

## **Practical Studies in Japanese Language Education** A Report about *Action Research Zero Workshop* in Venice (Italy)

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**Summary** 1 Project Background. – 2 Project Detail. – 3 Japanese Language Education at Ca' Foscari University: First Year of Bachelor Course. – 4 Details of the Action Research Zero Workshop. – 5 Conclusion and Remarks.

**Keywords** Critical Pedagogy. Japanese Language Education through Global Activities. Zero beginners. Action Research. Citizenship.

### **1 Project Background**

The edited book, finally-published in July 2016, *Shiminsei keisei to kotoba no kyōiku: bogo, daini gengo, gaikokugo o koete* (Citizenship formation and language education: beyond native, second and foreign language; Hosokawa, Ōtsuji, Mariotti) collected research papers, which focused on the importance of dialoguing as a milestone for identity and community formation. The study pointed out how a classroom of Japanese language can be a stimulus to dialogue and reciprocal values exchange for all participants too, no matter their native language.

Several fundamental questions have remained opened though: is such a formative dialogue feasible in a class of zero beginners of Japanese learners? How can they step up from 'words-only communication' to the construction of meaningful sentences, during a 15 meetings workshop focusing on 'contents – self-expression – citizenship formation' instead of classes focusing on grammar only? If it is feasible, as already shown in the previous research on zero-beginners of Japanese Language as Second Language (Kim, Take, Furuya 2010), what kinds of processes do learners go through? Does having the same native language influence such process? If so, in which way?

The above questions initiate the starting point for a joint research conducted by Hideo Hosokawa (Waseda University, emeritus professor, project

supervisor), Noriko Ichishima (Akita University, visiting scholar at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, project leader and facilitator), and Marcella Mariotti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, project leader and facilitator) at the Department of Asian and North African Studies (DSAAM) of Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy). The Japanese language course at Ca' Foscari University of Venice has the highest number of new students who enrol into Japanese language courses in whole Italy; 315 students out of almost 500 applicants every year admitted through an admission test about basic knowledge of the chosen area of studies, i.e. Japan.

## 2 Project Detail

The project, named *Practical Studies: Action Research Zero*, was originally thought of as a total of fifteen 1.5/2 hours meetings during 10 weeks period, from September 12 to November 27, 2016, scheduled as in the table 1. It planned to accept the first 8 participants who contacted the email address [action.research.zero@gmail.com](mailto:action.research.zero@gmail.com). The limited number of participants was to facilitate the dialogue between them and to build a strong sense of community.

Table 1. Activity Plan

Meeting	Date	Activity	Contents
0	9/12	The workshop participants deadline	
1	9/19	First meeting (2h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Presentation of the project and self-introduction
2	9/20	Second meeting (2h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Thinking about a common theme
3-4	9/21	Third meeting (4h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Selecting an individual subtitle for the final paper and social gathering
5-6	9/22	Fourth meeting (4h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Students describing their selected theme + common Mailing List settings
	9/25	Online theme sharing	Mailing List – Topic and Motivation
7	9/26	Group meeting 1 (1.5h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion
	9/28	Online report submission	
	10/2	Online comment submission	
8	10/3	Group meeting 2: Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion
	10/5	Online report submission	
	10/9	Online comment submission	
9	10/10	Group meeting 3: Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion
	10/12	Online report submission	

Meeting	Date	Activity	Contents
	10/16	Online comment submission	
10	10/17	Group meeting 4: Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion
	10/19	Online report submission	
	10/23	Online comment submission	
11	10/24	Group meeting 5: Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion
	10/26	Online report submission	
	10/30	Online comment submission	
12	10/31	Group meeting 6: Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion
	11/2	Online report submission	
	11/6	Online comment submission	
13	11/7	Group meeting 7: Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about assessment
	11/9	Online report submission	Assessment standards
	11/13	Online comment submission	
14	11/14	Group meeting 8: Ichishima & Mariotti	Mutual assessment
	11/16	Online report submission	
	11/20	Online comment submission	
15	11/21	Group meeting 9: Ichishima & Mariotti	Online reports booklet
	11/23	Online reports booklet	Online reports booklet
	11/27	Online report booklet submission	Online reports booklet delivery

