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The incorporation of Hip Hop dance in English language education in Japanese universities

ABSTRACT

This article explores the possibility of incorporating Hip Hop dance and culture into English language education in Japan. Japan's unique context, where Hip Hop dance is immensely popular but knowledge of its history and culture is lacking, provides a unique opportunity for research on Hip Hop dance and education. Data were collected from four key groups of participants to obtain perspectives and suggestions for a Hip Hop-based English language course for undergraduate students. With the growing popularity of Hip Hop dance and culture in Japan, dance can be utilized in Japanese universities as a valuable pedagogical tool and contribute to the development of innovative and effective practices of teaching and learning. The results of the study indicate that attitudes towards Hip Hop dance and culture in English language education were largely positive, and participants shared extensive suggestions for potential courses in the future. Participants also highlighted key benefits, as well as important challenges that need to be overcome in advancing Hip Hop-based English language education. This study shows that a content-based English language course on Hip Hop history and culture would be ideal for expanding understanding of Hip Hop in Japan.

KEYWORDS

Hip Hop dance education
English language teaching (ELT)
TESOL
cultural pedagogy
content-based instruction (CBI)
Japanese Hip Hop dance pedagogy
cross-cultural learning

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1. The capitalization of 'Hip Hop' was adopted in this article based on the official statement of Iglesias and Harris (2022: 126), which recognizes Hip Hop as a culture, along with its identity based on its historical roots.
2. International posture is defined by the extent to which Japanese language learners feel connected to the international community, demonstrate interest in international affairs as well as their willingness to interact with non-Japanese individuals. This concept also includes the willingness of Japanese EFL learners to work abroad as well as their degree of openness towards different countries and cultures. In addition, international posture also includes the ability to engage in cross-cultural communication as highlighted by Gudykunst (1991) and Kim (1991).

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, Hip Hop¹ dance has rapidly gained popularity in Japan. A large population of Japanese youth has been exposed to Hip Hop dance through mandatory dance classes in schools, as well as in studios and events (Kumano 2017; Kyodo 2011; Gilhooly 2019; Web Japan 2021). However, a deeper knowledge of Hip Hop history and culture is lacking in those platforms, and there have been calls for Japanese dancers to develop a deeper understanding of Hip Hop (Arita 2012; Hope College 2015). One platform for spreading knowledge of Hip Hop lies in the field of education, with increasing numbers of higher educational institutions embracing Hip Hop-Based Education (HHBE; Petchauer 2009: 947).

Since the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has been emphasizing English language education in Japan for many decades (Nishino and Watanabe 2008: 133), the popularity of Hip Hop dance among Japanese youth suggests that there is potential for its incorporation into English language education in Japan. Hip Hop complements existing theories in English language teaching, such as Yashima's framework of Willingness to Communicate (WTC 2002, 2009). Hip Hop dance in Japan functions as a space that contributes to students' cultural awareness and understanding of global perspectives, which is essential in the development of international posture in language development.² In addition, dance provides motivating and engaging ways for students to practise their language skills. Based on the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach in language teaching, the mind and body are interconnected, where physical movements and actions help reduce learner anxiety, increase motivation and create more enjoyable learning experiences (Asher 1969).

Based on my positionality as a male breaker in Singapore, the United States and Japan, along with my role as an assistant professor at a Japanese university, I have developed my study based on my experiences engaging in the Japanese Hip Hop dance scene as well as in the field of Japanese higher education. With the growing popularity of Hip Hop dance among Japanese youth, along with its compatibility with language learning theories, it can contribute to the advancement of English language learning pedagogies and methodologies. However, despite the popularity of Hip Hop dance in the global context, the element of dance also has the least amount of scholarly research and attention within Hip Hop studies (Johnson 2015: 66). This can be attributed to a lack of access to 'organic' dance spaces from academics, as well as traditional racist stereotypes against Afro-diasporic art (Schloss 2022: 537). Hence, much potential remains to be tapped into in the exploration of Hip Hop dance and its introduction into the field of English language teaching in Japan.

Since English language classes relating to Hip Hop have not been introduced into Japanese universities at the time of this writing, this study aims to explore the possibilities and potential challenges of introducing Hip Hop dance and culture into English language education in Japanese higher education institutions. The contribution will investigate the perspectives and ideas of Japanese university students, English language instructors, university Hip Hop educators as well as Hip Hop experts through qualitative surveys and interviews. Data collected will be used to facilitate the development of Hip Hop-based English language courses in the future.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Hip Hop dance, knowledge and culture

Dance has always been a key element of Hip Hop culture. Schloss goes as far as to state that ‘without dance, Hip Hop culture would not exist’ (2022: 534), emphasizing the central role of dancers in its evolution and popularization. In this study, Hip Hop dance refers to all genres of dances encompassed within Hip Hop culture, including but not limited to the ‘funkstyles’ in California such as popping and locking; genres from dance clubs in gay communities such as lofting and house; as well as breaking from the South Bronx (Johnson 2015).

In Hip Hop dance, the circular space where participants engage with one another is known as the cypher. Durden defines the cypher as a space for ‘engaging in conversation, transmitting ideas, and enabling growth throughout the dance community’ (2018: 76). Within the cypher, dancers are encouraged to display originality and innovativeness (Johnson 2011: 173), while they are both supported and critiqued by participants in the circle (2022: 1). The cypher is rooted in African spiritual and cultural traditions, where energy is built within the circular space in which participants deconstruct and create new concepts in order to push their limits and enhance their abilities (Durden 2018: 76). As a result, cyphers can be competitive and lead to the emergence of battles, which Johnson (2011: 173) defines as ‘performative duels’ among individual dancers or between groups of dancers.

Hip Hop dance is not only a form of physical movement but also an important cultural movement in African American and Latino communities, serving as a form of social and political expression. Therefore, its engagement is deeply connected with an understanding of Hip Hop’s cultural values. Pioneering dancer Buddha Stretch noted that its portrayal in many media platforms and dance studios may not be representative. This is because many of these platforms only display dance moves, without accurately portraying or spreading an awareness of Hip Hop’s cultural heritage (Wisner 2006).

