

Japanese Language and Literature

Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese

jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 60 | Number 1 | April 2026 | DOI: 10.5195/jll.2026.448

ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

Gakushūsha o shiensuru nihongo shidōhō 学習者を支援する日本語指導法 [*Learner-Supportive Methods for Teaching Japanese*] Volume I: Pronunciation • Vocabulary • Reading • Listening.

By Yukiko Hatasa. Tokyo: Kurosio Publishers, 2022. 269 pp. ¥3080.

Gakushūsha o shiensuru nihongo shidōhō 学習者を支援する日本語指導法 [*Learner-Supportive Methods for Teaching Japanese*] Volume II: Grammar • Conversation • Writing • Integrated Learning.

By Yukiko Hatasa. Tokyo: Kurosio Publishers, 2023. 358 pp. ¥3850.

Reviewed by

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Since the grammar-translation method was introduced to foreign language instruction in the nineteenth century, teachers have tried a variety of methods and approaches. In particular, numerous methods have been proposed over the past seventy years with the emergence and development of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a distinct research discipline. For busy classroom teachers, however, it can be difficult to keep up with this research, interpret its implications, and incorporate it into everyday classroom practice.

To support classroom teachers in this endeavor, Yukiko Hatasa—who has engaged in SLA research as well as Japanese language teaching and teacher education in the United States, Australia, and Japan for over forty years—offers this two-volume series, *Gakushūsha o shiensuru nihongo shidōhō*. Drawing from research in various fields, including SLA, language pedagogy, linguistics, and education, the series introduces research-based teaching methods and approaches designed to support



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Japanese language learning. The series also provides a wide range of sample classroom activities for learners with various backgrounds and characteristics. By consistently linking research and practice, the series aspires to serve as a comprehensive, practical reference for teachers of varying experience levels across diverse educational contexts.

The series comprises eight chapters across two volumes. Volume I covers pronunciation, vocabulary, reading, and listening. Volume II addresses grammar, speaking, writing, and integrated learning.

Chapter 1 focuses on pronunciation instruction. It explains why pronunciation instruction matters and introduces key concepts—Japanese consonants, vowels, mora, rhythm, pitch accent, and intonation—often through comparison with English. It identifies phonological features that pose difficulties for learners with different first languages (L1) (Table 1–4, p. 36) and offers sample classroom activities and online tools for teaching these features. The chapter also discusses instructional techniques such as shadowing.

Chapter 2 addresses vocabulary instruction. It begins by defining vocabulary and its components. It discusses the vocabulary size Japanese learners need for communication and outlines the processes involved in vocabulary acquisition. The chapter further examines characteristics of Japanese vocabulary and the relationship between kanji knowledge and vocabulary development, including examples of typical errors made by L1 Chinese learners. It then discusses how to choose which vocabulary to teach and introduces approaches, techniques, and materials for kanji and vocabulary instruction aimed at expanding learners' lexical resources (e.g., Table 2–12, p. 111; Table 2–14, p. 125; Table 2–15, pp. 126–128).

Chapter 3 discusses reading instruction. It first examines purposes of reading, characteristics of fluent reading, and processes and strategies involved in reading and comprehension. The chapter describes issues learners face at different proficiency levels and outlines the skills and strategies required to develop reading proficiency. The chapter also addresses how to select appropriate texts and teach reading strategies, and it introduces three-step reading instruction tailored to proficiency level and learners' kanji backgrounds, with sample pre-, main, and post-reading tasks. It then introduces more recent approaches to reading instruction, including reciprocal teaching and collaborative strategic reading. Additionally, the chapter introduces extensive reading as an activity outside the classroom and provides a list of useful websites for extensive reading (Table 3–3, pp. 165–166).

Chapter 4 is devoted to listening instruction. It begins by describing characteristics of spoken language and explaining fundamental differences between listening and reading. It outlines the listening process and the skills and strategies necessary for fluent listening. The chapter also addresses how to select listening materials for learners at different proficiency levels and highlights aspects of listening that require particular attention. It then introduces methods for developing the basic abilities and strategies required for effective listening comprehension, including intensive listening, selective listening, interactive listening, and extensive listening, along with sample classroom activities for each method.

Chapter 5 (the first chapter in Volume 2) addresses grammar instruction. It reviews research on the difficulty of grammatical items and on learners' developmental sequences in L2 acquisition. From this perspective, it points to limitations of conventional, cumulative, and linear approaches to grammar learning, promoted by methods such as Focus on Forms (FonFs) and Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP). In light of recent research, the chapter reexamines how to select and sequence grammatical items to be taught. It introduces four approaches to grammar instruction—output-based, input-based, deductive, and inductive—along with examples of classroom tasks and exercises. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach are also discussed. The chapter concludes with important considerations in introducing and explaining grammar, emphasizing that teachers should not rely solely on textbook explanations but instead provide clear, concise pedagogical grammar explanations suited to their learners and contexts.

Chapter 6 focuses on speaking instruction. It examines speaking in terms of communicative functions and types of speaking, including monologue, dialogue, and conversation. It also reviews communicative competence with reference to major models (those of Hymes; Canale and Swain; Bachman and Palmer; and Celce-Murcia) and discusses key components of speaking ability—such as fluency and appropriateness—as well as challenges that learners encounter in L2 speech production and development.¹ The chapter then summarizes goals, approaches, and instructional targets for speaking instruction and introduces teaching methods tailored to different types of speaking and proficiency levels. It emphasizes that speaking instruction should focus not only on accuracy, but also on conveying information and messages using language that is appropriate for the given context, in order to achieve the communicative goals at hand and build relationships with others.

