

## USING DIGITAL STORYBOOK IN A JAPANESE ONLINE CLASS TO SUPPORT A1-LEVEL WRITING SKILLS

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays, although face-to-face learning is conducted in various educational institutions, there is still a great demand for online learning, especially in non-formal educational institutions. Online learning helps students to study without being constrained by distance and have more flexible time. This study wants to explore the application of digital storybooks as an alternative learning media in an online language program to develop student's writing skills in Japanese and report on the results after the program. This study employed a case study design where the data is presented descriptively to report the implementation of a multimodal text in the form of a digital storybook and the responses of 4 Japanese language learners as both the participants of this study and an online language course. Naturalistic observation became the primary instrument where all activities were recorded, with the addition of writing practice to gain an understanding of students' comprehension of the given lesson as the second instrument. The results of using multimodal texts in the classroom showed a positive impact. This is shown in the students' writing after participating in learning with multimodal texts. The improvement in the students' writing skills was shown on the students' worksheets in which some students added place settings, time information, and also the correct particles. In short, the usage of the digital storybook enhances students' writing skills and develops their creativity through an enjoyable way of learning.

**Keywords:** multimodal text, writing skill, Japanese language learning, online class.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic two years ago brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including education. Based on the website of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Republic of Indonesia, on September 3rd, 2020, the Indonesian government issued various policies and initiatives to deal with learning obstacles during the pandemic. One of the obstacles is the ban on face-to-face learning in educational institutions and the implementation of the learning-from-home policy where the teaching and learning

activities are conducted online in each student's home using various information and communication technologies.

As the COVID-19 case subsides, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, the Minister of Religion, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Home Affairs issued a Joint Decree Number 01/KB/2022, Number 408 of 2022, Number HK.01.08/MENKES/1140/2022, Number 420-1026 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for organizing learning during the pandemic. The decree enables various educational institutions to apply face-to-face learning but still have to pay attention to health protocols. Nowadays, although face-to-face learning is conducted in various educational institutions, there is still a great demand for online learning, especially in non-formal educational institutions. Online learning helps the students to study without being constrained by distance and have more flexible time. The pandemic has taught us that learning activities can be conducted in various ways, both online and face-to-face. Additionally, the dire situation has also taught us that technology can be optimally utilized to support learning activities.

The non-formal educational institutions of language courses that provide online learning are increasingly widespread. The students can choose various language programs such as English, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, German, Arabic, and French. In Indonesia, Japanese is quite in demand by society. It is proven by The Japan Foundation survey in 2017 regarding the number of Japanese language learners in Indonesia, which ranks second behind China, 744,125 people. In addition, the number of Indonesians continuing their studies in Japan has also significantly increased, around 28.6% (Japan Student Service Association (JASSO), 2017). Likewise, the Japanese language learning institutions, both formal and non-formal are disseminated all over Indonesia (Djafri, 2019).

The high public interest in Japanese has made online courses spread in Indonesia. Therefore, various course institutions compete to provide programs and levels that suit the students' needs. In the elementary level (A1) suitable for the students who have never studied Japanese, there is an introduction to writing Japanese letters such as Hiragana and Katakana. The students are introduced to basic Japanese grammar and vocabulary. The introduction to writing letters aims to train the students' writing skills. Writing ability is believed to be the axis or center of language learning because writing is one of the language skills that combines mastery of letters, vocabulary, and grammar (Runtuwarouw, 2017; Buchari, 2018). Therefore, someone's language skills can be known from their writing outcomes.