Schloss (2022: 535) highlights the importance of approaching Hip Hop dance as a cultural practice, where the dance is not only practised but also studied. The fifth element of Hip Hop, ‘Knowledge’, is therefore an indispensable part of Hip Hop culture and dance. One aspect of Knowledge is defined as ‘Knowledge of self’, which refers to the African cultural awareness of one’s identity in ways that allow for the empowerment of marginalized communities (Gosa 2015: 57; Vengesayi 2018). Another aspect of Knowledge is what Gosa (2015: 57) describes as an understanding of Hip Hop from a historical and cultural perspective. Both aspects of Knowledge are key in ensuring that Hip Hop culture and Hip Hop dance continue to be a force for social and global transformation.

Hip Hop dance in Japan

Hip Hop dance is incredibly popular among Japanese youth. Dance teams are present in almost every college and high school in Japan (Kumano 2017). Most Japanese children are also exposed to it at a young age through dance classes in studios as well as in schools. From 2012, dance classes were also made mandatory in junior high schools throughout Japan (Kyodo 2011). As a result, almost all Japanese youth have had some form of experience engaging in Hip Hop dance, which has led to a surge in the popularity of the art form over

the past decade (Gilhooly 2019). Dance studios have seen a large increase in membership over the years, and parents willingly spend large sums of money for their children to attend classes and workshops (Web Japan 2021). This has enabled Japan's dance scene to prosper and develop, where frequent jams and events are held throughout the year. This has not been without its problems, however, with complaints about noise and drunken behaviour leading to stricter laws towards dance clubs and Hip Hop events in recent years (Manabe 2015: 525).

In addition, questions have also been raised over the element of 'Knowledge' in Japanese Hip Hop. Pioneering dancers in Japan have raised the concern that youth today seem to focus on developing dance technique without caring about history and culture (Arita 2012). This might be influenced by the fact that a large number of young dancers were exposed to Hip Hop through commercial platforms such as Japanese pop idols as well as Korean K-pop groups (Fukue 2012). Moncell Durden, associate professor of practice at the University of Southern California, highlighted that such platforms often misrepresent Hip Hop, as the dance is portrayed without its historical and cultural essence (Medea Vox 2019). Dance scholar Crystal Frazier observed that while Japanese dancers have incredible technique and discipline, there was a need for them to develop more interest and knowledge in Hip Hop history and culture (Hope College 2015).

While opportunities to develop dance techniques are abundant in Japan, the same cannot be said towards platforms to learn about history, knowledge and culture. The mandatory dance classes in junior high schools are taught by physical education teachers, who are unfamiliar with Hip Hop dance (Fukue 2012), much less about Hip Hop history and culture. Outside of school, most Japanese youth learn Hip Hop dance in commercially oriented studios, which focus on techniques, performances and competitions. Buddha Stretch also mentioned that many studios simply teach dance moves, without promoting knowledge and understanding towards Hip Hop's cultural heritage (Wisner 2006). Therefore, there is a need for more opportunities to learn about Hip Hop's history and culture and to spread 'Knowledge' in the Japanese Hip Hop community and beyond.

Hip Hop dance is profoundly connected with education. Petchauer (2022: 188) notes that the process of becoming a dancer is an 'educational process' in itself, where individuals pick up a variety of knowledge, skills and values through engagement in the Hip Hop community. Johnson also states that the cyphers in Hip Hop dance are spaces where participants learn about 'cultural values, sociality, musical history, and spiritual expression through physical practice' (2022: 1).

In recent years, higher education institutions especially in the United States have begun to introduce Hip Hop into classes, events, research projects and conferences (Petchauer 2009: 947). Hip Hop has also been used as supplementary content to complement the main subject area in classes (Morrell and Duncan-Andrade 2002: 89). For example, Hip Hop's history enables students to learn about oppression and discrimination in society (Stovall 2006). In addition to the study of Hip Hop's heritage and culture, it also involves developing educational approaches and pedagogies through the socially transformative tenets of Hip Hop culture (Petchauer 2009: 947).

Such educational frameworks have the potential to transform educational spaces, enhance critical thinking skills in students, empower marginalized communities as well as develop students' identities. For example, Hip Hop

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has been incorporated into after-school programmes, where youth engage in the creative elements of Hip Hop. Through such programmes, young people from all contexts and backgrounds develop healthy and supportive relationships, empower themselves to contribute to social change, learn important values and develop their character (Van Steenis 2020: 54). The vast applications of Hip Hop in education over the past decade have led to the emergence of HHBE as a field of study, with contributions from artists, educators and audiences from around the world.

Possibilities of Hip Hop dance in university English education in Japan

While scholarly research in Hip Hop, along with HHBE, has been introduced into many universities in the United States, the same cannot be said of Japan. Japanese universities do not typically offer majors or courses relating to Hip Hop studies. Teachers and faculty members in Japan who incorporate Hip Hop into educational material are also rare.³

This could be due to the fact that educational institutions in Japan are relatively conservative. Historically, the Ministry of Education in Japan has been closely connected to conservative, right-wing bureaucrats and has been resistant to more progressive and left-leaning ideas (Takayama 2008). In addition, traditional Japanese university classrooms have been characterized by a strong emphasis on lecture-based instruction, with a focus on rote learning and the acquisition of factual knowledge (Nakamura 2022; Tsuneyoshi 2001). However, this approach has faced criticism for lacking opportunities for active student participation, fostering a passive learning environment and hindering communication in the classroom (Germain 2020: 4). It has also led to the inability of Japanese university students to engage in collaborative work, effectively participate in discussions as well as develop critical thinking skills (Umehara 2015: 206). Hence, there have been calls for the development of innovative pedagogical strategies to foster a more dynamic learning environment and encourage student engagement in Japanese universities (Nakamura 2022).

Hip Hop dance is largely limited to physical education classes in schools, where the focus of such classes is centred on the learning of basic dance movements through guidebooks. Some attempts at incorporating Hip Hop into English language education appear in the form of English teachers using rap lyrics in class, as well as dance studios for kids that offer English-speaking opportunities in their dance classes. Present efforts, however, are limiting since these studios and dance instructors have little to no training in the field of language teaching. In addition, Hip Hop dance's rich cultural elements and pedagogy have not been incorporated into the dance classes in Japanese schools.

