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Anxiety Experienced by Students Learning Japanese at Job Training Institute

Muhammad Syafiq²⁷ and Arianty Visiaty²⁸

Abstract

For Indonesian internship candidates who want to work in Japan, language skills are certainly a key focus. These skills are not only an administrative requirement, but also essential for adapting to the Japanese work environment and culture, which are very different from those in Indonesia. However, in the process, many of them experience anxiety due to the demand to master Japanese in a short period of time and the knowledge that they will be required to communicate in Japanese at their workplace in Japan. This study aims to identify and analyze the forms of anxiety experienced by learners at the Job Training Institute (LPK) during the Japanese language learning process in the classroom. This study uses a survey method with a research instrument in the form of a questionnaire based on the Japanese Language Anxiety Scale In Class (JLAS-IN) (Motoda, 2000). The questionnaire was given to 69 respondents who were prospective interns studying Japanese at LPK. In addition to the questionnaire, follow-up interviews were conducted with 5 respondents. The results of this study indicate that learners at LPK do not feel anxious when learning Japanese. This study is expected to contribute to the field of language teaching, particularly in understanding the anxiety experienced by prospective Indonesian Japanese language trainees at LPK, as well as providing evaluation material for LPK in improving the effectiveness of Japanese language training.

Keywords: *Anxiety, LPK (Job Training Institute), trainees, Japanese Language Anxiety Scale (JLAS-IN), Japanese language learning*

²⁷ Affiliation: Al Azhar University Indonesia

Email address: muh.syafiq05@gmail.com

²⁸ Affiliation: Al Azhar University Indonesia

Email address: ariantyvisiaty@uai.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Currently, learning foreign languages is important for the younger generation because foreign languages not only serve as a means of communication, but also increase opportunities for employment both at home and abroad. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Migrant Worker Protection (2025), the number of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) placed in January 2023 was 24,015 and in January 2024 was 27,211, while in January 2025 the number decreased to 25,643. Based on this data, it can be seen that the placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers in January 2025 decreased from January 2024, but still showed an increase compared to January 2023. There are five countries that are the main destinations for Indonesian migrant workers in January 2025, with Malaysia in first place with 8,014 workers, followed by Hong Kong (7,245), Taiwan (5,516), Singapore (1,161), and Japan (1,122).

In order to work in Japan, there are several things that prospective workers must learn, including language proficiency and the skills required in the workplace. This is where the Job Training Institute (LPK) plays a role. According to the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia (2023), the LPK is an agency or organization that is authorized to conduct job training, either as a government or private institution. The duties of LPKs are outlined in the Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia (2016) in Ministerial Regulation No. 17 of 2016, which states that: Job training is a series of activities to provide, acquire, improve, and develop work competencies, productivity, discipline, attitude, and work ethic at a certain level of skill and expertise in accordance with the level and qualifications of the position or job. In accordance with this Ministerial Regulation, LPKs not only focus on work competencies but also train attitudes and work ethic. This also applies to LPKs that train prospective workers to work in Japan. Prospective workers trained at LPKs not only learn the Japanese language but also Japanese work culture. For prospective workers who will work in Japan, language skills are very important because they greatly affect the smooth running of work in the workplace. However, because Japanese has its own uniqueness compared to Indonesian, it is not easy for Indonesian learners of Japanese to learn and master it. On the other hand, the demand to master Japanese in a short period of time and the knowledge that they will be required to communicate directly in Japanese at work causes prospective workers to experience a high possibility of anxiety.

Merriam Webster defines anxiety as a feeling of uneasiness or restlessness due to thinking about bad things that may or may not happen (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Meanwhile, according to Zeidner & Matthews (2011), anxiety is a condition in which a person feels worried and even afraid. For people who experience anxiety, this can happen because of small things that may not be a problem for other people. Not only that, Zeidner & Matthews (2011) also say that anxiety is basically a person's reaction to external pressure, even though sometimes the reaction is excessive. This is what causes prospective employees who are learning Japanese at LPK and experiencing anxiety to be unable to focus on their studies because they are more preoccupied with their anxiety. This anxiety is not only a minor distraction, but it can also destroy the entire learning process. As stated by Krashen (1981), one of the factors that makes it difficult for people to learn a language, or even gain anything from the language learning process, is having high anxiety.

