

Training on the Use of *Aizuchi* in Japanese Conversation (*Kaiwa*) for Students of SMK Antartika 2 Sidoarjo

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This community service program aimed to enhance the Japanese conversation skills of students at SMK Antartika 2 Sidoarjo (Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo) by providing training in the use of aizuchi in kaiwa (conversation). The training was conducted in a workshop format involving material presentation, conversation demonstrations, group practice, and student presentations. Evaluation results showed a significant improvement in students' understanding of aizuchi, from 25% before the training to 100% after. Moreover, students expressed high enthusiasm to participate in similar activities in the future. The applied training model was found to be engaging and well-suited to the students' learning styles. This activity is expected to serve as a starting point in fostering students' interest in learning Japanese language and culture.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language skills, especially Japanese, have become an increasingly important competency for vocational high school students in facing the global workforce. One crucial aspect of Japanese language proficiency is speaking ability or *kaiwa*, which depends not only on mastery of grammar and vocabulary, but also involves social and cultural communication strategies. One important strategy that needs to be mastered in Japanese conversation is the use of *aizuchi*, short responses used by listeners as a form of active engagement in communication (Renariah, 2002; Van Dok Yun, 2000).

Unfortunately, many students have learned the basics of Japanese but do not yet understand the function of *aizuchi* or how to use it appropriately (Hardiansyah, 2012). This results in conversations that are stiff and unnatural. Therefore, special training on the use of *aizuchi* in *kaiwa* is necessary to support students' fluency and ease of communication in Japanese.

Based on these needs, a team of lecturers from the Japanese Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, organized a Community Service activity in the form of an *aizuchi* training workshop for students of Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo. This activity aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the concept and types of *aizuchi*, as well as to provide direct experience through conversation exercises involving *aizuchi* in various contexts. It is hoped that this activity will improve students' communication skills while fostering a greater interest in learning Japanese language and culture.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

Efforts to improve Japanese conversation skills, especially the use of *aizuchi*, can be done through various learning models. In this Community Service program, training or learning was conducted using a workshop model. The training was conducted in the form of a workshop, which has been proven effective in developing students' speaking skills through a hands-on approach (Rahmah, 2019; SMA Diponegoro Tumpang, 2014).

This community service was held at Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo on July 14, 2024. The workshop participants were 45 students from Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo who had previously taken Japanese language classes.

The workshop began with a presentation on the theory of *aizuchi* in Japanese and its various types, as well as instruction on how to use it. Next, the use of *aizuchi* was practiced with examples between instructors who conducted several conversations according to the types of *aizuchi*. This was followed by practice between students by providing light conversations that used a lot of *aizuchi*. And at the end, there was improvisation of Japanese conversations containing *aizuchi* using objects and contexts around the school and classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of discussions between the community service team and Japanese language teachers at Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo, the implementation of community service programs to address the problems experienced by these partners was carried out in the following stages.

General Material Presentation Stage on *Aizuchi*

At this stage, the community service team presented general material on the background of *aizuchi* and Japanese culture using a PowerPoint Presentation. Before the presentation of general material, the workshop began with a speech by the Principal of Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo.



Figure 1. The Event Began with A Speech by The Principal of Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo.



Figure 2. Roni Sensei Provided General Material.

Training Stage

After obtaining information about *aizuchi* and the Japanese culture behind it, the activity continued with *kaiwa* (conversation) practice, which contained a lot of *aizuchi*. First, the community service team provided several conversations ranging from formal, semi-formal, and informal. Each conversation was explained in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure. Next, the instructor provided practical examples. Then, students practiced in small groups guided by instructors from community service team. Once they were considered capable of practicing the conversations, students were asked to give presentations in front of each instructor. At the end of each formal, semi-formal, and informal conversation training session, a group of students was selected to perform in front of the class to practice the conversations they had practiced in groups. This continued until completion.



Figure 3. Parastuti Sensei Is Practicing Conversation in Small Groups.



Figure 4. Ina Sensei Is Practicing Conversation in Small Groups.

After practicing conversation in small groups, several groups were asked to practice in front of the class. By practicing in front of the class, students were able to demonstrate their skills and receive feedback from instructors on how to conduct conversations properly. Here are some photos of students practicing conversation in front of the class.



Figure 5. Amri Sensei Is Checking the Small Groups Before Practicing in Front of The Class.



Figure 6. Roni Sensei Is Checking and Evaluating One of The Student Performance Groups in Front of The Class.