Current concepts and pedagogies in HHBE also complement theories in language education. Yashima (2002, 2009) and Yashima and Zenuk Nishide (2008) introduced important concepts that lead to the development of WTC in Japanese students. These concepts include international posture, self-confidence in second-language communication as well as an imagined international community of practice. International posture is the degree of connectedness and openness towards the global community (Yashima 2002: 57), as well as students' abilities to successfully carry out cross-cultural communication (2002: 58), develop intercultural friendships as well as a

3. To briefly summarize Japanese higher education, it is a four-year degree where students choose their major before entering the university. First and second year involves a number of general education courses, going into their major subjects in years 3 and 4. These general education courses include a certain number of semesters of communicative English classes as compulsory to the degree. It is also important to note that club activities (e.g. sports, hobbies, cultural activities) are an integral part of university life. For example, Hip Hop dance clubs in Japanese universities typically have practices five days a week, including weekends. They may also come back to university during summer vacation to prepare for performances and competitions.

sense of connectedness with worldwide affairs (2009: 146). The second concept, self-confidence in second-language communication, is influenced by communicative anxiety and perceived proficiency in the language (Yashima 2002: 60). The concept of imagined international community of practice refers to the idea that language learners conceive of themselves as being part of a global community with which they can connect and communicate (Yashima 2009).

Since Hip Hop dance provides opportunities for participants to interact and communicate with diverse communities transcending nationality and cultures (Chang, 2005; Hazzard-Donald 2004: 506; Fogarty 2012), it could benefit the development of international posture in English language learners in Japan, which then positively influences their language-learning abilities. Hip Hop also focuses on an expression of unique individual identities and lived experiences (Durden 2018: 2), which could boost students' self-confidence in their second language communication, a key aspect of English language acquisition in the Japanese context. Cyphers also function as inclusive spaces for mutual support and encouragement (Watkins and Caines 2014: 1; Levy et al. 2017: 3), which could transform language classrooms in Japan into a low-anxiety space where the voices of all students are valued, and exchanges can occur freely in a democratic and dialogic fashion.

The global Hip Hop community also serves as an international community of practice highlighted by Yashima (2009). This global community, known as the Hip Hop nation, transcends nations, culture, language, identity and age (Morgan and Bennett 2011: 177). This has been likened to the concept of 'imagined communities', where members share a common sense of identity (Forman and Neal 2004: 5). Such a community is important in English language teaching in Japan. Studies have shown that Japanese English language learners feel that it is important for them to participate in some form of international community that gives them opportunities to use the English language (Murray 2008: 140).

Engaging in Hip Hop dance and culture could enable students to connect with the Hip Hop nation, an international community of practice where they could use the English language to communicate with citizens from around the world. Fogarty (2012: 453) further develops this idea of imagined communities into the concept of imagined affinities, where dancers around the world share a sense of identity and belonging through the shared practice of Hip Hop dance but are able to recognize, embrace and navigate the differences in culture, countries and contexts. This could be crucial in enabling Japanese students to grapple with and navigate their identities as English language learners. Japanese students perceive English as necessary for their personal lives, as well as for Japan's economy. However, this is coupled with the perception of English as a danger that could potentially dilute Japanese culture, which has led to a certain degree of resistance towards English as a 'necessary evil or a duty' (Murray 2008: 140).

Lastly, the Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach in language teaching allows for the combination of a subject area with the study of language, where knowledge in both content and language can be acquired (Snow 2014). The CBI approach is unique since it enables a variety of content areas to be taught in language classes. Hence, Hip Hop dance and culture could be incorporated as content into English language classes through this approach. Multiple models of CBI have also been developed through the years and can be adapted to fit different content areas, focus as well as educational contexts

(Snow and Brinton 2019). Hence, dance could be a potential subject area in English language education.

Over the past few decades, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has placed a strong emphasis on English language education in Japan (Nishino and Watanabe 2008: 133). MEXT recently made English classes mandatory for elementary school students in 2020 (MEXT 2021: 10). Most universities in Japan also require first-year students to take English classes (Ikegashira et al. 2009: 18). These initiatives provide ample opportunities for the research and development of Hip Hop dance in English language education in Japan.

Since such a course has never been developed, this study aims to explore the possibilities and perspectives towards Hip Hop dance in English language education in Japan. In order to achieve the objective of this study, three research questions were formulated:

1. What are the attitudes of students, educators as well as Hip Hop experts towards Hip Hop dance and culture in English language education in Japan?
2. What are some ways in which Hip Hop dance and culture can be incorporated into English language teaching and learning?
3. What are some potential benefits and challenges in the introduction of Hip Hop dance and culture into English language education in Japan?

To answer these research questions, a qualitative research design was employed, which will be explained in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

Design and rationale

Qualitative research methods in the form of a survey as well as semi-structured interviews of 45 minutes to 1 hour were employed to enable data to be collected from various groups of participants. Qualitative studies are frequently conducted in the field of education (Merriam 2009: 21) because they allow for the exploration of diverse perspectives and lived experiences of the participants. This study functions as a collaborative bridge between participants and the researcher (Creswell 2014), facilitating the collection of in-depth data based on the valuable knowledge and experiences of all participants. This data, along with the researcher's contextual knowledge, will enable each research question to be answered in detail.

A qualitative approach is also suitable for relatively new or unexplored research areas, as is the case with this study, where the incorporation of Hip Hop dance and culture in English language education in Japan has never been explored. In particular, semi-structured interviews are the most common type of data collected in educational research (Creswell 2014: 86), making them a key source of data in this study. Additionally, a survey consisting of eleven items was included to collect data from a larger population of Japanese university students.

Participants

Participants were determined based on Brown's (1995: 37) four groups of people who are crucial in the research and development of language courses.

The following categories of participants were selected for this study: Japanese university students, English language educators who have taught in Japanese universities, university dance educators as well as dance experts who have experience in higher education.