The anxiety experienced by learners at LPK when learning the language can be categorized as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language anxiety is not just ordinary anxiety felt by people, but foreign language anxiety has its own characteristics that specifically arise when learning a foreign language. In the case of Japanese language learners at LPK, FLA can be a serious obstacle that disrupts concentration, reduces motivation, and worsens their ability to absorb learning material optimally.

There have been many studies discussing anxiety in learning foreign languages in the classroom, for example, Astriyanti et al. (2023) who researched the anxiety levels of English learners based on linguistics. In this study, it was found that English learners had moderate anxiety levels with the highest speaking skills. On the other hand, learning Japanese is different because Japanese has its

own rules, which present different difficulties, as in the study by Istiqomah et al. (2015), which examined the difficulties of learning Japanese at a vocational school in Semarang and found that the highest level of difficulty was grammar. Meanwhile, another study related to anxiety in using Japanese is a study on the anxiety of Indonesian workers by Azzahra & Visiaty (2025). Azzahra & Visiaty (2025) researched the anxiety experienced by Indonesian workers in Japan, meaning anxiety felt outside the classroom. The results of this study show that the anxiety most felt by Indonesian workers is when they have to interact with Japanese people directly without supervision and are required to do so professionally. Research on the anxiety felt by Indonesian learners of Japanese in the classroom, especially at LPK, has never been conducted. Therefore, this study focuses on the anxiety felt by Indonesian learners of Japanese who study Japanese at LPK. Through this study, it is hoped that it can contribute to providing an overview to LPK regarding the anxiety felt by Indonesian learners of Japanese, and contribute to improving Japanese language skills through Japanese language learning in a comfortable and enjoyable classroom.

RESEARCH METHODS

To obtain data, this study used a quantitative and qualitative approach (mixed methods) with survey and interview research methods. The respondents of this study were 69 Japanese language learners studying Japanese at a Job Training Institute (LPK). Meanwhile, five respondents who had completed the questionnaire were selected for interviews. The research instrument was a Likert scale questionnaire with four options as a data collection tool (1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Agree, 4. Strongly agree). There were 23 questions in this questionnaire. These questions refer to the JLAS (Japanese Language Anxiety Scale) created by Motoda (2000), specifically the JLAS-IN (Japanese Language Anxiety Scale In Class), which was adapted to the context and needs of the study to describe the level of anxiety felt by Japanese language learners at the LPK.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety

Anxiety, according to Zeidner & Matthews (2011), is a condition in which a person experiences uneasiness, with uncertainty being the cause of anxiety. This can occur suddenly and make a person feel uneasy even though the situation may not necessarily be dangerous. In addition, López-Ibor (1987) states that anxiety is a reaction that arises when one feels threatened. It typically occurs due to rapid changes or conditions that impose mental stress, such as stressful life situations. Anxiety also arises when learning a foreign language. As stated by Young (1991), there are at least six factors that cause anxiety among foreign language learners, namely 1. personal and social relationship problems, 2. learners' beliefs about the language learning process, 3. the teacher's approach to teaching language, 4. interaction between teachers and learners, 5. learning activities in the classroom, 6. tests in language learning. Within reasonable limits, anxiety can be a natural human mechanism for remaining alert, but if it continues to arise uncontrollably, anxiety can have a negative impact on a person's life. This condition can arise in any situation, even when learning a foreign language, where there are many factors that influence the emergence of anxiety.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Anxiety in foreign language learning, or Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), is a type of anxiety that arises specifically when a person is learning or using a foreign language. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), FLA is not a common form of anxiety, but rather a unique form of anxiety because it involves self-perception, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors that are directly related to the language learning situation in the classroom. MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) add that FLA often arises in learners because they already have negative thoughts, which cause anxiety, panic, and lack of focus that affect their performance. Thus, the striking difference between ordinary anxiety and FLA lies in the context

in which it occurs. Anxiety in the classroom is general and can occur in all subjects, while FLA only arises in the context of foreign language learning and is closely related to language communication skills.