As the first semester begun on September 12th, 2016, the research team distributed the leaflet (fig. 1) during the first Japanese Grammar lesson to all the 315 learners of the first year, followed by a very brief oral orientation of the workshop contents. The front and the back of the leaflet were written in Italian and in Japanese respectively, so to stimulate the students to check both sides and eventually be curious about the way of writing date and time in Japanese.

As the image at the bottom right of the back-side of the leaflet illustrates, the project kicks off with the lecture by Hosokawa in September 19th at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. The lecture aimed to inform the participants, the teachers and the concerned scholars about the concept *Kangaeru tame no nihongo* (Japanese for Thinking) and the theoretical background of *Action Research Zero Workshop*. The whole lecture is available online at the following YouTube address: <https://youtu.be/Rbhs7xUQ5YY>.

Since this kind of intensive *sōgo katsudō gata nihongo kyōiku* (Japanese Language Education through Global Activities) usually experiences a quite high percentage of students drop-off, the research team decided to accept the all 15 applications received, twice the programmed number. To ensure a good class management, facilitators Mariotti and Ichishima searched for tutors too, through selecting them from students in the Master Course in Language and Civilisation of Asia and Mediterranean Africa



# Action 0

Attività in lingua giapponese per principianti assoluti.  
Partecipanti: max. 8 studenti del primo anno (ordine di prenotazione)

**Contenuto:**  
Negli incontri "Action Zero" si mira ad esprimere ciò che si pensa e a comprendere il pensiero altrui in lingua giapponese. Si parlerà e scriverà dei propri interessi. Leggendo e discutendone insieme, si apprenderanno nuovi vocaboli e aumenterà la capacità di esprimersi.

**Responsabili:**  
dott.ssa Marcella Mariotti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), prof. Ichishima Noriko (Akita University),  
**Supervisor:**  
prof. Hosokawa Hideo (Tokyo, Waseda University, in presenza a Venezia dal 19/9-23/9)

## Vuoi partecipare?

Scrivi entro il 16/9 ore 23:55 a  
action.research.zero@gmail.com

13 incontri:  
19/9, 20/9, 21/9, 22/9 (orario da concordare con i partecipanti)  
da lunedì 26/9 ogni settimana 17.30 – 19.00

Figure. 1 Leaflet distributed to the students

## 日本語 0 ビギナー活動 参加者募集

### 活動概要

このクラスでは、日本語で自分の考えてることを表現し、相手の考えていることを理解することを目指します。クラスでは、自分の好きなこと、興味のあることについて話したり、書いたりします。そして、それをみんなで読み、話し合いながら、言葉を学びます。

### 担当者

マルチエツラ・マリオッティ (カ・フォスカリ大学)、  
市嶋典子 (秋田大学、「カ・フォスカリ」大学)

### 日程

9月9日 (月) ~11月12日 (月)  
9月9日 ~22日までは、日本から細川英雄先生 (早稲田大学名譽教授) が参加します。  
なお、9月22日 (月) 以降は、毎週月曜日 5時 54分 ~7時 51分 に行う予定です。

### 授業予定

第1回: 9月9日 (月) 5時 ~6時  
第2回: 9月12日 (火) 10時 ~11時  
第3回: 9月12日 (水) 10時半 ~11時半  
第4回: 9月22日 (木) 6時 ~9時 懇親会  
第5回以降: 9月22日 (月) ~11月12日 (月) 毎週月曜日:  
5時 45分 ~7時 51分  
単位: インターシッピング 3 単位

「対話をするために必要なもの – ワークショップゼロの理論的背景」

講演者: 細川英雄、早稲田大学名譽教授  
日程: 9月19日, 11時 ~ 12時半  
会場: Aula Baratto  
住所: Dorsoduro, 3246, 30123 Venezia



