
Introduction to Japanese Culture in the Book of Shokyuu De-Yomeru Topikku 25 and Minna No Nihongo 1 as Basic Level Reading Learning Material

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Abstract: This study aim to describe and introduce Japanese culture in the texts of the book entitled Shokyuu De Yomeru Topikku 25 and Minna No Nihongo Shokyuu 1. Those books were used in the course of Dokkai 1 (Reading 1) and Dokkai 2 (Reading 2) at FKIP UNRI Japanese Language Education Program. This research was a cultural studies by classifying each chapter in the text that contained cultural forms as ideas, activities and works. The research method used in this study was a qualitative descriptive method by using the listening and nothing down technique for data collection. The results of this study in the first book was acquired one chapter containing culture as a form of ideas, eight chapters of cultural form as activities, five chapters of cultural form as works and six chapters introduced culture as ideas and activities. In the second book it was found one chapter introduced cultural form as ideas, eight chapters of cultural form of activity, three chapters of cultural form as works and one chapter that shows cultural form as ideas and activities. This research was expected to be able to provide information to Japanese language teachers that in every Japanese language learning it is also necessary to introduce Japanese culture so that students are interested in learning Japanese because they also get a picture of the true Japanese society.

Keywords: Reading, Japanese culture

1. Introduction

The purpose of introducing Japanese culture in lecturing material was so that Japanese language students in FKIP Universitas Riau Japanese Language Education Program can get to know Japanese culture and society in everyday life. As mentioned by Wilhem von Humboldt in Dardjowidjojo (2003) that languages in the world must be a cultural manifestations of the society talking those languages. Therefore language and culture have a very close relationship. That close relationship can be translated as there is dependence of human thought on languages. The point is the society's view of life and culture are determined by the language used by the community itself.

According to Liliweri (2002) culture is a view of life of a group of people in the form of behaviors, believes, values, and symbols they receive unconsciously all of which are passed on through the process of communication from one generation to the next. While Taylor in Liliweri (2002) defines culture as something that organized by categories of common phenomenon similar to those called as customs which include technology, knowledge, believes, arts, morals, laws, aesthetics, recreational and abilities and habits acquired by humans as members of community. In other words, culture includes everything that was acquired or learned by humans as member of society.

According to J.J. Hoenigman in Barzilai (2003: 109), cultural forms are divided into three: ideas, activities and artifacts.

1. Ideas (Ideal Forms)

The ideal form of culture is culture in the form of collection of ideas, suggestions, values, norms, regulations, etc. that are abstract in trait; cannot be grabbed or touched. This form of culture lies in the heads or in the realm of thinking of the society. If the society express their ideas in written form, then the place of those ideal cultures can be found in essays and books created by the members of that society.

2. Activity (Acts)

Activity is a form of culture as a patterned action from humans in that society. This form is often referred to as the social system. This social system consists of human activities that interact with each other, make contact, and mingle with other humans according to certain patterns based on customary behavior. The trait is concrete, occurs in everyday life, and can be observed and documented.

3. Artifacts (Works)

Artifact is a physical manifestation of a culture in the form of the results of the activities, actions, and works of all humans in a society in the form of objects or things that can be touched, seen, and documented. The trait is most concrete among the three forms of culture.

The introduction of Japanese culture to basic level students requires proper media. In order for students to understand well about Japanese culture, the FKIP UNRI Japanese Language Education Program needs to sort out what media should be used in lectures. Determining the learning media was discussed at the beginning of the semester by holding a meeting with several lecturers and native speakers. One of the learning media used in the learning process is textbooks. Textbook is one of the learning media that plays an important role in the world of education. Textbook used in lectures in FKIP UNRI Japanese Language Education Program received from a recommendation by The Japan Foundation where said organization is the counselor of Japanese language education in Indonesia and many other countries in the world which bring Japanese language in their education. In addition, through the lecturer meeting at the beginning of the semester it also provided input in the selection of companion books in lectures.

In learning foreign languages such as Japanese, we recognize four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of the four language skills that must be mastered, reading skills are felt to be very important because from reading we can meet the human needs in obtaining information. Reading also requires a process that involves the coordination of brain and eyes when the reader acknowledges and reads the contents of the writings. Meanwhile, the process of reading Japanese texts also requires special and high intellectual skills to be able to understand the meaning and explore the information contained therein.

According to Sudjianto (2010), that the teaching of reading in Japanese language education is commonly referred to Dokkai although there is also a term almost the same as Yomikata. But, usually the teaching of Yomikata (how to read) refers to the process of reading or spelling letters (hiragana, katakana, or kanji) which are oriented towards mastering these letters one by one and their use in wider language units in writing. So, Dokkai's teaching is oriented towards understanding the meaning and content of an essay. Dokkai not only emphasizes the ability of students to read texts written in Japanese characters (hiragana, katakana, and kanji), but the main purpose is the learning to absorb various information conveyed in the text they read.