Participants were selected via purposive sampling, which allowed for the most relevant group of participants to address the research questions most effectively (Maxwell 2012: 248). The first group of participants were 50 Japanese university students between the ages of 18 and 22. These students were from varying majors and were active members of their university Hip Hop dance clubs. The second group of participants were four university English language instructors who had experiences incorporating content-based approaches as well as arts-related approaches in universities in Japan. One of whom is Donna Brinton, a globally renowned pioneer of the CBI approach mentioned in the literature review. These instructors were familiar with arts in language education, but were not experts in Hip Hop.

The third group of participants were four highly experienced university Hip Hop dance educators: E. Moncell Durden, assistant professor of practice at the University of Southern California's Gloria Kaufman School of Dance and the founder of Intangible Roots; Dr Tasha Iglesias, lecturer at the University of California Riverside's Graduate School of Education and president of the Hip Hop Association of Advancement and Education; Dr Imani Kai Johnson, assistant professor at the University of California Riverside's Department of Dance and founder of the Show & Prove Hip Hop Studies Conference; and Mary Fogarty, associate professor at York University's Department of Dance and lead facilitator for the Toronto B-girl Movement.

The final group of participants were four experts of Hip Hop: Ana 'Rokafella' Garcia, breaker pioneer from New York City who has taught Hip Hop dance at renowned universities; Gabriel 'Kwikstep' Dionisio, pioneer dancer from New York City, who has taught at educational institutions around the United States for more than twenty years; Anthony 'Ynot' Denaro, former senior vice-president of the renowned Rock Steady Crew as well as an international judge and instructor of breaking; Raphael 'Viazeeen' Xavier, veteran dancer in the Philadelphia community and professor at Princeton University.

All university Hip Hop educators as well as Hip Hop experts are from the North American continent because the region has had an established history of Hip Hop in academia. All participants also have extensive experiences of Hip Hop in higher educational institutions. In Japan, Hip Hop in academia is still relatively unknown, and Japanese Hip Hop experts along with its practitioners have yet to be involved in educational work in the Japanese higher education context. Therefore, North American experts and Hip Hop educators were interviewed to allow for more comprehensive and practical ideas to be obtained in this study.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted virtually with the English language educators, Hip Hop dance educators as well as the experts of Hip Hop. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The responses from these interviews were then used to develop a student survey, which was distributed online to the Japanese university students. Out of the 50 students surveyed, four with more experience participating in Hip Hop dance and culture in Japan were selected to be interviewed. Member check procedures were also carried out during

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the process of all interviews to ensure accurate interpretation of all data. Participants from Japan were given the option to be interviewed in English or Japanese.

Interview design

All interviews were semi-structured and developed using the Appreciative Inquiry approach designed by Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987) to encourage creativity and innovation for social change. The Appreciative Inquiry model consists of four stages: Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver/Destiny, which culminate in a collection of creative ideas leading to an action plan (Boyd and Bright 2007; Shuayb et al. 2009). Interview questions were designed based on the concepts in English language teaching and HHBE mentioned earlier. Some questions were also adapted from similar educational research studies such as Rathore (2018) and Williams (2015) that explored new perspectives towards the arts in education. Slight modifications were made to some questions to fit each participant group.

The qualitative survey consisted of eleven items, some of which were checkbox questions that served to assess student perspectives on the types of content and activities they would like to engage in for a Hip Hop dance and culture English class.

Data analyses

Statistical analyses were carried out on the surveys to determine the degree of interest as well as fundamental perspectives towards Hip Hop dance and culture in English language education. Responses obtained in the open-ended questions were classified into specific themes and further evaluated. Interviews were transcribed, corroborated with notes taken during the interviews and coded into themes. A translator who had experience translating Hip Hop-related material in Japan was hired to translate all interview data into English.

RESULTS

Japanese university student survey

Of the 50 responses collected, 30 per cent of students indicated their current English-learning experiences were influenced by Hip Hop. These students suggested that their engagement with Hip Hop dance and culture gave them opportunities to learn the English language. Seventy-two per cent of students indicated they would like to be a part of their English language education because it would be both more enjoyable and motivating than their current English classes.

Students were also interested in improving their language skills to learn more about Hip Hop's history and culture. They further added that Hip Hop would enable them to develop better communication skills, learn from experiences outside the classroom as well as broaden their world-view. Eighty-two per cent of students indicated there should be English courses in universities that incorporated Hip Hop dance and culture. Students saw this course as a platform to develop knowledge in Hip Hop history and culture, which they identified to be lacking in Japan. They also recognized that Hip Hop could teach about expression, embrace positive values and broaden their perspectives towards different cultures. The students also mentioned that more would

be supportive of such a course if the connection between Hip Hop and education could be made clear to them.

The following three questions were checkbox questions prompting students to select at least three options. One question was on the type of content relating to Hip Hop dance history and culture that students would be interested to learn. Each participant selected an average of five out of eleven available options. Three content areas stood out as the most interesting topics with more than 30 votes (Figure 1).

Another question was on the type of content relating to Hip Hop and society that students would be interested to learn. For this question, each participant selected an average of four out of nine available options. One content area received an overwhelming majority of the votes with 41, followed by the second content area at 30 votes. The third content area was selected by approximately half of the students, with 25 votes (Figure 2).

The final checkbox question was on the type of Hip Hop-related activities students would be interested in for an English language course. An average of four out of ten options were selected by each student. Three options stood out with 35, 29 and 28 votes, respectively. A number of other options were also selected by approximately half the number of students (Figure 3).

