

# EVALUATION OF JAPANESE LANGUAGE WRITING CLASS: INTEGRATING JAPAN FOUNDATION STANDARD WITH THE VISION OF THE UNIVERSITY IN A LECTURE'S LEARNING OBJECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT-** *Universitas Negeri Semarang, as a conservation-oriented university, has been using a curriculum that implements conservative values in its lecture sessions. For instance, Sakubun Schochukyu subject (elementary-level writing skill) adds conservative values-related objective (culture, environment, and character) in its learning syllabus. The evaluation of the lecturing process has only been carried out during tests or when giving assignments to the students. However, a learning course is supposed to be evaluated by referring to several factors to define its success. Therefore, the Sakubun Schochukyu lecturing process is evaluated based on self-assessment, students' perception, and writing assessment. This study reported that students' self-assessment highly contributed to the learning objective. The students also responded positively to the Sakubun Shochukyu lecture. In addition, students' writing ability fell under a "very good" category with the score ranging from 81-85. Nevertheless, the element of grammar still needed improvement since there were some grammatical and expression errors that occurred in the writing, yet the overall meaning were still understandable.*

**Keywords-** *Evaluation, Self-Assessment, Students' Perception, Writing*

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## I INTRODUCTION

Universitas Negeri Semarang (henceforth, UNNES) is a university with a conservative-oriented vision. The policy regarding this vision are central to students' education and learning process (Demirel & Coşkun, 2010), along with the concern on the effort to shape an environmentally-friendly character (Mbizvo et al., 2019) embedding socio-cultural values. By this vision, the society of academicians is demanded to have a conservation point of view and attitude that retains natural resources and socio-cultural values. Such a conservative-oriented attitude is expected to support the process of preserving nature and socio-cultural values in Indonesia. Shi et al.(2019) have identified several studies proving that human's attitude is crucial in determining the effect of energy conservation and environmental protection. On that ground, shaping an attitude of conservation culture is required. Zhou & Wu (2012) explain that "conservation culture, in short, refers to the harmonious development of man and nature."

Preserving the earth's environment provides various benefits; this action depends on the role of the society, as evident by different studies (Hirschenberger et al., 2019; Steinert, et al., 2020; Ülger et al., 2014). Considering the importance of conservation, UNNES has implemented conservative values, consisting of cultural, environmental, and character conservations in the learning curriculum since 2012 (Syarifudin et al., 2019). UNNES is not only committed to applying natural and cultural conservations but also the character conservation as mandated by the government (Fahmy et al., 2015)

The Sakubun Schochukyu (elementary-level writing skill) is one of the subjects containing conservation values in its learning syllabus in the Study Program of Japanese Education. Alongside Japanese skills, another objective to be achieved after the lecturing process is related to conservation values. This objective is reflected in the graduate learning objective, subject learning objective, and the expected ability in every meeting or material.

The syllabus that has been designed and applied in lectures for one semester needs to be evaluated, as it is central to the classroom learning (ref 29) to find out the extent to which the objective has been met (Ghonoobi & Salimib, 2011); as well as the quality of the Sakubun Shochukyu lecture.

Teachers oftentimes perform the evaluation process by assessing the results of students' tests or assignments, whereas an evaluation of the learning process should be carried out using a variety of methods (Martin et al., 2019). As an evaluation of learning process (Thomas, 2018) in Sakubun Shochukyu subject, the evaluation is done by using self-assessment (Matsuda et al., 2017), students' perception (Nazilah, 2014), and students' writing assessment by employing JF Standard assessment system (The Japan Foundation, 2017).

## II METHOD OF STUDY

This study relied on a quantitative approach, in which its data were collected from the questionnaire and writing score. The questionnaire was distributed to 29 students in study group 1 participated in Sakubun Shochukyu subject, i.e., the third-semester students of the academic year 2019/2020.

The assessment of students' writing utilized a four-level assessment rubric with the category of "ganbare", "mousukoshi", "dekimashita", "yoku dekimashita" ("Do your best!", "A little more!", "You did it!", "Excellent!"). Each category was converted to a range of scores, i.e., "ganbare" (60.00-70.00), "mousukoshi" (70.01-80.00), "dekimashita" (80.01-90.00), and "yoku dekimashita" (90.01-99.00). These were included in a rubric to ease the assessment process, so that students' writing skill could be identified. The writing assessment rubric by following JF Standard assessment system is presented below.

