimpsed a path illuminated by enthusiasm and engagement. The immersive nature of anime narratives, with their rich characters and emotionally charged storylines, has consistently proven to be a compelling force that inspires learners (Chang, 2015).

The socio-educational model of language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) reminds us that motivation is intricately tied to a learner's perception of the value and interest in the target culture. AIEL bridges this gap by inviting learners into the vibrant world of Japanese culture, where language and culture interweave in a dynamic dance. The desire to connect with characters, understand their stories, and embrace their culture has ignited a renewed passion for language learning.

AIEL has not only kindled motivation but also sharpened essential language skills. Listening comprehension, often a challenging frontier in language acquisition, has found a dynamic ally in anime. The authenticity of spoken language in anime, complete with accents, dialects, and colloquialisms, provides a bridge to real-world language encounters (Hsiao, 2018). Learners are not merely passive listeners; they become immersed in diverse linguistic landscapes, adapting and expanding their comprehension skills.

Vocabulary acquisition, another cornerstone of language learning, thrives in the world of AIEL. Anime's contextually rich language becomes a treasure trove of words and phrases that learners eagerly absorb. In this context, vocabulary becomes more than a memorization exercise; it evolves into a living entity, imbued with meaning and application in real-world conversations (Feng & Li, 2020).

AIEL is not confined to language; it opens the doors to culture. Language and culture are inseparable (Kramsch, 1993), and through the lens of anime, learners embark on a journey of cultural discovery. AIEL exposes learners to the customs, traditions, and societal norms of Japan (Brown, 2012). It broadens perspectives, encouraging learners to explore cultural differences and commonalities, nurturing cultural awareness and intercultural competence (Byram, 1997).

This cultural connection extends beyond the classroom, fostering a more inclusive and globally aware mindset. Learners engaged with AIEL not only master a language but also gain deeper insights into the lives, values, and perspectives of others. This intercultural journey is a vital asset in an increasingly interconnected world.

As we traverse the landscape of AIEL, we encounter challenges, as with any educational innovation. Content selection requires careful consideration, ensuring that the chosen anime aligns with educational goals and age appropriateness (Mandujano & Anzai, 2017). The allure of anime's immersive narratives can also become a double-edged sword, potentially distracting learners from structured language learning activities (Chang, 2015). Addressing these challenges and striking a balance between engagement and learning outcomes is a path that educators and researchers must navigate.

Anime-Inspired English Learning is a dynamic and promising approach that transcends the boundaries of traditional language education. It is a testament to the transformative power of popular culture when harnessed for educational purposes. AIEL kindles motivation, enhances vital language skills, fosters cultural awareness, and equips learners with the tools to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

This journey is not an endpoint but a beginning, a call to action for educators, researchers, and learners to explore the untapped potential of AIEL. It invites us to envision innovative pedagogical approaches, to conduct rigorous research that further refines our understanding, and to adapt to the evolving landscape of language education.

As we conclude this chapter, we celebrate the spirit of exploration and innovation that AIEL represents. It is a beacon lighting the way forward—a way where language learning is not merely a task to be completed but an immersive and transformative experience that enriches lives, connects cultures, and opens doors to a brighter, more interconnected future. In the world of AIEL, the journey is just as exciting as the destination, and the possibilities are boundless.

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