

Research Article

Classroom Action Research on Thematic-Designed Online Learning for Contemporary Japanese Literature

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Abstract

This study aims to implement contemporary Japanese literature learning with thematic designs as a learning strategy for 60 students on literary study classes (Poetry, Prose, and Drama) at Darma Persada University that conducted by online during pandemic. This study was conducted using Kurt Lewin's Classroom Action Research model consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting; particularly for the observing section, the assessment was measured using two indicators based on students' understanding of the material and satisfaction with online learning. Data was collected using questionnaires and filled out via google form. The findings of this study indicate the level of student understanding on the material, the constraints of online learning, and feedback from experts. The findings are useful for improving Japanese literature learning, to be more precisely during online course.

Keywords: Classroom Action Research; Contemporary Japanese Literature; Thematic Learning Design

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1. Introduction

This study aims to implement Japanese Literature learning with thematic designs during the pandemic. The teaching material is analysis of Japanese literary works, contemporary Japanese literature works, which are one of the important aspects in understanding the development of Japanese literature and understanding Japanese society today. Thematic learning implementation aims to make it easier for students to understand teaching material, because can be applied in various learning subjects.

There are several previous studies related to the development of learning methods using thematic designs. In the article conducted by Fatimah (2014),

research objectives at investigating student responses on teaching with thematic designs in teaching English vocabulary using classroom action research methodology. Fatimah performed observations by distributing questionnaires consisting of four categories with ten questions to 32 students of fifth grade in one of the elementary schools in Bandung. The results of this study indicate that student responses are very positive and can increase student interest in actively contributing to the learning process and can improve student ability to understand vocabulary.

Varner (2005) also performed the application of thematic design in Edo era learning while even though it was

unwritten clearly. Varner explained the learning activities involves students to contribute actively to discussion after completing assignments, either as a group or individual coursework regarding Classical Japanese Themes. Varner used *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shonagon to teach literature-writing styles at that time and assign students to appreciate this literature work in a new form of writing by combining aesthetic values in Heian Literature, Heian era traditions, and Sei Shonagon style of writing. In an exploration class on art, literature and gender roles at the era, Varner used the *Kagero Diary*, *the Diary of Murasaki Shikibu* or the *Sarashina Diary* to find out about the lives of Heian women living in the court. Students also invited to collectively analyse and interpret works of art in the form of emaki or scroll paintings such as Miyeko Murase's *The Tale of Genji: Legends and Paintings*. Varner used the English version of literature and works of art in studying the historical, social, cultural and political aspects of this period.

Using literatures media in learning subject also used by Tanaka, in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class at Otemae University, Japan in different way of learning and teaching. Tanaka (2015) used L1 literature text, as a media (with Japanese-mother tongue) in class L2 (second language-English) which considered be able to improve students' language skills. Tanaka choose *tanka* (short Japanese poem) *Tangled hair: Selected tanka Midaregami* by Yosano Akiko as teaching material, which taught using the mirror text method and literary translation. This method aims to encourage students to be actively involved in creative activities and discussions in class. Textual and contextual understanding can be achieved by critical analysis of grammar, syntax and nuance. Literature helps students form connections to cultural contexts and is a powerful tool in translating texts coherently, thereby

increasing student awareness of culture and English.

In a similar study, Yahya also used Japanese literature in English Literature class in the context of EFL. Yahya interviewed several students and lecturers at six universities in Japan for several months. Yahya focuses on English language skills and literary competence, the selection of teaching materials and teaching methods, and solutions to reduce language and cultural gaps. Notably, when choosing teaching materials, Yahya used Shakespeare's poetry, and then used the *Yakudoku* method and the New Criticism Approach as teaching methods. *Yakudoku* is a method frequently used to learn foreign languages by translating text word-for-word. The lecturer provides a translation model, corrects the level of accuracy of the students' translation, then the translation results are discussed as well as interpreting the plot, themes, characters, and semantic meaning. In addition, the lecturer also teaches the work experts to provide their perspective on the author and his work. The New Criticism Approach method is a teaching procedure in criticizing text, a method that requires students to concentrate on extracting word information from text. The purpose of this method is to determine the value of literature works and authors who use common language in extraordinary ways.

