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# Contents of Reading Material for High School Japanese Language Beginner-Level Students

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## Abstract

One of the characteristics of suitable learning materials is that they provide benefits to language learners. Significantly, few beginner-level textbooks specifically created for Indonesian students relate to the lives of Indonesian-Japanese language students. This study aims to find reading material topics closer to the daily lives of Indonesian beginner-level students, especially those studying at high schools in Indonesia so that they can be more useful in their lives. This research is qualitative descriptive research using interview research techniques. The respondents in this study were five beginner-level Japanese language learners studying at high schools in Indonesia. The result of the survey found several reading material topics, such as reading the composition of ingredients on Japanese food packaging, profiles of idols or celebrities they like on social media, phrases on the typography of clothes, restaurant names, and several other topics. This study concluded that the reading materials related to the lives of Japanese high school students in Indonesia are related to Japanese products used, things they like or hobbies, and cultural comparisons.

Keywords: Reading skills; learning materials; beginner-level learners

## 1. Introduction

Teaching materials are essential because students use tools or media to help the learning process smoothly. Tomlinson defines teaching materials as all resources to facilitate and support learning. Media that students can be used as teaching materials can be print or non-print. Printed teaching materials can be in newspapers, product packaging, photos, and worksheets, while non-printed teaching materials can be in the form of audio files, applications, and internet platforms. The distinctive characteristic of teaching materials lies in the pedagogical goals created by their creators, thus distinguishing them from just learning resources. For example, YouTube videos are considered learning resources until they are equipped with pedagogical elements, ranging from simple questions to complex projects or assignments. Teaching materials are also defined as all forms of written and unwritten materials used to assist teachers or instructors in carrying out the learning process and become materials to be studied by students to achieve predetermined competency standards.

From the two definitions above, teaching materials are all media that are important in the learning process and help students achieve learning goals in print and non-print form. Teachers ensure that teaching and learning activities run smoothly and teaching materials come in printed and non-printed form. Tomlinson (2011), one of the principles in developing teaching materials is that teaching materials must have an impact and be relevant and useful. This impact, relevance, and usefulness will increase student motivation because they feel that the things they are learning are what they need in their lives now and in the future. This relevance and usefulness are closely related to learning objectives and outcomes, which are then translated into teaching materials [4]. Teaching materials or learning content are topics, themes, beliefs, behavior, concepts, and facts that are often grouped into subjects or learning areas. It includes the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes expected to be learned and form the basis for teaching and learning activities. Teaching material can be considered a subject or collection of learning content, including knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are the focus of learning or teaching. Teaching materials play an essential role as an integral component of overall teaching materials.

One of the Japanese language skills that you need to pay attention to is reading skills. Reading skills will always be related to thinking and memory processes. Reading skills can make the learning process more accessible because reading material contains vocabulary, phrases, and uses grammar, and it is also a source of information. So, having good reading skills can help make it easier for readers to master other skills and, of course, increase insight and information.

Oktaviani and Sastrawijaya said that one of the difficulties faced by Japanese language learners is reading because of the differences in letters between Indonesian and Japanese and also understanding the meaning of phrases or sentences in a reading. Difficulty in reading Japanese can reduce student motivation. However, the impact, relevance, and usefulness of the reading skills teaching materials can be felt in students' lives. In that case, student motivation will increase, as is one of the principles of teaching materials, based on Tomlinson (2011). The connection between usefulness and motivation for reading is also emphasized by

Setsuko Mori, which says that reading skills are always related to the usefulness of reading. By getting the benefits of reading, it will motivate students to read. The benefits here can be in the form of benefits in students' daily lives. Visiaty said that learning language reading skills using material related to students' lives should be applied from the beginner level. Because apart from increasing motivation, students can use their prior knowledge to understand reading.

According to Huntley-Moore & Panter, one of the things that can be considered when determining teaching materials is students. Students can be used as a resource to find suitable teaching materials according to the student's own needs. For this reason, so that reading skills teaching materials suit the needs of students' daily lives, students can be used as a source of information to find suitable teaching materials.