Table 1. Assessment Rubric of Students' Writing

Point of Assessment	Do your best! 60.00-70.00	A little more! 70.01-80.00	You did it! 80.01-90.00	Excellent! 90.01-99.00
Content, attention to the reader	There is insufficient information to convey the idea. There is no relationship between the content and the theme. Difficult to understand.	Have information that needs to be conveyed, but generally, the writer does not know what he wants to convey.	Have information that needs to be conveyed, and the writer knows what he wants to convey.	Provide detailed information needed to convey ideas. There are additional explanations as needed. It is very easy to understand by readers.
Composition	Sentences are intermittent and compositions cannot be seen as sentences.	Only making a line of sentence that contains what he wants to say but there is no coherence	The whole composition can be understood, but some parts are vague to be understood	Coherence between sentences is very good. Its composition is very easy to understand, and its readability is high.
Grammar	Many errors in grammar and expression. The meaning is difficult to understand.	There are some errors in grammar and expression but the whole meaning can be understood.	There are almost no errors in grammar and expression. The meaning is easy to understand.	It's easy to understand because there are no errors in grammar and expression.
Vocabulary	Sentences are difficult to understand because there are many errors in the use of	There are parts that contain errors in the use of vocabulary, or writing errors (long sounds, double consonants, etc.),	The use of vocabulary is appropriate. There are almost no errors in	The use of vocabulary is correct and there are no errors in vocabulary.

Point of Assessment	Do your best!	A little more!	You did it!	Excellent!
	60.00-70.00	70.01-80.00	80.01-90.00	90.01-99.00
	vocabulary	but do not affect the reader's understanding	vocabulary.	
Letters/ hand-writing	Almost everything is written in Hiragana and Katakana letters. The periods and commas are mostly wrong-placed.	In some parts, it still uses Hiragana letters for Kanji that have been learned. There are a few errors in the placement of periods and commas. Therefore there are sentences that are difficult to understand.	Trained Kanji is used and well-written. The placement of periods and commas is correct, so that it is easy to understand.	Trained Kanji is used and well-written well. The writer even tries to use Kanji that has not been learned. The placement of periods and commas is correct, so that it's easy to understand.

### III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

The analysis result reveals that self-assessment regarding the fulfillment of graduate learning objective, subject learning objective, and sub-subject learning objective arrives at a high score with an average of 3.3. Moreover, students' perception of implementing character values in the learning objective, writing media utilization, the use of "Marugoto" as the primary textbook, lecturer's explanation and feedback gets a "very positive" category with an average of 3.6.

The assessment of students' writing is divided into the categories of content/ attention to the reader, composition, grammar/ expression, vocabulary, letters and hand-writing; these are elaborated as follows. First, in terms of content or attention to the reader, students can present information and understand what they want to convey; second, the writing composition is comprehensible, although some parts are vague; third, most of the students have used good grammar and expression, although some errors still take place. Despite this, the whole meaning is understandable; fourth, the vocabulary is used correctly with only minor mistakes; fifth, in terms of letters and hand-writing, students use well-written Kanji with no mistakes. The students are also able to place punctuation marks (periods and commas) accurately, resulting in a comprehensible writing.

#### Discussion

##### 1. Self-Assessment

As one of the curriculum elements (Ghonoody & Salimib, 2011), every subject must target a learning objective. The extent to which the learning objective has been met will be found out after the evaluation at the end of the learning process. Self-assessment serves as one of the evaluation methods to identify students' perceptions of

their ability as they have different perceptions of it (Karlen et al., 2019). There are three points of students' self-assessment as the curriculum evaluation (Motamed et al., 2013), including graduate learning objective, subject learning objective, and sub-subject learning objective.

Graduate learning objective comprises knowledge (mastering information from the basic Japanese writing activity about everyday life), attitude (intelligence, morality, ethics, and internalization of conservative values in the learning process), special skills (being able to productively use Japanese in the materials learned in elementary level A2-2), and general skills (being able to apply logical, critical, systematic, and innovative thoughts in writing activity using Japanese with elementary level A2-2 as well as performing self-evaluation process towards the one-semester learning). Self-assessment of the students in regards to the achievement of the objective is included in a high category with an average of 3.13 out of 4.