During the pandemic, limited community activities have demanded online learning using various digital technologies (Ria et al., 2022). Multimodality in learning has brought education to a more modern direction. Multimodality represents meaning-making by simultaneously using two or more modes in a communication process (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.20; Blitz-Raith & Liu, 2017; Herman, 2022; Ngongo et al., 2022; Dini, 2022). In learning in the classroom, the students can construct meaning by seeing, reading, analyzing, expressing opinions, producing, and interacting with multimedia and digital

texts. Each mode in the multimodal texts provides information the students can use to build meaning (Callow, 2020; Anggrainy, 2016). Therefore, multimodal texts can be applied to develop the students' language skills which is in line with the research conducted by Hadianto (2021), in this research, multimodal texts were used as media in Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) class to introduce local Indonesian culture and to develop international students' literacy skills. By increasing the literacy skills of BIPA learners, other language skills will also increase, for instance, listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. In addition, the multimodal texts used also make BIPA learning more effective and help BIPA learners adapt to the Indonesian culture. The similar research about multimodal text to enhance the students' writing skills was conducted by Xiu et al (2021), the research was to examine the effects of integrating SNS-based multimodal composing activities into secondary and higher education on students' writing skills. The results are highlighted in regard to particular aspects of multimodal writing and SNS-based learning that helps the students to enhance their writing skills. The other similar research had been conducted by Vivas & Gonzales (2022). This research project aims to inspire eighth graders at a public school in Tunja to study EFL by incorporating multimodality principles into creative writing. This study incorporates action research elements such as doing a pedagogical intervention in four workshops to express creative writing exercises utilizing all five senses: text, image, video, sound, and speech. Then the students submit them to the EDMODO learning environment. As a result, multimodal creative writing exercises in online settings have shown to be effective methods for boosting the students' enthusiasm to learn and use the English language.

Previous research on the use of multimodal texts has been associated with language learning in tertiary institutions and children's education. Archer (2010) wrote multimodal texts in higher education and the implications for writing pedagogy that explored the influence and incorporation of visuals in the students' texts by emphasizing the semiotic aspects of mode and the relationship between visual and verbal aspects of the texts. In addition, another study reported by Runtuwarow (2018) showed that the average students' writing scores increased after the implementation of the collaboration models at the end of each test during the workshops. Another study focused on the use of multimodal texts to develop children's language skills was conducted by Dini (2022) on the multimodal texts used as a medium for literacy activities in early childhood education. The participants in the study were 26 students in one of the kindergartens in Pematang Siantar, Indonesia. The research results found that the existence of the School Literacy Movement (GLS) using multimodal texts increased the reassurance of the students' learning environment. So, multimodal-based literacy activities were feasible to be developed and implemented in early childhood.

Similar research was conducted by Oskoz and Elola (2016) about digital stories that bring multimodal texts to the Spanish writing classroom. The research focused on the perceptions of six advanced Spanish learners on digital storybooks created by integrating various modes and used to convey meaning to learners. The other research that is still in

line with the previous research was conducted by Yusella et al. (2022), this study used an e-book and GELIBO (Gemar Literasi with Flipbook) as an activity to examine elementary school students' reading and writing literacy skills. The findings indicated that one of the activities the author intends to implement to address the students' disinterest in reading the current storybook is the creation of mind maps. The students' enthusiasm for learning may improve as a result of the media used by the teacher. In addition, Tahta & Pusparini (2022) also conducted research that attempts to determine what the students think about the English digital storybook "Let's Read" after reading it during online learning. Twenty-five junior high school students in the ninth grade participated in this study. The findings revealed that most students favor "Let's Read" as a fun and mobile website. In terms of sensations and emotions, it demonstrates that "Let's Read" is simple and encourages pupils to enjoy reading. The students are familiar with experiences because of the distinctive illustrations. The students' motivation to read actively and pursue their aspirations is impacted by "Let's Read."

In short, it is concluded that the existing studies have identified the use of multimodal texts using various digital applications to promote the students' ability in various foreign languages, however, the use of multimodal texts to develop the students' Japanese writing skills, especially in online classes, has never been conducted before. Therefore, research focusing on the use of multimodal texts in the teaching of basic Japanese writing is needed. Three research problems are then formulated as follows: (1) What types of multimodal texts are used to develop the students' Japanese writing skills? (2) How is the multimodal text applied in learning Japanese? (3) How is the students' writing ability after joining the lesson?