Chapter 7 is devoted to writing instruction. It begins by considering what activities are included in “writing,” and it compares Japanese and English texts to discuss purposes, formats, and text types. The chapter addresses issues central to Japanese writing instruction, including differences between written and spoken language, orthographic conventions, and text structures such as expository/persuasive, descriptive, and narrative writing. Drawing on research into the writing process, it also outlines characteristics and processes of effective writing. The chapter then explains four approaches to writing instruction: a product approach, a process approach, a genre approach, and a process-genre approach. It also introduces collaborative writing and feedback practices. It discusses the advantages and disadvantages of teacher and peer feedback and provides sample rubrics intended to make peer feedback more effective (e.g., Table 7–7, p.475; Table 7–9, p. 499). The chapter concludes with key considerations and sample classroom activities for writing instruction at different proficiency levels.

Chapter 8 explores integrated learning, which involves instruction that combines multiple skills. It presents three representative approaches—Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)—and explains their historical backgrounds, underlying principles, and the types of instructional models each includes. The chapter addresses how to incorporate these approaches into Japanese language classrooms and how to improve instruction according to learners’ proficiency levels and characteristics.

Despite the breadth of coverage, the series is well-organized, cohesive, and easy to navigate. The contents are organized primarily by skill area, which is intuitive for language teachers. Each chapter follows a consistent structure, moving from key concepts and definitions to Japanese-specific considerations, learner development and challenges in L2 acquisition, instructional approaches and methods, and sample classroom activities. This consistency makes it easy for readers to consult chapters selectively, depending on immediate needs (e.g., when planning listening activities, designing a writing task, or reconsidering how to sequence grammar points). Although the amount of information may feel overwhelming for some pre-service teachers, the series is especially well suited as a resource for in-service Japanese language educators around the world.

Taken together, the two volumes make significant contributions to the field. First, the series foregrounds the question of how to support learners

through instruction and presents teaching methods and approaches alongside supporting research evidence and concrete activity examples. Hatasa emphasizes that effective instruction begins with understanding learners' developmental processes and the challenges they are likely to encounter, rather than relying on textbooks alone. No single textbook can adequately address the diverse needs of all learners. Accordingly, textbooks are best understood as instructional resources rather than complete solutions to teaching and learning. By linking research and practice, the volumes encourage Japanese language educators to reflect critically on their own teaching and to align instructional goals, teaching methods, and classroom activities in ways that facilitate second/foreign language (L2) acquisition. At the same time, the series acknowledges the realities of teachers' workloads: it can be difficult to keep up with research, break long-standing routines, and incorporate new approaches. Hatasa therefore recommends making changes incrementally, where possible. In this regard, the discussion of integrated learning approaches such as CBI, CLIL, and TBLT is particularly beneficial. These approaches draw on multiple skills and can create synergistic benefits for language development. Moreover, multi-skill activities are often more authentic and closer to real-world tasks. The series thus helps Japanese language teachers think beyond their textbooks and strengthen instruction by incorporating research-based practices to support L2 learners.

Second, the series offers a wealth of information, including linguistic knowledge and the theoretical background of language acquisition, that is relevant to L2 instruction. The series discusses features of Japanese that require special pedagogical attention. This is particularly helpful because teaching methods and approaches are often first developed and discussed in relation to alphabetic languages, particularly English. Consequently, teachers of non-alphabetic languages often find themselves needing to undertake an additional step in adapting and applying these approaches to their respective target languages. Furthermore, the extensive literature reviews in each chapter can help scholars form future research agendas and encourage further exploration of these topics.

Third, the series provides a rich set of resources, including tables and lists describing challenges and typical errors in Japanese acquisition, instructional options, and sample activities. These points are presented with attention to proficiency levels and learner characteristics, including first language and distinctions between kanji-background and non-kanji-background learners. This specificity helps teachers envision what

instruction might look like when incorporating the approaches introduced in the series.

If another volume were to be published in this series, it would be valuable to see a chapter devoted to assessment. Assessment takes place in all educational contexts, regardless of age, setting, or content. Therefore, topics including types of assessment, proficiency standards such as the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), research on assessment, and how assessment can be used to support L2 learning would be of great interest to language educators around the world.

In summary, *Gakushūsha o shiensuru nihongo shidōhō* introduces recent methods and approaches for L2 instruction alongside the theories and research supporting them and provides numerous sample classroom activities. By integrating theory and practice, the series guides teachers in understanding what should be taught, why it matters in the context of Japanese, and how instruction can effectively facilitate learners' L2 acquisition. At the same time, Hatasa underscores that no single method fits all contexts; teachers must understand their learners and make deliberate instructional choices. Ultimately, each classroom teacher needs to consider the purpose and function of classroom activities and design lessons accordingly so that instruction can achieve greater impact in a given educational context. In this regard, the series is an invaluable reference for teachers serving in diverse educational contexts.

NOTES

- ¹ Dell Hymes, "On Communicative Competence," in *Sociolinguistics*, ed. by John Pride and Janet Holmes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 269-85; Michael Canale and Merrill Swain, "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing," *Applied Linguistics* 1 (1980): 1-47; Lyman F. Bachman and Adrian S. Palmer, *Language Testing in Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Marianne Celce-Murcia, "Rethinking the Role of Communicative Competence in Language Teaching" in *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning*, ed. by Eva Alcón Soler and Maria Pilar Safont Jordà, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 41-57.