In the 2014 curriculum FKIP UNRI Japanese Language Education Program included reading courses (Dokkai) in the semester 2 to semester 5 distribution (KKNI Curriculum 2014 FKIP UNRI Japanese Language Education Program). It was explained that in Dokkai 1 there will be courses that study about

comprehension of the contents of short readings and discusses the sentence patterns contained therein. Whereas Dokkai 2 is a course of which material was chosen to train students to read and listen to basic level Japanese discourse which is a continuation of Dokkai I with basic level of Japanese language which scope is related to topics that have been determined in textbooks.

The book used were the book entitled *Shokyuu de Yomeru Topikku 25* and *Minna No Nihongo Shokyuu 1* for reading in basic level. The book entitled *Shokyuu de Yomeru Topikku 25* was used starting from semester 2 to semester 3. While the book titled *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu 1* was used starting from semester 1 to semester 2. Considering the textbook as a source of learning, it is expected to contain clear, accurate, and up-to-date materials. One of the expectations of the FKIP UNRI Japanese Language Education Program graduates is in addition to producing prospective Japanese language teachers, it is also expected that the graduates will be the agents of cultural relations between Indonesia and Japan where knowledge about Japanese culture is very necessary. In addition, the introduction of Japanese culture to basic level students is expected to attract their interest to continue learning Japanese and explore more about Japanese culture.

Therefore, the researcher wants to introduce what elements of Japanese culture that are found in the book entitled *Shokyuu de Yomeru Topikku 25* and *Minna No Nihongo Shokyuu 1*. Where as mentioned before, both books were used as primary sources in the Dokkai 1 course (Reading 1).

2. Methodology

The method used in this research was descriptive method. Descriptive research is research that is intended to conclude information about the status of existing symptoms, which symptoms according to what they were at the time the study was conducted (Arikunto, 2007). This study used a cultural study method that examines Japanese culture contained in the book entitled *Shokyuu de Yomeru Topikku 25* and *Minna No Nihongo Shokyuu 1*. Listen and note methods were used to collect data where researchers record and then group the elements of Japanese culture in each chapter of the book entitled *Shokyuu de Yomeru Topikku 25* and *Minna No Nihongo Shokyuu 1*.

The research approach used was descriptive qualitative which describes Japanese culture contained in the book entitled *Shokyuu de Yomeru Topikku 25* and *Minna No Nihongo Shokyuu 1*.

3. Result and Discussion

The results obtained after analyzing the two books were the forms of Japanese culture as the most frequently encountered activity. This was because the books entitled *Shokyuu De Yomeru Topikku 25* and *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu 1* were books used for basic-level Japanese language learners, where the two books introduced activities that were usually carried out daily by the Japanese community as the closest example of Japanese culture.

In the book entitled *Shokyuu De Yomeru Topikku 25* there were 25 chapters with each different topics. But there were two chapters that did not contain Japanese culture in its texts. Cultural forms as ideas were found in chapter 16 but also in the Warming Up 1, Warming Up 2, Chapter, 6, 7, 12, and 15 where in some of the chapters of cultural forms as ideas were also shown as activities. Cultural forms as works were found in chapters 9, 19, 20, 22 and 23.

While in the book entitled *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu 1*, there were 9 chapters that did not contain cultural forms in the texts. Dokkai text was found in practice section (mondai) starting from chapter 6

where in that chapter was found some basic sentence forms or patterns which have begun to be studied. Cultural forms as ideas were found in chapter 20, cultural forms as ideas and activities were found in chapters 6,9,14,17,18,19,20, and 24 while cultural forms as works were found in chapters 16,19 and 23.

3.1. Cultural Form as Ideas

In the book entitled *Shokyuu De Yomeru Topikku 25*, the form of culture as ideas or values existing in Japanese society was found in chapter 16, entitled *Souzou no Doubutsu* telling about Japanese mythological creatures, Kappa. Kappa was believed to be a water creature that liked to prey on children. In order to defeat Kappa, we had to bow in his honor and the kappa would follow resulting in the water in the plate on its head being spilled out and the power of Kappa will disappear. Then, the habit of bowing to respect for others was conveyed to the children in order for them to do it.

In *Warming Up 1* chapter entitled *Okuni wa Dochira Desuka* showed the attitude when you first meet and get acquainted with new people. Here we could find the introduction between Japanese and people from other countries. In Japan, when introducing yourself the first time you should say *Hajimemashite* while bending your body slightly. This bending down body movement was known as *Ojigi*. *Ojigi* itself was a characteristic of Japanese people. In almost every activity related to other people, in order to greet people, Japanese always do *Ojigi*. *Ojigi* is not only done when acquainted, but also done when apologizing for making a mistake.

In this reading text there was the sentence said *Okuni wa dochira desuka*. The sentence uses word *Okuni* which is a formal and respectful form of the word *kuni* which means country and word *dochira* is a respectful form of *doko* which means “where”. Choosing polite forms of words when meeting someone you just met is a Japanese culture elevating the other party as a form of respect.

In self-introduction situations, Japanese people also offer business cards with card position that the writings can directly be read by the interlocutor. This is known as *meishi koukan*, the name card exchange culture. *Meishi koukan* is a business ethic in Japan. Every company employee is almost certain to have a business card. When exchanging business cards, the right hands out the business card and the left hand receives the other person's business card. After the business card is received, then hold it with both hands while reading what is written on it. This is an unwritten rule in Japanese culture.