The learning objective in Sakubun Shochukyu Subject is "students will be able to write an impression, present information, thoughts, and others regarding the theme that is close to students' everyday life". This objective (Yusuff, 2018) is adjusted to students' elementary level A2-2 of JF Standard. Based on students' responses, the achievement of the learning objective of this subject reaches an average point of 3.30.

The last point of self-assessment regarding the sub-subject learning objective consists of 10 objectives that integrate with Japanese skills with the cultural, environmental, and character conservation values; the objectives for the students to achieve are provided below.

- 1) Paying attention to the lecturer as a form of respect and politeness (character value).
- 2) Understanding the process of the lecture.
- 3) Being able to tell hobbies of favorite things.
- 4) Being able to write down how to eat or cook Indonesian foods to foreigners as a form of loving the culture of Indonesia (cultural value).
- 5) Being able to write an explanation about ethical eating applicable in every region (character value).
- 6) Being able to write impressions of traveling experiences and give suggestions to readers who wish to visit the same place as a sign of care (character value).
- 7) Being able to write information regarding some activities related to Indonesian culture (festivals, customs, etc.) to be introduced to foreigners as a form of loving the culture of Indonesia (cultural value).
- 8) Being able to communicate in Japanese by greeting other people and blessing them as a sign of caring for others (character value).
- 9) Being able to show care for people who might need information about an electronic product by writing specifically about the detail and review of the product (character value).
- 10) Being able to write information on historical and cultural places or buildings in Indonesia that had been visited as a form of caring for Indonesian historical and cultural conservations (character value).

As based on the questionnaire, students mostly give a score of 3.41 at the point of fulfilling the sub-learning objectives mentioned previously. All in all, students give a high point with an average of 3.3 out of 4, as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Average results of self-assessment

No.	Objectives	Average results
1.	Graduate learning objective	3.13
2.	Subject learning objective	3.30
3.	Sub-subject learning objective	3.41
4.	Average results	3.30

From the five-scale assessment (low, very low, moderate, high, very high), point 3.30 gets the “high” category; it is equivalent to “very good” category in the writing assessment. Despite the fact that the “passed” category, according to university standard, encompasses seven grades (UNNES, 2018), writing subject has another policy since it is a productive skill. Students should get a minimum score of 60 as the lowest grade with the “fair” category (“fair”, “average”, “good”, “very good”, “excellent”).

The implementation of this policy is grounded by the notion that writing is a complex activity (Graham et al., 2005) where students apply their cognitive and metacognitive skills (Escorcía & Gimenes, 2019; Iskandar, 2014) in an integrated manner.

Understanding and producing a written language, as stated by (Hillis, 2008), is a complex task that requires cognitive processes. According to Hillis, cognitive processes in writing activity include (1) auditory process of the spoken word, culminating in access to a learned phonological representation that allows recognition of the spoken word as a familiar word; (2) access to the lexical-semantic representation of the word; (3) access to, or assembly of, an orthographic representation (the series of graphemes that constitute the learned spelling of the word); (4) access to the specific letter shapes or letter shape-specific motor plans, that support writing the word in a particular font or case; (5) motor planning and programming of the movements of the fingers, wrist, and arm required to write; and (6) implementing the actual movements.

Metacognition refers to an accurate conscious control or cognitive control (or knowledge) of one’s cognition and cognitive activities (Longyan & Zhifei, 2010). Furthermore, Hideyuki provides an example of metacognition, e.g., thinking about what to perform in the specific learning process, and to continue the learning while considering what is essential when that process takes place. Hideyuki also divides metacognition in writing activity into metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive activity.

Metacognitive knowledge consists of knowledge of human cognitive characters, assignments, strategies (declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge). On the other hand, metacognitive activity comprises metacognitive monitoring (consciousness, feeling, inspection, prediction, and evaluation about cognition) and metacognitive control (goal, planning, and modification about cognition).

Another rationale of implementing the policy mentioned earlier is that students' writing is not only considered a product, but also a long process starting from determining a writing topic or theme to the result of the writing itself. De Smet et al. (2014) opine that three main activities in writing are planning, translating, and reviewing their text. During the writing process, writers should simultaneously plan, translate, and review their texts. They need to consider what ideas to be written (content) and how to express them in a way that is corresponding to the topic and appropriate for readers (rhetorical aspect).

