

Teaching Indonesian through Japanese literature for foreign language learners

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
BIPA Japanese Culture Language Learning	Literary works played a significant role as a medium for teaching Indonesian to foreign learners (BIPA). This study aimed to discuss the significance and use of the short stories “A Cat in Rashomon” and “The Cat and the Mushroom in the Cup” in developing BIPA learning design. This study employed a sociocultural framework to highlight the significance of the short stories for their representation of Japanese cultural aspects, and the “learning by design” paradigm to develop instructional designs. The findings revealed that both short stories narrated a culture of regret and loss, which in Japanese society was deeply intertwined with interpersonal engagement and relationships. This study then structured the learning into three sessions that explored learners’ personal experiences with the culture of emotions and their connections to these short stories. In other words, the main narrative in both short stories serves as the theme that ties the entire learning session together. Each session aimed to achieve four core competencies in the Indonesian language, encompassing the ability to explore their experiences and to conceptualize, analyze, and apply knowledge. This study emphasized that the significance of these two short stories lay in their representational value as a work of Indonesian-language literature that depicted the culture of another country, and their use also promoted the achievement of Indonesian language competencies.

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Introduction

Literary works are relevant to language learning, serving as primary and supplementary resources in both first- and second-language contexts for non-native speakers of a particular language. In global academic discourse, the use of these literary works is referred to as “literature in language education” (LLE) (Luuka, 2023). This connection is made possible by the characteristics of literature, which originates from and is mediated by language (verbal signifiers) to convey its substance. Meanwhile, according to Calafato (2024), this connection arises from the blurring of boundaries between language learning and literary studies, thereby making literary works a source of language. This, in turn, influences how educators use literary works to build, on the one hand, language proficiency and, on the other, literary competence—such as appreciating, understanding, analyzing, and interpreting texts. The same applies to Indonesian language learning for foreign speakers (BIPA) in the Indonesian educational context. Previous researchers have utilized local literature, such as Betawi literature (Bahtiar, 2018), national literature (Alfayanti et al., 2017; Nisa et al., 2020; Cahyo et al., 2024; Ekasiswanto et al., 2024), Southeast Asian regional literature (Gultom

& Mulyati, 2023), and local culture (Sutriyati et al., 2019; Azizah et al., 2022; Muzaki et al., 2025) in BIPA instruction.

Several previous studies indicate a similar trend, namely regarding the use of literary works that incorporate Indonesian identity and specific local contexts in BIPA teaching practices. This underscores the notion that learning Indonesian is inextricably linked to Indonesian culture. However, Indonesian literary works that tell stories about other cultures also have equal potential for their use in BIPA instruction. This aligns with Anggraeni's (2023) view that a phenomenon of "ideological mobility" has emerged, in which Indonesian literary works, written by Indonesians, draw upon realities originating outside their own cultural context. A literary work exemplifying this phenomenon is "Grandfather in Takamoto's Cats", a collection of short stories by Bagus Dwi Hananto (2023). This collection consists of eleven short stories. In her literary critique, Anggraeni (2023) assesses this collection as a non-caricatured depiction of Japan—a portrayal that makes the collection resemble translated literature. These short stories feature characters with Japanese identities, are set in Japan, showcase Japanese cultural traits, and incorporate specific Japanese linguistic codes. In other words, this collection contains a distinct Japanese flavor.

In addition to its ideological mobility, the significance of the short story collection "Grandfather in Takamoto's cat" lies in its status as an Indonesian literary work that depicts the East Asian world—specifically Japan—without resorting to translation or adaptation. This implies how Japan, in its various aspects, manifests as a "poetics of Japan" within Indonesian literature. Thus, this work transcends the geographical boundaries of Indonesian identity, presenting a story that steps outside the national and local contexts—a point clearly evident in various literary works and utilized in numerous studies on Indonesian as a foreign language (BIPA) instruction. On the other hand, this "Japanese-ness" allows the work to engage in a dialogue with Japanese culture, thereby offering readers a dual benefit: they become acquainted with Indonesian literature and the Indonesian language while simultaneously encountering Japanese culture. The two are inextricably linked and cannot be separated. Thus, by taking this short story collection as its subject, this research takes both a cross-cultural and trans-geographical spirit. This can be compared with previous research by Gultom & Mulyati (2023), which used the Malin Kundang folktale in BIPA instruction and compared it with stories from several Southeast Asian countries. This approach remains a conventional comparison tied to the local context—specifically, the folktale's origin in West Sumatra—rather than exploring Indonesian stories that incorporate elements of other nations and cultures. Hence, this short story collection is also worthy of consideration in BIPA instruction because it highlights the diversity of Indonesian literary realities—realities that do not merely narrate. Hence, this short story collection is also worthy of consideration in BIPA instruction because it highlights the diversity of Indonesian literary realities—realities that not only narrate Indonesian identity but also depict other societies and cultures.

