

Learner perceptions and the learning process of dialogue assessment: An analysis of data from the Action Research Zero (ARZ) Workshop

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Abstract

This paper investigates and analyzes learners' perceptions and processes of dialogue assessment during a project in which I took part, named Practical Studies: Action Research Zero (ARZ) Workshop. The Action Research Zero Workshop's aim was for students to be able to express their thoughts and understand others. The learners would discuss and write about their interests, learning phrases and new vocabulary through the activities. At the final stage of the workshop, the learners were asked to discuss and decide which criteria to evaluate their reports. From the analysis, the following points emerged: 1) they found meaning in being able to understand the concept of what the Action Research Zero Workshop ought to be, and the evaluation criteria, presented in the second week by the teacher, were redefined by the learner through a series of activities; 2) the students achieved linguistic competence while they even upgrade the targeted evaluation criteria and goals through the learning process. I stress the importance of the class design which acknowledges various interpretations and allows participants to discuss their values freely regarding processes and independent evaluation practices.

Keywords: evaluation criteria, linguistic competence, educational philosophy, Zero beginners

【キーワード】 評価基準、言語能力、教育観、ゼロビギナー

1 Paradigm shift in evaluation within Japanese language education

Japanese language practice has witnessed a shift in learning/teaching format since the 1990s. Based on this shift, there have been various studies reported such as portfolio evaluation or self-evaluation as criticisms and alternative evaluation methods to orthodox knowledge-driven evaluation. However, scholars have yet to explore the linkage between these new evaluation methodologies and educational philosophies. Indeed, there are many Japanese language classes that presented a class design, in principle, as non-teacher-driven, focusing on learners' initiative and collaboration, while conducting the examination at the end of class. These examples raised the issue of the gap between educational philosophy practice, and evaluation.

Hosokawa (2004) emphasizes the importance of shifting the evaluation method from teacher-driven to a mutual consensus model between teachers and learners in order to bridge such gap. Allowing learners to initiate the evaluation process may, as Hosokawa suggests, change power relationships in evaluation, unlike conventional evaluation where learners always wait to be evaluated. Ichishima (2009) points out the problems of an evaluation methodology where teachers unilaterally set the evaluation criteria and quantify the learning process as an academic record. She also emphasizes the importance of dialogue to share the evaluation criteria and its purpose among the class participants. Again, Ichishima (2014) proposes an alternative evaluation philosophy and method as *dialogic assessment* to overcome the issues abovementioned. *Dialogic assessment* is based on dynamic/relational linguistic ability, characterized by plurality and disputation of meanings, process-oriented,

inseparability from learning at one's own initiative. The *dialogic assessment* focuses on dialogue between teachers and learners to discuss evaluation criteria based on the learning context to improve criteria, targeting the intersubjective understanding of evaluation criteria.

This study is to demonstrate an actual scene of the Japanese language practice employing the *dialogic assessment* mentioned above. In particular, it examines and demonstrates the actual perception and learning process of the Japanese language beginners (zero-beginners) who participated in *dialogic assessment* activities.

2 The summary of practice

The summary of this workshop presented in the 2016 leaflet reported in Mariotti and Ichishima (2017), was as follows.

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: 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.

3 The detail of *dialogic assessment*

We conducted *dialogic assessment* in this training as follows.

1. Discussion about the produced final reports of every group: The class participants discussed reports produced by each learner and gave comments on positive points as well as points to improve.
2. Setting of evaluation criteria: In the second week, the teachers proposed a) originality, b) acceptance of comments from others, and c) logicity as draft evaluation points. The learners then decided how to evaluate the report, prior to the learners reaching a conclusion; the teachers first asked the learners about what would constitute 'a good' report for this class. The learner in return wrote the answer in sticky notes. (one criteria per one note). They put these notes on a large paper to share with the group. Thereafter, all groups together were asked to sort these notes into categories to conceptualize, and criteria were settled upon discussing about them with the whole class.
3. Evaluation: the learners evaluated each report with comments based on the selected evaluation points and shared their evaluation comments within their own group.

