

The Role of Assignment at Intermediate Bunpou Course in Meeting Skill Demands of the 21st-Century

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the role of assignment in Bunpou course in meeting the demands of 21st-century skills. As we all know that Bunpou is a part of language skills which is the root in the JF Standard tree. Without strong roots, it is impossible to produce a strong tree. Along with the times, the dependence on textbooks in the learning process is gradually decreasing. Students must be given the freedom to explore the world of unlimited knowledge to be able to compete globally in this century. In addition to meet the demands of the 21st century, especially in today's distance learning, teachers have limitations to monitor student learning activities. Moreover, the grammar learned in the early intermediate level is more complicated than at the elementary level, which is why teachers need to consider effective assignment methods. Assignments according to interests are an alternative in distance learning, because without a teacher monitor, students will certainly be happy to do so. Therefore, in this study, the assignment of Bunpou course was carried out by instructing students to look for examples of grammar expressions (*bunkei hyougen*) they had learned in the sources they are interested in, except social media. The method used is a descriptive research method by describing the results of assignments in the Bunpou course and its relation to the demands of skills in the 21st century. Data collection techniques were carried out through questionnaires to find out what 21st-century skills were realized through this assignment. From this study, it found that the output of this project is related to increase 21st-century skills i.e., critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, compassion, and digital literacy, but still need further study to assure either it supports the computational thinking skill or not.

Keywords: *Intermediate Bunpou, Assignment, 21st Century Skills*

INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology in the field of education has provided various facilities for us to carry out the learning process. "Knowledge at your fingertips" is not impossible anymore. But in fact, not everyone can take advantage of this sophistication, until finally, the pandemic has forced us to conduct full online lectures. Based on previous studies that have been conducted, online lectures have advantages and disadvantages (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015; Mohammadi et al., 2011). On the one hand, this has several advantages such as time and space efficiency, increased skills in operating gadgets and the ability to use various learning platforms, and so on. One of the advantages of e-learning in foreign language learning is the efficiency of space and time, as well as the increasing role of students in the learning process (Inaba, 2013). But on the other hand, of course, there are also limitations such as internet connection problems, where not all regions have good internet connections. In addition, as a lecturer, the difficulty in monitoring the student's learning process has become undeniable anxiety. Do students really understand the lesson? Do students really learn? Do they not cheat at the exam? Facing current actual problems, the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has emphasized the importance of a student-oriented independent learning process by prioritizing the improvement of skills needed in the 21st century to be able to adapt to the demands of the growing industrial world (Arif Budiansyah, 2020).

Algahtani (2011) says that online learning is included as part of e-learning. He specifically said that e-learning is divided into three, namely adjunct, blended e-Learning, and online (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). The discussion in this study is the learning process of the Intermediate Bunpo course at the State University of Jakarta. In practice, the learning of this course uses a blended e-learning technique, where the teaching material still uses the main textbook, namely the 4th edition of the book "New Approach Japanese

Intermediate Course" written by Oyanagi Noboru and published by Nihongo Kenkyusha (Oyanagi, 2004). In contrast to the Basic Bunpo lessons, Bunpo lessons at this level do not quite require cognitive ability at the level of remembering or understanding, but it also takes the ability to be able to evaluate whether the use of one *hyogen* or expression is appropriate in conveying the speaker's intent. This is because the material in this textbook is categorized in expressions that have the same function but have very slight differences in meaning and usage.

Considering above mentioned problems, this study was conducted as an alternative problem solving through project-based assignments. This form of the assignment was chosen because project-based learning is believed to be a learning method that can provide opportunities for students to build skills needed in the 21st century (Larmer et al., 2015). There are previous studies about the role of project-based in Japanese language learning (Aneros & Herniwati, 2019; Takeda, 2016) which found that project-based learning in language and literary skills can improve the skills of 21 students. But of course, every study is based on the problems that occur in their respective places. Thus, this study focused on the role of project-based learning in understanding the use of *hyougen* learned at the intermediate level. Therefore, this study aims to determine the role of assignments in the Intermediate Bunpo course in meeting the 21st-century skill demands.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

21st-century skills

Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S), an organization that works with academic institutions and companies in the field of technology, has developed an operational definition of 21st-century skills so that students have the right skills to succeed in the 21st Century workplace as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Operational Definitions of 21st Century Skills

