

Research Article

The Relevance of *Bijinesu Nihongo* Course to The Cultural Understanding of Students Participating in The Internship to Japan

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Abstract

Along with the Japanese population drop, the number of productive age workforce in Japan also decreasing constantly. This situation drove Japan to welcome younger workforces and professionals from other countries. While some of the younger workforces aims at a more permanent employment, some of them are only temporary workers and interns. Among those going through internship programs are students from Widyatama University Indonesia. One of the hardships the students must go through is adapting with new culture and work ethics. While Widyatama University have tried to prepare the students for their internship period in Japan through various methods, one of them is through the “*Bijinesu Nihongo*” class. This research is conducted in the interest of finding out how effective the “*Bijinesu Nihongo*” syllabus is in real life internship period according to the students who have already or currently undergoing internship in Japan. Using descriptive qualitative methods, internship students would act as research subject, and be interviewed about their working experiences in Japan. The interview results will indicate how much of the subject they learned in class is truly relevant during their internship period. The result would greatly assist coursers to revise and update better curriculum to better prepare students facing their internship.

Keywords: Students; internship; culture; office; Japanese; Indonesian

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1. Introduction

Japan is one of the countries that is well-known as an industrial center in Asia, Japan is also one of the developed countries that can be equated with America and European countries. Almost all electronic goods and vehicles sold in Indonesia are made in Japan.

Currently, Japan is faced with the problem of a declining population. According to Japanese government data, in 2021 the number of births in Japan will reach a record low. Data from the Ministry

of Health states that in 2021 births in Japan will reach 811,604 people, but on the other hand, the death rate will be higher with 1,439,809 people. This led to a decline in the overall population in Japan of 628,205 people as quoted by Reuters (2022).

With the decline in population, Japan has recently lacked productive labor, in anticipation of this shortage, Japan has opened up opportunities for foreigners to work in Japan. Many programs are provided by the Japanese government for foreigners who want to work there, such as

the *Ginou Jisshusei* program, *Tokutei Ginou*, and even students have internship opportunities there, even an internship program is provided for one year.

Regarding the student internship program, many companies offer cooperation with the Japanese language study program at Widyatama University, thanks to this collaboration several students have participated in an internship program in Japan for one year. This is a good opportunity for students because with this program, students will have a chance to implement their Japanese knowledge directly in the country where the language is spoken. On the other hand, this is a challenge for the Japanese language study program to prepare students to be ready to take part in this internship program, because joining this program is not easy, there are requirements that must be met by students, besides preparation in terms of knowledge, both knowledge and skills. language and culture are very necessary, so that students do not experience difficulties during their internship.

One of the efforts of Widyatama University's Japanese language study program in preparing students to take part in the internship program or for graduates who want to work in Japan is to include the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course in the curriculum. In the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course, you are taught with materials related to working in a Japanese company and adapting to Japanese people in the workplace.

The purpose for this research is to find out the relevance and uses of *Bijinesu Nihongo* subjects for the graduated students on the field, or in this case, the place where they worked during their internship period in Japan before they were graduated. This research also aimed to locate any aspects that still inadequate or requires any upgrades and addition to further improve *Bijinesu Nihongo* subjects to prepare future students for their internship to Japan.

Dona Nuril Syamsyah and Ai Sumirah Setiawati's research (2018) entitled "The suitability of the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course material with the Japanese language skills required in the Field of Work." This study aims to describe the suitability of the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course material with the Japanese language skills required in the field of work. The material taught in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* or Business Japanese course used is the application of polite and formal Japanese grammar and ethics in the context of Japanese work or business in the form of conversations with superiors or colleagues in a Japanese company. using polite language. This study uses a qualitative descriptive analysis method.

Nalti Novianti's research (2018) titled Field Studies of Diaspora from Japanese Language Learning at the University. From the results of the questionnaire, it can be seen that business Japanese lessons are in demand by students because they will be useful in their workplace, the research method uses qualitative methods with a descriptive analysis approach.

2. Methods

This article will be presented using descriptive analysis method. The analytical descriptive approach according to Sugiono (2009: 29) is a method that serves to describe or provide an overview of the object of research through data or samples that have been collected as they are, without analyzing and making generally accepted conclusions. Meanwhile, according to Suharsimi Arikunto (2013: 3) that: "Descriptive research is research that is intended to investigate the circumstances, conditions or other things that have been mentioned, the results of which are presented in the form of a research report". i.e. the data will be analyzed using qualitative-quantitative hybrid analysis to figure out the answer to the following problems:

- a. Were the subjects taught in class during *Bijinesu Nihongo* course being useful and relevant for the students during their Internship period in Japan?
- b. What subjects and what aspects of *Bijinesu Nihongo* Course we need to improve according to the students who have finished their internship period in Japan?

