

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH *NOBINOBI YOMIKAKI* JAPANESE READING MATERIAL

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the role of *Nobinobi Yomikaki* textbook in the establishment of 21st-century skills, specifically critical thinking in reading and writing courses or *dokusaku*. Reading is one of the skills in language learning, which is further divided into two classifications, namely beginner and advanced abilities. Foreign language learners, especially Japanese learners, must start by learning new written symbols. With the increasing demand for the supply of human resources who master 21st-century skills, educational institutions also began to make improvements by prioritizing the establishment of 21st-century abilities of the students in teaching and learning activities from elementary to university level. There are four skills that must be possessed by individuals or students in the 21st century, that is creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, abbreviated as to 4C. Some things that can be done for the establishment of 21st-century abilities are to actively involve students in learning and be supported by qualified teaching materials. *Nobinobi Yomikaki* textbook is a teaching material that was developed based on the needs of beginner learners towards the establishment of 21st-century skills. The method used is a descriptive research method by describing the indicators of critical thinking skills achieved during the use of *Nobinobi Yomikaki* textbook. Data collection techniques are carried out by observing during teaching and learning activities. The results showed that indicators of critical thinking skills were found in students when learning using teaching materials; among them are students who could use the type of reasoning that was appropriate to the situation, and then were able to analyze evidence, arguments, and different points of view, and could reflect critically on experiences and their learning process.

Keywords: beginner, critical thinking, reading, writing, 21st-century skills

INTRODUCTION

Especially in language learning, according to Suto and Eccles (2014), life has become more internationally open and multicultural but still interconnected (Suto & Eccles, n.d.). Today, knowledge of another language is one of a number of skills that can help a person get a job. So it can be said that foreign language education currently has a big role in the creation of superior human resources. Especially in the education of Japanese as a foreign language, the toughest competitors today are not coming from the same institutions as other universities. But Japanese language students from outside Indonesia may not know at all.

In an effort to overcome this, in its development, learning is no longer focused on grammar, memorization, and learning from rote but uses knowledge of language and culture as a means to connect with other people around the world. Geographic and physical boundaries are easily transcended with technology as students learn to reach the world around them, using their language and cultural skills to facilitate the relationships they want to make. (Eaton, 2010)

With the increasing demand for the supply of human resources who masters 21st-century skills, educational institutions have begun to improve by prioritizing the establishment of 21st-century abilities of the students in teaching and learning activities ranging from elementary education to university level. Some things that can be done for the

establishment of 21st-century skills are to actively involve students in learning and be supported by qualified teaching materials. At this time, the teaching material in question is a Japanese reading teaching material for beginners, which was developed by Frida Philiyanti and Cut Erra Rismorlita after conducting a needs analysis of students.

From the study that has been carried out previously regarding the need for Japanese reading teaching materials for beginner level at Jakarta State University, it can be seen from the results of document reviews and observations that the condition of teaching materials that existed at that time could not be said to be ideal to meet the needs of 21st-century skills. Meanwhile, from the results of the questionnaire, it is known that the three needs with the highest ranking are the need for teaching materials that focus on metacognition skills, critical thinking, and digital literacy. Therefore, the portion of activities that can accommodate these needs must be enlarged in the teaching materials developed (Philiyanti & Rismorlita, 2020). So that the structure of teaching materials for reading and writing subjects was compiled for the beginner level, which had been tested for expediency by experts; this can answer the needs of students and study programs for systematic, contextual teaching materials and help improve the skills needed in the 21st century. (Philiyanti et al., 2021).

By considering the problems above, this study was conducted to determine whether by using teaching materials developed based on the needs of 21st-century skills, critical thinking skills in students can be formed and used in learning.

21st Century Skills

In an effort to support the creation of excellent human resources, experts have formulated the skills needed to face the 21st century. Bialik and Fadel explained that there are 4 skills that individuals or students must possess in the 21st century, namely creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, shortened to 4C. (Bialik et al., 2015)

Critical Thinking as 21st-Century Skills

The National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking defines critical thinking as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to beliefs and actions. Although it covers a wide range of mental activities, in essence, the "critical" part of "critical thinking" refers to questioning claims rather than taking them for granted.

Based on the 21st-century ability standard rubric issued by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), students have met the standards if they are able to achieve the following points.

- a. Students can use various types of reasoning according to the situation.
- b. Students recognize how the parts of a system work together to achieve something.
- c. Students can reflect critically on experiences and learning processes.
- d. Students are able to make judgments and make decisions.
- e. Students are able to analyze evidence/facts, arguments, and different points of view.
- f. There are students who effectively identify and ask important questions that clarify multiple points of view and lead to better solutions.