## METHOD

This research employed a case study design as it thoroughly examines a social activity limited by time, participants, and other elements to gather comprehensive data to understand the problems that occur (Creswell, 2016). This study is also descriptive where the collected data is presented in the form of a systematic description of the phenomena that occur in society (Rukajat, 2018). To answer the research questions, the data that this study obtained are of two types: an observation report of the class activities in the form of a video recording and students' responses to the use of multimodal text (the digital storybook) throughout the session in the form of a written assignment. The class itself, which was part of an online language program, was conducted online using Zoom on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with a duration of 90 minutes.

The participants involved in this study are two high school students who attended the same school and two undergraduate students who studied at different universities, therefore making the total number of participants involved in this study four. Despite the differences in age and level of education, all participants enrolled in the same level of the course, i.e., elementary level (A1). The small numbers of participants owe to the fact that this is preliminary research to collect responses to the multimodal text, i.e., the digital

storybook in Japanese, which was recently designed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following is detailed information about the participants of this study:

Table 1. Participants of the Study

Name	Age	Level of Education/Department
Student 1	20	Undergraduate/Public Administration
Student 2	21	Undergraduate/Tourism
Student 3	16	High School/Language Program
Student 4	16	High School/Language Program

The data collection steps started from designing the digital storybook itself. The colorful palette and simple illustrations were chosen to catch students' attention and help them understand the story better since all sentences, including assignment instructions, were written in Japanese. The theme "birthday party" was specifically chosen as students of the program had to memorize vocabulary on days and dates in Japanese, and therefore choosing a simple yet straightforward theme to support their memorization was imperative. They could also try to apply the knowledge they had received from the storybook by making a birthday card as a response to the story they had read. Afterward, the digital storybook was used in the main activity stage of the class. The indicators of success for this specific meeting, where the main learning media is a digital storybook, are: 1) students are able to understand the story in the digital storybook, 2) students are able to read aloud the story with the correct and proper Japanese pronunciation, 3) students were able to retell the story they had read using their own words, and 4) students are able to make a birthday card as a response to the story they read using the correct words and/or phrases in Japanese, e.g., *otanjoubi omedetou gozaimasu* (happy birthday to you) in hiragana and katakana.

Afterward, a 90-minute program where the storybook was used was arranged, which was divided into three parts: pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity stage with a predetermined time allocation. The stages written in the table are explored in detail in the following table:

Table 2. Implementation Stages

Stage	Activity	Description	Time Allocation
Pre-activity	Greetings	Say hello and ask how the students are	5 minutes
	Warmers	Shows videos about names of the days and dates in Japanese	10 minutes
	Pre-reading	The students state their date of birth in Japanese	10 minutes
Main-activity	Reading	The student read and listen to the media provided by the teacher (Storybook ・ モモコちゃん の バスデーパーティー or <i>Momoko chan no Basudee Paathii</i> or 'Momoko's Birthday Party')	20 minutes

Post-activity	Post-reading	The students take notes by rewriting the story using their own words	10 minutes
	Writing	The students write birthday card related to the storybook and then upload it in provided classwork – google classroom	25 minutes
	Feedback and homework	The teacher provides feedback regarding the birthday cards written by the students and gives assignment for the next meeting	10 minutes

The class started with the teacher greeting students and giving them a warm-up activity in the form of watching two videos about days and dates in Japanese. Afterward, the teacher asked students to state their date of birth in Japanese. This warming-up activity lasted for approximately 25 minutes. Following that, the teacher showed them the digital storybook, which had been previously uploaded to Google Sites so that students could access it themselves through the gadget. However, it was observed that students read the storybook through the screen which was shared by the teacher. They also listened to the audio that was prepared. Afterward, each student read aloud each page alternately with guidance from the teacher. This activity lasted for about 20 minutes.

After reading aloud, students retold the story using their own words in 10 minutes to assess their comprehension of the story. This activity was also complemented by giving students a chance to write a birthday card as a response to the story they had read which was uploaded to the assigned Google Classroom card. In the last 10 minutes of the meeting, the teacher provided students with feedback on their writing and assigned them another homework for the next meeting.