In the BIPA instruction context, literary works serve as a means of gaining awareness of different perspectives and shifting one's point of view—specifically by placing oneself in another person's position and imagining reality from that person's perspective (Porto & Zamblyas, 2020). This is also supported by Sun's (2024) view that literary works are useful in shaping critical pedagogy in language learning. The short story collection "Grandfather in Takamoto's Cats" enables learners to study Indonesian while engaging with Japanese realities. This study focuses on BIPA (Indonesian as a Foreign Language) instruction in Japan, with Japanese learners as participants. Compared with previous studies that used local and national literature for non-native speakers, using Indonesian literary works featuring Japanese cultural elements for Japanese learners offers pedagogical benefits that support second-language learning. Research by Ratri et al. (2025) on integrating local culture into English language learning found that, while this integration provides a familiar context for students, it makes it difficult for teachers to find suitable resources. Reflecting on that research, this study simplifies matters for both sides: this short story collection contains narratives familiar to learners and makes it easier for teachers, especially since the resource is in Indonesian and teachers do not need to create new learning materials on Japanese culture. The integration of these cultural elements has pedagogical implications, including adaptive language instruction that supports learners' emotional well-being (Caruana & Zammit, 2024). Yesmin & Singh (2025) point out that in second-language learning, students often experience a cultural burden due to a lack of connection to the language and real-life situations. Therefore, this short story collection offers greater value than most Indonesian literary works because learners are exposed to Indonesian literature that is connected to their daily lives, situations, and culture in Japan, thereby minimizing cognitive load. Thus, such use is certainly not arbitrary but eclectic, based on the best considerations. This aligns with Luuka (2023), who states that context influences what, why, and how literary works are used in language learning.

This present study seeks to outline the instructional design that employs the short stories from this collection and to examine the significance of the works underpinning their use in the instructional context. Thus, this study proposes two research questions. First, what is the literary significance of the selected

short stories used in BIPA learning? Second, based on this significance, how can a BIPA learning design be developed that utilizes literature-based learning?

Orientation of Literary Work Use in BIPA Instruction

Foreign language instruction typically highlights the role and actions of the teacher or instructor in the classroom. This overlooks the fact that instructors have thoughts, beliefs, and considerations about the value of a particular medium that lead them to use it in instruction. This underscores the importance of focusing on orientation. Choo (as cited in Calafato, 2024) states that orientation is the value that underpins a person's approach to performing a specific action. There are three approaches to using literary works in language learning: the text-based approach, which prioritizes formal literary elements; the paraphrastic approach, which emphasizes simplifying texts into words and phrases and translating them into simple terms; and the multimodal approach, which builds students' literacy skills through various media formats. This study posits that to discuss the significance of the short stories in "Grandfather in Takamoto's Cats", the most appropriate analytical tool is the text-based approach. The reason is that the paraphrastic approach, as its name implies, reduces the text to isolated units, thereby disregarding the value of the work's wholeness and integrity. The multimodal approach is also inappropriate given that this short story collection relies solely on a single mode: verbal language.

In contrast, the textual approach clearly considers literary works as a whole, using formal literary analysis to select them. However, Calafato does not further explain how this textual approach is applied in research. Therefore, this paper draws on Hossain (2024), who applies Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that literary works serve as a medium for exploring language, culture, and social processes. This theory can be applied to narratively discuss how culture and social processes are represented in the short story collection, making it significant for BIPA learning. After discussing the issue of significance, the next main topic is how these short stories are implemented in concrete practice. This must, of course, be based on learning objectives. Hossain (2024), for example, states that using literary works in language learning aims to enable learners to explore diverse perspectives and express their thoughts in the target language. Calafato & Hunstadbråten (2025) explain, in their research applying the concept of *information processing*, that this use aims to foster emotional and aesthetic engagement, thereby going beyond mere plot comprehension. Meanwhile, according to Bobkina & Stefanova (2016), in their research integrating a reception-based approach into language learning, this use aims to foster and inspire critical thinking grounded in learners' interactions with and interpretations of texts.

An approach considered essential for accommodating various objectives regarding the use of literary works in BIPA instruction is "learning by design." This approach refers to the integration of informal or learner experiences with formal experiences or academic settings as its fundamental principle (Zapata, 2022). This definition implies that learner experiences occurring outside the classroom are both part of and a support for the formal learning process within the classroom. In *learning by design*, the knowledge-building process comprises four components: *experiencing*, *conceptualizing*, *analyzing*, and *applying* (Zapata, 2022). Meanwhile, Bobkina & Stefanova (2016) employ four components previously used by the New London Group and adopted by Kern (2003), namely: (1) situated practice, where learners are guided to explore relevant knowledge in response to a situation; (2) open instruction, which involves the conscious, analytical, and systematic understanding of texts; (3) critical framing to reveal reflective dimensions, and (4) transformed practices, namely changing one mode of representation to another. Thus, in the discussion regarding the implementation of Stories compilation in BIPA learning, this study will present and explain a learning design based on the concept of *learning by design* and take into account the four components proposed by Bobkina & Stefanova (2016).

Method

Investigating the significance of literary works in BIPA instruction while simultaneously discussing their application places this study at the intersection of basic and applied research. According to Zhang & Tang (2024), basic research is grounded in research activities, whereas applied research aims to generate solutions to societal problems. To bridge this duality and align with the context of this study, this research employs an integrative methodology. Simply put, this methodology integrates fundamental and applied research. As noted by Stark & Mandl (2007), this approach contributes by combining knowledge with its practical application. This methodology focuses on the development, evaluation, and implementation of innovative instructional approaches designed to produce specific outcomes or *outputs* within a particular domain. The domain for this study is the Indonesian literature course at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) in Japan.