To enhance the understanding of using thematic design as learning method, Okoro (2016) also conducted research particularly on teachers' understanding when applying thematic approaches on learning social studies. This research highlight on how far teachers' understanding of thematic approach in teaching social studies case studies on 28 school and 56 teachers in Obia-Akpor Local government Area. Okoro uses Teachers' Understanding and Practice of Thematic Instructional Questionnaire (TUPTIQ), which consisted of two sections – A and B. Section A, is made up

of Biodata of the respondents while section B contains the questionnaire items on the research questions. The result from collected data shows that teachers' understanding of thematic approach in teaching social studies is not sufficient; teachers do not have adequate thematic practice approach in teaching social studies; and that teachers' years of experience is not a determinant factor for teachers' utilization of thematic instruction in teaching social studies.

The research that had been mentioned are one of the foundations for writers to use thematic methods in learning literature works. The similarity between this study and Fatimah (2014) and Okoro (2016)'s is both use thematic design or thematic approach to design learning material and to study object, particularly Fatimah's using classroom acting research as a research method which also used on this study as well while the differences are on the subject and the education degree. Meanwhile Tanaka (2015) and Yahya (2015) are both applying thematic designed as a learning method applied to university students, and the explicit distinction is those research use literature works as a medium in understanding aspects of society and culture, while this study analyses literature works as the main study. To fill the gap between those research with this study is in this study combines CAR method on thematic design to learn Japanese Literature for university students. Hence, this research contributed to the preparation of material based on themes, the development of learning methods and the development of interesting classroom activities.

2. Methods

The research was conducted using the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method of Kurt Lewin's model. CAR itself is a research method based on collecting information on classroom activities. Kurt Lewin's CAR model was initially used to

examine major post-war social problems. Lewin then developed a theory of action research and the social change that needed to be achieved. This theory is considered corresponding to be applied in the education field as well as social science in general (Hopkins, 2014: 59).

Stephen Corey was the first who introduced Classroom Action Research (CAR) to the educational field in the 1950s, and further developed after he wrote book "Action Research to Improve School Practice" (1953). Corey described three characteristics of action research. First, its purpose is to improve practice because CAR is a process which teachers study their own practice to solve their personal practical problems. Second, practitioners carry it out or apply the results of the research to their practice. Third, practitioners are more likely to be influenced by their own action research than by traditional research conducted by researchers outside of the practitioners' workplace (Gordon & Solis, 2018). Therefore, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of learning during the pandemic period and to develop Japanese Literature learning. In the analysis of literature works with the approach of Japanese society and culture, which expected to increase students' understanding in gauging a literature work in general, notably in Japanese literature.

The participant of this study is 60 students from 4 Japanese literature learning classes with a thematic design: Literature Works Studies 36 students, Japanese Prose Studies 7 students, Japanese Poetry Studies 7 students, and Japanese Drama studies 10 students. This study conducted over a year, class observation had been done from March to July AY 2019/2020, and the process of data analyzation had been done on six months forth. As for learning method evaluation, there were two experts involved in this study namely lecturer of Japanese Study, Faculty of Humanities

Universitas Indonesia and Doctoral Student of Japanese Modern Literature, Graduate School of Letters, Ritsumeikan University and Lecturers of Faculty of Cultural Studies of Brawijaya University.

The stages in Kurt Lewin's CAR model consists of four stages, 1) Planning, 2) Acting, 3) observing, and 4) reflection.

Planning stage is carried out by compiling a syllabus in accordance with the existing curriculum. The syllabus is compiled in conjunction with the programmed online learning method, the presentation of the material either synchronously or asynchronously, as well as the types of assignments for students.

Implement what has been designed in the planning stage. Teaching and learning activity were performed using audio-visual media, platforms for discussion, and video conferencing as supporting elements on learning.