活動型クラス  
……上級生・中級生も歓迎……

(area Japan) who were writing their master thesis on, or simply who were interested in Japanese Language Education (Rizzatello, Bartolommeoni), ex-students who had already experienced such class concept (Vischi), conference attendants, Japanese native speaker interested in the concept (Kato), gathering 4 tutors in total. Many teachers in Japanese Language who had attended Hosokawa's conference *Taiwa o suru tame ni hitsuyō na mono – wākushoppu zero no riron teki na haikai* (What do we need to dialogue? Theoretical background for Workshop Zero) had expressed their interest on the project, but due to other classes schedule they were not able to attend the project as tutors.

The original schedule of the Workshop Zero class had to be modified to accommodate participants' needs, so that they could continue to attend all other first year classes. Furthermore, although participation to the Workshop Zero would not result in any credits as Japanese class, it yet allowed the students to gain 3 credits as alternative activity to the mandatory internship.

### 3 Japanese Language Education at Ca' Foscari University: First Year of Bachelor Course

In Italy, the academic year usually starts in September and ends in August. As for the A.Y. 2016/17, the first year of Japanese language education is worth 18 credits. It consists of 60 hours of Japanese grammar (4 classes/77 students each) taught by faculty members (lecturers and professors), 300 hours of exercise with native speakers (CEL: language expert collaborators), 90 hours of individual study, a middle term online test, and a final oral and written exam. Exercise with native speakers consist of:

- textbook readings (Shin Bunka Shokyū Nihongo, 60 hours, 2 classes /155 students each),
- conversations (role play, 60 hours, 4 classes/77 students each),
- grammar exercises (120 hours, 3 classes/103 students each) and
- writing (60 hours, 2 classes / 155 students each), enriched by lecture notes.

As for the first semester of the first year, the students deal with half of the total hours: 30 hours grammar, 150 exercitation hours, 45 individual study hours.

In brief, the 15 participants started the Workshop Zero in the second week of the language course, i.e. after 1 week of Japanese classes. The first week of Japanese classes consists of 2 hours general introduction by a faculty member where they could listen about focusing on a general presentation of the language, and 8 hours of exercitations about greetings, *hiragana* and counter words (*josūshi*).

### 4 Details of the Action Research Zero Workshop

The Action Research Zero Workshop started soon after the Hosokawa's lecture on September 19, 2016. The summary of this workshop is as follows, which slightly differs from the initial schedule.

1. Target learner: Zero-beginners of Japanese language at Ca' Foscari University of Venice.
2. Participants: 15 learners, 4 tutors, 3 teachers
3. Class period: 12.9.2016 - 15.12.2016
4. Lessons (see table 2): 16 lessons, 1.5/2 hours for one lesson
5. Credit: 3 credits for internship alternative activity might be gained upon request
6. Project Leaders and Facilitators: Marcella Mariotti (assistant professor, Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and Ichishima Noriko (associate professor, Akita University, visiting scholar at Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

7. Project Supervisor: Hosokawa Hideo (emeritus professor, Waseda University). Hosokawa conducted the first 5 meetings between September 19 and 22nd.

As described in the leaflet in Italian, Action Research Zero Workshop aimed for students to be able to express their thoughts and understand the others'. The learners would discuss and write about their interests, learning phrases and new vocabulary through the activities. Individual learner selected his/her own theme and started writing a report titled *Watashi to ...* (... and myself), discussing their themes with each other in the classroom. In addition, the learners exchanged opinions through email as well using a dedicated googlegroup; they needed to write (rewrite) and submit their reports at least once a week to their own discussion sub-group. The 15 learners were divided into 4 groups where each of them supported by 1 tutor.

The titles of the reports are as follows. The Japanese notations are just as the learners wrote it at the final submission.