The integrative methodology described above is further elaborated in the following steps. First, as a form of foundational research, this study conducts a narrative analysis to initially describe the socio-

cultural content regarding Japanese-ness in the short stories *from the anthology* “Grandfather in Takamoto’s Cats”. As outlined previously, this was conducted using Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, as in Hossain (2024). Hossain (2024) explains that literary works contain cultural references within their narratives or storytelling. Neither Vygotsky nor Hossain provides specific criteria for identifying these references, as each literary work has its own cultural context. Therefore, the analysis is conducted by comprehensively understanding the story’s structure to identify its main thematic elements. Then, these themes are connected to the sociocultural context of Japan. This analysis aims to address the first research question regarding the significance of the literary works used.

Furthermore, this study employs a reflective-introspective method that relies on the researcher’s experience and role as an instructor of Indonesian literature at TUFS in Japan to design the learning process. This method ensures that the resulting design aligns with the context in which BIPA is taught. Additionally, this design outlines learner objectives, lesson plans, and the instructional process, taking into account the “*learning by design*” components from Zapata (2022) and Bobkina & Stefanova (2016). This design will answer the second question. This learning process remains grounded in and takes into account the literary analysis discussed in the first question. In other words, literary analysis is “translated” into learning. For example, if literary analysis identifies elements of Japanese culture as sociocultural representations in a collection of short stories, then the learning session encourages students to interpret those representations or assigns tasks related to them. Essentially, this learning process is designed to encourage students to interpret literary works. Thus, this study also indirectly reflects a second-language learning approach based on literary works—namely, the communicative approach, which emphasizes the negotiation of meaning—rather than the traditional approach, which views literary works as a source of language (see Hall, 2005).

Results and Discussion

Japanese Elements in Two Short Stories from “Grandfather Among Takamoto’s Cats”: Summary of Two Short Stories

This section aims to answer the first question, which is grounded in Luuka’s (2023) perspective on what literary works are used for and why in language learning, specifically in the context of BIPA. This study does not utilize all eleven short stories in the collection due to technical limitations in discussing their overall significance in this section. This study uses two short stories as samples for analysis: “A Cat in Rashomon” and “The Cat and the Mushroom in the Cup.”

The short story “A Cat in Rashomon” recounts the actions of a man, nicknamed the Young Master, who drags a woman’s corpse to an area near a temple to bury her at night. This story presents a flashback narrative in which the Young Master, while intoxicated and unable to control himself, becomes sexually aroused and attempts to have intercourse with the woman. Young Master takes control of the woman’s body, terrifying her until she finally breathes her last. The Young Master realizes his mistake and immediately covers his tracks by burying the woman’s body. That night, only two witnesses knew of his actions: an old man and a cat. “The Cat and the Mushroom in the Cup” tells the story of a young writer, Ukimachi, who spends his days in a state of emptiness after losing his parents. Until one day, he visited his parents’ gravesite and found a starving black cat, which he then cared for and named Kuro. Since Kuro’s arrival, his life has gradually improved. He washed the cup—a gift for his mother—which contained stale coffee and had grown mold, visited the gravesite, and breathed in the morning air.

The short stories “A Cat in Rashomon” and “The Cat and the Mold in the Cup” were selected as research subjects for several reasons. First, based on the synopsis above, the two short stories differ in narrative content. The first short story depicts a life that appears tragic because humanity’s inability to control its emotions gives rise to evil and uncontrolled desires. These desires bring only temporary pleasure but risk and take the lives of others. The emotions and desires in this story create a sorrowful existence, as the Young Master must go to great lengths to conceal his crimes. He feels haunted by his actions and guilt, forcing him to conceal his misdeeds. This contrasts with the second short story, which depicts a life full of spirit. Any sorrow will eventually find a ray of hope for resolution, allowing the character to rediscover the spirit and reason to continue living. Unlike the first short story, the sorrow experienced by Ukimachi is not a tragedy but a fleeting phase of life—one in which humans will experience sorrow followed by happiness. With these two distinct narrative concepts, the use of these two short stories will foster diversity in BIPA instruction. In addition, pragmatically, the BIPA instruction investigated in this study is pragmatically directed toward Japanese students enrolled in the Indonesian literature program in Japan. Using short stories closely tied to their culture makes the learning process more relevant and contextual.

1. “Japanese-ness”

This section aims to discuss the significance of the two short stories from a linguistic perspective, a key element in sociocultural theory. In this context, the author proposes the concept of “Japanese-ness” to denote linguistic units in the short stories that referentially depict it. Based on the summary above, both short stories are distinctly Japanese without resorting to caricatured depictions of Japan, such as cherry blossom trees, Mount Fuji, or the rising sun. What defines this Japanese-ness lies in the characters—both human and feline—who linguistically use Japanese names. The same applies to the inclusion of place names traceable to Japan, such as *Shinto* shrines, *Kyushu*, and *Tsuruga*. There are also historical periods, such as the Edo and Showa eras. This demonstrates that the author does not create an imaginary setting (in the sense that it does not exist in reality), but rather one that truly exists within Japan's landscape.