The primary instrument used in this study was naturalistic observation, as the researchers aimed to get insight into students' responses to the use of a digital storybook in an online environment. That is why the class activity was fully recorded to ensure any spontaneous responses from the participants were captured. Naturalistic observation was also chosen considering the small-scaled activity that this study focused on. A secondary instrument in the form of a writing practice was also constructed to gain an understanding of students' comprehension of the given lesson. As the students were still at the elementary level, they were tasked to rewrite the story that they had read from the digital storybook using their own words. The results of their writing were then transcribed as secondary data.

Upon the analysis process, the video recording and transcriptions of students' writing results were then triangulated using methodological triangulation to investigate how the digital storybook helped enhance students' writing skills in Japanese. The triangulation process began with describing in detail the content of the digital storybook, followed by describing the three stages of activities as depicted in the video recording. Afterward, the writing transcriptions were scrutinized in terms of the content, letter writing, vocabulary use, grammar, and conjunction selection. The results of the triangulation process were

then interpreted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the application of the multimodal text in an online class by also referring to previous studies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the result and discussion of the study by dividing it into three parts to answer the research questions. The first part is the description of a digital storybook as a multimodal text designed for elementary-level Japanese language learning, followed by an in-depth recounting of the implementation of the multimodal texts in an online class conducted via Zoom. The last part reports students' writing abilities after participating in online learning through the analysis of their writing transcripts.

### Multimodal Texts in Digital Storybook

The multimodal text used in this study is a digital storybook entitled 「モモコちゃんのバースデーパーティー」 *Momoko chan no Basudee Paathii* or 'Momoko's Birthday Party'. The storybook was designed using the online graphic design tool *www.canva.com*; then the finished storybook design was uploaded to a personal Google Sites that can be accessed through the following link: [https://sites.google.com/view/devinakyoushitsu/storybook/story-1\\_](https://sites.google.com/view/devinakyoushitsu/storybook/story-1_)

The use of Google Sites as a cloud-based medium to store this multimodal text is based on the consideration that the platform is easily editable and accessible for language learners of any level. Accessing the site does not require visitors to register either, making it a flexible platform to access lessons anytime and anywhere. The digital storybook entitled 「モモコちゃんのバースデーパーティー」 *Momoko chan no Basudee Paathii* or 'Momoko's Birthday Party' consists of seven-story pages and one activity page with the following details:



Figure 1. Pages 1-4 of the Digital Storybook



Figure 2. Pages 5-8 of the Digital Storybook

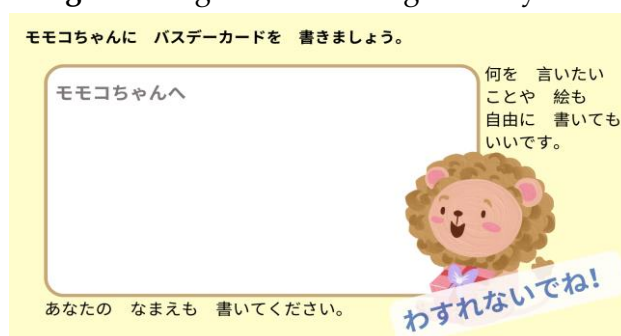


Figure 3. Activity Sheet

Pages 1-7 (see Figure 1 and 2) depict a cover and a short story about Momoko, who is very excited about her birthday where she writes invitations and gives them to her friends. The house is decorated beautifully, however, Momoko's friends do not come. This saddens her, but after a while, his friends come and celebrate the birthday party together. In addition to the story, the site also includes an activity sheet (see Figure 3) where students were asked to write greeting cards in Japanese characters for Momoko. This activity aims to train the students' writing skills and comprehension of reading and instructions. In this particular section, there are instructions for writing greeting cards, wishes, and the sender's names, and the students can decorate the cards according to their creativity. The instructions are written in Japanese to enhance the students' Japanese skills.