ATC21S		21 st C skills reviewed by ATC21S			
21 st C skill category	21 st century skills	Partnership for 21 st C skills (2013)	Lisbon Council (2007)	ISTE NETS (2013)	ETS iSkill (2013)
Ways of thinking	creativity & innovation	creativity & innovation		creativity & innovation	creativity & innovation
	critical thinking problem solving decision making	critical thinking problem solving decision making	problem solving	critical thinking problem solving decision making	critical thinking problem solving
	learning to learn metacognition				
Ways of working	communication	communication		communication	communication
	collaboration	collaboration	collaboration		collaboration
Tools for working	information literacy	information literacy media literacy	information literacy	information literacy	information literacy
ICT literacy	ICT operation and concepts	ICT operation and concepts	ICT operation and concepts	ICT operation and concepts	ICT operation and concepts
Living in the world	citizenship				
	life and career	e.g. initiative flexibility leadership	flexibility adaptability		initiative self direction
	personal and social responsibility				

Source : (Suto & Eccles, 2014)

From several definitions that have been developed by various institutions, ATC21S classified these skills into five categories, namely: a) ways of thinking, b) ways of working, c) tools for working, d) ICT Literacy, e) Living in the world. If we look at the definitions in common, it can be said that the skills needed are: 1)

creativity and innovation, 2) critical thinking and problem solving,) communication, 4) collaboration, 5) information literacy, 6) ICT operations and concepts, and 7) life. skills.

In Indonesia itself, officially the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Nadiem Makarim, explained that in its implementation in education field, there are six skills that need to be considered in designing the learning process, namely: 1) creativity and innovation, 2) critical thinking and problem solving, 3) communication, 4) collaboration, 5) computational thinking, and 6) compassion (Arif Budiansyah, 2020).

Here are the definitions of this six skills (Fullan & Scott, 2014; Grover & Pea, 2013)

- 1) Creativity and innovation
Having an 'entrepreneurial eye' for economic and social opportunities, asking the right questions to generate novel ideas, and demonstrating leadership to pursue those ideas into practice.
- 2) Critical thinking and problem solving
Critically evaluating information and arguments, seeing patterns and connections, constructing meaningful knowledge, and applying it in the real world.
- 3) Communication
Communication entails mastery of three fluencies: digital, writing, and speaking tailored for a range of audiences.
- 4) Collaboration
Collaboration refers to the capacity to work interdependently and synergistically in teams with strong interpersonal and team-related skills including effective management of team dynamics, making substantive decisions together, and learning from and contributing to the learning of others.
- 5) Computational thinking
The essence of this skill is thinking like a computer scientist when confronted with a problem.
- 6) Compassion
Compassion in this definition is empathy. As the result of the study, empathy is splited into three aspects, "emotional (or affective empathy), cognitive (or thinking empathy), and motivation for an empathic response."(Philpot, 2019)

Project-Based Learning

Thomas (2000) claimed that "project-based learning is a model that organizes learning around projects. Projects are complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students in the design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give the student the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods." (Takeda, 2016)

There are six characteristics in the implementation of project-based learning, such as: 1) driving questions to guide instruction, 2) focus on learning districts and states goals with confidence, 3) engage in actual scientific practice, 4) collaborate with students, teachers, and members of society to investigate questions and ideas, 5) use technology to support learning by enhancing engagement in scientific practice and collaboration with students, teachers, and members of society, and 6) create artifacts to motivate students and represent their newly acquired knowledge (Mikouchi et al., 2018).

Although it is not a new instructional model, but this model is respected and in demand, because from many studies it is proven that this model can help students to be motivated, help them in their studies, careers, and life, and also help students meet standards and succeed in exams that require them to demonstrate deep thinking knowledge and skills. From the teacher's side, this model helps to teach more satisfyingly, and from the school's side, this model helps to connect with parents, the community, and the wider world.

METHODS

The method used is a descriptive research method by describing the results of assignments in the Bunpou course and its role to meet the 21st-century demands skills. Data collection techniques were carried out through questionnaires to find out what 21st-century skills were realized through this assignment. The

questionnaire contains 12 questions about their opinion on the assignment of Intermediate Bunpo courses, and it is made according to 21st-century skills rubric assessment (Instruction, n.d.). Respondents are 39 students in the 2nd grade who take Intermediate Bunpo Course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Assignment Flow

1. Driving Questions

The lecturer explains the characteristics of the New Approach Japanese Intermediate Coursebook that they will use during one semester of the course. The content in this book is classified according to the functional language of the *bunkei* or *hyougen*. After that, the lecturer explained the material in chapter 1. Then did a review with the students. Indirectly, the lecturer provokes students to observe what difficulties they encounter in understanding the material being taught. So finally, it was concluded that *bunkei* and *hyougen* with the same language function have similar meanings but different usage. Then the lecturer asked the question "What do you think is the best way to find out how to use each of these *bunkei* *hyougen*?"