1. ゲンダイアートと私 (*Gendai āto to watashi*, Modern art and Myself)
2. ドラムと私 (*Doramu to watashi*, Drum and Myself)
3. バスケットボールと私 (*Basuketto bōru to watashi*, Basketball and Myself)
4. 日本のしと私 (*Nihon no shi to watashi*, Japanese poetry and Myself)
5. ストリーを書くことと私 (*Sutori to watashi*, Writing story and Myself)
6. ファッションと私 (*fashon to watashi*, Fashion and Myself)
7. 私の猫と私 (*Watashi no neko to watashi*, My cat and Myself)
8. 星を見ることと私 (*Hoshi o miru koto to watashi*, Watching stars and Myself)
9. 描くことと私 (*Egaku koto to watashi*, Drawing and Myself)
10. ロックの反抗と私 (*Rokku no hankō to watashi*, Resistance rock and Myself)
11. ゆびわものがたりと私 (*Yubiwa monogatari to watashi*, Lord of the Rings and Myself)
12. パリのルブルビじゅつかんと私 (*Pari no Ruburu bijutsukan*, Louvre of Paris and Myself)
13. ハリーポッターと私 (*Harī Pottā to watashi*, Harry Potter and Myself)
14. 空手と私 (*Karate to watashi*, Karate and Myself)
15. だいにじせかいたいせんと私 (*Dainiji sekai taisen to watashi*, World War II and Myself)

Under normal practice, zero-beginners class supposes not to be widened outside classroom. However, the strong motivation of the learners and their willingness 'to go further' convinced the teachers to proceed as usual with non-zero-beginners classroom. The final delivered reports consisted of a motivational paragraph, a dialogue report, and conclusions. In the motivational paragraph, the learners described about the relations between the theme they had chosen and themselves. They had to think about the reason why they had chosen his/her own theme. For the dialogue report, they had to choose one person to discuss the motivational paragraph and think further about their themes. Thereafter, they had to summarize the dialogue

contents focusing on some main 'turning points' of the dialogue they had, commenting on the reasons that they selected such quotations. Finally, they wrote the conclusions drawn from their initial motivational paragraphs and the report of the whole dialogue processes in and outside of the classroom.

At the second week of the workshop, the teachers indicated the following three criterias as purposes of the class and the main aim of the report: 1) originality, 2) the reception of others' argumentation, 3) logicality. At the final stage of the workshop, the learners were asked to discuss and decide which criteria to evaluate their reports according to the above three points. They had to check each of them before drawing to their own conclusions. The following are the criteria, which the learners themselves decided that they should evaluate and the reasons of such a choice.

1) オリジナリティ (Originality)

・皆さんはレポートで自分の興味を表現しました。

(Everybody expressed his/her own interest in the report)

・皆さんはオリジナルのテーマをかんがえました。オリジナリティはじぶんじしんを表します。

(Everybody thought about an original theme. The originality expresses oneself.)

・このワークショップの大切ポイントはやるきがでたことです、自己がわかるからです。そしてクリエイティビティも大切です。自己のかんしょうについて話すからです。

(The important point of this workshop is to have felt motivated, because it makes me understand myself. And creativity is important too, because one talks about the feelings of him/herself.)

2) 意見交換はクールだったか? どうして? (Was the exchange of opinions cool? Why?)

・たにんをはなします。あたらしいけんをみいだす。

(I talk with another person. I find a new opinion.)

・じぶんのでーまをのべるとじぶんがわかる。

(If I talk about my theme, I can understand myself.)

・私のともだちと私はじぶんをかんがえました。みなさんはきもちをもしあげました。

(My friends and I thought about ourselves. Everybody talked about his/her feelings.)

3) テーマは違っても同じ気持ち (Even if the themes are different, the feeling is the same)

・私たちは tema がちがいますが、私たちはどようのきもちがあります。

(Our themes are different, but we have same feeling.)

・きょうゆうのポイントがあります、でもおなじではありません。

(We have common points, but they are not the same thing.)