## **2. Students' Perception**

Students' perception can be utilized as one of the evaluation instruments related to the conduct of a lecture; what has been applied by the lecturer in the classroom has a direct influence on students' perception and comprehension (Liu & Du, 2018). The result of the survey containing students' perception can function as a reference for the lecturer to identify their views of the lecturing process for it to be an evaluation for the lecturer. This study examines four aspects of students' perceptions, which are the implementation of character values in the lecturing process, the use of writing media, the selection of writing topics/themes, and other general aspects. The first aspect of character values assessed by the students can be seen in the point of self-assessment about the subject learning objective. The second aspect of writing media utilized in the lecturing process consists of worksheets, social media, photo panels, and blogs. Varied media, particularly those relying on mobile technologies (Voi Ngoc, 2019), are intentionally used to avoid learning boredom. The media, such as social media and blogs, are selected based on the idea that the learning materials are learned in accordance with the students' writing needs (Miangah, 2012).

The third aspect of topics or themes in Sakubun Shochukyu encompasses Jibun no Shumi wo Shoukai Suru (introducing one's hobby), Indonesia no Ryouri o Susumeru (recommending Indonesian foods), Uchi no Shokuji Manaa (introducing ethical eating in every house), Ryokou (traveling), Matsuri: Indonesia no Bunka, Ibento nado (Festival: Indonesian cultural festivals, events, and others), Tokubetsuna Hi: Tegami o Henjisuru (special day: replying a letter), Nettoshoppingu: Shouhin o Kuraberu (online shopping: comparing products), and Rekishi to Bunka no Machi: Indonesia no Rekishi to Bunka no Machi/ Tatemono (cultural and historical cities: cities or buildings with cultural and historical values in Indonesia).

All of those topics mentioned above are adapted from a course book entitled "Marugoto" (Kijima et al., 2012), especially Marugoto elementary level 2 A2 (Kawashima et al., 2015). The book is used in the Study Program of Japanese Education, UNNES since the academic year of 2018-2019, and has followed the JF Standard published in 2010 by The Japan Foundation that was adapted from Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Areum, n.d.).

Other assessed aspects are related to how the lecture is carried out. There are nine items being asked, such as:

1) Perception of the utilization of "Marugoto" as the main textbook. The question about students' perception of using this book is based on the idea that the perception will affect their interest to read the book along with their learning (Gurung & Landrum, 2012). In the same tune, (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011) bring out the fact that

“Indeed, there have been several comprehensive reviews in the educational literature that suggest how instructional materials influence students’ situational interest.”

2) The preference level of the students towards writing activity in Japanese. This item should be examined, considering that preference can influence the students’ learning attention, involvement, pleasure, and outcomes. A study conducted by (Ainley & Ainley, 2011) on four students from Colombia, America, Estonia and Sweden also discovered a strong correlation between science personal value, science pleasure and interest. Even though their study focused on science, the researchers believe that such a correlation is also applicable to other fields of study.

3) 100-minute session of contact hours (2 x 50 minutes). In the second semester of 2019, the writing process is done in the classroom, unless the writing topic is made in groups (Topic: Matsuri: Indonesia no Bunka, Ibento nado and Matsuri: Indonesia no Bunka, Ibento nado). Their perception of this method needs to be questioned. Hashemian and Heidari (2013) claim that a great number of factors, time, in particular, influence the writing of foreign language learners.

4) Writing in the classroom (not homework). This item is questioned to find out whether or not students feel comfortable and free to do the writing process in the classroom; this factor will be impactful on students’ writing performances.

5) Comprehensible explanation of writing instruction from the lecturer. If the students are able to understand the lecturer’s explanation or instruction, it will influence the smoothness of their writing process.

6) Comprehensible classical feedback from the lecturer can help students understand and master writing skills. Similar to item 5, comprehensible feedback can facilitate the students to better their writing.

7) Classical feedback from the lecturer. Asking about this item is to determine students’ perception of, whether or not the feedback containing the errors they generally commit, is positively performed.

8) Individual feedback from the lecturer is very useful for writing skill comprehension and mastery. After classical feedback, the teacher asks the students to individually come to get supervision and feedback.

9) Individual feedback from the lecturer. Students’ perception of the individual feedback carried out by the lecturer.

The result of the questionnaire reveals that students have a “very positive” perception of four aspects mentioned previously, with an average of 3.6. The following table presents the details.

