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Japanese Pop Culture's Influence on the Experiences of Young Japanese in Germany

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Introduction

- Number of Japanese students learning German decreased by 50% between 1995 and 2015 (ca. 400,000 → ca. 200,000) (Schöningh 2015, 541)
 - In addition, ca. 75% learn German only for about one year / less than 60 hours in total, quitting at level A1/2 (Ibid., 543)
 - Why do Japanese students learn German?
 - 1) They have to (obligation for studies in law, pharmacy, etc.)
 - 2) They have to (not accepted for first preference / obligation for a second language) (ca. 45%) (Schaaf 2009, 266)
 - 3) They are interested in Germany or something German
- *Besides the “traditional” fields like history, literature, classical music, etc., might Japanese pop culture also influence the students’ interest?*

Research Context: Media Tourism

- Pop culture influences the image of and interest in places
 - Mediatized tourist gaze (Urry and Larsen 2011, 115):
“Media cultures also create desires for tourism, novel destinations and for new forms of mediated gazing.”
 - *Game of Thrones* attracted tourists to the filming locations in Scotland and Croatia (Waysdorf and Reijnders 2017)
 - *Harry Potter* or *Sherlock Holmes* increased the interest of Japanese people in traveling to the UK and in English culture (Iwashita 2008)
 - Displacement (media and place are not related): tourist boom in Norway because of Disney’s *Frozen* (Metcalf et al. 2018)
- *Japanese pop culture related to Germany might also lead to an increased interest.*

Research Design

- Qualitative semi-structured interviews (45-90 min)
- Essential criteria:
 - young Japanese (< 25 years old)
 - temporarily living in Germany (1-2 years)
 - not “forced” to live in Germany (like e.g. expats)
- Location: Dusseldorf and Munich
- Main corpus: 10 interviews
- Extended corpus: 3 additional interviews (not entirely fitting to the essential criteria)
- Research question: *Did Japanese pop culture have an impact on the interest in Germany / German culture and on the experiences/activities made abroad?*

	Age	Sex	Location	Profession	Stay in Germany	First interest in Germany	Interest in anime	Interest in manga
1	22	f	Dusseldorf	student	1 year	history	9	9
2	21	f	Dusseldorf	student	1 year	culture, tourism	9	8
3	21	f	Dusseldorf	student	1 year	none	10	10
4	20	f	Dusseldorf	student	1 year	environment, migration policy	5	3
5	21	f	Dusseldorf	student	1 year	literature	8	8
6	20	f	Dusseldorf	student	1 year	none	3	5
7	21	f	Dusseldorf	student	1 year	none	8	6
8	25	f	Dusseldorf	job training (Ausbildung)	2 years	classical music	5	5
9	22	f	Munich	student	1 year	none	7	7
10	23	f	Munich	student	1 year	classical music	7	7
1*	23	f	Munich	student	20 years	family moved to Germany	1	0
2*	38	f	Munich	freelancer	13 years	classical music	8	8
3*	39	m	Munich	employee	13 years	classical music	5	5

1=lowest, 10=highest

	Age	Sex	<i>Attack on Titan</i>	<i>Fullmetal Alchemist</i>	<i>Hetalia</i>	Other	Activities in Germany related to the consumed series	Learning German?
1	22	f	O	X	O	X	traveling, comparison of stereotypes	watching anime in German
2	21	f	O	O	O	X	comparison of stereotypes	no
3	21	f	O	O	O	<i>Jojo's Bizarre Adventure</i>	traveling	no
4	20	f	O	X	X	X	discussion with Germans, taking photos of cosplayers	watching anime in German
5	21	f	O	X	O	X	traveling, taking photos of cosplayers	a bit more motivation
6	20	f	X	X	X	X	no	no
7	21	f	O	O	O	X	trying the same food, discussion with Germans	no
8	25	f	O	O	O	X	discussion with Germans, simple cosplay, traveling	reading manga in German
9	22	f	O	O	X	X	traveling, discussion with Germans	much more motivation, watching anime in German
10	23	f	O	X	X	X	traveling, simple cosplay	no
1*	23	f	X	X	X	X	traveling	no
2*	38	f	X	X	X	X	no	reading manga in German
3*	39	m	X	X	X	<i>Neon Genesis Evangelion</i>	no	no

Anime/Manga series related to Germany

Attack on Titan (2009-2020)

- Mentioned in nine interviews

Fullmetal Alchemist (2001-2009)

- Mentioned in five interviews, but not as related to Germany

Hetalia (2008-)

- Mentioned in six interviews

Saga of Tanya the Evil (2013-)

- Popular in general, but not mentioned in the interviews

Neon Genesis Evangelion (1995)

- Mentioned in one interview (older generation)

Jojo's Bizarre Adventure (1986-)

- "WWII storyline" was mentioned in one interview

Results' Summary

- Japanese pop culture related to Germany has a certain impact on young people learning German and on their experiences abroad (90% of the interviewees):
 - traveling inside of Germany (60%)
 - topic of conversations with Germans (50%)
 - object to study German (watching/reading translated versions) (40%)
 - extra motivation for learning (20%)
 - pop culture depicting Germany is commonly related to war/militarism (WWI or WWII) and the late 19th / early 20th century → interest for these topics
- New trend and much related to *Attack on Titan* (and *Hetalia*)

Implications / Future Research?

- Japanese pop culture related to Germany can offer an additional topic for German language/culture classes as well as for German-Japanese youth exchange events (e.g., with German students learning Japanese and interested in manga/anime)
- More diversity in interviewees' gender and location
- Quantative follow-up projects? (e.g., surveys)
- Content analysis of series related to Germany (what are exactly the inspirations/origins?)
- Long-term development and relevance (e.g., *Attack on Titan* will end soon, will there be a series similarly popular now / in the future?)

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