## 4) 考えの比較 (Comparison of the thought)

・ぐるーぶのたいわはひかくをじゅりつします。

(The dialogue of the group established a comparison.)

・たいわへのかんしんがたかまりました。

(The comparison of thought grew interest on dialogue.)

## 5) 変わる (Changement)

私のかんがえよりおおきいです。なぜならみなさんのかんがえはことなります。そしてわたしのかんがえもかわりました。

(My thought become bigger, because everyone has different opinions, and my opinion is changed.)

私のグループ友達をたすけます。いぜんテーマについてわかりません。何わたしはしました。あとでわかりました。

(The member of my group helps the other group mate. I had not understood about a theme before, but understood it later.)

While the learners wrote each other comments through email, they managed to rewrite their reports based on the received comments according to the above points. On the last day of the workshop, each learner performed a 2 minutes presentation about his/her theme. After the presentations, they were asked to re-organize the above 1) to 5) points and shrink them to only 3, according to which they would have done their own self-evaluation before submitting the full report. The final 3 points for evaluation become: 1) originality, 2) reception of other's ideas, and 3) transmission of own values. Each group, without tutors, conducted the gathering of the reports during winter holiday that supposed to strengthen further the sense of community. The reports will be available by February 2017 at the following websites: <http://virgo.unive.it/mariotti/kangaeru> and [html http://ichishima.thyme.jp/](http://ichishima.thyme.jp/).

## 5 Conclusion and Remarks

It is worth pointing out that Action Research Zero Workshop is the very first practical study based on the 'Japanese for thinking' concept conducted on absolute beginners of Japanese language outside of Japan. Actually, the previous researches on absolute beginners were conducted in Japan (Tsumura, Suga, Shioya, Ichishima, and Take 2009) and they didn't reach to the stage of 'outside classroom dialogue activity', possibly because of the limited time. For this reason, and the other reasons that will be discussed in the next research paper about few case studies, the teachers of Action Research Zero Workshop decided to widen the time length of the workshop until December 15th, 2016. It will also allow the learners to fully immerse themselves into the *sōgo katsudō gata nihongo kyōiku* (Japanese

Language Education through Global Activities). The final schedule is as described in table 2.

Table 2. Actual date and activities

Meeting	Date	Activity	Contents
0	9/12	The workshop participants deadline	
1	9/19	First meeting (2h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Presentation of the project
2	9/20	Second meeting (2h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Thinking about a theme, Mailing List – Topic and Motivation
3	9/21	Third meeting (2h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Thinking about a theme
4	9/22	Fourth meeting (2h): Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators Dinner with students and tutors	Thinking about a theme
5	9/23	Fifth meeting (2h) with: Hosokawa leader, Ichishima & Mariotti facilitators	Students describing their selected theme
	9/27	Online Report submission	
6	9/29	Group meeting 1 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about motivation
	10/3	Online Report submission	
	10/5	Online comment submission	
7	10/6	Group meeting 2 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about motivation
	10/10	Online Report submission	
8	10/13	Group meeting 3 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about motivation
	10/17	Online Report submission	
	10/18	Online comment submission	
9	10/20	Group meeting 4 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about motivation
	10/24	Online Report submission	
10	10/27	Group meeting 5 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about motivation
	10/31	Online Report submission	
11	11/3	Group meeting 6 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about motivation and dialogue report
	11/3	Online Report submission	
12	11/10	Group meeting 7 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about dialogue report

Meeting	Date	Activity	Contents
	11/13	Online Report submission	
13	11/17	Group meeting 8 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about dialogue report and conclusions
	11/20	Online Report submission	
14	11/24	Group meeting 9 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about conclusions
	12/2	Online Report submission	
15	12/6	Group meeting 10 (1.5h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about assessment
	12/10	Online comment submission	
	12/14	Online Report submission	
16	12/15	Group meeting 11 (2h): Ichishima & Mariotti	Class discussion about assessment, Presentation for themes
	2017/1/31	Online Reports booklet submission	Online reports booklet delivery, Self assessment

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