Japanese Language Anxiety Scale

Motoda (2000) explains that the Japanese Language Anxiety Scale (JLAS) is designed to measure the level of anxiety experienced by Japanese language learners. The JLAS itself is divided into two parts, namely the Japanese Language Anxiety Scale In Class (JLAS-IN), which focuses on anxiety in classroom learning situations, and the Japanese Language Anxiety Scale Out Class (JLAS-OUT), which measures anxiety in the use of Japanese outside the classroom environment.

In the JLAS-IN section, Motoda (2000) further divides the types of questions into three parts, namely:

- a. Anxiety in Speaking Activities (発話活動における緊張), speaking directly in Japanese, especially in formal settings such as classrooms, is often a source of great pressure for learners. The fear of making pronunciation mistakes, not being able to find the right words, and not being able to express opinions or ideas fluently can trigger high levels of anxiety.
- b. Anxiety Toward Uncertain Situations (状況把握の不確かさに対する不安), refers to feelings of uncertainty, confusion, or not understanding the context of the learning process, including what the teacher is saying in class. They do not fully understand what is happening or do not know what they should do.
- c. Anxiety Toward Japanese Language Ability (日本語力に対する心配), reflects feelings of embarrassment, inferiority, and fear of negative judgment from others, especially teachers or classmates, due to Japanese language skills that are perceived as not good enough. Even when they actually have sufficient understanding. This lack of confidence arises because they feel that the Japanese they use is still incorrect, unnatural, or grammatically incorrect, and they worry that these mistakes will make them look bad in the eyes of others.

RESULT

Anxiety in Speaking Activities

Based on the results of questionnaire processing using descriptive statistical analysis, the following results were obtained. Anxiety in Speaking Activities based on the questionnaire results shown in Table 1 below, judging from the overall mean (mean=2.11), it is known that the majority of the 69 respondents disagreed with the statements related to anxiety in speaking activities (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9). This shows that most respondents did not feel anxiety when speaking.

Among all statements, the mean for statement P4 (I feel anxious when speaking Japanese loudly in class.) showed a tendency to strongly disagree, mean=1.72. This means that respondents were not very anxious when they had to speak loudly in class. This is reinforced by the statements of MU and IS in the interview, who stated that they did not feel anxious because they understood that this was a rule at the LPK and were already accustomed to it.

(1)

MU: “**We are required to speak loudly here.** Actually, there is a purpose behind it, it helps us memorize kotoba and bunpou more easily. For example, when we create reibun, we must present them loudly. There’s a clear reason for that, so I think it’s normal.”

(2)

IS: “For me, we are required to speak loudly here so that our message becomes clear and can be properly conveyed when we speak. If we speak softly, the listener might not understand what we’re

trying to say. So, **we are trained to speak loudly to ensure that our message is delivered clearly to the listener.**"

In MU's statement, it can be seen that MU feels that speaking loudly is something that must be done, so they do not feel it is a problem. Meanwhile, IS states that speaking loudly is not a problem because it has become a habit at LPK. This shows that low anxiety levels enable learners to speak more clearly and loudly. Conversely, individuals with high anxiety levels tend to speak softly or unsteadily. These findings are in line with the results of a literature review by Trajano et al. (2016), which states that high anxiety levels can affect a person's voice quality, causing vocal disorders and increasing voice-related symptoms.

This data also shows that respondents only tended to agree with statement P6 (I feel anxious in class when I cannot remember the Japanese words I usually know.) with a mean of 2.57. This shows that anxiety affects the fluency of language productivity, in this case when speaking. This is reinforced by (Horwitz et al., 1986), which states that anxiety can cause forgetfulness, one of which is forgetting vocabulary.

Based on the interview results, all five respondents confirmed that they often forget Japanese when they are anxious. One example is seen in the following statement by UU.

(3)

UU: "When I was sitting at my desk, I might have already memorized some parts, **but when I got in front of the class, I suddenly went blank and got confused about which part to say first.**"

In the above statement, it appears that the respondent forgot what he had memorized earlier because he was anxious. This is consistent with what Horwitz et al. (1986) said about anxiety causing forgetfulness.