At the end of the classroom practice session, the students had many questions. The questions were not only about the *aizuchi* they had practiced in conversation, but also about Japanese culture. The team even had to explain about apprenticeship programs in Japan after graduating from vocational school. In addition, there are internship programs in Japan that students can take if they major in Japanese language.



Figure 7. Ina Sensei, Amri Sensei, And Parastuti Sensei Were Busy Answering Questions About Japanese Society and Culture.

The training activity ended with a group photo with the students, Japanese language teacher Alfy sensei, and the community service team from the Japanese Language Education study program, Faculty of Language and Arts, Surabaya State University.



Figure 8. Group Photo at The End of The Activity

Evaluation

At the end of the series of community service program implementations, the implementation team conducted an evaluation of the entire program, including the benefits of this program, primarily for students of Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo.

From the results of random questionnaires and interviews, the students were very happy to participate in the *aizuchi* training activities organized by the community service team. The principal and Japanese language teachers hoped that community service activities

such as this would continue in the future and that cooperation could be developed in other areas. The workshop model and training sequence appear to be suitable for the students at Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo. This reinforces that the training sequence model used is proven to be in line with the learning style of vocational school students (Ulfia Rahmi & Noviyanti Aneros, 2016; Tarigan, 2021).

Twenty students have responded to the questionnaire that was distributed. The results are as follows. Regarding understanding of *aizuchi*, 90% of respondents understood it. This means that after receiving training, students were able to understand what *aizuchi* is.

Setelah dijelaskan dalam kegiatan PKM dari Unesa pada hari Jumat tanggal 14 Juli 2024, apakah kalian menjadi merasa paham tentang aizuchi?
20 jawaban

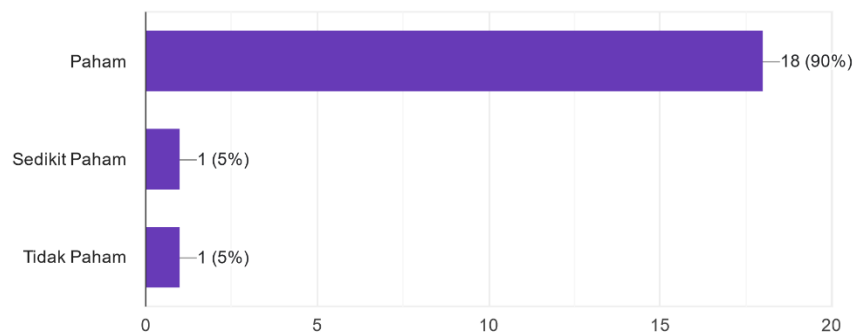


Figure 9. Questionnaire Question 1

Before the *aizuchi* training from the community service team, students did not fully understand what *aizuchi* meant. The following table shows that 75% did not understand or had little understanding. Thus, 25% understood *aizuchi*. This is understandable because the students who attended were those who had studied basic Japanese.

Sebelum dijelaskan apakah kalian merasa paham tentang aizuchi?
20 jawaban

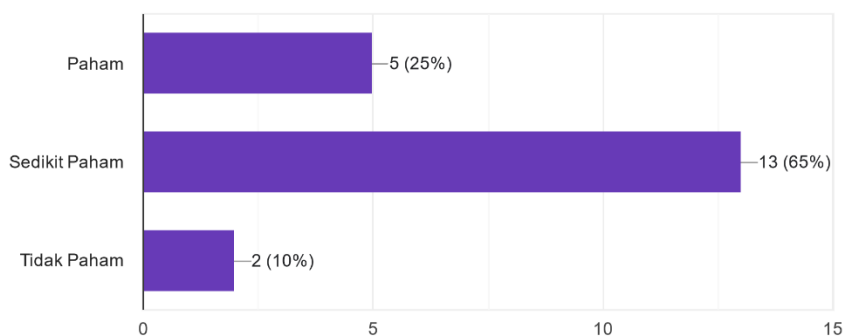


Figure 10. Questionnaire Question 2

However, students' understanding increased dramatically from 25% to 70%. If we add those who said they could do it a little, the total becomes 100%. Meanwhile, 0% said they

couldn't do it. This means that this activity improved students' understanding of *aizuchi*, which is often used in Japanese conversation.