“Japanese-style language” is also constructed by the author through the use of Japanese terms and the addition of definitions or information in footnotes. The terms found in both short stories include, among others, (1) *torii*— “a Shinto shrine gate that serves as a boundary between the real world and the supernatural world”—in the first short story, and (2) *kawaii*— “cute”—in the second short story. This underscores that the inclusion of footnotes is not due to *the untranslatability* of these terms into the target language, but rather to the author's deliberate and authoritative use of Japanese terms to authentically evoke a Japanese atmosphere. This aligns with Jiang's (2015) view that claims of *untranslatability* in the practice of using footnotes are invalid. He argues that footnotes serve as a valuable tool in translation by allowing translators to supply cultural and contextual details that help readers interpret the text more accurately. This study agrees with him that the information in footnotes provides contextual and cultural context that supports reading, understanding, and interpretation. However, unlike Jiang's reference to “*for translation*,” the issue is that these two short stories are not translations. They were generally written in Indonesian by Indonesians who have absorbed or studied Japanese culture. This study argues that the Japanese terms and their accompanying footnotes are intended to emphasize that these short stories genuinely contain Japanese elements.

It is important to emphasize that identifying these Japanese elements—whether they are words or phrases—does not mean extracting and isolating these linguistic units from the short stories. After all, these linguistic units constitute small contexts that help shape the overall narrative context, which makes the two short stories complete works of literature in terms of narrative. Thus, these Japanese elements also hold narrative significance. For further analysis, consider the following two excerpts,

First, with a sense of unease, he buried the body in a clump of bushes near the *kusu no ki* tree, not far from his room (Hananto, 2023).

“Your cat is so *kawaii*, Uchimaki-san. I've been coming here a lot just to watch your cat—sorry about that.” (Hananto, 2023)

Bal (2025) defines narrative as a description of how narrative texts are constructed. The first excerpt shows that the *kusu no ki* tree plays a crucial role in shaping the events as one of the elements of the narrative text. The tree's presence creates a space that allows the character to act and achieve his goal, namely burying the corpse. Meanwhile, the second excerpt features a speech act or direct speech from a character commenting on Uchimaki's cat. The adjective *kawaii* plays a crucial role because it enables the character to observe, describe, and comment on the cat or object. This constitutes a form of focalization between the observer and the observed (see Bal, 2025). This further analysis demonstrates that Japanese-style expressions are not merely linguistic accommodations but actually serve as the shapers of the story's overall context.

2. Cultural Sentiment in Two Short Stories: A Japanese Perspective

This section discusses the significance of the two short stories in terms of the sociocultural content they represent. Based on the summaries, these two short stories are actually relatively simple. This is evident from the narrative structure, which features few characters and minimal conflict. There is almost no open or direct conflict among the characters. The Young Master regrets his actions that led to a woman's death; Ukimachi loses her way following her parents' death and eventually rediscovers her will to live after meeting the cat, Kuro. These plot points reveal that the conflict is built within the characters psychologically by contrasting past actions or events with the present (loss and regret); in some short stories, this is accompanied by a resolution in the form of a renewed spirit to continue living. This nearly identical narrative structure indicates that the author constructs conflict centered on the characters themselves, making both short stories equally representative of the culture of emotion as a sociocultural aspect of Japanese society.

This study posits that the similarities between the two are not a mere coincidence. This appears to reveal patterns and phenomena that can only be constructed if the author recognizes and understands the

culture of emotions from a Japanese perspective. These similarities clearly indicate that the author recognizes and understands this. In literary works concerning emotions and feelings, individuals immersed in the same cultural context are exposed to shared practices and meanings, thereby generating similar emotional patterns (De Leersnyder et al., 2020). The characters *Tuan Muda* (young master) and Ukimachi are Japanese people living within the Japanese landscape, culture, and traditions; it is therefore reasonable to conclude that they share an emotional culture of loss, regret, and the rediscovery of life. As Kawahara et al. (2021) state, it is important to pay attention to the cultural context in which these feelings occur or are formed. This is elaborated below.

Regret is a common negative emotion that arises when someone feels they have not worked hard enough or have harmed someone (Komiya et al., 2011). In their study comparing expressions of regret between Japanese and American respondents, Komiya et al. (2011) found that Japanese respondents tend to regret their actions rather than their inaction in relation to others (interpersonal relationships) more than American respondents do. In other words, the culture of regret in Japanese society is grounded in interpersonal relationships. This is also consistent with the findings of Kitayama et al. (2000), who state that Japanese society is indeed based on interpersonal dependence and involvement. This reality is clearly evident in the short story "A Cat in Rashomon," as seen in this excerpt.

...the woman breathed her last. She died in fear. The demon dwelling within the Young Master smiled contentedly and then left him; he became the suspect. Only then did the Young Master realize his mistake and regret his foolishness (Hananto, 2023).

