

The translation of European verse is a constant impetus for experimentation in Japan. This is a well-known part of the story, but in *The Ends of Meter* it is yoked to a compelling historical framework and treated with heightened sensitivity and a greater awareness of the global literary and critical context than is typical of the author-focused studies of modern Japanese poetry that predominate.

NihonGO NOW!

L1V1 Textbook, vii, 343; L1V1 Activity Book, v, 254. \$70.00 together.

L1V2 Textbook, v, 329; L1V2 Activity Book, v, 251. \$70.00 together.

L2V1 Textbook, vii, 343; L2V1 Activity Book, v, 280. \$70.00 together.

L2V2 Textbook, v, 373; L2V2 Activity Book, v, 281. \$70.00 together.

By **Mari Noda, Patricia J. Wetzel, Ginger Marcus, Stephen D. Luft,** and **Shinsuke Tsuchiya**. New York: Routledge, 2021. 4 volumes.

Reviewed by **Robert Joseph Del Greco**

NihonGO NOW! (hereafter *NOW!*) is a new textbook and multimedia learning system for the Japanese language. While this series can be used by all Japanese learners and adapted to function in diverse academic contexts, it is most aimed at adult learners of the university level.

NOW! employs the terminology of theater, calling the twenty-four chapters of the program “Acts” (*maku*), each of which is divided into several “Scenes” (*ba* or *shiin*).

We expect that you will engage yourself actively in all of the Scenes, assuming roles of the actors in the Scenes and understanding the circumstances that determine how actors carry out their intentions through language. [...] We refer to this kind of active engagement as ‘performance.’ The vocabulary and the sentence structures you learn are simply tools you will need to perform successfully in Japanese culture. (xix)

Generally, each volume contains six Acts, within which are six “Speaking/Listening” (*hanasu/kiku*) Scenes, and two to three “Reading/Writing” (*yomikaki*) Scenes. Each Speaking/Listening Scene

includes a brief explanation of the setting, the scene script, either dialogue or monologue, in Japanese (as well as Romanized script for the first four Acts), a gloss English translation, a vocabulary list breaking down new words introduced in the scene itself as well as introducing supplemental vocabulary items, and explanations of what is going on “Behind the Scenes” (BTS), where grammar and other structures are explained.

In the Scenes for Reading and Writing, again a brief contextualization is provided first, then an item of text itself (such as an email, text message exchange, or note), followed by a breakdown of any new symbols occurring in that text. Instead of asking students to look “Behind the Scenes” (BTS), the reading and writing sections of the text ask students to read “Between the Lines” (BTL) and these sections contain the explanations of the Japanese writing system. BTL points discuss Japanese writing conventions and text genres, the differences between written and spoken Japanese, and additional information needed to produce Japanese text effectively in a culturally coherent manner. The base orthographies of *hiragana* and *katakana* are introduced over the first six Acts (level 1 volume 1), with a gradually increasing number of kanji introduced in subsequent Acts. In total 450 kanji are introduced throughout (133 in the second volume, 162 in the third volume, and 155 in the fourth volume). The main textbook is accompanied by a corresponding Activity Book in which students are provided a variety of practice exercises for each scene. Each volume could potentially correspond to a college semester, allowing completion of the entire series in four semesters of Japanese language courses; however, the content is exceedingly rich and a slower and more deliberate approach will benefit many learners.

Practice and presentation of the spoken Scenes is the main learning tool for oral skills implemented by *NOW!*. While the model of using dialogues to highlight key grammar is familiar in many language textbooks, *NOW!* elevates this practice by presenting a large number of dialogues as the core of its program, each with audio materials and corresponding practice exercises supporting students’ progress. Moreover, the Speaking and Listening Scenes do not only model target vocabulary and structures, but include careful attention to conversational strategies and less obvious linguistic features, such as filler words and buying time with confirmation questions. The authors present contextualized exchanges suitable for students to practice and perform with no loss of fidelity to natural speech even when students are only initially grasping basic concepts in their first semester of Japanese study.