The data that would be analyzed were gathered by giving questionnaires to students who have finished their internship period in Japan. After the quantitative data from the questionnaire is gathered, a further additional information and data were gathered via online interview with each respondent. Quantitative data from the questionnaire will then be combined with qualitative data from the interview to acquire the answer to the aforementioned questions above.

3. Result and Discussion

Internship Program is essential for students in order to gain experience and new knowledge regarding the field they work at. Fuchadzhi (2016:1) stated that the value of internships is gaining the experiences required by the students before they graduated. And this value has been recognized widely by both the academic and business communities alike. Many business and company nowadays demand experienced prospective employees in spite of the fact that most of them are fresh graduate. Students can gain the required experiences before they finish their education and graduated through internship program. There are, however, a distinction between internship programs and practicum in the field of education. According to Hodges (2016), compared to internship, practicum requires less total hours the student needs in order to complete, and that practicum requires less contact time with the clients. Internships also have higher expectations toward the students compared to practicum. In

conclusion, Hodges stated that practicum program can be referred as “pre-internship” program. In overall, Fuchadzhi (2016) describes internship programs as follows: 1). In business schools, internship program has become a staple in which the students must participate in before they graduated; 2). Internship program is the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice as student’s continuation in study; 3). Since theoretical knowledge alone won’t guarantee future employment, internship program teach student the value of what they are doing while providing them with their needed work experience; 4). Despite being a complex process involving three “actors” (student-university-company), most research concerning internship programs typically focuses only to a small portion of the whole process; 5). Some of the important soft skills students can learn during their internship period are time management, negotiation, dependability, taking initiative, building relationships, accepting criticism, working independently, and many more. Internship also improve their skills in making presentation and writing.

De Mente (2018) refers to Japanese customs, traditions and etiquettes as the “*kata*”, derived from the word “*shikata*” (仕方(しかた)) which means “the way to do something”. The “*kata*” concept incorporates more than just mechanical concept on how things are supposed to be done, but also includes the physical and spiritual laws. Most of the Japanese “*kata*” has been well established within the period of centuries. And over the generations, they have become ritualized and sanctified so much, doing things the right way has become more important than doing the right thing.

One of the thing in Japanese etiquette, especially in business and office environment is the existence of *senpai-kouhai* (senior-junior) relationship. According to Davies & Ikeno (2002), *senpai-kouhai* relationship have existed

since the beginning of Japanese history. But the formative of this human relationship ranking is mainly influenced by three aspects, which is Confucianism, Japanese traditional family system, and the civil law. Confucianism with their concept of filial piety, respecting the elders, and the reverence toward the ancestors fit the Japanese preferences. While in the traditional Japanese family, the seniority system which also largely based on Confucianism system, fathers are respected as the chief-male with absolute power, while the eldest son in the family will be the one who inherited the family's estate. Japanese society also consider reverence to one's superior as a virtue. In addition, the former civil law which was brought into effect in 1898 strengthened seniority rules. Stating that a father has the right to rule over the family and the eldest son is the sole heir for the father's state and position. Despite being overturned in 1947, said civil law continues to carry its effect on the Japanese's way of thinking.

Chaney & Martin (2007 ; 33) mentioned that one of the most important aspect for one's career is business socializing. While it is important and good to never refuse an invitation from one's senior or superior, the other way around i.e., inviting them to lunch or to one's house may be considered inappropriate.

The senpai-kouhai relationship mentioned above entails the need to use *Keigo* (敬語(けいご)), Japanese polite language, or also known as Japanese Honorific, which consists of 3 types: *Sonkeigo*, *Kenjougo* and *Teineigo*. Davies & Ikeno (2002) stated that a speaker would use *Sonkeigo* (also known as respectful or honorific language) if they wish to express respect toward an addressee. *Sonkeigo* is meant to raise the addressee position by the speaker by using some particular honorific expressions. On the other hand, *Kenjougo* is the type of speech that express respect directly to the addressee by lowering the position of the speaker. *Teineigo* is

somewhat different from both *Sonkeigo* and *Kenjougo*. While *Sonkeigo* shows respect to certain people in professional manner and *Kenjougo* shows respect to one's superiors, *Teineigo* is a polite level of speech that can be directed commonly in relationships among all kind of people.