Qualitative/in-depth interviews with Japanese university students

Students were very open to the idea of Hip Hop dance and culture in English language education. Students felt that engagement in Hip Hop outside of academia gave them many opportunities for cross-cultural learning and communication, such as picking up Black vernacular language and common words used in conversation. Student A noted: ‘When I read the lyrics, I can

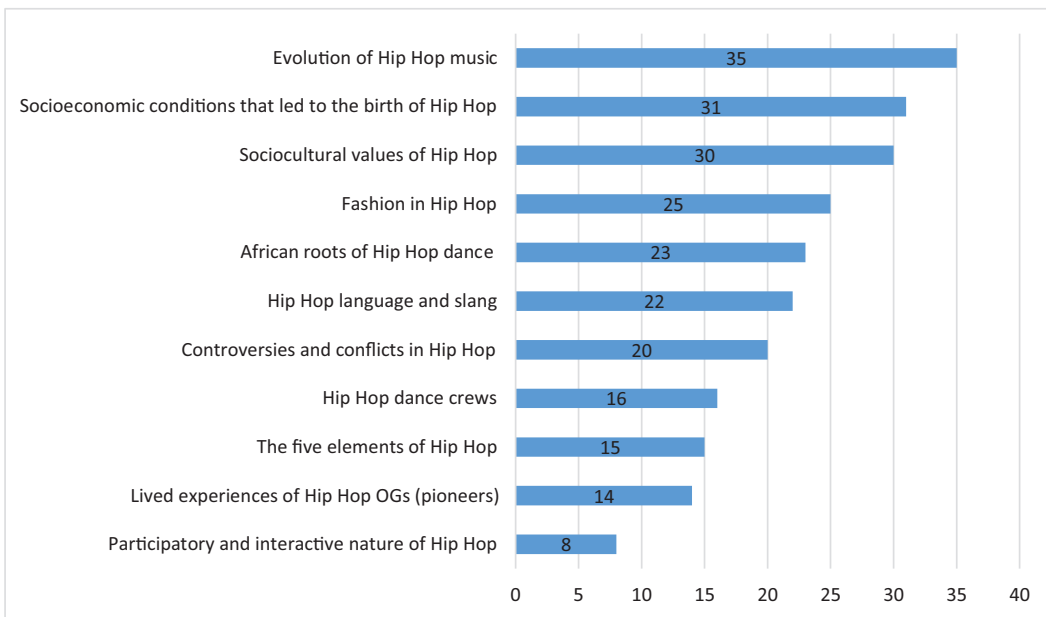


Figure 1: Content areas on Hip Hop history and culture that students would be interested to learn.

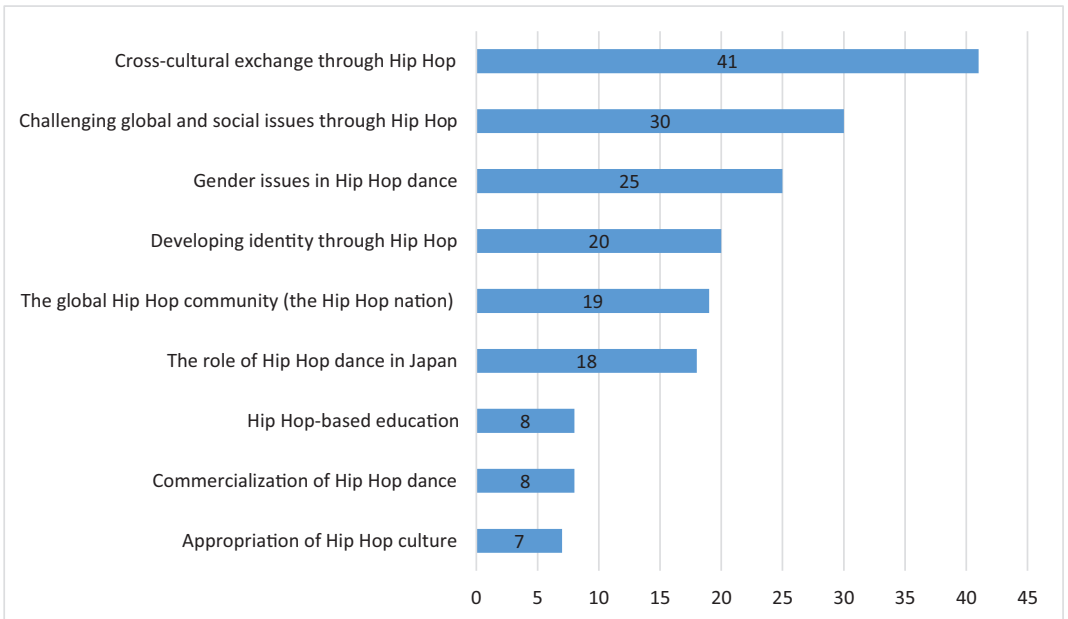


Figure 2: Content areas relating to Hip Hop and society that students are interested in.

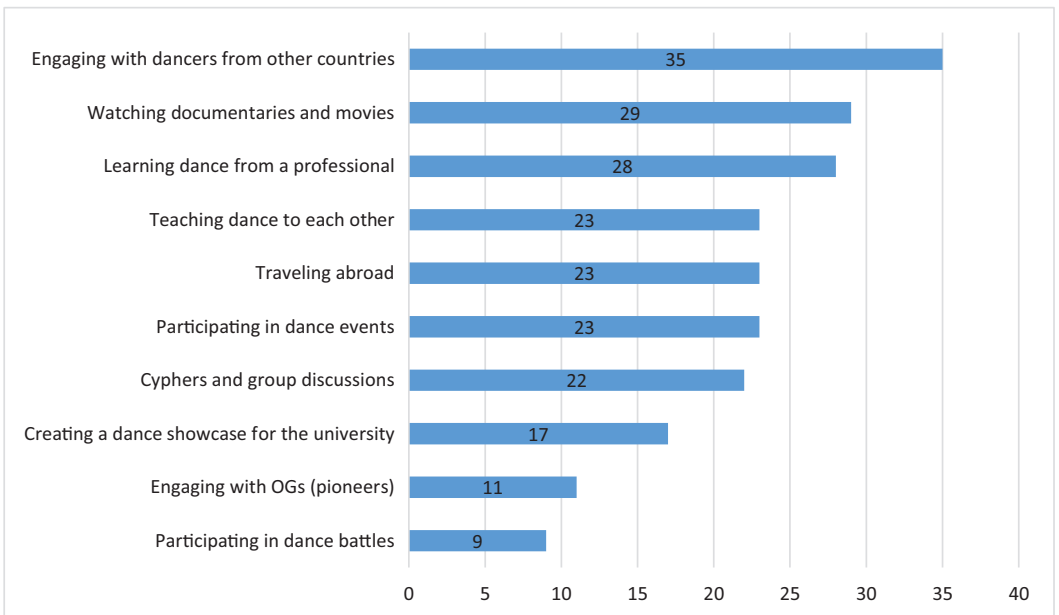


Figure 3: Types of Hip Hop-related activities that students are interested in.

easily find words related to drugs or gangsters. However, at the same time, I also find social issues and what circumstances those people are in'. As such, this student's participation in Hip Hop dance enabled him to learn about social issues. The concept of oral tradition and expression in Hip Hop could transform the way knowledge is shared in the traditional Japanese classrooms.