In the first excerpt, the narrator explicitly shows how the Young Master realized his mistake of being unable to control his desire to have sex with the woman. Only after his desire was fulfilled—leading to the woman's death—did he realize the foolishness of his actions, which satisfied him while simultaneously causing another's death. This narrative also affirms the culture of remorse in Japan, as articulated by Komiya et al. (2011) and Kitayama et al. (2000), who emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships. In this case, the Young Master's regret extends not only to himself but also to the other person whose life was lost as a result of his actions. In narratological theory, relationships between characters can manifest in various patterns, one of which is that of the powerful and the recipient (Bal, 2025). In this case, the Young Master has the power to fulfill his desires. The title *Tuan* indicates that this character holds a higher social rank than the woman, creating an intersection between gender and social status. The woman is the recipient of this power. However, this power is negative in nature; rather than being empowering, it manifests as domination in the form of a desire to force her into sexual relations.

Zhang et al. (2021) state that regret reflects the gap between a person's actual condition—what has actually occurred—and their ideal condition—what should have been. Ideally, the Young Master should have been able to control his desires so as not to commit a foolish act that took someone's life. However, by the end of the short story, this gap remains unresolved, ultimately preventing interpersonal relationships from ever truly being restored, leaving only regret. In "The Cat and the Mushroom in the Cup," the actor's departure indeed evokes a sense of loss in the main character. This means that interpersonal relationships with those who are no longer present can never happen again. However, the main character succeeds in building interpersonal relationships with the other actors, preventing the culture of regret and loss from completely taking over. This is evident in the excerpt below.

Nevertheless, from time to time, Uchimaki realized that Kuro's presence at home made him happy over small things and lifted the burden of memories of his parents. Uchimaki felt he had become stronger and more open. One day, Eguchi arrived with someone else. Kanazawa, an intern editor who also loved cats (Hananto, 2023).

To illustrate the culture of loss, it is helpful to first discuss perceptions of death in Japanese culture. Japanese society, according to Valentine (2010), offers various forms of response to the impact of death that seek to reconcile the living, the deceased, and the grief of those left behind. Meanwhile, Shinya (2004) states that the performance of funeral rites, as a ritual upon death, symbolizes the journey to the next world—a process of transition. This aligns with findings that death is a transitional moment leading to life after death (Sagara-Rosemeyer & Davies, 2007). It is this understanding that ultimately makes death, though sorrowful and evoking a sense of loss, something to be accepted. In the short story "The Cat and the Mushroom in the Cup," Ukimachi visits the graves of his parents and brings flowers for them. Here, death is addressed traditionally through burial as a transitional phase, so that they—according to belief—may move on to the next world. The visit and the flowers serve as a means to stay connected with his deceased parents while also serving as a way to cope with the overwhelming sense of loss that consumes Ukimachi.

Based on the above discussion, short stories that represent a culture of regret and those that represent a culture of loss and rediscovery of spirit both focus on interpersonal relationships. This aligns with the

findings of Komiya et al. (2011) and Kitayama et al. (2000), who note that Japanese society tends to prioritize engagement and interpersonal relationships. Within this sociocultural analysis, this study also emphasizes that these relationships are not singular or monolithic but diverse, encompassing both positive and negative emotions, as well as experiences of regret or loss and rediscovery. In a broader context, through an analysis of Japanese-ness in both short stories, this study underscores the view of Gutiérrez & Neville (2026) that language learning must be connected to the world of Japanese-speaking culture. Borrowing the terminology of Gass & Selinker (2008) and Ortega (2009), this world of Japanese-speaking culture serves as the social context that connects learners to their native language and culture during the process of learning Indonesian.

The Use of Two Short Stories in BIPA Instruction

This section determines the proficiency levels of the learners targeted for BIPA instruction. Suharsono (2021) states that BIPA learners are categorized into pre-beginner and beginner (A1 and A2), pre-intermediate and intermediate (B1 and B2), and pre-advanced and advanced (C1 and C2) levels. This study determined that the instruction is designed for learners at the C2 level. The characteristics of this advanced level are: (1) understanding read texts fluently, (2) being able to summarize information from spoken or written sources, (3) being able to construct and present arguments coherently, (4) the ability to express oneself clearly, fluently, and accurately, and (5) the ability to distinguish meanings in complex situations (Suharsono, 2021). Although both short stories have relatively simple plots and straightforward conflict development, they are quite complex, lengthy, and challenging texts. Based on this fact, the learners suitable as the target audience for this instructional design are C2 learners, given their ability to use the Indonesian language—both orally and in writing—well, fluently, and effectively.

Instructional Design

This study is based on the four characteristics of advanced-level learners as outlined by Suharsono (2021). At TUFS, C2 learners refer to those enrolled in the Indonesian Literature 2 course. There are seven learners in the class. This learning program is designed to take place over three sessions. Each session lasts 80 minutes. This timeframe was determined based on the fact that the students are all Japanese and are therefore familiar with Japanese culture as depicted in the two short stories. However, this study does not negate the fact that each person's literary experience is unique; hence, teachers must still guide the students, introducing them to discussions and icebreakers before delving into the two short stories. The new instructional design is a concept or proposal, so the timing is flexible and can be adapted to the context of other institutions if this proposal is piloted elsewhere.

Each session is designed to cover the four core competencies learners must study and master: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In each session, the learning process is based on the concept of *"learning by design,"* as outlined by Zapata (2022) and supported by Bobkina & Stefanova (2016). These four components encompass how learners experience, conceptualize, analyze, and apply. This approach positions students as active participants in the learning process, thereby increasing their motivation to learn a language (Habók & Magyar, 2020).