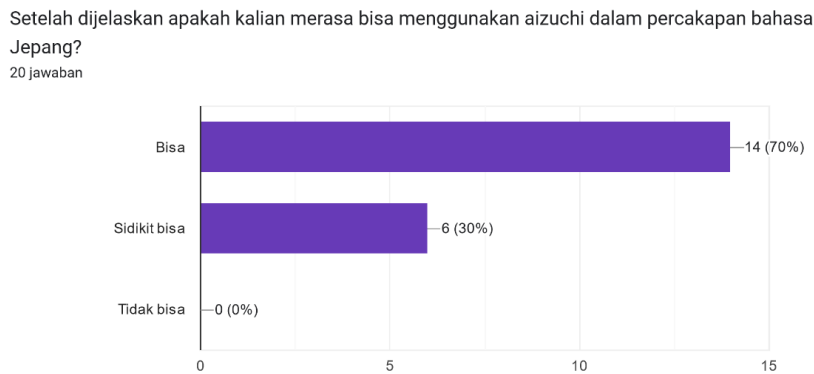


Figure 11. Questionnaire Question 3

Sometimes the success of an activity depends on how the instructor manages the class. The following questions represent the learning/training model used by the community service team. The training sequence model used consists of material explanation, conversation explanation, conversation examples, drills, group exercises, and practice (presentations) in front of the class. This model seems suitable for students at Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo, as evidenced by the fact that 95% of students like it and 5% like it a little. This means that this training model can be applied in future training and learning activities.

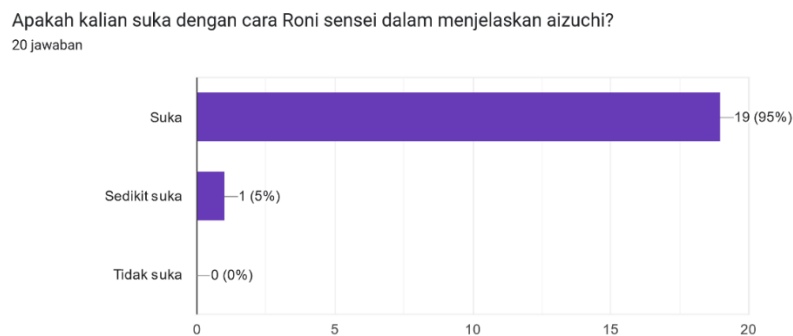


Figure 12. Questionnaire Question 4

The following question was more related to whether the students would be interested in participating again if such an activity were held again. Their answer was that 100% of them wanted to participate again. This means that the students are very enthusiastic about learning more Japanese. It is only natural that the school should respond to their wishes by holding similar activities.



Figure 13. Questionnaire Question 5

The fact that students are very enthusiastic or interested in learning Japanese further can be seen from the results of the questionnaire in the following questions below. This can be captured by the university to welcome and provide a forum in the Japanese language study program, where the desire to learn further among students is very high, namely 95%.

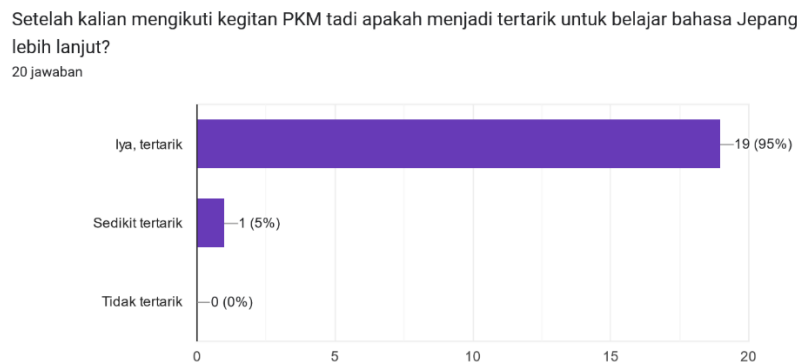


Figure 14. Questionnaire Question 6

CONCLUSION

Training in the use of *aizuchi* in Japanese conversation through a workshop model provided by the community service team to students at Antartika 2 Vocational School in Sidoarjo proved to be effective. The evaluation results showed a significant increase in students' understanding of *aizuchi*, from only 25% to 100% of students who understood and were able to use *aizuchi* in *kaiwa*. The training model, which involved explanations, demonstrations, group exercises, and presentations, proved to be engaging and suited to the students' learning styles. Student enthusiasm was also high, as evidenced by 100% of students expressing a desire to participate in similar activities in the future. This training not only improved Japanese language skills but also fostered interest and motivation for further learning.

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