

# The Effectiveness of the "Irodori" Based Japanese Language Learning Model on the Learning Outcomes of Students Participating in the Kaigo Program: Measured from the Standard Japanese Language Competency Test

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## Abstract

*This study aims to measure the effect of learning with "Irodori" teaching materials on the Japanese language learning outcomes of participants in the caregiver worker program. The research method used is qualitative descriptive method. Data was collected from the results of the Japanese Language NAT-TEST. Data processing showed that 2 out of 11 (18%) passed in Class A and 6 out of 10 (60%) passed in Class B, showing that Class B performed better than Class A. Class B, which used "Irodori" teaching materials, had a higher pass rate. The increase in the pass rate of the proficiency test indicates that the use of the "Irodori"-based learning model has a positive impact on the Japanese language acquisition ability of Kaigo participants.*

**Keywords:** *Irodori Based Learning, Kaigo Program, NAT-TEST*

## 要旨

本研究は、介護福祉士事業参加者の日本語学習成果について、「いろどり」教材による学習の効果を測定することを目的としています。使用される研究方法は定性的記述法です。データは日本語能力検定 NAT-TEST の結果から収集した。データ処理の結果、A クラスの合格者は 11 名中 2 名 (18%)、B クラスの合格者は 10 名中 6 名 (60%) で、A クラスより B クラスの方が結果が良かったことがわかりました。「いろどり」教材を使った B クラスの方が合格率が高かった。能力試験の合格率の上昇は、「いろどり」ベースの学習モデルの使用がカイゴ参加者の日本語習得能力にプラスの影響を与えていることを示しています。

**Keywords:** 「いろどり」ベース学習、かいご福祉士、NAT テスト

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, more and more Indonesians are interested in learning Japanese. Based on the results of the Japan Foundation survey in 2021, there are 711,732 people who are learning Japanese in Indonesia, which is the 2nd highest after China out of the total Japanese language learners worldwide (The Japan Foundation, 2021). One of the indicators of the increasing number of language learners in Indonesia is the number of jobs available that require Japanese language skills both at home and abroad as well as in Japan. One of them is the nursing recruitment program (kaigo) so that many people are interested in coming to Japan. Especially in recent years, there has been a lot of demand for kaigoshi nurses on the condition that they must have a certificate of passing the Japanese language competency test. There are also interns from other fields, but the requirements are the same, they must have Japanese language proficiency as evidenced by a Japanese language competency certificate.

To obtain a Japanese language proficiency certificate, learners must take a competency exam organized by an official Japanese language proficiency test organization. Currently, there are 4 types of Japanese language competency tests that can be chosen by test takers, namely: Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), Japanese Language NAT-TEST, Japan Foundation Test (JFT-Basic), and J-Test.

Japan Education Academy (JEA) is a Japanese non-formal educational institution headquartered in Jakarta and collaborates with various universities in Indonesia including Sam Ratulangi University (Unsrat) Manado, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing Study Program for the recruitment of nursing graduates as prospective Kaigoshi workers in Japan, as well as collaborating with the Faculty of Cultural Sciences for Japanese language education for Kaigoshi prospective participants recruited by JEA. The training classes are in the Nursing Study Program and in the Japanese Language Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Unsrat. JEA is consistent in setting learning targets. Especially for nursing graduates, it is mandatory to pass Japanese language proficiency tests, such as the Japanese Language NAT-Test, JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test), J-Test, and JFT-Basic. Unlike the JLPT which only conducts tests 2 times a year, the NAT-Test and JFT-Basic are held 6 times every year. Therefore, the Japanese side tolerates Kaigo participants to take part in the NAT-Test and J-Test which are also internationally recognized.

Nursing social worker program (Kaigo fukushishi) is a field of social nursing referring to the care and support of the elderly or individuals who need assistance in daily activities (care giver). The elderly population in Japan is one of the highest in the world. Meanwhile, the number of workers in Japan is decreasing in connection with the declining birth rate in Japan which has an impact on the reduction of productive workers. This creates a social gap, especially in the workforce, causing the Japanese government to open opportunities for foreign workers to fill the gap. In particular, there is a great demand for social care services specifically for the elderly. Nursing social workers or Kaigoshi play a crucial role in supporting services for the elderly population to live a more independent and quality life. Becoming a worker as a Kaigoshi is not without its challenges. In addition to physical and emotional demands, Kaigoshi often have to face difficult situations such as treating patients with dementia. It is important to maintain a work-life balance and utilize support from the surrounding environment with adequate Japanese language skills. However, with the right training education, especially Japanese language skills, and knowledge of Japanese work culture, they can adapt well.

Regarding the requirement to have a minimum Japanese language ability of level 4 for Kaigoshi candidates, first, Japanese level 4 is the minimum standard to be able to live daily life in Japan, especially regarding general rules and prohibitions. Second, as a minimum standard in the work environment, their abilities will then develop over time and experience.