The students felt that English education in Japan was too centred on text-book material and lacked opportunities for authentic verbal communication. Student B shared:

[W]e don't have a lot of opportunities to talk in English, and are not willing to do it. Thus, many of us still don't feel comfortable to communicate in English. However, I noticed we feel comfortable when talking about what we love such as dancing, and it improves not only English speaking skills, but our understanding of different values as I mentioned before.

Students believed that Hip Hop in education could lead to better communicative classes, which would enable them to develop more global mindsets.

Notably, students also wanted more opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Hip Hop. Student B shared that the members of the Hip Hop dance club struggled to develop a deeper sense of knowledge in Hip Hop. He added, 'We usually don't deeply understand (Hip Hop's history and culture) even though we love dancing, which is why I think lectures to expand the understanding of the culture will be greatly accepted'.

In addition to lectures, students also suggested having guest speakers and field trips to better experience Hip Hop culture. Students were interested in learning dance using English and incorporating cyphers into the classroom. They added that cyphers could also be a platform for verbal communication and peaceful competition. This would provide opportunities for human connection and friendships in the classroom, which are uncommon in Japanese classrooms.

The students recognized that there is still a significant degree of prejudice towards Hip Hop in Japan as well as the presence of people within the Hip Hop community who do not serve as good examples, which makes it challenging to obtain institutional support for Hip Hop in Japanese universities. However, the students believed that Hip Hop in English education could reduce prejudice towards the culture in Japan by increasing awareness towards its positive values. Student C highlighted that 'dancing brought peace by letting people express their feelings or thoughts and if we increase awareness towards this peaceful aspect of dancing, people would be able to empathize with Hip Hop more easily'.

Qualitative/in-depth interviews with university English educators

English educators felt that students would be able to learn English through rap lyrics, learn kinaesthetic movements through dance or through pedagogical approaches, where expressive aspects of Hip Hop culture can be used/ utilized to create opportunities for communicative learning. Donna Brinton shared her experience of incorporating arts into her English language classes: 'I did a whole unit on blues music and that was extremely popular. And suddenly these students who'd been totally unmotivated, you know, were motivated. They came after class to participate in the language lab activities that I designed' (2021).

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The English educators added that Hip Hop can increase student motivation, lower their affective filter in the classroom as well as help them overcome cultural barriers that limit expression. The social and interactive nature of Hip Hop, along with its values of community and individuality, can be used to develop safe spaces for communication. Hip Hop can also serve as a discourse community for students to learn different varieties of English. Historical narratives in the Hip Hop community are also potential content areas, where students can learn from readings, documentaries, interviews and guest speakers. Out of the various CBI approaches in language education, Brinton specifically suggested using the Sustained Content Language Teaching (SCLT) model for an English language course in Hip Hop.

While the English educators recognized that they lacked knowledge in Hip Hop, they expressed a willingness to learn and implement Hip Hop into their teaching. Some suggested having performances and showcases as part of a university course in order to promote Hip Hop in education in Japan. The educators added, however, that course development would take significant time and effort, since teachers need to be sufficiently trained and equipped with the right material. Resistance from institutions and other faculty members posed a concern as well due to the presence of negative stigma towards Hip Hop in Japan.

Qualitative interviews with North American Hip Hop dance educators

The dance educators stated that Hip Hop provides spaces for human connection and interaction. Hip Hop culture can transform classroom culture, creating less stressful and more enjoyable classes. Students will also be more comfortable making mistakes and showing vulnerability. Most importantly, Hip Hop promotes student-centeredness and inclusivity, allowing students to bring their unique identities and lived experiences into the classroom. The participants suggested that cyphers could be incorporated into the classroom, functioning as a student-centred platform to exchange and promote ideas. Students should also be encouraged to connect their interests, identities and lived experiences with class content. Educator A added that the informal culture of peer group learning should be brought into the classroom, based on the concept of 'each one, teach one' in Hip Hop, where students support the growth of one another.

Since Hip Hop is steeped in oral tradition, students could improve their language skills through the experiences shared by older members of the Hip Hop community. For example, students can pick up Black English through engaging with historical material. Educator B highlights the complexities of teaching content in Hip Hop's history, stating:

So some of my moving away from a particular kind of version of Hip Hop history is also an attempt to reframe, I don't know if reframe is the right word, but it's an attempt to, just reconsider the kinds of terms that are elevated in telling the story of Hip Hop culture. So naming important figures is not a problem for me, but also naming community. Also naming a dynamic that isn't about inventors, isn't about fathers or godfathers or forefathers, that isn't about the biggest name, versus the community of people that laid some groundwork.

The participants believed in the importance of travelling and engaging with Hip Hop culture and the community while learning about the

various communities that contributed to Hip Hop's history. They specifically mentioned the South Bronx in New York City due to its prominence as the birthplace of Hip Hop. Some additional suggestions included inviting guest speakers and showing students documentaries and movies.

The Hip Hop dance educators also shared multiple benefits of introducing Hip Hop into English education in Japan. Large populations of Japanese students are interested in it, which would increase their motivation to learn. Hip Hop is also a culture that challenges existing beliefs and could drive positive change in Japanese society through education. Students can learn about and engage in conversation about social issues, shifting content away from traditional textbook material, enabling students to develop empathy.

While the Hip Hop dance educators were interested in teaching a Hip Hop-based English course, they expressed concern about their knowledge in language education. They also added that teachers would require knowledge and skills in Hip Hop, language teaching as well as in higher education to teach such a course. It is also challenging to teach Hip Hop's complex history and culture. Materials must be created in collaboration with knowledgeable individuals in Hip Hop culture so that students are not limited to a one-sided version of Hip Hop's history. Obtaining institutional support might also be challenging due to existing prejudices towards Hip Hop.