Table 3. Average results of students’ perception

No.	Perceptions	Average results
1)	The implementation of character values in the lecturing process	3.37
2)	The use of writing media	3.65
3)	Themes or topics selected in <i>Sakubun Shochukyu</i> lecture	3.67
4)	Other aspects	3.61
Overall average		3.60



### 3. Writing Assessment Result

The writing assessment is done in the first writing the students compose, not the one that is written after having feedback from the lecturer. This assessment is based on the rubric as described in the chapter of the method of study, which then the result is in compliant with the assessment standard of learning outcomes applied in UNNES (UNNES, 2018). It comes to the report that statistically, students' average score achieves 81.68 and falls under a "very good" category; it gets the same category as students' perception of the fulfillment of learning objective. Here are the details.

Table 4. The average score of students' writing skill

Topics/ Assessment Points	Content, attention to the reader	Composition	Grammar/ expression	Vocabular y	Letters/ hand- writing	Average scores
<i>Atarashiitomodachi : Jibun no shumiwoshoukaisur u</i>	75.71	79.39	77.23	82.68	81.32	79.26
<i>Mise de taberu 1: Indonesia no Ryouru o Susumeru</i>	71.77	74.77	71.65	73.52	76.52	73.65
<i>Mise de taberu 2: Uchi no ShokujiManaa</i>	70.90	72.45	73.68	76.32	80.84	74.84
<i>Ryokou</i>	85.71	83.06	77.90	85.35	81.87	82.78
<i>Matsuri: Indonesia no Bunka (Ibentonado)</i>	88.39	87.03	78.42	82.87	87.06	84.75
<i>Tokubetsunahi: Tegami o Henjisuru</i>	80.23	81.90	75.45	78.65	76.87	78.62
<i>Nettoshoppin'gu</i>	87.81	88.23	79.71	93.29	84.42	86.69
<i>Rekishi to Bunka no Machi: Indonesia no Rekishi to Bunka no Machi/ Tatemono</i>	95.00	95.00	89.23	92.81	92.16	92.84
Average scores	81.94	82.73	77.91	83.19	82.63	81.68

The above table indicates that the aspect of grammar gets the lowest score, although it falls under a “good” category. There are some errors in grammar and expression that occur in the writing, yet the overall meaning is still understandable. These errors are due to the mother tongue effect, as the students write the sentence based on Indonesian (their mother tongue) patterns which are different from Japanese. In Japanese, the sentence patterns consist of subject-object-predicate-complement; meanwhile, it is subject-predicate-object-complement in Indonesian. Moreover, the word orders encompass modifier-head in Japanese and head-modifier in Indonesian.

Other assessment categories, i.e., content and attention to the reader, composition, vocabulary, letters and handwriting arrive at the same score range of 80.01-90 (very good category).

Regarding the average score of each writing topic, students reach a “very high” score in the topics of Indonesia no Rekishi to Bunka no Machi and Nettoshoppin’gu. The first writing topic (Indonesia no Rekishi to Bunka no machi) is a group-based project, so that students work together in groups. As the writing object, historical cities or buildings in Indonesia to be discussed in their writing should be based on the students’ interest because it determines the writing quality (Yu et al., 2019). The students then carry out a field study to gather information. In addition to students’ interest in the writing object, sufficient time does also influence writing quality (Hashemian & Heidari, 2013); thus, they are given two weeks to write about Indonesian historical cities/buildings. However, for other topics, students do the writing process only during the contact hours. Other factors that are also impactful on achieving high scores include positive perception of the students and group work; working in groups is very useful because students with good skills can help those who need support and assistance.

Students also score high on the topic Nettoshoppin’gu due to the fact they are more excited to write about gadget-related things, which are very close to everyday life, so that the learning process will be more engaged and positively influence their writing performances. According to Osgerby et al. (2018), “learning occurs when new knowledge and experience is brought to an individual’s attention, where it is assessed in the context of what is already known”. In the same way as the topic of historical cities/buildings in Indonesia, students’ interest in the topic of online shopping also has an impact on writing quality.

#### **IV CONCLUSION**

Self-assessment of the students generally achieves a high score, and students’ perception of character values implementation and the learning process arrives at a “very positive” category. Additionally, students’ writing skill is categorized “very good”, despite some errors in grammar and expression.

The result of the questionnaire regarding students’ perceptions connected with students’ writing assessment reveals that students can write better about the themes they perceive positively. Accordingly, positive perception

affects students' work ethics in completing the writing assignment; an enticing topic that is familiar to students' daily life will also determine their writing results.

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