Third, as elderly nurses, abilities at this level are very much needed to be able to communicate, especially with the elderly so that they can provide optimal services. To be able to communicate in Japanese, nurses must have knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and have good listening skills. This is related to the questions on the Japanese language proficiency test. There are three types of questions on the test, namely vocabulary (*moji-goi*), grammar (*bunpou*), reading (*dokkai*), and listening (*choukai*). However, the first challenge faced by students in answering JLPT, NAT-Test, and JFT-Basic questions, as well as J-Test is the lack of mastery of the material being taught. After being interviewed to the training participants who failed the test, it was found that the cause was a lack of focus, not understanding the material taught well, and lack of listening skills. In fact, the material was taught for 6 hours per meeting every day except Saturdays, Sundays and other holidays, for approximately 6 months.

The selection of learning strategies can be done by students or teachers. The factors for selecting learning strategies according to Sunendar and Iskandarwassid (2015:168), are (1) Characteristics of students, including mental maturity and intellectual abilities, physical condition and psychomotor skills, age; and gender; (2) Expected basic competencies, namely adequate statements about knowledge, skills, attitudes reflected in habits of thinking and acting after students complete certain aspects of the lesson; (3) Teaching materials, namely a set of information that must be absorbed by students in learning; (4) Time available, namely the time period to achieve basic competencies, for example within three months, six months, or one year. The teacher then develops teaching materials to be able to achieve these competencies; (5) Learning facilities and infrastructure. Learning facilities are everything that is directly used by students. Meanwhile, infrastructure is everything that supports the learning process. (6) The ability of teachers in choosing learning strategies is very important so that the expected competencies can be achieved. These requirements have been met for the Kaigo Japanese language learning class.

One of the determining factors for successful learning is teaching materials. In nursing class learning, several teaching materials have been used to obtain maximum results. However, the evaluation results based on Japanese language proficiency tests have not been satisfactory. After attending a workshop on a new learning model, namely using the "Irodori" textbook, it was decided to use this teaching material in 2024.

Research on the use of "Irodori" teaching materials has not been widely conducted. From the search results, 2 studies were found related to the use of "Irodori". The first is research by Atarina (2023) on Dokkai learning using the "Irodori" book, which focuses on reading skills, but does not compare it with other books. The second, research by Salbiah (2023) on the use of Aizuchi in the "Irodori" teaching book, also discusses the use of fillers in the book.

On this occasion, the learning outcomes so far will be compared based on the results of the Japanese language competency test NAT-Test, which is managed by Senmon Kyouiku Publishing Co., Ltd., Japan. So the problem to be answered in this study is whether the "Irodori" based learning model can provide a better influence compared to other teaching materials?

## 2. Method

This study is a qualitative descriptive study. The subjects of the study were 11 students participating in the nursing program (Kaigo) class of 2023, and 10 students from the class of 2024, recruited by JEA (Japan Edukasi Akademi) as a nursing recruitment institution in collaboration with Sam Ratulangi University, Manado. The data in this study were

obtained through the results of the Japanese language competency test NAT-TEST taken by participants from Class 2023 (Class A) and Class 2024 (Class B) from the Kaigo training class. Class A took part in learning from September 2023 to February 2024, while Class B took part in learning from January 2024 to June 2024, each for 6 months intensively. The results of this study only describe or construct the results of a comparison of the research subjects between class A which uses other teaching materials and class B which applies learning based on the "Irodori" teaching materials, to get an overview of learning outcomes based on differences in teaching materials. The learning period and number of teachers and treatment of both classes are the same. The only difference is the teaching materials used.

### 3. Result

The data of this study were taken from the results of the Japanese language competency test NAT-TEST Level Q4, equivalent to JLPT Level N4, based on certificates or result reports received by participants. The participant numbers in the table are only participants who passed and were willing to provide their numbers, while participants who did not pass were not willing for their numbers to be published so they were given an asterisk.

#### Class A Test Result

As shown in Table 1 below, the results of the Class A Test show that out of 11 participants who took the exam, only 2 people passed (18%). This group is a class that received Japanese language learning using other teaching materials (Minna no Nihongo).

Table 1. Class A Test Results for Class 2023

| No. | Participants's number       | Level | Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading (120) | Listening (60) | Total Score (180) | Result    |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1   | 24020046640017              | 4Q    | 66                                 | 37             | 103               | 合格 passed |
| 2   | 24020046640022              | 4Q    | 62                                 | 41             | 103               | 合格 passed |
| 3   | 2402004664-01*              | 4Q    | 51.4                               | 36.4           | 87.9              | 不合格 fail  |
| 4   | 2402004664-02*              | 4Q    | 48                                 | 19.3           | 67.3              | 不合格 fail  |
| 5   | 2402004664-03*              | 4Q    | 44.                                | 23.6           | 68.1              | 不合格 fail  |
| 6   | 2402004664-04*              | 4Q    | 56.5                               | 27.9           | 84.4              | 不合格 fail  |
| 7   | 2402004664-05*              | 4Q    | 46.3                               | 36.4           | 82.7              | 不合格 fail  |
| 8   | 2402004664-06*              | 4Q    | 46.3                               | 32.1           | 78.4              | 不合格 fail  |
| 9   | 2402004664-07*              | 4Q    | 49.7                               | 27.9           | 77.6              | 不合格 fail  |
| 10  | 2402004664-08*              | 4Q    | 48                                 | 25.7           | 73.7              | 不合格 fail  |
| 11  | 2402004664-09*              | 4Q    | 48                                 | 30.0           | 78.0              | 不合格 fail  |
|     | average value ( $\bar{X}$ ) |       | 53,27                              | 34,18          | <b>85,55</b>      |           |