1. First Session

The first session is intended to hone learners' ability to understand long texts and identify implied meanings. In particular, the four components expected to be achieved are understanding various forms of communication (listening), actively participating in diverse conversations (speaking), reading all forms of written language without difficulty (reading), and writing clear texts with fluent language (writing) (Suharsono, 2021).

First, since this is the first session, it is important for the teacher not to immediately present literary works as the learning medium. Instead, the teacher should first provide an introductory explanation that offers a general overview and guidance on what will be studied. The previous discussion underscored that the two short stories in the collection "Grandfather in Takamoto's Cats" represent interpersonal relationships that encompass the culture of emotions. Thus, the teacher begins the class by stating that the lesson will focus on emotions and feelings. At this stage, the teacher serves as both a facilitator and an initiator, delivering a brief lecture on feelings in daily life while students listen attentively. The teacher also briefly touches on feelings of regret and loss, as depicted in the two short stories. This step takes approximately 10 minutes. Next, the teacher can ask a few simple questions to spark a dialogue (speaking), such as "Have you ever felt regret?" If so, why did that regret occur? Have you ever felt a sense of loss? Why did that happen? How did you come to terms with that feeling of loss? After the students respond, the teacher can ask follow-up questions to encourage a more active and responsive dialogue in the classroom. Teachers need to plan these kinds of prompt questions to encourage critical thinking and the development of ideas (Haile et al., 2024), as well as to foster interpersonal interaction (Saville-Troike, 2012). Questions

are an important means of interaction, yet they are often overlooked in language learning and testing (Dai, 2024).

Second, upon entering the basic reading competency stage, the teacher distributes the short stories among the seven learners, with three learners receiving “A Cat in Rashomon” and the other four receiving “The Cat and the Mushroom in the Cup,” or vice versa. At this stage, open instruction (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016) occurs, with the teacher directing students to read the short stories they have received individually. This approach aims to engage students with literary works and ensure that learning is not teacher-centered (Wahyuni et al., 2025). Given that these two short stories are relatively short for a 13 x 19 cm short story collection—with an average of 8–14 pages—the time allocated for reading the stories is 15–20 minutes, including time for comprehension. As a guide to understanding, the teacher instructs them to grasp the characters’ feelings in the short stories. Additionally, the implicit meanings of the short stories, in relation to these feelings, guide the learners. With this guidance, comprehension and interpretation will not stray aimlessly but will align with the learning topic. Assignment form can be seen in Figure 1.

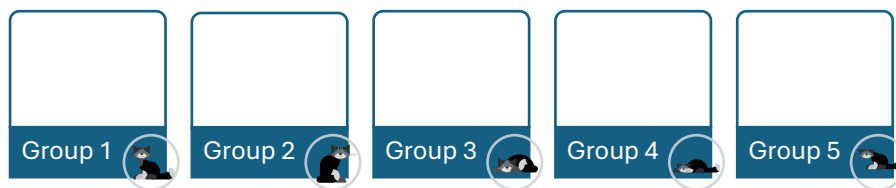


Fig. 1. Assignment Form

Third, after reading a long, complex short story, the next competency to be assessed is writing. This is done by assigning a task in which learners *analyze* their impressions of their respective short stories in relation to emotions. Each person writes down their findings. For example, a learner assigned the short story “A Cat in Rashomon” () might present five elements: *guilt*, *regret*, *self-awareness*, *fear*, and *malice*. This also constitutes a step in critical framing, as they are guided to express their reflections based on the short story they have read (see Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016). This step takes approximately 15 minutes, followed by 5 minutes for instructor *feedback*.

Fourth, learners are given a final assignment for the session, in which each learner constructs two compound sentences using the words or phrases on the assignment sheet. This assignment aims to practice their writing skills, specifically in constructing complex and compound-complex sentences. The sentences do not have to contain the words they wrote verbatim, but they can be modified as long as the sentences still reflect the words they wrote. For example, the word “*fear*” can be transformed into “*fear*” depending on the sentence they wish to write. This is an individual assignment designed to stimulate their ability to *conceptualize* ideas from simple language (words/phrases) into more complex language (compound sentences). This also involves *applying* the meaning they have comprehended from the short stories to new sentences that reflect their information processing and reception of those stories. Finally, in the last 10 minutes, the instructor provides general, concluding feedback to wrap up the session. In this session, the instructor also assigns additional homework outside of class hours so that learners can reflect on whether they have any experiences related to the two short stories. Which short story is most closely related to that experience? This reflection will serve as learning material for the next session. The reflection should be typed on one A4 page with 1.5-line spacing.

Although the stages above appear to demand learners’ language production skills, they are fundamentally inseparable from literary interpretation. When learners form impressions and construct sentences, they naturally draw upon their reading of the two short stories. This aligns with Hall’s (2005) concept of the communicative approach, as it involves a negotiation of meaning between learners and literary works. Thus, these two short stories are not static texts but dynamic objects that learners can interpret freely and responsibly while remaining attentive to the theme of emotion. This is because this theme aligns with the literary analysis discussed earlier. This differs from the research by Cahyo et al. (2024), which merely uses literature as a medium to study seven cultural elements, failing to create a dialogue of meaning between the work and the learner. The form of learning proposed by this study, on the other hand, encourages interpretation and produces new texts as a form of literary appreciation. The result is the creation of new texts that are, in essence, also a form of linguistic art. This aligns with Luukka’s (2023) view that literature can be compared to other art forms.