Qualitative/in-depth interviews with North American Hip Hop dance experts

The dance experts shared that Hip Hop was a platform for diverse groups of people to build connections and develop friendships, which facilitates language learning. Participants had previously observed that their students were able to learn Black English and Chicano English through their engagement with Hip Hop. Dancers also have opportunities to learn more about other countries and cultures through the global Hip Hop community. The experts saw Hip Hop as a philosophy of learning, since its knowledge and skills can be applied to different areas in life. Active engagement in community events and sessions can enhance public speaking, communication as well as organizational and management skills.

The Hip Hop experts were interested in the incorporation of Hip Hop into English education and saw it as an opportunity to spread knowledge and help students develop critical thinking skills. Kwikstep, however, stated that he would want the autonomy to teach from a Black cultural perspective. This would involve exploring and understanding Hip Hop in its historical, social and cultural context, specifically as it pertains to the experiences and contributions of Black people. The experts also added that since oral tradition is an important aspect of Hip Hop history, experiential learning is a big part of learning Hip Hop's history. They suggested learning from pioneering communities and bringing students to New York City to experience Hip Hop jams and events. The cypher could also be incorporated into the classroom, which would serve as a space for reflection, growth, confidence-building and the development of humility. The cypher would be a platform for students to engage in critical conversations in the target language. Movies and documentaries such as *Decade of Fire*, *Rubble Kings* and *Planet Rock* were also suggested as additional material for the course.

The experts recognized that one potential benefit of incorporating Hip Hop into English language education was that students would be able to

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deepen their understanding of Hip Hop culture and history. HHBE would also provide spaces where marginalized communities can have a voice. However, the experts expressed concern that Japanese students might have a distorted view of Hip Hop history and culture based on commercial rap music and Hip Hop dance, which could affect their openness to learning about the culture. Ana 'Rokafella' Garcia shared about her experiences teaching dance in Japan and the attitudes of local dancers when she tried to talk to them about Hip Hop's cultural heritage:

They did not want to hear it. They were like, Oh yeah, yeah, no, no, we're not interested [...] we just want to hang out and dance [...] and they would tell Kwikstep, you know, I don't know what your wife is talking about, but, uh, we're just here to have fun.

The Hip Hop experts also expressed concerns over obtaining support from academic institutions, along with the difficulty in organizing the complex and vast sources of material on Hip Hop. While there is an increasing number of resources in Hip Hop studies, there were questions raised on whether the diverse narratives and perspectives can be organized into a single course. Extensive knowledge and skills are also required in order for teachers to effectively teach Hip Hop content.

DISCUSSION

The first research question aimed to explore the attitudes of key stakeholders towards Hip Hop dance and culture in English language education in Japan. Japanese university students, English language educators who have taught in Japanese universities, North American Hip Hop educators in universities, along with the North American Hip Hop experts expressed positive attitudes and support towards the incorporation of Hip Hop dance and culture into English language education in Japanese universities. Hip Hop as a topic would not only pique the interest of students but also motivate them to actively learn the language. Hip Hop as a learning tool and pedagogy also provides multiple platforms to enhance the learning experiences of university students. Engagement in Hip Hop culture not only provided Japanese students with learning opportunities but also motivated them to improve their English language skills so that they could communicate with dancers abroad and deepen their understanding of Hip Hop culture. This is connected with the concepts of 'imagined communities' (Forman and Neal 2004: 5) and 'imagined affinities' (Fogarty 2012: 453), where Japanese students can develop their language abilities through engagement with an imagined community of practice (Yashima 2009).

The data collected also confirmed an important point in the literature review that, despite the massive interest in Hip Hop dance in Japan, there was a lack of knowledge and understanding among young practitioners towards Hip Hop's history and culture. Hip Hop in English education could then serve as a valuable opportunity for Japanese university students to learn about Hip Hop's history and culture through their English language classes. An authentic and comprehensive sharing of Hip Hop culture, where diverse stories and experiences are represented, is also important. While significant efforts might be required to establish the necessary infrastructure and resources, the Japanese university educators and North American Hip Hop experts

interviewed in this study expressed a willingness to learn from one another and contribute their expertise towards the development of Hip Hop English language courses.

The second research question was about the ways in which Hip Hop dance and culture can be incorporated into English-language teaching and learning. One possible approach is through the language teaching model of CBI. Specifically, the SCLT approach suggested by its inventor Donna Brinton could be applied. This model allows for a more comprehensive teaching of Hip Hop history and culture as content for a language course, which would serve to enhance the understanding towards Hip Hop knowledge in Japan. Based on the topics that students were interested in as shown in the 'Results' section of the student survey, 'essays, autobiographies, poems, short stories, and novels' (Snow and Brinton 2019: 20) would be selected as reading material for the course. The course will also incorporate documentaries and movies such as those shared in the 'Results' section.

Students were interested in activities that promote cross-cultural exchange, challenge global and social issues as well as explore gender issues within Hip Hop. As such, guest speakers from abroad can be invited through in-person or online platforms to share their knowledge. Teachers can also collaborate with international Hip Hop organizations to provide students with opportunities for dialogue and cultural exchange. The SCLT model incorporates activities such as discussion sessions and journals where students reflect and discuss class material. This not only ensures that students develop 'the four skills, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation' (Snow and Brinton 2019: 19), it also leads to a more comprehensive and critical study of Hip Hop.

In addition to Standard English, students would also be able to gain exposure to different varieties of English through exposure to Black and Chicano English, allowing for a more globally centred view of the English language. To ensure that students develop comprehensive knowledge in Hip Hop, they can also be given opportunities to learn from documentaries, interviews, movies as well as from pioneering communities.

The participants' responses also suggested that it might be difficult for Japanese students to experience 'authentic' Hip Hop history and culture in Japan. Condry's (2006) ethnography provided insights into how Hip Hop culture in Japan was largely inspired by American Hip Hop experts. As a result, Japanese Hip Hop dancers continue to recognize North American Hip Hop experts as examples of 'authenticity', which is reflected in efforts among Japanese dancers to 'copy' aspects of American Hip Hop, such as language, fashion and social habits. This might have led to the perception among participants that there is a need to experience Hip Hop culture in North America in order to improve knowledge towards the culture.