### ***Implementation of Multimodal Text in Language Learning***

In its implementation in the classroom, the digital storybook 'Momoko's Birthday Party' was used to enrich the theme of days and dates in Japanese. In addition to storybooks, there were other multimodal media used by the teacher in three stages, *pre-activity*, *main-activity*, and *post-activity*, as detailed in the following section. All stages were complemented with different multimodal texts, but the digital storybook was specifically used in the main activity stage.

#### ***Pre-activity Stage***

The pre-activity stage at the beginning of the class started with the teacher greeting the students and asking how each student was doing in Japanese. The allotted time for this stage was 5 minutes to create a relaxed and fun atmosphere for learning and provide



the students with the opportunity to have Japanese exposure and sharpen their conversation skills when responding to the teacher's greetings and questions. The purpose of this activity is to familiarize the students with the greetings and some simple questions in Japanese. In practice, the students could respond well to the greetings and answer the questions without hitched. Although the meeting was held online, the majority of participants showed their faces, and only one student could not activate the camera due to technical problems.

The online classes provide new challenges and opportunities for both teachers and students. The challenge was that one student encountered technical problems such as the inability to activate the camera and microphone during the learning process. Yet, students could still interact via the chat feature on Zoom meetings. Online classes could still run even if students encounter technical problems. Therefore, online classes can be an alternative learning activity without meeting face-to-face as in conventional classes.

After greetings, the next activity was warming-up with an allotted time of 10 minutes. At this stage, the teacher reviewed the material studied in the previous meeting. This stage was carried out by showing a Japanese video regarding the names of days and dates. The video shown was sourced from YouTube with the following information:

1. The day video: Days of the Week Song (Japanese) | 7 Days of the Week | KidsMusicTime
2. The date video: 【唱歌學日文】日期歌/【日付の歌】 #12

The teacher replayed the videos when necessary, as two students felt that the Japanese pronunciation was too fast. Then after everyone warmed up, the teacher prepared the students for the main activities to enhance the students' ability to read while observing and analyzing the situations and practicing critical thinking. In this activity, students paid close attention to the videos played by the teacher. After students watched the videos containing days and dates in Japanese, the next activity was pre-reading. In the pre-reading activity, the students were asked to state their birth dates in Japanese, followed up by mentioning vocabulary related to birthday celebrations in Japanese. The 5 minutes-activity aims to train students to use Japanese when mentioning dates and analyzing situations related to the topics. In this activity, the students actively asked about the vocabulary related to conjunctions in Japanese and other vocabulary they did not understand.

#### *Main Activity Stage*

This stage aims to train the students' concentration and ability to listen and read stories in Japanese. At this stage, the teacher showcased the Google Sites page containing digital storybooks, and then played the audio of the story for students to listen to it. After that, students read the storybook displayed by the teacher alternately on each page. The allocation for this stage was 20 minutes, however, it exceeded the allotted time because two students were not fluent in reading and seemed to have difficulty in reading *kanji* characters.

### *Post Activity Stage*

This stage aims to train the students to construct their understanding of the story by applying the Japanese grammar and sentence patterns they have learned. *Post-reading* activities were carried out by asking the students to rewrite the story using their own words, followed by reading their version of the story aloud. The time allotted for this stage was 15 minutes. At this stage, before the students read out the results of their notes, the teacher requested the students to take photos of their notes which were then uploaded to *Google Classroom*.

In practice, three students took notes and uploaded the results to respond to the instructions given by the teacher; only one student wrote her notes in the Zoom meeting chat column. After writing down their notes, students were directed to write greeting cards for Momoko and they still had to relate to Momoko's birthday story that they had read earlier. Before the learning activities at this meeting, the teacher gave instructions to the students through *Google Classroom* so that the students could print the greeting card sheets.