However, from the overall results, it can be concluded that respondents did not feel tense when speaking. This may be due to the comfortable and relaxed classroom atmosphere. When the classroom atmosphere is comfortable and relaxed, it reduces and prevents learner anxiety. This is in line with the affective filter hypothesis. This hypothesis states that if the learners' affective filter is low, it will be easier for them to accept input and master the language (Krashen, 1982). The classroom atmosphere is inseparable from the teacher. As stated by MU during the interview, teachers influence the classroom atmosphere. In statement (4), MU said that the level of anxiety depends on how teachers teach in the classroom.

(4)

MU: "The level of anxiety also **depends on the teacher, because each teacher has a different way of teaching.**"

Table 1 Descriptive statistics related to anxiety in speaking activities

Anxiety in Speaking Activities				
No	Statement	N	MEAN	SD
P6	I feel anxious in class when I cannot remember the Japanese words I usually know.	69	2.57	.977
P3	I feel anxious when giving an oral presentation in Japanese in class.	69	2.36	.907
P5	I feel anxious that I might mishear Japanese in class.	69	2.26	.965

P8	I feel anxious when doing role-play in Japanese in class.	69	2.22	.855
P2	I usually feel anxious when speaking Japanese in class.	69	2.06	.765
P1	I feel anxious when I think I will be called on.	69	2.00	.857
P9	I feel anxious when suddenly being asked a question by the teacher.	69	1.96	.915
P7	I feel anxious when participating in a discussion in Japanese in class.	69	1.84	.760
P4	I feel anxious when speaking Japanese loudly in class.	69	1.72	.838
Average			2.11	.598

Anxiety Toward Uncertain Situations

The results of the questionnaire on anxiety about uncertainty (Table 2) show that the majority of respondents agreed with statements P10, P11, P12, P13, and P15, although there were still slight differences of opinion (mean=2.50). Statements P10, P11, P12, P13, and P15 all refer to situations of incomprehension, both incomprehension of content and incomprehension due to the speed of speech. This is in line with the statement by Sofyan & Mushrihah (2019), who say that learners often have difficulty understanding speech because teachers speak at a high speed and learners have limited vocabulary. When teachers continue to speak quickly, learners tend to feel anxious and have difficulty grasping or understanding the content of the message being conveyed. One example of anxiety seen in the interview data is the anxiety depicted in statement P10 (I feel anxious when the content of the Japanese lesson is difficult and I cannot understand it.) This can be seen in the following data (5). Data (5) shows that remaining silent and turning to a friend is a sign of UU's anxiety when he does not understand the teacher's explanation.

(5)

UU: " **It definitely happens**, for example when the teacher explains a bunpou topic and asks about it, but we still don't understand. When that happens, **we usually stay silent or, umm... look at our friends.**"

Regarding the element of uncertainty in the situation, there were also statements that the majority of respondents tended to disagree with, namely statements P14, P16, and P17. This means that learners do not feel anxious when the teacher does not understand the Japanese they are speaking (P14), when the teacher does not understand what they are asking (P16), and when there is a lot to learn (P17).

When comparing statements P10, P11, P12, P13, P15 and statements P14 and P16, it can be said that learners feel more anxious when understanding the language than when producing the language being learned. This is in line with research conducted by (Ran et al., 2022), which states that the highest level of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is experienced by students in the listening skill. The study shows that learners feel very anxious when listening to English, both inside and outside the classroom, with the highest average listening anxiety score compared to the other three skills (speaking, reading, and writing).

Regarding statement P17 (I feel anxious when I have to learn many things in Japanese class), learners tend not to feel anxious about the amount of things they have to learn. This is because learners try to manage their time and set priorities. As described in the concept of time management in the

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Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) by Oxford & Ehrman (1995), time management is one of the important factors that influence learning success, especially for adults such as LPK learners. With good time management skills, learners can study more efficiently and reduce the anxiety that arises from the many demands of learning, as seen in the statements by UU in data (6) and IS in data (7) below.

(6)

UU: “So, umm... There are many things we have to do here. For example, memorizing kotoba, preparing for tomorrow’s shiken, fukushuu previous lessons that we sometimes forget, because they might appear again in the next test. Then, we also have to memorize things like houkoku and others. Sometimes, it’s hard to decide which one to memorize first, **so we really have to manage our time carefully.**”

(7)

IS: “Maybe, umm... for that, **it’s all about time management. We have to prioritize the things that are most important first.** For example, we should probably memorize houkoku first, and then focus on memorizing kotoba afterward.”