Book entitled *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu 1* chapter 20, entitled *Nikki* (diary). The text tells the writer who was with 2 of his friends went to the Temple in Kyoto on January the 1st. The writer tells us that there were many people who visited the temple that day wearing kimono. In Japan, January the 1st is celebrated by visiting Shinto shrines on the morning of the first day of the new year. They went to the temple with the purpose of praying that throughout the new year they will always get blessings. Besides praying, they also tossed coins into the box placed in front of the temple. As written in the text, *Jinja no mae no hako ni okane wo irete, iro iro onegaishita* (put coins in the box in front of the temple and pray).

The first day of the year visit to the temple is known as *Hatsumode*. New year celebration in Japan is a very special celebration for Japanese people. Since December of the previous year, Japanese people have been preparing everything in order to celebrate the coming of the new year. Like, sending a new year card, cleaning the house (*Oomisoka*), eating soba on New Year's Eve (*Toshikoshi Soba*) and going to the temple in the morning. After that, commonly Japanese people will visit relatives or friends as well as in Indonesia when celebrating the new year. Sending each other new year cards, *oomisoka*, *toshikoshi soba* and *hatsumode* are cultural manifestations as ideas because there are no

written rules that state that these activities must be carried out, but Japanese people believe that this is a good habit that is always to be done.

3.2. Cultural Form as Activity

In chapter 7 entitled *Moraimashita-Agemashita* tells the story of one company employee named George who came from Peru. It is said that when he first came to Japan for the first time George received some goods and a computer for use from his coworker. This is usually done in the work environment in Japan as a form of employee cares to new colleagues. George also gave presents to his coworkers brought from his country. The form of culture as an activity is shown by Japanese people who are George's coworkers.

In the book entitled *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu 1*, the form of culture as an activity one of them was found in the reading entitled *Me-ru (E-mail)* in chapter 14. It is said that someone named Yamada Tomoko sent an e-mail to his friend named Maria. Tomoko was on vacation to her parents' house and invites Maria and her family to come to visit. Tomoko offers Maria and her family to swim and fish in the sea because the area is famous for its delicious fish. Although it was not mentioned in the text, it was clearly described the situation at that time was summer. In summer, Japanese people usually go on vacation both abroad and local by visiting their parents. The initial sentence in the text that was the opening greeting in the letter was found sentence *Ogenki desuka. Mainichi Atsui Desune*. The sentence asked Maria if she was going alright because the days were hot. Correspondence or sending postcards to friends is usually done by Japanese people.

3.3. Cultural Form as Works

In chapter 20 there were two dokkai texts *Shousetsuka No Isshou* which means the history of the novelist. The text told the life story of a famous writer in Japan named Natsume Souseki. It was reported that Natsume Souseki was born in 1867. After graduating from Tokyo University he began his career teaching English in schools. In 1905 he began writing his first novel entitled *Wagahai wa Neko de Aru* which later became a famous novel in Japan. The novel has been translated into English under the title *I am a Cat*. In 1907, he stopped teaching at the university and began writing many novels. Natsume died in 1916 at the age of 49. From 1984 until now, the Japanese government gave tribute to him by placing a picture of himself on 1000 yen banknotes.

In the second reading entitled *Nihon no Bungakusha (Japanese Literalist)* told about the questionnaire issued by the *Asahi* newspaper to 20569 Japanese people. The results of the questionnaire stated that Natsume Souseki was ranked first as a Japanese writer in the era of the 1000s to the 2000s which was the most preferred. Followed by second place was Murasaki Shikibu. Of the top 10 ranks, Murasaki Shikibu was the only novelist who was female.

From the two texts in chapter 20 it introduces several writers from Japan whose works have been translated into international languages and until now the works of these novelists can still be found.

In the book entitled *Minna No Nihongo Shokyuu 1*, the form of culture as a work can be found in chapter 23 entitled *Shoutoku Taishi*. Shoutoku Taishi was born in 574. Since he was a child he studied hard and was good at riding a horse. It was also said that Shoutoku Taishi was a person who has many friends. At the age of 20 he began his career in the Japanese government and was known as a Japanese politician who built a Buddhist temple to study state law. The temple was in the Nara Prefectur. UNESCO then noted this Buddhist temple as the oldest wooden building in the world.

4. Conclusion

In the book entitled *Shokyuu De Yomeru Topikku* 25 most cultural forms were cultural forms as activities, in which interactions with human fellows such as attitudes in the working environment, planning vacations, sending letters to friends and participating in gathering activities. While on the book entitled *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu* 1 form of culture the most indicated was a form of cultural activity. Activities carried out by the Japanese community as written in the *dokkai* text such as campus activities, sending e-mails, giving presents to each other, and other activities such as climbing Mount Fuji which was usually done in summer in Japan.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the two books provided an introduction to the basics; the habits that were carried out at home or in the campus environment. In both books, culture as ideas and works were not too widely introduced because the values or ethics of Japanese society and culture as works were specifically studied further in other courses.

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