The observation stage cannot be carried out directly by face-to-face therefore, this study uses a questionnaire to find out how students perceive effective learning with thematic designs and how satisfied students are with the online learning that has been done. The questions on questionnaire are arranged based on nine indicators of *Condition of learning and Cognitive Process* by Robert Gagne.

Reflection is performed in two ways, namely by (1) distributing a questionnaire containing learning obstacles as feedback from students; and (2) feedback from the experts on learning literature. In this step, the CAR cannot be done only once, but teacher should repeatedly twice or more depends on the result of observation in the class (Purwantoro, 2014).

The instruments in this research are lecturer as a teacher, students, and experts in analysis of literature work subjects (poetry, prose and drama).

3. Result and Discussion

This research use Classroom Action Research, mainly Kurt Lewin model and consist of four steps as follows: Planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The Instrument of this research are students of Japanese literature works classes and its lecturers.

3.1 Planning

On the first step, we arrange Japanese literature work syllabus based on applied 2017 curriculum of our program at university. Thematic-designed learning covers the society background of literature works, social issues offered in it, and the writer reflection or reaction. The material selection must be well-considered to enhance student understanding on its issue and to relate with current condition. This design consists of these four steps as follow (Esu on Okoro, 2016):

- 1) Choosing a theme. The consideration in choosing a theme is its relatedness to human being life as students can simply connect the literature work with life or issues in society. Among the themes studied were *genbaku bungaku*/atomic bomb literature, *zainichi bungaku*/Korean literature, *sainan bungaku*/disaster literature, and war propaganda in literature.
- 2) Designing the integrated curriculum. Lecture must organize learning objectives of the curriculum, namely process skills and content knowledge about the theme. The curriculum is arranged based on the selected themes first stage by providing details on every aspect discussed in the theme, including discussion of the background for the formation of the literary work, authors and literary works, also analysis and discussion on the selection of a literature work.

- 3) Designing the instruction, which involves making transformation to the class schedule combining hours normally devoted to specific topics. Lectures are carried out both synchronously and asynchronously lecture, as lecturers must provide clear lecture guides and instructions for each material and worksheet as an assignment.
- 4) Encouraging presentation and celebration. Due to the project orientation of thematic instruction, it frequently involves students going collective presentation. The aim of assignments for students is to increase understanding of the literature work, both in the form of worksheet as individual assignment and presentations as group assignments.

The delivery of material based on curriculum and using an interdisciplinary integrated learning approach. There are involves (1) recognizing the connections between a wide range of subject areas, namely red lines between cultural, political, and social aspects as background of writings or its content; (2) determines how to use these connections to contribute to a student's whole education; enhance analytical thinking on literature works study as a product and reflection of society in a certain period (Bottoms and Sharpe, 1996). Whereas the learning strategy includes two things, namely learning method (as seen in char 1) and learning technique.

The learning techniques consist of implementation of learning process and the detail steps on how to deliver learning material to students which follows: 1) Giving literary works by certain authors to students; 2) Student read the chosen literature work (take home assignments or in-class activities); 3) Student express opinions about the intrinsic elements of the

literary work by provoking questions from the lecturer; 4) The lecturer provides an explanation of the theme/topic of literary works as a concept; 5) Giving assignments in the form of worksheets containing questions about literary works in accordance with the theme discussion