Based on the results of a study of Japanese books currently used in high school, entitled Sakura 1 (2009), Sakura 2 (2009), Sakura 3 (2009), and Nihongo Kirakira 1 (2001), Nihongo Kirakira 2 (2017), Nihongo Kirakira 3 (2017) with reading material with themes about everyday life, but not those found in students' daily lives. For example, the themes of *asagohan* (breakfast), *heya* (room), *ie* (house), etc. This theme is, of course, related to everyday life and is helpful in learning activities. Still, this reading is commonly found in public places for Japanese language students studying in Indonesia, so it is seen only sometimes in everyday life. In this research, what is meant by teaching material related and useful in students' daily lives is teaching material or reading that will often come into contact, such as reading on food, drink, clothing, or other Japanese product packaging. Readings on these products will always be found in mini-market shops, so students will always come into contact with this when visiting mini-markets, shops that sell Japanese products, or Japanese food restaurants. These places are public places that will be frequently visited in everyday life, so by understanding this reading, students can read and know the meaning of the reading, and by studying the material, this form of reading will be beneficial.

This research aims to find reading teaching material topics that are relevant to the daily lives of students in Indonesia and provide benefits to the daily lives of Indonesian beginner-level students, especially those studying at the high school level and equivalent.

## 2. Research Method

This research is research with a qualitative approach. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. This research was conducted using open interview techniques. The research respondents were five students from one of the Senior High Schools in Jakarta, with the following profiles.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

No.	Name	Class	Type of Language Class	
1.	RP	11 C	Subjects in class	2019
2.	S	11 A	Extracurricular	Junior High School
3.	YD	11 E	Subjects in class, Extracurricular	Junior High School
4.	ZA	11 E	Subjects in class	Year 4 elementary school
5.	SW	11 E	Extracurricular	Year 1 high school

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Forms of Reading that are often found in The Daily Life of Beginner Level Students in High School.

Based on the results of interviews conducted with five high school students, it can be seen that the reading skills teaching materials that respondents consider necessary because they are often found in everyday life in Indonesia consist of five significant forms of reading, namely:

1. Words, phrases, and sentences in the product.
2. Social media content
3. Song lyrics
4. Food ingredients
5. Food menu
6. Folklore
7. Manga

The form of words, phrases, and sentences on products here can be product brand names on packaging, such as brands of snacks, skincare, packaged drinks, etc., restaurant names, and typography on clothing. Examples of these readings are shown in pictures 1, 2, and 3 below.

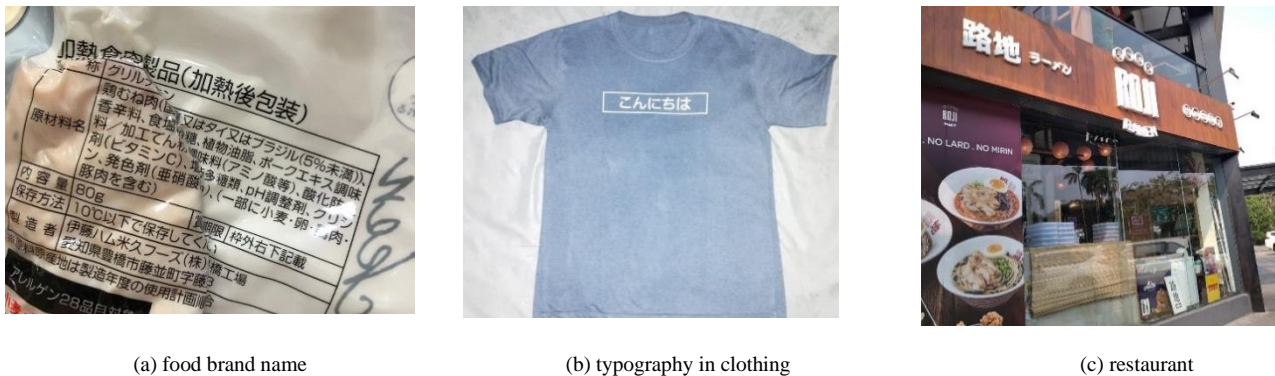


Figure 1 Reading on a product

The product brand name on the packaging and the name of the restaurant here include products produced in Japan or the name of a franchise restaurant from Japan, the brand name of Japanese or Indonesian products made in Indonesia, and the name of a restaurant owned by an Indonesian. Apart from the reading form in the form of words, as in the example above, it can also be in phrases or sentences, as in the example of a product advertising catchphrase (example 4), and the following typography on a T-shirt (Picture 5).