2. Designing The Project

The question at the beginning sparked a class discussion until finally it concluded that the most appropriate way was to see its use by native speakers. There are 2 stages in working on the project, namely:

- a. Collect sample sentences from native speakers
- b. Make a visualization of the use of the *bunkei hyougen* as evidence of their understanding of the usage.

3. Data Collecting

From the results of the agreement between lecturer and students, it was decided that the initial project was to write down the examples of sentences that appeared in their preferred learning media. It was decided to use teaching media such as *manga*, *anime*, *dorama*, *uta*, and games.

The object of *bunkei* and *hyougen* is *bunkei hyougen* from chapters 7 to 13 or the material before the mid-test. Before the mid-test, each student collects sentences contain the learned *bunkei hyougen* that were founded in media.

4. Discussion

After all the data was collected, a group discussion was conducted regarding the use of the sentence. This is where the selection process takes place, which *bunkei hyougen* they can visualize or not.

5. Project Presentation

Towards the end of the semester, each group collects their work in the form of 4 comma manga. Each group also explained the process and reasons they made the *manga*.

Here is a sample of manga as the result of the project.



Picture 1. Sample of The Project Result

Questionnaire Result

From the results of the questionnaire regarding what skills were sharpened during project work, the following results are known:

21 st Century Skill	Yes	No
Critical thinking	38	1
Creativity	34	5
Collaboration	35	4
Communication	35	4
Compassion	35	4
Computational Thinking	Unknown	Unknown
Digital and Information Literacy	37	2

Role of The Assignment in Meet The 21st Century Skill Demands

Following is a discussion based on the questionnaire result of how project assignments can help students improve their 21st century skills.

1. Critical Thinking

The criteria for evaluating critical thinking in this project in the category of "Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs" in the standard rubric of assessment. In this process, students feel how they must sort and select collected examples of sentences to decide which use is the most appropriate and by the visualization they will make. Therefore, almost all students, or 97.4% agree that this task has sharpened their critical thinking skill.

2. Creativity

The criteria for evaluating creativity in this project in the category of "Elaborates, refines, analyzes and evaluates their ideas to improve and maximize creative efforts". In this process, students are faced with several ideas in groups, but they must be able to decide which visual idea is the most useful in describing their understanding of the *bunkei hyogen* being learned. Therefore, as many as 87.2% of students agree that this task trains their creative skill.

3. Collaboration

The criteria for evaluating collaboration in this project in the category of "Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member". In this process, students are faced with the challenge of working together in groups responsibly. In practice, they must be able to share roles and make a real contribution to the completion of the task. Even though not everyone in the group can draw manga, they still must make a tangible contribution. Therefore, as many as 89.7% of students agree that this task trains their collaborative skill.

4. Communication

The criteria for evaluating collaboration in this project is the category of "Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts". In this process, students are faced with the challenge of being able to express their opinions effectively to complete assignments. Although at first glance like a trivial thing, but this is a big challenge, especially for quiet students. In addition, working in an online condition presents its challenges to voice opinions and ideas. Therefore, as many as 89.7% of students agree that this task trains their communication skill.

5. Compassion

The criteria for evaluating compassion in this project are the same as the assessment in collaboration skills. How come? When all students are required to be able to work together in teams, then indirectly their personality for empathy is tested. A team cannot work well if each member only cares about their self-ego. Therefore, as many as 89.7% of students agree that this task trains their empathy.

6. Computational Thinking

This study cannot measure computational thinking skill because of incapacity to monitor how each student works in completing the project. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a systematic framework and worksheet to measure it and further study will be needed.

7. Digital and Information Literacy

The criteria for evaluating collaboration in this project in the category of "Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand". In this process, students have the autonomy to explore unlimited information on the internet. The utilization of big data on the internet can only be conducted effectively if each student focuses on what is the goal of the project. Therefore, 94.9% of students agree that this assignment trains their digital and information literacy.

CONCLUSION

The role of project assignment in the Intermediate Bunpo course in improving 21st-century skills showed that giving autonomy to determine how to accomplish the learning target of the course makes the learning process becoming fun and more meaningful. This project also taught them to use the information on the internet smartly, by sorting and selecting which ones are really related to the course or not, in other words, it helps them to think critically. On the other hand, by working in a teamwork, helps them to improve their collaborative and communication skills and also compassion by appreciating each other's ideas. At the end, they have creatively made a 4-comma *manga* to make their works more tangible.

On the lecturer side, this assignment can overcome one of the concerns of online learning, which is the lecturer does not need to monitor the student learning process because students choose their own process.

However, how to measure computational thinking skills through this assignment is still a shortcoming of this study. Therefore, hopefully, this study can become a recommendation for further research.

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