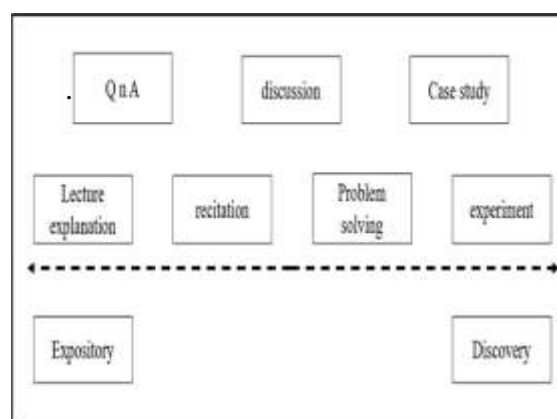


Chart 1 Integrated learning method

Source: edited by authors

3.2 Acting

This 'Acting' stage is the implementation of the 'planning' stage, which is the learning and teaching activity stage (TTA - teaching and learning activities) studying literature works. The TTA has been carried out in online class learning from March to July AY 2019/2020. Prior to the implementation of the lecture, Darma Persada University lecturer of Japanese Literature conducted observations by attending the Japanese prose study class at the Japanese Studies Program/Department of Literature, Faculty of Humanities Universitas Indonesia, twice in December 2019. The purpose of this observation is to learn how to teach Japanese literature study. From the results of these observations, there are several methods, which has been applying in Darma Persada University, namely the use of worksheets as assignments.

Lectures are performed based on the syllabus of Japanese literature which refers to the 2012 curriculum for some courses: drama studies, prose studies and poetry

studies, as well as the 2017 curriculum for Japanese Literature studies courses. The syllabus arrangement and selection of literature works for online lecture flow are arranged thematically. Lectures are conducted asynchronously and synchronously. In the traditional TTA, student need to understand and master the learning materials while lecture is teaching, this teaching model is called synchronous. Besides, the TTA can be carried out asynchronously, this model aims allowing students to learn independently and reduce the students' dependence on the teacher. When students encounter difficulties in understanding material or solving problems, students can communicate with the lecture through several communication platforms (Wang, 2017)

Asynchronous lectures (the first meeting) are carried out by self-study, students listen to recorded videos containing material explanations and work on worksheets uploaded on google classroom or university portals. If students struggle to understand the material and have a question, a discussion will be held through the class WhatsApp Group. Meanwhile, synchronous lectures (second meeting) are conducted by video

conference via zoom as a substitute for face-to-face lectures. In this lecture, class activities focus on joint discussion of literature works that have been worked previously on worksheet. The flow of online lecture learning is performed first by explaining the literature concepts or certain theme accumulating from several sources, such as articles or books discuss about the development of literature works or literature works itself, followed by a questions and answers session regarding the material. Hereafter, lecturer will provide an example of literature works for discussion. There are two ways of discussion, the first one is by discussing it directly during the class or the second one is taking home assignments and discussing at the next meeting. The second method is applied frequently because students can answer the questions on the worksheet with deeper analysis and can create more interactive discussions on forth. At the end of the discussion, students were invited to reflect on the contents of literature works into human being lives from a more personal perspective. The literature works used as teaching material are as seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Selected Japanese Literature work for teaching material

Literature Theme	Discussed literature
<i>Senso bungaku</i> /war Literature	<i>Watashi ga Ichiban Kirei datta toki</i> (When I was the prettiest) – Ibaragi Noriko (poem)
<i>Genbaku bungaku</i> /atomic bomb literature	- <i>Hadashi no Gen</i> (Barefoot Gen) - Keiji Nakazawa (manga) - <i>Futari no Bohyo</i> (Two Grave Markers) - Hayashi Kyoko (shortstory) - <i>Yonsen no Hi to Yoru</i> (Four Thousand Days and Nights) Tamura Ryoichi (poem)
<i>Sainan bungaku</i> /disaster literature	- <i>Kamisama</i> 1994 and 2011 - Kawakami Hiromi - Galapagos - Arai Takako (poem) - <i>Urusai Dobutsu</i> (Noisy Animal) Sayaka Osaki (poem)
<i>Zainichi bungaku</i> /Korean Literature Modern Literature	Pachinko Min Ji Lee (one chapter on book) - <i>Chuumon no Ooi Ryouriten</i> – Miyazawa Kenji (short story) - <i>Ame ni mo makezu</i> – Miyazawa Kenji (poem) - <i>Hyousetsu</i> (Name Plate) – Rin Ishigaki (poem) - <i>Mae ni aru nabe to okama to moeru hi to</i> – Rin Ishigaki (poem) - <i>Sarada Kinenbi</i> (Salad Anniversary) – Tawara Machi (<i>tanka</i>)
Postmodern Literature Propaganda on Literature	Cream – Haruki Murakami (shorts tory) <i>Merah Putih</i> – Usmar Ismail (Poem) (Japanese Propaganda in Indonesia during WWII)