Students who feel that they often find reading forms in the form of words, phrases, and sentences in this product include YD, as implied in the results of the following interview.

YD: "Biasanya sih ada di namanya kak nama snack-nya."

Based on YD's statement, it is known that YD often finds Japanese in product brand names such as snack brands and taglines or catchphrases for these brands. Apart from that, YD said that apart from brands and menus, he often finds Japanese words, phrases, and sentences on clothes as typography, as can be seen in YD's statement below.

YD: "It's often found in snacks and can be other things like food and drinks. Sometimes there are t-shirts; that's what they say in Japan."

Then, the reading material on social media is in captions or bios. The captions or bios read are those of figures/characters that students like or are idols of, such as the Japanese vtuber bio in example 6 below.



Figure 2 Reading material on social media content

To the statement made by RP, it is known that RP found readings on social media of singers or characters he liked. As implied in the results of the following interview.

RP: "If there is a Japanese artist who has social media, I follow him, like his posts, look at his Instagram stories, and yes, read his profile (bio) too."

Meanwhile, the way of reading food ingredients is in the form of information about the ingredients used to make a food product, which is listed on the packaging or food menu. Food ingredients are usually found in products produced by Japan, such as information on Japanese food products in picture 7 below.



Figure 3. food ingredients

For reading in the form of a food menu, it is in the form of the names of Japanese foods often found in Japanese restaurants written in hiragana or katakana letters, as in example 8 below.

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Students who stated that reading in the form of food menus or Japanese food names was often found in everyday life included ZA, as implied in the results of the following interview. Based on ZA's statement, it is known that ZA often finds Japanese in Japanese restaurants, such as on the menu and the names of Japanese food.

ZA: "For me, it's often in hiragana form. Usually, that's the case in restaurants; as far as I know, it's on the menu."

Then, folklore can be read in Japanese folk tales or fairy tales. The student who stated was RP.

RP: "When I look for Japanese folk tales, there are many mixed writings like hiragana or katakana."

### 3.2. Content Characteristics of Beginner Level Reading Skills Teaching Materials in High School and Development Suggestions

Based on the results of the forms of reading often encountered in the daily lives of beginner-level students in high school, the character of these forms of reading is as follows.

1. The reading often found is not always in the form of paragraphs, but in the form of words, sentences, and phrases.
2. Reading in the form of paragraphs can be found in songs and folk tales,
3. Reading in the form of conversations in the manga.

So, reading material in the form of words, sentences, and phrases is easier to understand with the help of knowledge of vocabulary and letters. However, some paragraphs are difficult because they are hampered by the large amount of vocabulary, kanji, that have yet to be studied. As well as such grammar in the form of conversations in mango. For paragraphs in conversation, the teacher needs to make an effort to change or adapt the reading by using the vocabulary or grammar and letters learned. Meanwhile, reading is like an ingredients; learning can be done using a top-down reading strategy. Like scanning, where students need to look for essential words related to religious prohibitions or allergies.

## 4. Conclusions

From this research, beginner-level students in high school in Indonesia often encounter forms of reading, namely words, phrases and sentences in products. Then read the form of social media content, song lyrics, food ingredients, food menus, folklore, and manga in everyday life. This form of reading is authentic and can be used as content for teaching Japanese reading skills to beginner-level high school students. Teaching materials taken from authentic sources, such as research results, will feel more connected and useful in students' daily lives because they can actually be found in their lives. Teaching material content like this can increase motivation for students to read literature in Japanese. From the forms of authentic reading found, the reading material is not always in the form of paragraphs, but some are in the form of words, sentences, and phrases. For readings in the form of paragraphs or conversations in a manga, teachers need to make adaptation efforts so that beginner-level students can understand the reading. Some authentic reading materials can also be given to beginner students by including appropriate reading strategies. Readings in the form of paragraphs can be found in songs and folk tales.

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