To facilitate students' understanding that many structures of Japanese are modulated according to social roles and other contextually dependent factors, *NOW!* utilizes a set of well-developed fictional characters who encounter situations representative of the kind of experiences non-natives can expect to have while living in Japan or otherwise interacting with Japanese speakers. The focal characters are Sasha Morris (age twenty-five) a recent university graduate and intern at Ogaki Trading company, Brian Wang (age twenty), who is participating in study abroad at Fukuzawa University, and Amy Johnson (age twenty) a student at Clinton University who is part of the Japanese Club. Students can see reflections of their own lives and experiences in these characters, for example, when Amy uses Japanese to communicate with her peers even while studying at an American university. Moreover, each of the three central characters has a different ethnic background, with two of the three being people of color.

Each of these three central characters is surrounded by contextually appropriate supporting characters: coworkers, superiors, teachers, classmates, roommates, host family members, and more. Students should practice and perform these scenes while paying particular attention to the roles, emotions, and motivations of the interlocutors: "Your objective is to become able to handle the many situations depicted in these Scenes while also allowing the Japanese people in these Scenes to feel comfortable interacting with you." (xxv) The *NOW!* characters are not interchangeable or random. Rather, they have concrete relationships and their Scenes are grounded in their individual social roles.

For example, Act 2 Scene 8 presents a scene that anyone who has worked in a Japanese office will readily recognize. For setting we are informed "Sasha is about to leave, but asks Kanda-san if there is anything more to do." The relationship between these characters has been established as part of Act 1, so that we know Sasha is an intern, and Kanda-san is her supervisor. The script involves practicing ritual expressions such as *o saki ni shitsurei shimasu* (lit. "excuse me for leaving ahead of you") and is learners' first introduction to the verb *arimasu* (to exist). In addition to a BTS point explaining *arimasu*, this scene also includes a BTS point that discusses the cultural expectations of a *senpai/kōhai* (roughly "mentor/mentee" or "senior/junior") relationship.

The BTS points are a focal element of the text, containing both detailed grammar explanations (conjugation paradigms, usage of particles, etc.) and more observational cultural points (sharing snacks at the office, Japan's prefectures, use of humor, etc.). While my experience is that most

textbooks push the introduction of honorifics into intermediate or even advanced level courses, *NOW!* introduces honorifics in Act 5, and prior to that already incorporates discussion of the various other structures which native speakers use in order to smooth social interactions. For example, in Act 2 Scene 2 we find a BTS point describing the multitude of functions for the word *chotto* (“a little”). This BTS is further divided into the following subheadings with discussion of each: “A. To soften the impact of what you say,” “B. Refusing,” “C. Avoiding the unpleasant” and “D. Getting someone’s attention.” This level of detailed analysis allows the authors to present the Japanese language with attention to the subtlety of discursive function from the beginning.

Accompanying the main text, the Activity Book contains exercises suitable for a variety of implementations. For each ACT there are “Practice” (*renshū*) activities for each individual Scene, followed by an “Assessment” (*hyōka*) section which contains review exercises for the Act as a whole. In the Practice sections for Speaking/Listening Scenes, the Activity Book first provides Comprehension Practice (*rikai renshū*), which checks whether one understands the content of an utterance or short conversation, then Performance Practice (*jitsuen renshū*) activities, which focus on production. Students work on these exercises using audio files from the *NOW!* website. Reading practice (*yomi renshū*) and Writing practice (*kaki renshū*) activities are paired with each Reading/Writing Scene. Finally, a typical Assessment section consists of listening comprehension exercises (*kiite miyō*), reading and writing practices with “Contextualized reading” (*yonde miyō*), “Dictation” (*kakitori*) and “Contextualized writing” (*kaite miyō*), “Dry run” (*tukatte miyō*) exercises (short hypothetical prompts asking students to produce an appropriate utterance for the situation), and “What do you know?” (*shitteru?*) which checks the students’ understanding of the BTS and BTL points.

These activities are designed for students to use as preparation before a class session in which they will be evaluated on their mastery of the content of the day’s Scene(s). The Activity Book is also a base from which instructors can design other assessments and class activities.