2. Second Session

The second session is designed to hone the learners’ ability to express ideas fluently and spontaneously. Specifically, they should be able to comprehend speech delivered in various accents (listening), overcome difficulties in summarizing information (speaking), use facts to draw conclusions

(reading), and write conclusions clearly and in a structured manner (writing) (Suharsono, 2021). In this session, the learning medium is the reflection assignment from the previous week's meeting. Calafato & Hunstadbråten (2025) note that literary works can be understood in different ways, which may not occur to one when the work is merely read. Based on this idea, the reflection assignment serves as a means for learners to experiment with interpretation and further hone their language skills outside the classroom. Reflections linked to personal experiences ensure that learning is not based solely on classroom instruction but is also supported by informal experiences.

First, the teacher begins the class by presenting a prompt about the previous session's assignment. To energize the classroom atmosphere, the teacher can ask for volunteers or select one or two learners to briefly share their relevant personal reflections on one of the short stories. Next, the teacher maps and groups the learners based on the short stories they consider relevant. *Second*, the learners are asked to read the writings of other learners (reading). Here, the study posits that situated practice is not only related to individual experiences but also to those of other learners. Thus, a process of sharing (*sharing*) occurs, making the *experiencing* process more diverse and complex as it involves others. Within 25 minutes, each learner is also asked to conduct a simple interview with the person whose writing they read. This step aims to develop learners' ability to speak in simple dialogues, exchange and share answers or information, and listen to others' conversations. Ivey (2023) states that an interview is an interpretive activity. Thus, these speaking and listening activities reflect open-ended instructions and critical framing that encourage learners to use language analytically to ask and answer questions.

In the final 35 minutes, the instructor asked the students to report on the results of their interviews in a one-page (1.5-spaced) essay that included conclusions drawn from the facts they had gathered during the interviews. Referring to Ivey's (2023) view above, an interview is not merely a reciprocal question-and-answer activity, but a continuous interpretive process between the interviewer and the interviewee. In this process, a reciprocal act of meaning-making occurs. In other words, a practice of *analysis* is formed—not merely to record the interview results but to report them systematically, clearly, and structurally, both in terms of language and content. This writing serves as a learning tool to develop writing competence and to conceptualize and apply the results of the interview activity. Referring to the four components identified by Bobkina & Stefanova (2016), this aims to produce a mode of representation in the form of another text, which enriches the interpretation of the two short stories used in the learning process. Furthermore, before ending the class, the instructor asked the learners to prepare a slide presentation for the next meeting.

Conducting interviews and documenting the results is not merely a form of language instruction aimed at performing specific actions (Calafato, 2024), but also an exercise in literary appreciation. While the previous stage focused on negotiating meaning through the creation of new texts based on interpretations of literary works, this stage guides learners toward literary reception. The interview method allows learners to share and receive others' interpretations—how these two short stories are received and perceived by each individual, and how each of them exchanges interpretations with others. Leibrandt (2022) argues that aesthetic perception encompasses not only the practice of understanding texts but also the critical examination of reality in relation to literary works. This corresponds with Bobkina & Stefanova's (2016) concept of reception in language learning. Therefore, from a pedagogical perspective, this stage facilitates the refinement and training of multi-layered critical thinking, in which each student first interprets the short stories, then analyzes others' interpretations, and finally reports their findings in written form. Unlike previous studies (Azizah et al., 2022; Muzaki et al., 2025), which unquestioningly emphasized exposure to local culture, this study focuses on the capacity and critical thinking skills of learners studying Indonesian through short stories with Japanese cultural elements. Thus, Japanese culture for these Japanese learners is not intended to be simply romanticized but is used as a medium for critical learning.

3. Third Session

This session is designed to enable learners to communicate arguments and present data clearly and coherently. The details include (1) understanding the reconstruction of arguments and data in the presentation, (2) delivering the presentation clearly and fluently, (3) interpreting, responding to, and evaluating, and (4) writing up the reconstruction results in the form of a report (Suharsono, 2021). This session can be described as a sort of "final project" for BIPA learning based on short stories about Japanese culture. This project strongly embodies the component described by Bobkina & Stefanova (2016), namely the practice of transforming one mode into another. The use of *PowerPoint* as visual media means the delivery occurs not only verbally but also visually. In this project, listening and speaking competencies are indeed prioritized. However, writing practice actually occurs. According to Tam (2026), in multimedia learning, active processing occurs as learners select, organize, and integrate relevant information.