NOBINOBI YOMIKAKI TEACHING MATERIALS

Teaching materials for reading and writing *Nobinobi Yomikaki* were compiled and developed based on the needs of beginner students for the establishment of 21st-century skills that have been studied and analyzed in 2020 for early-level students by Frida Philiyanti (Philiyanti & Rismorlita, 2020).

Here is the structure of the *Nobinobi Yomikaki* textbook in each lesson chapter.

1) *Fokasu* (Focus)

There are two points in this subchapter, and the first one is *mokuteki*, or the goal; at this point, the objectives and learning achievements of the chapter are explained. The second is *bunkei* or grammar. At this point, the sentence patterns that have been studied previously and the sentence patterns that will appear in the reading text are explained.

2) *Rifurekushon* (Initial Reflection)

In this subchapter contains exercise questions to recall lessons that have been studied previously.

3) *Woominguappu* (Warming Up)

This section contains exercise questions related to the topic of discussion in the chapter.

4) *Yomimasu*

This subchapter contains short reading material in the Japanese language with topics that have been adapted to the chapters.

5) *Shirabemashou*

In this section, an empty table is provided with columns labelled *atarasiii tango/kanji* and *Indonesiago*. Here students are asked to write down new words or kanji that they encounter in reading and look for their meaning in Indonesian using a dictionary or the internet.

6) *Hanashaimashou*

In this subchapter, several questions about the reading material in the previous subchapter have been provided that students must answer by conducting discussions with their friends.

7) *Kakimashou*

In this subchapter, there are two writing activities; firstly, a kanji writing exercise sheet that has just been learned and found in the reading material. And secondly, an exercise sheet for writing short Japanese discourses that have been adapted to the learning topic.

8) *Asesumentoshiito*

In this subchapter, there is an assessment rubric and empty tables labelled *dekirukoto* and *dekinaikoto* that can be filled in by students to conduct self-evaluation.

METHOD

The method used is a descriptive research method by describing the results of learning activities for reading and writing courses using *Nobinobi Yomikaki* teaching materials and their role in meeting the demands of 21st-century skills, especially critical thinking. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation to determine the role and usefulness of *Nobinobi Yomikako* textbooks in the establishment of students' critical thinking skills. The observation sheet contains 6 points of achievement standards made in accordance with the 21st-century skills rubric assessment by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Respondents are 2 classes of reading and writing courses containing 24 students each, with a total of 54 students. Observations were carried out for six weeks with six meetings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Japanese literacy textbooks for beginners *Nobinobi Yomikaki* have been used in teaching and learning activities in two classes of level 1 students at the State University of Jakarta for six meetings from September 9, 2022, to October 14, 2022. Observations were made to determine the establishment of 21st-century skills in students when the book is used. The skill observed is the critical thinking skills of students.

In observations, it was found that students could use the type of reasoning that was appropriate to the situation, such as brainstorming with other students when doing group activities. This is found in the *Hanasaimashou* or Let's Discuss sub-chapter. Students can also critically reflect on their experiences and learning processes, and this is helped by the provision of a self-reflection column in the *Nobinobi Yomikaki* textbook, which allows students to explain what matters they have learned and what they have not learned.

Students are also involved in making judgments and making decisions and are able to analyze evidence, arguments, and different points of view. This can be seen because there are illustrated images that can be interpreted in various ways, students also have different points of view, but students are able to give good responses and are able to make decisions about the meaning of the illustrated images. In the *nobinobi* textbook, in chapter 3, sub-chapter *Woominguappu* or Warming Up, it was found that there was an image of a glass filled with a dark-coloured drink. Students also had various views; some of them said it was coke (sodas), and some said that it was tea. However, students are able to respond to both these different views and make a decision that both are true.

In the *Yomimashou* or Let's Read subchapter, it was found that there were students who effectively identified and asked questions that clarified new points of view. This is because *Nobinobi Yomikaki* textbooks provide Japanese language discourse in which sometimes they have the vocabulary or even sentence patterns that have never been studied by level 1 students. In the field, when students read discourse, they find the conjunctions *ya* and *to*, and this triggers their critical thinking skills. When it comes to translating it into Indonesian, because it has never been studied before, questions are created by students to lecturers to get clarity about the conjunctions *ya* and *to*.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that students' critical thinking skills can be formed and used when *nobinobi* teaching materials are applied to learning. Although the teaching materials are used by different teachers with different teaching styles, the content and structure of these *nobinobi* teaching materials require students to use their critical thinking skills.

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