3.3 Observing

Due to the pandemic, online classroom observation stage is carried out by filling in an online questionnaire of 60 students from 4 Japanese literature learning classes with a thematic design: Literature Works studies 36 students, Japanese Prose studies 7 students, Japanese Poetry studies 7 students, and Japanese Drama studies 10 students. The questionnaire was prepared based on the theory of Condition of learning and Cognitive Process from Robert M. Gagne that consisted of nine instructional events and corresponding cognitive processes. Gagne theory consists of 1) Gaining attention; 2) Informing learner of the objective; 3) Stimulating recall of prior learning; 4) Presenting the stimulus; 5) Providing learning guidance; 6) Eliciting performance; 7) Providing feedback; 8) Assessing performance; 9) Enhancing retention and transfer (Gagne, Briggs, & Wager, 1992). These stages and their related cognitive process are:

1) Gaining attention (reception)

Slavin (Slavin on Ngussa, 2014) suggests that to get students' attention, the lecturer can use cues by raising or lowering their voice, doing some gestures, and introducing topic with demonstration, and informing that the topic is "important" so it can stimulate student curiosity. Lecturer ensures that students are ready to learn and participate in learning activities, stimulating by providing an example of contemporary literary works (poetry, prose, drama) which will be discussed before entering a comprehensive discussion of the theme.

2) Informing learners of the objective (expectancy)

Inform student clearly about course objectives that students are obtained from learning process, so the students have an idea about understanding course content (Zhu & St. Amant, 2010). Lectures inform students about the course content and the goals of Japanese literature courses, namely increasing critical analysis power

of contemporary Japanese literary works, increasing knowledge and understanding regarding the conditions of society, culture, politics, economics, mindsets and author experiences through literary works.

3) Stimulating recall of prior learning (retrieval)

Students need to recall the material they have learned then integrate it with the new material (Al-mahiroh & Suyadi, 2020). Lecturer discusses the material that was delivered at the previous meeting by questions and answers to students. Then, students can relate it to the hints for new topic. For example, an understanding of the background that influences the birth of the literature work. Explanation of cultural and social background in literature works connected with historical events, phenomena or social issues.

4) Presenting the stimulus (selective perception)

Lectures provide examples of Japanese literature works in Japanese for students. To help students understand literature works in Japanese, students can also read literature works in English as reference material. At this stage, students are expected to actively express their opinions related to literature works in the discussion forum.

5) Providing learning guidance (semantic encoding)

Lecturer provides clear instructions to students such as the elements that must be analysed in literature works. Instructions are explained and written as question in a worksheet which aims to make it easier for students to achieve learning targets.

6) Eliciting performance (responding)

By providing worksheets containing questions about literary works for students, both regarding intrinsic / extrinsic elements using certain concepts or approaches, requires students to recount / review the contents of literature works, answer questions related to worksheets based on student understanding.

7) Providing feedback (reinforcement)

Teachers provide feedback on students' performances, which carried out directly during the discussion of literature works in discussion forums. This aims to help students comprehend the extent of understanding of literature works and how the results of the worksheet.

8) Assessing performance (retrieval)

To measure students' abilities and distinct whether the expected learning objectives / outcomes have been achieved, in addition to providing worksheets, student is required to write personal reflections on the literature that has been discussed and uses the mid-semester examination and final examination to determine the student's analytical skill on literature work.

9) Enhancing retention and transfer (generalization).

Retention can be increased through repeated exercise to empower the knowledge (Warsita, 2008). Provides an overview of the relevance of issues that highlighted on literature with current social

issues. Thus, this reflection is expected on deepening student understanding on the literature as product of society and be more sensitive and critical of social issues around them.