4 The data to be analyzed

This study conducted a qualitative analysis on class conversation data and learners' work as a sample. It analyzed class conversations data extracting mostly *dialogic assessment* activity part. Based on this analysis, it demonstrates how the zero-beginners participated in the evaluation process and what perception they had had of the activity.

5 The actual outcome of *dialogic assessment*

5.1 Evaluation points set by the learners

The following are the evaluation points, which the learners themselves decided that they should evaluate and the reasons for such a choice. Japanese sentences are quoted from students' stickers, which were written in Japanese.

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な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、私たちはどのようなきもちがあります。

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

- ・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)

- ・ぐるーぷ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 (Change)

・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 I understood it later.)

5.2 Reasoning of the evaluation criteria decided

【オリジナリティ (Originality)】

学習者 A : オリジナリティ。なぜなら皆さんはオリジナルのテーマを考えました。オリジナルは自分自身を表します。表します è ‘rappresenta’. (自分自身) vuol dire ‘se stessi’ (自分を意味する)

チューター A : Non è la stessa cosa di (それは同じものではありません) 自身を

学習者 B : ***

チューター A : No, quello di un altro (いいえ, 別の)

チューター B : fiducia (信頼)

市嶋 : 後で、みんなでします。

学習者 A : 皆さんはレポートで自分の興味を表現します、しました。

Learner A: Originality. Because everyone thought about an original theme. Originality expresses his/her own self. Arawashimasu è ‘Rappresenta’ (representing). Jishin Vuol dire ‘se stessi’ (means ‘own self’).

Tutor A: Non è la stessa cosa di (It's not the same thing as) ‘Own’.

Learner B: ***

Tutor A: No, quello di un altro (No, that of another.)

Tutor B : Fiducia (trust)

Ichishima: We will conduct it together later.

Learner A: Everyone expresses their own interest. Expressed.

The conversation above reveals that the learner A, often using Italian words, tried to explore what he wanted to say and express it. Then, he said originality is important because everyone had expressed their own theme, own interest during the activity. Again, he defines ‘originality’ as expressing himself.

As mentioned above, the teachers had proposed ‘originality’ as initial evaluation criteria. During the activity process, the learners defined the concept of ‘originality’ and re-acknowledged.

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

学習者 B : 一番、対話への関心がたかりました、高まりました。そして、二番、気持ち。皆さんは自分の気持ちについて話しました。

市嶋 : うん、分かりました？

学習者 B : Tutti hanno parlato dei propri sentimenti (誰もが自分の気持ちを話しました)

学習者 C : Come me! 私も～!

Learner B : First, it did grow interest on dialogue. Second, feeling. Everyone has expressed their own feelings.

Ichishima: Well, did you understand?

Learner B: Tutti hanno parlato dei propri sentimenti (Everyone has expressed their own feelings).

Learner C: Me too.

The learner B said that expressing their own feelings had grown interest in dialogue, and learner C agreed with it. This conversation reveals that the learners appreciated the process of sharing their own feelings. And, the learner C mentioned about discussion as follows.

学習者 C : 私の友達と私は自分を考えました。皆さんは気持ちを申し上げました。

市嶋 : うん。

学習者 D : 申し上げ?

市嶋 : 分かりました? いいですね。

チューターB : 誰か同じような人?

チューターA : Qualcuno ha capito? (みんな理解しましたか?)

市嶋 : 分かった? 今, Cさんの、ポイント分かりましたか?

学習者 C : みなさんは気持ちを申し上げました。

学習者 D : あ、申し上げ?

市嶋 : 言いました、言いました。

チューターA : Scusate (すみません) 言う 'dire', semplicemente forma molto cortese

学習者 D : Ah, ok

学習者 C : (前略) 意見の交換、対話は有意義でした。

Learner C: My friends and I thought about our own self. Everyone expressed their feelings.

Ichishima: OK

Learner D: Expressed?

Ichishima: Did you understand? Good.

Tutor B: Who else agrees with them?

Tutor A: Qualcuno ha capito (Did everyone understand)?

Ichishima: Everyone got it? Did everyone get C's point?

Learner C: Everyone expressed own feelings.

Learner D: Expressed?

Ichishima: Said, said.