Another vital aspect about Japanese etiquette internship students need to remember is the importance of *aisatsu*. De Mente (2018) describe *aisatsu* as Japanese way for greeting or acknowledging other people. According to De Mente (2018), since one's initial *aisatsu* is directly affected by the way one perceives other person status in both social and business life, *aisatsu* play a role concerning how one qualify with whom one going to meet, how to behave toward them, and how they will treat or react as a response. There are numerous occasions where a professional is required to give *aisatsu* to clients, colleague and superiors, including when one is being transferred into new workplace. Accomplishing *aisatsu* properly is an exercise in a broad spectrum of Japanese culture.

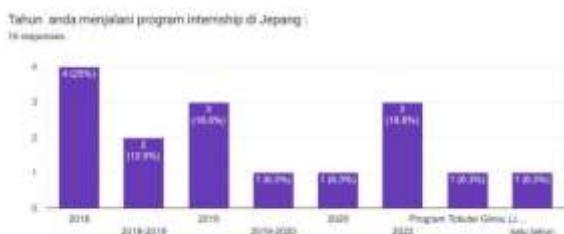
Chaney & Martin (2007) mentioned about how important telephone's role and etiquette in office and business environment as follows:

“Since about 70 percent of business is conducted over the telephone, good telephone manners are important. Business recognizes that the manner in which employees communicate via telephone plays a major role in the impression other people have on the firm. Telephone may be the only link between the company and costumers and between the company and the public. Thus, it is important that proper telephone etiquette be stressed at all level by an organization.”

While the above statement is for companies and organizations in America, the same principle is also true in almost any other country, including Indonesia and Japan. A telephone call before paying a

visit is a form of courtesy. In business, it's a must.

To find out whether the *Bijinesu Nihongo* courses given to students so far are quite relevant or not to the reality on the ground, the authors conducted a study by distributing questionnaires to 16 respondents, in this case the alumni of the Japanese language study program who had participated in the internship program and to graduates who are currently working in Japan through the *Tokutei Ginou* and *Ginou Jisshusei* program.



Graphic 1

Looking at Graph 1, it can be seen that the internship program at the Widyatama University Japanese Language Study Program started in 2018, and at that time the participants consisted of at most four people (25%) who were still final semester students. then followed in 2019 3 people (18.8%), mid 2018-2019, 2 people (12.5%), mid 2019-2020 and 2020 1 person (6.3%). As for the graduates who worked through the Tokutei ginou program, the first consisted of 3 people (18.8%) and still in the same year followed another 1 person (6.3%)



Graphic 2

In graph 2, it can be seen that most of the students participating in the internship program are apprentices at golf companies,

1 person is at a hotel, the rest are graduates who work through the *Tokutei Ginou* and *Ginou Jisshusei* programs, their jobs are in the fields of *kaigo* (care giver), fish processing and food processing.

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi KEIGO (Bahasa Sopan) yang diajarkan pada mata kuliah Business Nihongo relevan dan terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama internship?

16 responden



Graphic 3

From the results of the questionnaire, the material about polite language (*Keigo*) given in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course is very relevant to its practice in the field, this is based on the answers from respondents, almost half or 50% of respondents answered very relevant, the remaining 25% answered relevant and 25% answered sometimes relevant.

Seeing the work of students or graduates at work, all in the service sector, it is certain that an understanding of *Keigo* material is needed in the workplace.

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi SHANAI DAN SHAGAI (Tata cara di dalam dan di luar kantor/persyarahan) yang diajarkan pada mata kuliah... dan terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama internship?

16 responden



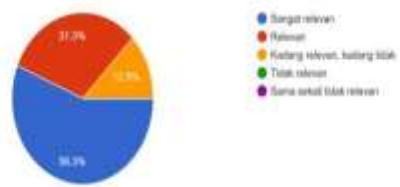
Graphic 4

The answer to the question of the relevance of the material on procedures inside and outside the company (*Shanai* and *Shagai*) with their practice in the internship or workplace, the results were 62% answered relevant, the remaining 18.8% each for very relevant and sometimes relevant, sometimes not.

It is certain that because the work of students and graduates relates to clients who are guests of the company, *Shanai* and *Shagai* materials are definitely needed, this

is intended to prevent misunderstandings in communication.

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi SHOUKAI (Perkenalan diri) yang diajarkan pada mata kuliah Business Nihongo relevan dan terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama internship?
16 responses

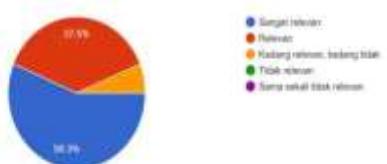


Graphic 5

For self-introduction material (*shoukai*), most of the respondents answered very relevant (56.3%), then 31.3% answered relevant and the remaining 12.5% answered sometimes. From the respondents' answers, it can be concluded that the material about *shoukai* is important to be taught.