In the practice stage of these learning activities, the students followed the instructions very well. All students who activated the camera printed the greeting cards and were ready to engage with the learning activities at this meeting. Here, the students wrote birthday greeting cards related to the storybooks and then uploaded them on the *Google Classroom*. This activity aims to train the students to apply Japanese in simple texts in order to support students in communicating their meaning, the teacher wants them to connect and combine their imagination and creativity. The time allocation for this activity was 25 minutes, but in practice, students needed more time, especially to respond to the instructions which was to creatively decorate the cards. Although this made all students feel motivated, it exceeded the allotted time and the teacher had to add 10 more minutes for students to finish their work. Overall, the time taken for this activity was 35 minutes. On the other hand, based on the observations, students showed interest and enthusiasm during the learning process.

The post-activity stage ended by giving feedback and homework at the end of the learning activity. This activity aims to build communication between the teacher and the students. Moreover, it helped the students understand the learning material. The planned time allocation was 10 minutes in which the teacher provided feedback, such as correcting the birthday cards written by students. After providing feedback on student's writing results, the teacher also delivered further information regarding assignments for the next meeting. The assignment given at this meeting was a word search *puzzle* related to dates and holidays in Japanese. The purpose of giving the assignments is to help the students reconstruct their understanding of the material and introduce Japanese culture regarding holidays in Japan, such as the date of Children's Day and *Tanabata celebrations*.



Figure 4: Homework sheet

In its implementation, the use of multimodal texts in learning can improve the students' language skills. This is in line with previous research put forward by Archer (2010), Callow (2020), Dini (2022), and Hadianto (2021) that the use of multimodal texts can make it easier for students to construct their knowledge and apply materials they have learned. The multimodal text in this study is a digital storybook entitled 「モモコちゃんのバスデーパーティー」 *Momoko chan no Basudee Paathii* or 'Momoko's Birthday Party' has good implications. It is similar to the previous research written by Yusella et al. (2022), Tahta & Pusparini (2021), as well as Oskoz & Elola (2016) on the effectiveness of using digital storybooks in language teaching. Based on the observations, the students seemed interested and enthusiastic during the learning process.

### Students' Writing Skill

The multimodal texts created using Canva and the students' worksheet can help improve the students' writing ability. The notes written by the students in *hiragana* are transcribed into *hiragana letters*, and *romaji* to help us understand the meanings of the cards better. The notes and students' writing results are shown in the following transcript:

#### Student 1:

むかしむかし、おんなのこがいました。あのおんなのなまえはももこちゃんです。でもともだちはどうぶつでした。まず、ももこちゃんのたんじょうびにどうぶつはきません。でもあとでどうぶつはきます。それからみんなたのしみです。

*Mukashimukashi, onna no ko ga imashita. Ano onna no namae wa Momoko chan desu. Demo, tomodachi wa doubutsu deshita. Mazu, Momoko chan no tanjoubi ni doubutsu wa kimasen. Demo ato de doubutsu wa kimasu. Sorekara minna tanoshimamasu.*

(Once upon a time, there lived a girl. The child's name is Momoko. But her friends are animals. At first, no animals came to her birthday, but then the animals came. Then they all have fun).

In the card written by Student 1, there is inconsistent use of past tense sentence patterns. The conjunction used is not suitable, but the particle used is correct. The students' analysis of reading is strong enough to develop the other explanations unwritten in story books, such as information about the time in ancient times and Momoko's friends which are animals.

**Student 2:**

ももこちはうたがだいすき。あしたももこちはデーををしますますでもパーティーだれきませませんももはかなしい。さんさんじゅっぷんあとますますますます。。

*Momoko chin wa uta ga daisuki desu. Ashita momoko chin wa basudee paathii wo shimasu. Demo paathii de daremo kimasen. Momoko san wa kanashii desu. Sanjuppun atode tomodachi ga kimasu. Momoko chin wa ureshii desu.*

(Momoko likes music. Tomorrow is Momoko's birthday party. But at the party, no one came. Momoko is sad. 30 minutes later, his friends come. Momoko is happy.)