Table 2 Descriptive statistics related to anxiety toward uncertain situations

Anxiety Toward Uncertain Situations				
No	Statement	N	MEAN	SD
P13	I feel anxious when I cannot follow the speed of Japanese in an audio recording.	69	2.86	.912
P11	I feel anxious when the teacher speaks Japanese too fast.	69	2.78	.820
P12	I feel anxious when I cannot keep up with the pace of the Japanese lesson.	69	2.68	.915
P15	I feel anxious when I do not understand Japanese in a recording.	69	2.64	.923
P10	I feel anxious when the content of the Japanese lesson is difficult and I cannot understand it.	69	2.59	.913
P14	I feel anxious when the teacher does not understand my Japanese.	69	2.26	1.024
P16	I feel anxious when my question is not conveyed properly to the teacher.	69	2.23	.926
P17	I feel anxious when I have to learn too many things in the Japanese lesson.	69	1.90	.894
Average			2.50	.672

Anxiety Toward Japanese Language Ability

Based on the overall survey results, in terms of anxiety about Japanese language ability, it shows that most respondents do not feel anxious or afraid about their Japanese language ability, as can be seen from the overall mean (mean=2.11).

From the statements with “not anxious” answers above, it can be seen that learners are not anxious about other people's views of their language skills (P18, P19, P20, P23), nor are they anxious about their own ability to learn Japanese (P22).

Among the respondents' answers related to language ability, statement P18 (I feel **anxious** that other students will laugh at me when I speak Japanese.) is a statement with a tendency to strongly disagree (mean=1.70). This can be seen in the MU statement in data (6) and the IS statement in data (7), which state that they do not feel anxious about being laughed at by their classmates.

(8)

MU: “**Sometimes it actually becomes a joke.** Like, ‘**Oh, this is wrong, it should be like this,**’ or ‘**Oh, that’s how it is.**”

(9)

IS: “Here, **everyone supports each other.** So, um... even if we make mistakes, our friends correct us. **They might laugh a little,** but um... **they still help and support us instead of mocking or bullying.**”

In MU's statement, it is clear that MU is not worried about being laughed at and considers it a joke. Meanwhile, in IS's statement, it is also clear that IS is not worried about being laughed at.

IS's statement also clarifies the questionnaire answers regarding not feeling anxious about other people's views on Japanese language ability (P18, P19, P20, P21). This is in line with the opinion of Huang et al. (2010), who stated that support from friends is very important for language learners because learners spend a lot of time together learning and facing similar challenges. **Support from classmates is not only in the form of friendship, but can also help facilitate the learning process.** Statement (7) shows that classmates are very supportive and helpful to each other, making learners feel comfortable in class.

Statement 23 (I feel anxious that the teacher will scold me when I use Japanese incorrectly.) also has a disagreement response (mean=2.43). This means that the respondents did not feel anxious about being scolded by the teacher when using Japanese in class. This means that the classroom atmosphere was relaxed and comfortable, so that the learners' affective filter was low and they could use Japanese in class without anxiety, as stated by (Krashen, 1982).

Although on average the respondents did not feel anxious about their Japanese language skills, there was one statement that tended to elicit feelings of anxiety, namely statement P21 (I feel anxious that my Japanese ability is lower than that of other students.). This shows that the respondents compared their abilities with those of their classmates and felt anxious if their language skills were lower than those of others. **This is in line with the results of Kadir et al.'s (2018) study, which shows that some learners have low self-perception because they feel that their friends are more proficient in foreign languages, thus causing a lack of confidence and anxiety in the learning process.**

As shown in RS's statement in data (8), RS often feels anxious when he feels that his abilities are lower than those of his classmates.

(10)

RS: “**Often, sensei.** For example, if my ability is lower than, um... other friends who study more diligently, or if there's something I don't understand from what sensei explained earlier, we can ask our friends or *senpai* about it later in the evening.”