Introducing yourself is one of the Japanese cultures that is done when you first meet, this culture is an obligation for new people to enter the company and also when meeting for the first time

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi AJABTU (Memberi salam) yang diajarkan pada mata kuliah Business Nihongo relevan dan terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama internship?
16 responses



Graphic 6

The greeting material taught in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course is relevant to practice in the workplace, the majority of respondents answered 56.3% very relevant, the remaining 37.5% answered relevant and the rest answered sometimes relevant.

Saying greetings at the time of meeting is like a must for Japanese people, the procedure for giving greetings taught in the study program may be in accordance with the practice in the field or the respondent's place of work.

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi IRAI (Memberi dan merespon permintaan) yang diajarkan pada mata kuliah Business Nihongo relevan dan terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama internship?
16 responses



Graphic 7

The material about giving and responding to requests taught in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course some respondents answered very relevant (50%), the rest answered only 31.3% relevant and the remaining 18.8% answered sometimes relevant sometimes not

Because half of the respondents answered that it was very relevant and many also answered that it was relevant, this could mean that the course material on *Irai* in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course was in accordance with the practice in the field where they worked.

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi KYOKA (Tata cara memberi dan meminta izin) yang diajarkan pada mata kuliah Business Nihongo relevan dan terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama internship?
16 responses



Graphic 8

For *Kyoka*'s material, most of the respondents answered very relevant (56.3%) who answered quite a lot (37.5%) and a few who answered sometimes relevant

In other words, the material given in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course is appropriate and relevant to the reality in the field where they work

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi DENWA (Tata cara komunikasi via telepon) yang diajarkan pada mata kuliah Business Nihongo relevan dan terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama internship?
16 responses



Graphic 9

For the material on communication procedures via telephone (*denwa*) most of the respondents answered relevant, the remaining 18.8% each answered very relevant and sometimes relevant, sometimes not, and the rest answered irrelevant (12.5%)

Dalam masa internship anda, apakah materi HOUEMON (Tata krama dalam berkunjung dan menyambut kunjungan) yang diajarkan pada mata k...an terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama Internship?
16 responses



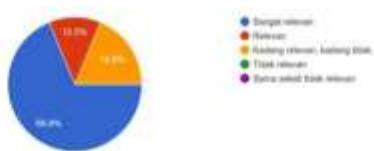
Graphic 10

On the question of the suitability or relevance of the *Denwa* material with practice in the field, there were respondents who answered that it was irrelevant, maybe at their place of work they did not have direct contact with clients so there was no opportunity to communicate using the telephone.

On the question of the relevance of the material on manners in visiting and welcoming visits (*houmon*) most answered that the material was relevant to practice in the field (56.3%) the rest answered very relevant and sometimes relevant, sometimes not 12.5%.

This illustrates that the material that has been delivered about *houmon* is very useful for respondents during their internship or work in Japan

Dalam masa Internship anda, apakah materi HOURENSOU (Kebiasaan untuk selalu Melaporkan, Menghubungi dan berkonsultasi dengan atasan/senior...) terpakai dalam pekerjaan selama Internship?
16 responses



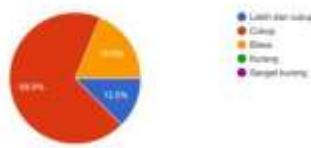
Graphic 11

The material on the habit of reporting, contacting and consulting (*hourensou*) is very useful for respondents as evidenced by the answers from respondents that this material is very relevant to their place of work (68.8%) the

rest is relevant (12.5% and sometimes 18.8% is relevant).

With the answers from respondents, it can be concluded that the habit of *hourensou* in the work environment in Japan is very important, because this habit will be one of the factors for smooth work.

Menurut pendapat anda, secara garis besar, sudutankah mata kuliah Business Nihongo cukup memadai dalam mempersiapkan calon peserta magang atau Internship ke Jepang?
16 responses

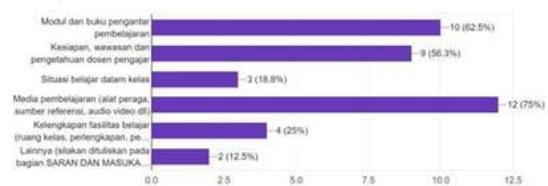


Graphic 12

Seeing answers from respondents to questions about whether or not the material in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course is sufficient, where 68.8% of respondents answered enough, then 12.5% answered more than enough and finally 18.8% answered normal, it is a sign that the material in the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course is not yet fully relevant to the reality as evidenced by the presence of respondents who answered normally

This is an input for the study program to further improve both in terms of material and teaching methods or teaching methods delivered by the coursers.