Hence, a travelling segment to places such as New York City would be highly attractive and beneficial to Japanese students. The students were highly interested in the possibility of learning from Hip Hop events, sessions as well as engaging with North American experts and communities. This approach would provide opportunities for Japanese students to foster cross-cultural understanding and promote social change in language learning through interactions with diverse educational contexts outside of Japan.

In addition, Hip Hop can also be used as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. The interactive and communicative nature of Hip Hop culture can play an important role in the transformation of traditional Japanese classroom spaces. This involves the creation of safe classroom communities,

where students feel comfortable being vulnerable and making mistakes. Such classroom cultures are rare in the Japanese educational context, where many problems relating to inclusiveness in education have been present (Sakamoto 2022).

The study indicated that the cypher is another key framework that should be utilized, serving as an inclusive and growth-oriented space for interaction and communication in English. Levy et al. (2017) explored the use of cyphers in group therapy for underprivileged youth, developing a series of norms and guidelines within cyphers for social work settings. These approaches can likewise be adapted into an English language classroom in Japan by introducing regular cyphers in the form of group dialogue sessions within a language course. Scaffolding can be done to introduce the norms of a Hip Hop cypher into a Japanese classroom context, which would lead to more effective and deeper discussions among students.

There are numerous values within Hip Hop culture that can be introduced to further improve Japanese classroom cultures. A participant's suggestion of 'each one, teach one' is one such example. 'Each one, teach one' is a proverb that emerged during the era of slavery in the United States where Africans did not have access to education. Whenever someone in the community gained some form of literacy, they became responsible for sharing their knowledge with the rest of the community (The University of Arizona College of Education n.d.). This approach can serve to promote a culture of mutual growth and support within Japanese classrooms. For example, students can be assigned responsibilities to share new knowledge with their classmates each week in order to promote such as culture.

Lastly, students were also interested in the idea of dancing in their English classes, where a variety of dance activities can be modified to accomplish language-learning goals. In the context of a Japanese classroom, basic Freestyle Hip Hop dance moves would be a suitable introduction. Students could also teach dance to one another in English, as well as attend dance workshops in English.

The final research question was about the potential benefits and challenges in the introduction of Hip Hop dance and culture into English language education in Japan. The results indicated that Hip Hop could be transformational for education in Japan. Classroom culture could be transformed into enjoyable and engaging spaces where students feel connected with one another like a community. Hip Hop culture would also motivate students and enhance their learning experiences. Japanese students would also gain access to more opportunities to obtain knowledge about Hip Hop history and culture. This would address the concerns in Japan over the lack of opportunities to develop a deeper understanding towards Hip Hop. Additionally, the increase in knowledge and awareness could reduce prejudice towards Hip Hop in Japanese society.

In terms of potential challenges, obtaining institutional support for such a Hip Hop-based curriculum is the largest concern. This is due to existing prejudices towards Hip Hop, along with the conservative nature of Japanese society and its field of education. Japanese society is largely risk-averse and there is a large degree of hesitancy to move away from traditional approaches. However, with increasing calls to reform education in Japan, along with concerns over Japan's economy decline, there remain avenues for the introduction of innovative educational approaches. One approach could be to start introducing Hip Hop-related courses in more global-centric educational institutions.

Another concern raised in this study was the availability of teachers who can teach Hip Hop content in English language courses since extensive knowledge in both Hip Hop culture and language education might be required. Hip Hop's history and culture is also extremely complex, and it would be challenging to cover the diverse narratives through a single course alone. Students would have to go through extensive material, hear from the experiences of various pioneering communities as well as spend significant time abroad to develop a comprehensive understanding of Hip Hop. Within Japan, there is also the need to navigate existing knowledge about Hip Hop, where many individuals have only been exposed to commercial Hip Hop dance and are not necessarily open to learning about Hip Hop history and culture. Nonetheless, the introduction of a carefully planned dance and English language course could be the first step towards introducing Hip Hop into English language education in Japanese universities.

LIMITATIONS

This study presents several limitations that may affect the generalizability and applicability of its findings. Firstly, the research exclusively focuses on interviews with North American Hip Hop experts, which may limit the understanding of the specific cultural nuances, interpretations and adaptations of Hip Hop within the Japanese context. Since Hip Hop in academia has not yet been introduced into Japanese higher education, the research has also been limited to perspectives of Hip Hop educators in North American universities.

Secondly, the investigation was geographically restricted to university students in the Tokyo area, which could limit the representativeness of the findings. There are regional differences in culture, educational practices and socio-economic backgrounds between different regions in Japan. It would be interesting to explore perspectives and experiences of university students in other parts of Japan as well. Future research should address these limitations by exploring the perspectives of Japanese Hip Hop experts towards Hip Hop in education and expand the sample to include students from various regions across Japan. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of Hip Hop's role in English language university education throughout the country and shed light on the potential regional variations in the adoption and adaptation of Hip Hop educational pedagogies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, there is huge potential to introduce Hip Hop dance and culture into English language education in Japan. Along with the introduction of Hip Hop content into English language classes, educators can explore pedagogies within existing classes. This could eventually culminate in the creation of content-based classes as well as frameworks that incorporate Hip Hop dance in English language education in Japan. As this is a new concept and has not been pursued yet in Japanese universities, based on my research, I can see the importance of including new elements into the curriculum such as (1) the cypher to create inclusive communities in the classroom, (2) English classes for dancers and (3) introducing dance to all students in general.

While it is important to introduce extensive knowledge on Hip Hop history and culture into education in Japan, extensive funding and resources might be

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required to invite guest speakers or organize exchange programmes abroad. The support of important stakeholders both in Hip Hop and in education is, therefore, necessary. Future possibilities are promising as current attitudes reflected in this study have been largely positive, even among participants who were unfamiliar with the concept of HHBE. The results of this study can serve as the first steps towards the development of Hip Hop content and frameworks in English language education in Japan.

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