Student 2 can remember the composition of the story with a complex structure. The sentence pattern is consistent, and the particles used are appropriate, but there are inconsistencies and errors in writing the endings used after the people's names. The ending should be written 'chan' to properly address young children, but the students write it as 'chin,' and there is one sentence using 'san' term of address. On the other hand, the writing of student 3 is good and complex. The students add her own adverbs of time, but the sentence pattern used is not consistent. Even so, the particles used are precise.

**Student 3:**

*Mukashi, aru tokoro ni onna no hito ga imashita. Sono onna wa Momoko chan desu. Momoko chan wa uta ga suki desu. Sorekara, tsugi no hi wa Momoko no tanjoubi desu. Momoko chan wa tomodachi wo sasoiwasuga, daremo kimasen. Sorekara momoko chan*

*wa nakimashita. Demo atode minna ga kimashita. Tanoshikatta desu.*

**(Once upon a time, somewhere, there lived a woman named Momoko. Momoko likes music. Then, the next day is Momoko's birthday. Momoko invited her friends, but no one came. Then Momoko cried. But, after that, everyone came. It was fun.)**


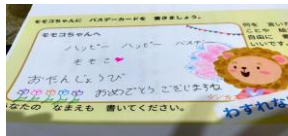
In contrast to students 1, 2, and 3 who can use particles and conjunctions accurately, student 4 cannot use particles and conjunctions accurately in her notes. Thus, the teacher must correct and provide re-understanding to student 4. However, the same as students 1, 2, and 3, student 4 can correctly describe the story's outline.

**Student 4:**

*Momoko chan wa ashita no tanjoubi desu. Sorekara tomodachi wo invitation wa kakimasu. Daremo kimasen demo. Demo minna ga kimasu. Omoshiroi desshita.*

**(Tomorrow is Momoko's birthday. Then, he wrote an invitation for his friend. But no one came. But then everyone come. Interesting.)**

Based on the transcription results on the four students' notes, all students can catch the story well. Even though there are still mistakes in grammar and the use of conjunctions and particles in Japanese, the students indirectly hone their writing skills by analyzing the pictures and stories they read. It is shown in their notes which add the setting of the place, description of time, and so on. In addition to notes written by the students, the written greeting cards also have promising implications for students' writing abilities, with evidence from birthday card transcripts as follows:

<p><b>Student 1:</b></p>  <p><b>(Happy birthday. Momokochan, I hope you are always healthy)</b></p> <p><b>Student 3:</b></p>	<p><b>Student 2:</b></p>  <p><b>(Happy happy birthday Momoko Happy birthday)</b></p> <p><b>Student 4:</b></p>
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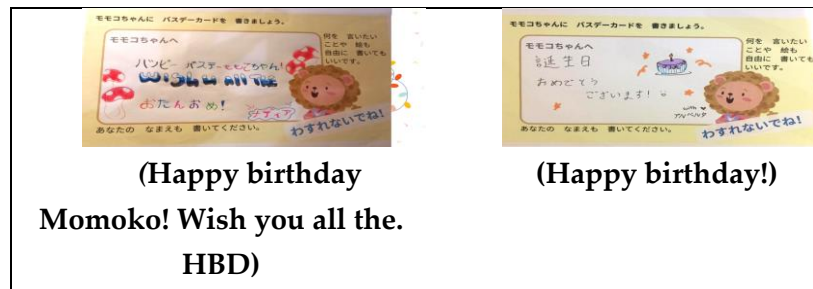


Figure 5: Students' birthday cards

Student 1 writes her words in *hiragana* letters properly and correctly, and student 1 can even convey her wishes to Momoko. On the other hand, student 2 does not write her wishes for Momoko, but student 2 writes the congratulations words both in English and Japanese. English words are written in *katakana* while Japanese speech is written in *hiragana*. Student 3 also writes down her wishes in Japanese and English, but unfortunately, the words regarding the wishes are not complete. Student 3 only writes, 'Wish you all the' without any explanation. On student 3's card, the word 'Wish you all the' is written in different fonts and colors. The student gives more effort to that word and thus forgets the clear explanation about her wishes to Momoko. Even so, Student 3 writes down the acronym that is widely used by Japanese people, 'Otanome' which has the same meaning as 'HBD' from the word 'Happy Birthday'. Furthermore, Student 4 writes congratulation in Japanese and write them using *kanji* that is never taught before. Student 4 does not include her wishes to Momoko but she writes *kanji* and *hiragana* correctly neat.