Based on the explanation of the learning conditions (Robert Gagne) and its application, arranging questions in the questionnaire used two indicators 1) Students' understanding of the material and 2) The level of satisfaction with online learning. Following are the results of the questionnaire on the first indicator Scale of student satisfaction on Japanese literature class denotes 42.6% predominantly satisfied that thematic designed-based learning on Japanese literature easily understand. Students mostly can obtain new information relate to Japanese Literature and social issues with thematic designed-based learning with 41%-51% of respondents. The details of the questionnaire results are as seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Scale of Student Satisfaction on Japanese Literature Class

Question	Scale			
	1	2	3	4
1. The course and material are corresponding on syllabus	-	6 students 10%	23 students 38.3%	31 students 51.7%
2. Thematic designed-based learning on Japanese literature easily understand	3 students 5%	16 students 26.7%	29 students 48.3%	12 students 20%
3. Gaining new information/ knowledge relate to Japanese literature and social issues	-	4 students 6.7%	25 students 41.7%	31 students 51.7%
4. The examination material based on the lecture and courses which already discussed during online class	-	6 students 10%	23 students 38.3%	31 students 51.7%
5. Satisfaction toward Japanese literature class	2 students 3.3%	8 students 13.3%	28 students 46.7%	22 students 36.7%

Furthermore, in second categories 2) Scale of student understanding on Japanese Literature course (scale 1 until 4) denotes 45.4% understand the course. The result of both sections is quite similar. The number

of each question devotes that the majority could comprehend the online learning flow, either the implementation of syllabus, worksheet, discussion section, and the response to the class as an

integrated learning activity. Each point of this questionnaire gained adequate respond from students. About 49 students able to enhance their ability on analytical thinking by studying Japanese Literature. Moreover,

utilizing multimedia facilities could deliver the material effectively and support student on understanding Japanese literature work.

Table 3 Scale of Students' understanding of the material

Question	Scale			
	1	2	3	4
1. Studying on Contemporary Japanese Literature work able to enhance student ability on analytical thinking	-	11 students 18.3%	41 students 68.3%	8 students 13.3%
2. Lecturers give clear instruction on how to answer each question in analytical way	3 students 5%	6 students 10%	23 students 38.3%	28 students 46.7%
3. Using multimedia facilities (such PPT or zoom) effectively support student on understanding Japanese literature works	5 orang students 8.3%	8 students 13.3%	22 students 36.7%	25 students 41.7%
4. Lecturers give feedback and explanation toward worksheet and examination	3 students 5 %	5 students 8.3%	23 students 38.3 %	29 students 48.3%

3.4 Reflection

Reflection or evaluation of learning is carried out in two ways, namely questionnaires from students and feedback from experts.

First step was conducted by questionnaire from students, focus on constrains of online class. As expected, the

highest number was on internet connection and data due to the absence of financial support, neither from university nor from government. Language barrier and unable to deliver the ideas effectively follows respectively. Both point 4 and 5 has quiet similar result.