### Class B Test Result

The results of the class B test are as shown in Table 2 below. The number of participants who took the test was 10 participants, and 6 of them passed (60%). This class is a class that receives Japanese language lessons using the “Irodori” teaching material.

Table 2 Class B Test Results for Class 2024

| No. | Participants's number       | Level | Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading (120) | Listening (60) | Total Score (180) | Result    |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------|------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1   | 24060046640009              | 4Q    | 78                                 | 34             | 112               | 合格 passed |
| 2   | 24060046640011              | 4Q    | 85                                 | 31             | 116               | 合格 passed |
| 3   | 24060046640014              | 4Q    | 71                                 | 39             | 110               | 合格 passed |
| 4   | 24060046640020              | 4Q    | 78                                 | 42             | 120               | 合格 passed |
| 5   | 24060046649001              | 4Q    | 67                                 | 37             | 104               | 合格 passed |
| 6   | 24060046649002              | 4Q    | 64                                 | 32             | 96                | 合格 passed |
| 7   | 2406004664-01*              | 4Q    | 49.7                               | 30             | 79.7              | 不合格 fail  |
| 8   | 2406004664-02*              | 4Q    | 48.4                               | 34.0           | 82.3              | 不合格 fail  |
| 9   | 2406004664-03*              | 4Q    | 48                                 | 25.7           | 73.7              | 不合格 fail  |
| 10  | 2406004664-04*              | 4Q    | 47.9                               | 30.1           | 78.0              | 不合格 fail  |
|     | average value ( $\bar{X}$ ) |       | 65,5                               | 34,2           | <b>98,7</b>       |           |

### Comparison Results

Judging from the percentage of participants who passed the test (Class A, 18%, and Class B, 60%) and from the average class score (Class A  $\bar{x}$  85.55, and Class B  $\bar{x}$  98.7) shows that Class B has a higher passing score than Class A.

## 4. Discussion

Based on the data shown above, it appears that the number of participants who passed the test was Class B (60%) higher than Class A (18%). This result shows that Class B is better than Class A. Both classes received Japanese language education in the same time span, namely 6 months according to the program set by the company that recruited them, both received learning from the same instructor and in the same place. The only difference is the teaching materials used, namely Class A uses the textbook "Minna no Nihongo" (3A Network, 1998), while Class B uses the textbook "Irodori" (The Japan Foundation, 2022). Of course, the structure and completeness of these two teaching materials are different, but this is not discussed in this presentation. If you look at the requirements of these two classes, they only differ in the teaching materials, then it can be said that the teaching materials used in class B, namely "Irodori", show a positive influence on student learning outcomes.

Learning success is determined by many factors. This time the teaching material factor is the focus of discussion. Teachers must be able to choose strategies that are appropriate to class conditions and the goals to be achieved. The selection of strategies in this study was in accordance with the strategies proposed by Sunendar, Dadang & Iskandarwassid (2016).

Special classes for nursing are prepared for participants who will work in Japan. They are not the same as regular classes like in college. From this point of view, it seems that the "Irodori" teaching materials are more suitable for students who are prepared to work in Japan as caregivers. Compared to the book "Minna no Nihongo" which uses a grammar approach, the "Irodori" teaching book uses an input approach and natural language use. Regarding the more detailed differences between the two books, it needs to be studied in more depth, because in this presentation only looks at the learning outcomes.

Irodori learning is inquiry-based learning which means a series of learning activities that maximally involve all students' abilities to search and investigate systematically, critically, logically, analytically, so that they can formulate their own findings with confidence.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis of group A and group B who took the Japanese language competency test NAT-TEST, it is known that the number of class B participants who passed the test was 60%, this number is greater than class A, where only 18% of participants passed the test. This shows that there is a positive influence of the use of "Irodori" teaching materials compared to other teaching materials on the Japanese language learning outcomes of students participating in the Kaigo program. The use of "Irodori" teaching materials has advantages in terms of material and material composition that prioritizes natural voice input and language input.

The presentation of the results of this study only presents a comparison based on the results of the Japanese language competency test NAT-TEST to see the effectiveness of the teaching materials used. In the following presentation, the characteristics of each teaching material will be described qualitatively in detail.

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