It is also observed that the presence of *kanji* embedded in several parts of the story made it difficult for two students who were not fluent in reading the *kanji* so that, in turn, they need more time to finish their assignment, thus exceeding the allotted time. After reading the digital storybook, the students are asked to write notes, retell the story in their own words, and then upload these notes to the classwork provided. Even though two students found difficulties in reading *kanji*, in line with Yusella et al. (2022), Tahta & Pusparini (2021), Oskoz & Elola (2016), the other two students understood the meaning of the storybook quickly, and they showed that they were able to understand the new vocabulary and grammar. In practice, three students take notes and upload their notes according to the instructions given by the teacher; only one student writes her notes in the chat zoom meeting column. Even if one student does not follow the instructions given by the teacher, the teacher can still provide corrections to notes written in the chat zoom meeting column.

After taking notes, the students are directed to write greeting cards to Momoko. This activity is still related to multimodal texts read by the students. The teacher gave instructions so the students could print the greeting cards before the meeting. All students have printed greeting cards so that the learning activities are conducive. The teacher instructs the students to decorate the cards as creatively as possible. This is because the teacher wants the students to bring together and connect their imagination and creativity that is most apt to support and express their meaning on the card. It is still in line with the

previous research conducted by Vivas & Gonzales (2022), Archer (2010), and Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) that the students create a motivated conjunction of meaning and form by choosing specific design elements to be meaningful at a specific point in a specific setting. But, the instructions for creatively decorating the cards, which made the students happy, actually backfired for the teacher, then extended the activity to 35 minutes from the original 25 minutes.

Nonetheless, the existence of multimodal texts increases the students' writing skills, and this is in line with Vivas & Gonzales' (2022), Xiu et al.'s (2021) and Runtuwarow's (2018) research. The improvement in the students' writing skills was shown on the student worksheets. Some students add place settings, time information, even the kanji letters that has never been taught before by the teacher. The students also use suitable particles, and write down the words correctly. In addition to notes written by the students, the greeting cards also have promising implications for the students' writing skills because by writing greeting cards, the students can develop their creativity and apply the Japanese words to congratulate someone in a fun and effective way.

## CONCLUSION

Online learning has created a new alternative in the field of education. The existence of multimodal texts in digital storybooks is an alternative learning media that can be used to develop students' language skills. In its implementation in learning, the digital storybook entitled 「モモコちゃんの バスデーパーティー」 *Momoko chan no Basudee Paathii* or 'Momoko's Birthday Party' received a positive response from students. It is shown by the expressions of students who paid attention to the lesson, despite one student having technical difficulties. In practice, digital storybooks are used as media in the main activity section in the classroom. The students are requested to listen and read the digital storybook, and then the students write notes and retell the stories they have read using their own words. Students' notes and greeting cards show there is a significant development in students' engagement when and motivation in learning Japanese, as shown by the use of correct grammar, suitable particles, and the presence of new vocabulary related to worksheets and information about time and place, added by students in their notes and the greeting cards. Future studies could look into how well digital storybooks work in multilingual classrooms and to improve language proficiency across languages. Comparative studies could draw attention to the variations in advantages between languages, while longitudinal research could monitor the long-term effects. Additionally, examining cultural relevance and supporting student-written multimodal texts are other ways to improve student engagement and learning results.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by the Indonesian National Research and Innovation Agency under the Research and Innovation for Advanced Indonesia grant under Contract Number 25/IV/KS/05/2022 and 797/UN10.C10/TU/2023.

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