Another statement came from UU, who admitted that he sometimes felt inferior when seeing other people's achievements, although those feelings did not make him despair. On the contrary, that anxiety actually motivated him to try harder and catch up with his friend.

(11)

UU: "Not really, but that feeling of, um, what sensei mentioned earlier (feeling inferior) **is still there**. However, I don't feel down because of it; sometimes it even makes me want to catch up and improve myself."

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics Related to anxiety toward Japanese language ability

Anxiety Toward Japanese Language Ability				
No	Statement	N	MEAN	SD
P21	I feel anxious that my Japanese ability is lower than that of other students.	69	2.55	1.132
P23	I feel anxious that the teacher will scold me when I use Japanese incorrectly.	69	2.43	1.050
P22	Even during lessons, I feel anxious that I do not have the ability to learn Japanese well.	69	2.06	.938
P20	I feel embarrassed when I make mistakes in Japanese in front of other students.	69	2.03	.874
P19	I feel anxious that other students think my Japanese is poor.	69	1.88	.993
P18	I feel anxious that other students will laugh at me when I speak Japanese.	69	1.70	.880
Average			2.11	.751

CONCLUSION

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Through the results of this study, it can be concluded that Japanese language learners do not feel anxious during the learning process at LPK. This applies to speaking activities, uncertain situations, and language skills. This is due to the comfortable classroom environment, which allows learners to relax. This condition is due to the positive attitude of the teachers, who appreciate every effort made by learners and conduct interesting and enjoyable learning activities. In addition, classmates support each other, preventing learners from feeling anxious. This is in accordance with Krashen (1982), who said that the lower the affective filter, the easier it is for learners to accept learning and master the language. A comfortable and enjoyable classroom atmosphere allows learners to open their emotional filters, calming them down and increasing their motivation and confidence. This makes it easier for learners to absorb the learning material into their brains.

Of the 23 statements, only 7 conditions made learners anxious. In terms of speaking activities, learners feel unable to remember the Japanese they actually know when they feel anxious. In terms of situational uncertainty, learners feel anxious about situations of incomprehension, whether it be incomprehension of the content of speech or learning material, or incomprehension due to the speed of speech. Meanwhile, in terms of language ability, learners feel anxious when their language skills are lower than those of their classmates.

In terms of learners' anxiety that makes it difficult to remember vocabulary, the advice that can be given is to encourage learners to dare to speak even if their grammar is not yet perfect. And emphasize the most important thing in communication, which is the delivery of the message. In terms of not understanding the content of Japanese speech, the advice that can be given is to provide lessons on listening strategies, while for not understanding the speed, the advice that can be given is to use teacher talk, which is to adjust the speed and choice of vocabulary according to the learner's ability level, especially at the basic level. For anxiety related to a lack of confidence in language ability compared to other classmates, the advice that can be given is to provide motivation to be more confident.

This study has two main limitations. First, the study was only conducted at one Job Training Institute (LPK), so the results cannot be generalized to all LPKs in Indonesia, which may have different teaching methods and learning environments. Second, the respondents in this study came from various levels of Japanese language proficiency, without any separation based on specific levels such as basic, intermediate, or advanced. This means that the results of the study cannot specifically describe the level of anxiety experienced by learners at each level of language proficiency. Therefore, future research is needed on language anxiety in the classroom with respondents from various LPKs, as well as research that looks at language anxiety at each level of Japanese language proficiency.

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AUTHOR BIGRAPHIES

Muhammad Syafiq is a student in the Japanese Language and Culture Study Program at Al-Azhar Indonesia University. He has practical experience through an internship at a Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja (LPK), where he was involved in Japanese language learning activities for Indonesian internship candidates preparing to work in Japan. This experience allowed him to observe directly the classroom environment, learning processes, and challenges faced by learners in vocational language training settings. His academic interests include Japanese language education, classroom interaction, and the integration of Japanese work culture into language instruction. Through his academic and internship experiences, he aims to contribute insights that support the improvement of Japanese language training programs for Indonesian learners.

Arianty Visiaty is a lecturer at Al-Azhar Indonesia University, teaching Japanese language and Japanese language pedagogy. Arianty Visiaty holds a master's degree from Ochanomizu University, Japan, in Applied Linguistics, including Educational Linguistics.