To begin the class within 15 minutes, the instructor can open the session and provide an introduction to kickstart the presentation. The instructor can ask what challenges they faced in preparing the

presentation and what they learned during the project's development. The instructor also instructs students to ask questions of peers who have presented their assignments. To ensure fairness, the arrangement is for one student to ask another. The instruction to ask questions not only energizes the classroom atmosphere but also fosters a culture of peer assessment. It trains them to interpret, provide feedback on, and critically and objectively evaluate their peers' work. Kim (2014) states that well-designed peer assessment can enhance their ability to take responsibility and provide professional evaluations. Within the allotted time—approximately 65 minutes—students take turns presenting their worksheets and receiving feedback from peers. This study argues that this presentation project simultaneously trains them to share their own experiences, receive and analyze information from others' experiences, and integrate these insights. Furthermore, the information they have received is conceptualized and presented systematically for effective delivery in Indonesian. Similarly, this practice positions them to explore their experiences and compare them with others' analytically and critically, which is subsequently presented as a multimedia slide presentation.

4. Evaluation and Reflection

After completing the learning process over three sessions, the instructor also distributes a feedback form to serve as the basis for evaluating learning. This evaluation is the final stage of the learning sequence, assessing the extent to which learners accept the learning process, as well as the strengths to maintain and the weaknesses to address. Thus, future learning sessions can be better structured based on the results of this evaluation. This evaluation is conducted outside of class hours via communication channels, such as email or a WhatsApp group, as a series of short questions that allow learners to express their aspirations, experiences, perspectives, and feedback. Some of these questions are as follows.

1. What is your opinion of the two short stories used and their application during the learning process?
2. Do you think this literature-based learning is effective? Explain the reasons behind your opinion.
3. What advantages do you perceive in this literature-based learning?
4. What are the shortcomings you perceive in this literature-based learning?
5. What aspects of this literature-based learning need improvement?

The evaluation stage helps determine the effectiveness of literature-based learning by gathering learners' perspectives, experiences, and feedback after completing the three-session learning process. Through a series of reflective questions distributed via online communication platforms, learners are encouraged to assess the relevance of the selected short stories, the effectiveness of the instructional approach, its perceived strengths and weaknesses, and areas requiring improvement. The feedback collected not only provides valuable insights into learners' acceptance and engagement with the learning process but also serves as an essential foundation for refining future instructional practices. Consequently, this evaluation ensures the continuous development and improvement of literature-based learning to better meet learners' needs and learning objectives. In addition, evaluation is also useful for understanding learners' attitudes toward the Indonesian language. As Thomas & Wareing (2007) noted, attitudes toward language have a number of implications. These implications can be identified from the evaluations conducted.

Thus, after conducting both literary analysis and instructional design analysis, this study has contributed to the development of a BIPA instructional design based on Indonesian literary works. Meanwhile, the selected literary works are not limited to local and national contexts, but also present cross-national and cross-cultural perspectives. This study recognizes that Indonesian language instruction based on Indonesian literary works with Japanese themes is proposed for Japanese native speakers. However, this study does not intend to replace previous research that has largely relied on Indonesian literary works centered on local culture. Rather, this study complements such research by demonstrating that Indonesian literature is thematically diverse, including representations of other countries' cultures. Given this complementary nature, this design can certainly be adapted and applied in learning contexts with diverse learner backgrounds—not limited solely to Japanese learners. In this case, the design is flexible but must still be adapted to the participants' backgrounds. In the context of a heterogeneous group of learners, instructors must be prepared to bridge the cultural depictions in literary works, the Indonesian language, and the learners' own cultures. This is crucial to ensure that the instructional design helps students achieve their learning objectives, rather than creating a cultural burden that actually hinders their learning of the Indonesian language.

After conducting both literary and pedagogical analyses, this study acknowledges its limitation in that it is confined to the formulation, planning, and proposal of a learning design. In other words, this study has not yet reached the stage of implementation and validity testing to determine the extent to which this design is feasible, appropriate, and potentially applicable, as well as to identify its accompanying limitations. Therefore, future research may focus on applied studies that examine the implementation and

evaluate this instructional design. In this way, the literary and pedagogical analyses presented in this study may provide further possibilities for developing BIPA instruction based on literary works.

Conclusion

This study has addressed the significance of the two short stories in the collection of “Grandfather in Takamoto’s Cats” and their use in BIPA instruction. The short stories “A Cat in Rashomon” and “The Cat and the Mushroom in the Cup” demonstrate significant Japanese cultural elements, evident in the linguistic exploration and representation of sociocultural aspects. This study found that both literary works represent a culture of regret and loss, which in Japanese society places great emphasis on interpersonal involvement and relationships. This significance serves as the rationale for selecting the short stories using a text-based approach and for their subsequent use in instruction. This study further developed a preliminary learning plan and its practical design across three sessions. The learning activities were designed to foster speaking, listening, reading, and writing competencies while addressing aspects of experience, conceptualization, analysis, and application. The results of this study show that this instructional design treats the two short stories not as static texts but as dynamic texts that can be interpreted, perceived, and analyzed experimentally, integrating learners’ experiences and thereby generating new texts through writing and speaking. Thus, the two short stories about Japanese culture, which represent this culture, are appropriate for use in BIPA instruction due to their significance and their role in promoting Indonesian language proficiency.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : Rudi Ekasiswanto was responsible for the entire research project. He also led the writing of the manuscript and collaborated with other authors. Indri Kustantinah, David Moeljadi, and Nicholaas Warouw revised the manuscript. The four authors approved the final manuscript.
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