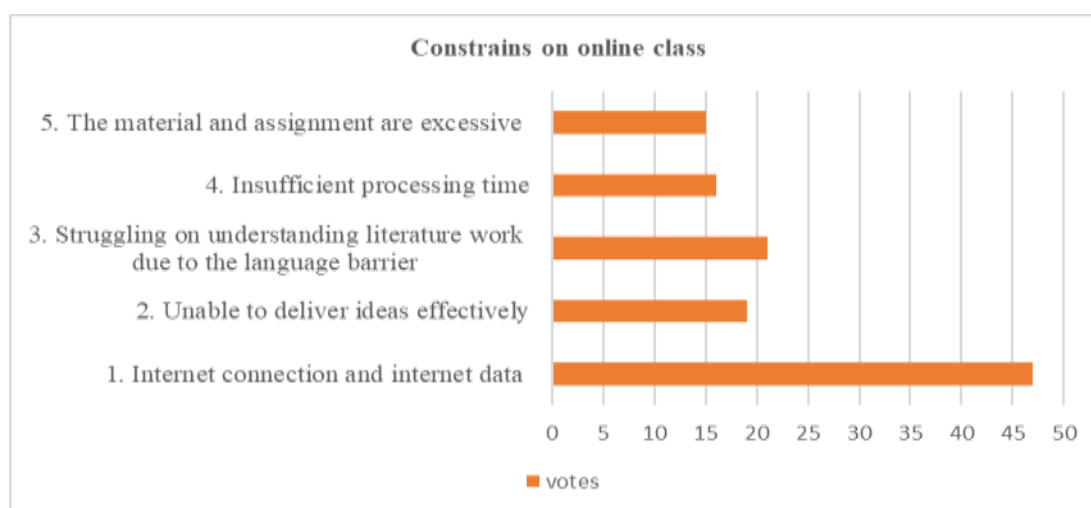


Chart 2 Discussion on Constrains of Online class during pandemic crisis

These constrains were not only found in Literature Study classes but is generally encountered in online classes. In classrooms with integrated learning, such

constraints are perceived because discussions of literature works are carried out in two directions, so the key lies in the active involvement of students in

conveying interpretations of literary works. A bad internet network will have an impact on other aspects, such as difficulty in capturing material or following discussions. To overcome this, lecturer records the class synchronously through zoom and uploads it on the google classroom platform as students can access it again at any time.

As an evaluation material, we ask Japanese literature lecturers who already have teaching experience to provide feedback on students' assignment. Feedback from experts is as follows:

- 1) The learning strategy designed is good enough because it involves students to actively think, ask questions, and read texts. In addition, the existence of various learning activities that are not one way will trigger students to focus on lectures. Another thing to consider about is that this lecture is held during a pandemic, so everything runs online. Responding to the conditions of online lectures like this, how do the lecturer maintain the interaction between lecturers and students and among fellow students intact? What strategies can be implemented to make the lecture material and lecture atmosphere reach the students who learn from their homes? In addition, during pandemic like this, in a constant state of being at home, both students and lecturers will experience boredom if not be handled properly, can result in a lack of enthusiasm for doing various things, including attending or conducting lectures. We also need to think about strategies to maintain the enthusiasm of both lecturers and students and how to make fellow students and lecturers complement and strengthen each other in a pandemic like this. (Lecturer of Japanese Study, Faculty of Humanities Universitas Indonesia)
- 2) The theme selection and work process are very good, but if we talk about contemporary Japanese literature, if we

take the post-1945 start point it perceives too broad. It would be better if the period range is narrowed down to precisely on contemporary to relate with present social condition.

- 3) Regarding the research results, it is necessary to explain the concrete achievements of this kind of learning method. It is necessary to explain the differences in the achievements obtained by students before the pandemic and in the middle of a pandemic. Hence, it can be seen whether the problem is on the "pandemic" or on the "learning method", because who knows with this thematic learning method runs by online, the results are much better than ordinary lectures before the pandemic. (Doctoral Student of Japanese Modern Literature, Graduate School of Letters, Ritsumeikan University and Lecturers of FCS UB)

4. Conclusion

Based on the result of the discussion and evaluation, which already mentioned above, the authors conclude that thematic-based learning can be implemented in contemporary Japanese literature course by online learning, and it found to be quite effective with some consideration. Besides, constrain on online course shows that the highest constrain was on internet connection and data due to the absence of financial support, consequently the students could not actively participate during lesson. Therefore, the lecturers must take constrains during online learning into accounts seriously to improve learning method.

In addition, the evaluation from experts is also an important note for the authors to improve and develop online learning methods to work smoothly and create interactive discussions, both between lecturers and students, and students with other students. Another note from the experts is the selection of

literature works as teaching materials. The lecturer must determine the categorization of literature works based on periodization, then the selection of literature works is corresponding to the category. However, it is hardly to compare this online thematic teaching method with onsite lecture soon. The authors will conduct further research if condition is set. In other word, it is necessary to improve and develop in terms of both learning materials and learning strategies in understandable and interesting way.

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