Menurut pendapat anda, aspek apa saja yang masih perlu dibenahi dari mata kuliah Business Nihongo supaya lebih memadai dalam mempersiapkan calon peserta magang atau Internship ke Jepang?
16 responses



Graphic 13

From this graph, it can be seen that many respondents gave input so that study programs improve learning media (props, reference sources, audio videos, etc.) Seeing input from respondents is a concern for study programs to be better in the future.

In addition to the above charts and graphs, the followings are response from

the respondents regarding the things that they feel is necessary to be upgraded or improved in *Bijinesu Nihongo* course to in order to better prepare future internship students before they departed to Japan:

"Saran saya, sebaiknya dipersiapkan modul khusus untuk mata kuliah Bijinesu Nihongo kalau pun mengambil dari berbagai sumber. Karena kalau hanya dari fotokopian yang dibagikan pada setiap pertemuan, terkadang ada yang tercecer dan kurang enak digunakan saat akan dipelajari kembali."

("My advice is to prepare a special module for the *Bijinesu Nihongo* course if you take it from various sources. Because if only from photocopies that are distributed at each meeting, sometimes something is scattered and is not comfortable to use when going to be studied again.")

"Menurut saya akan lebih baik jika mahasiswa lebih sering memperagakan/praktek dan melihat video video tata gesture dan cara bersikap orang jepangnya asli. terutama dalam hal shoukai, aisatsu, irai dan kyoka. karena jika materi saja, mahasiswa akan tidak terbiasa dan canggung jika nanti akan dihadapkan dengan situasi nyata."

("I think it would be better if students demonstrate/practice more often and watch videos of the original Japanese gestures and manners of behaving, especially in terms of *shoukai*, *aisatsu*, *irai* and *kyoka*. because if the material is only, students will be unfamiliar and awkward if later they will be faced with real situations.")

*"Penyesuaian materi dan simulasi dengan bidang tujuan tempat internship." "Lebih mempertambah praktik dari pada materi. Terutama praktik *kaiwa*."*

("The adjustment of materials and simulations with the destination field for the internship." "More practice than material. Especially *kaiwa* practice.")

"Menurut saya langkah lebih baiknya ditambahkan juga oleh senseinya seperti pengalaman kerja senseinya selama di Jepang, terutama yg cukup relevan dengan matakuliah terkait supaya bayangan siswa bisa lebih luas. Dan juga perlu menerapkan pola hidup di Jepang di kelas. Karena saya rasa cukup penting siswa tau bedanya perbedaan budaya, cara bekerja di jepang jika diberitaukan pengalaman/testimoni bagi yang pernah di Jepang dan penerapan langsungnya selama di kelas."

("I think it would be better if the sensei added it, such as his senses' work experience while in Japan, especially those that are quite relevant to related subjects so that the students' imagination can be wider. And also need to apply the Japanese lifestyle in the classroom. Because I think it is quite important for students to know the difference between cultural differences, how to work in Japan, if they share experiences/testimonials for those who have been in Japan and apply it directly in class.")

"Ada baiknya jika Business Nihingo diperbanyak praktek nya juga agar kesiapan mahasiswa yang ingin internship ke Jepang lebih matang."

("It would be better if Business Nihongo had more practice so that the readiness of students who wanted to do internships in Japan was more mature.")

"Lebih banyak praktik dalam berkomunikasi. Karena apa yang saya rasakan di sini, waktu kuliah saya paham materi yang disampaikan. Tetapi saat di Jepang, saya menyesal jarang mempraktikkan bahasa jepang baik cara bicara ke staf dan atasan serta Riyousha san."

("More practice in communicating. Because of what I feel here, when I was in college, I understood the material being presented. But while in Japan, I regret that I rarely practice Japanese, both how to speak to staff and superiors and Riyousha san.")

4. Conclusion

According to the result of questionnaire shown above, the following conclusions can be made.

While most of the graduated students who went through internship program during their education in our university seem to show their satisfaction which indicates that the subject and material taught to them before their internship period is relevant and useful to them to some extents, there are still several parts and aspects that need to be improved or added in order to improve the quality of *Bijinesu Nihongo* course. Namely, the availability of solid, hard printed modules/books, native Japanese speaker specialized in office and business manners and/or etiquettes, and teaching media such as audio/video materials for students to practice their Japanese skills in office and business environment.

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