The Activity Book section corresponding to Act 4 Scene 1 is a representative example of exercises for the Speaking/Listening Scenes. In this Scene students have been newly introduced to past tense forms of each key word class. The exercises begin with a Comprehension Practice that simply asks students to confirm whether the utterances spoken on the audio file are past tense or non-past. Students can then check their

accuracy using the key at the back of the Activity Book (answers keys are provided for the Comprehension Practice activities only). The next three activities for this scene are Performance Practice, such as a drill in which you refute the speaker's negative assumptions about something in the past (A: "You didn't watch it?" B: "No, I watched it."). Each Performance Practice has a header confirming the language-task at hand, phrased as a practical discourse move rather than as a grammar drill, in this case "4-1-3P Refuting an idea (BTS1)"; and, like the Scenes themselves, each is accompanied by a brief set-up allowing the language to be situated in context: "Assure Nakamura-san, a club member who is a year older, that his negative assumptions are incorrect." Thus, we have a known association between the speakers as well as a signal indicating their relative social status. Both of these types of practice have easily accessible audio components which are found on the same web page as other resources for their corresponding Scene.

The *NOW!* website is a most valuable resource. Hosted by Brigham Young University, (<http://nihongonow.byu.edu>), it prioritizes ease of access. Students, instructors, and anyone else may access the complete audio files for both the textbook and the Activity Book without any additional purchase, and even without creating individual login credentials. The website section for each Scene includes audio files for the scene script itself, but also files for "build up" (allowing learners to engage in more effective oral practice by approaching longer utterances in chunks starting at the end and working backwards) and also "role play" (allowing learners to practice one side of a conversation while audio for the other speaker is provided). Each of these practice modes is further supported by a video slide-show which displays the Scene script as the audio plays.

The *NOW!* website also includes full glossaries for vocabulary introduced in the book, flashcard files for Quizlet, complete lists of BTS and BTL points, and links to additional resources for studying kanji and pronunciation. Instructors can also gain access (with verification) to an additional portion of the site providing teacher's guides and other support material. The site is ideally formatted for mobile use as well, meaning anyone with a smartphone can access the audio files and other support material on-the-go. The portrayal of the *NOW!* characters by actors in a professionally produced live-action drama series on the web brings them even more to life. Available on the textbook's main site or on YouTube, the *NihonGO NOW!* web series presents one key scene from each of the first twelve Acts in a smoothly edited short episode.

This textbook series is also available in ebook format, which is sometimes available at a reduced price depending on the retailer. Although the convenience of an ebook may appeal to many readers, this option also has significant drawbacks from a standpoint of classroom implementation. Students using the ebook cannot open and navigate to a desired passage as fast as with the hard copy. Some will prefer to bring phones or other mobile devices to class rather than a full computer, and on phones in particular the navigation is cumbersome, and the viewable area of the page is reduced. Finally, because students use the *NOW!* website for audio files and other materials, it is difficult to switch back-and-forth between the website and the textbook itself using one device.

In summation, *NihonGO NOW!* is a comprehensive, well-structured, and authentic learning system available for the Japanese language. For instructors who prioritize the development of verbal skills there is an abundance of model conversations and drills, including audio. For those whose highest concern is providing students with detailed cultural and linguistic information, they will find insightful and clear discussion Behind the Scenes. Finally, *NOW!*'s dynamic web series and relatable characters help instructors create a lively classroom and promote the intrinsic motivation in students to engage with the material.

Tenkō: Cultures of Political Conversion in Transwar Japan

Edited by **Irena Hayter, George T. Sipos, and Mark Williams.**
Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series. New York:
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021. xliii, 245 pp. \$ 44.95
paperback, \$170.00 hardcover, \$33.71 e-book.

Reviewed by **Alex Bates**

This edited volume is a welcome addition to English language scholarship on *tenkō*. *Tenkō* is typically thought of as the public renunciation of leftist thought by leading intellectuals and writers of the proletarian movement in the 1930s. The most famous example, discussed at length in the introduction and a few chapters, is that of Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika, significant leaders of the movement who issued a joint