Tutor A: Scusate. (Excuse me) 'Dire', semplicemente è la forma molto cortese ('Say', simply it is very polite form).

Learner D: Ah, ok

Learner C: (Omitted) discussion or dialogue was very meaningful.

Learner C had said that ‘My friends and I thought about our own self. Everyone expressed their feelings.’, before concluding ‘discussion, or dialogue was very meaningful.’ In addition, the conversion reveals that learner C regarded sharing her own feelings, in other words, ‘discussion’ and ‘dialogue’ as meaningful.

学習者 E : 私の日本語と考えを良くなりました。
 発話者不明 : あー
 学習者 E : 2 番、私の深い思い、受（じゅ）しました。
 チューター A : ok
 学習者 E : 思い、受（じゅ）しました。
 チューター A : 表しました。表します。表しました。
 学習者 E : 3 番、新しい人々、あって彼らの考えを聞きました。なぜなら
 ***ました。

Learner E: My Japanese language and thought have improved.
 Unknown: Ah
 Learner E: Secondly, my deep thought, I got it.
 Tutor A: OK
 Learner E: Thought, I got it.
 Tutor A: Expressed, express, expressed.
 Learner E: Thirdly, I met new people and heard their own ideas, because ***.

Moreover, the learner E explained the importance of discussion. He said, ‘my Japanese language and thought have improved’, through expressing his own feelings and listening to the others’ ideas. The conversation reveals that he regarded discussion with others as meaningful, improving his language and thought.

5.3. Perception of activities

The conversation below focuses on the part where the participants mentioned their activity as a whole, to reveal their perception of the activities.

学習者 D : じゃあ、このワークショップの大切ポイントはやる気が、やる気が出た事です。Come si dice（なんていう）・・・自己？自己が分かるからです。そしてクリエイティビティも大切です。自己の感情について話すからです。最初のポイントは。Dopo ve lo spiego tutto in italiano（後で全てイタリア語で説明します）
 学習者 G : Grazie（ありがとう）
 学習者 D : 協力です。他人の目の中に自己の真実があるからです。
 学習者 A : Non ho capito（分かりませんでした。）
 学習者 D : La prima roba che ho detto（私が言った最初のもの）やる気が出た事です。È la voglia di mettersi in gioco, la voglia di fare.自己がかわるからです。
 市嶋 : 変わる？ 分かる？
 学習者 A : 分かる Per capire se stessi. Poi ho scritto（自分を理解する。それから私は書きました）クリエイティビティも大切です。自己の感情について、自己 - sempre ‘se stessi’（いつも自分）自己の感情 ‘Sentimenti’について話すからです。Per parlare dei propri sentimenti. Poi（あなたの気持ちについて話すために、それから）最初のポイント、協力です。Cioè

- abbiamo detto ‘in collaborazione’. E ho scritto ‘motivazione’ (私たちは協働で語り、そして私は動機を書きました) 他人の目に、他人の目の中に quindi (というと) 自己の真実 Quindi ‘Il proprio vero io sta negli occhi altrui’.
- 学習者 F : 意見交換、他人を話します。新しい意見を見出す。Cioè parlando con gli altri si scoprono cose nuove. E poi, (つまり他の人と話し、新しいものを手に入れるということです)
- Learner D: The important point of this workshop was to get us motivated. Come si dice (Such as) ..., it allows us to understand ourselves. Dopo ve lo spiego tutto in italiano (I will explain all in Italian later).
- Learner G: Thank you
- Learner D: Point is, cooperation. One will find truth about his/herself in the eyes of the others.
- Learner A: Non ho capito (I didn’t understand).
- Learner D: La prima roba che ho detto, (What I said first is) this workshop motivated me. È la voglia di mettersi gioco, la voglia di fare (*It is a matter of putting ourselves on the line, to desire to get involved*). Through this activity, I understand (change?) myself.
- Ichishima: Understand? Change?
- Learner A: Understand. Per capire se stessi. Poi ho scritto. (I understand myself, that was what I wrote) Creativity is also important. One will explain his/her sentimenti (feelings), always ones’ feelings. Per parlare dei propri sentimenti. Poi (To talk about your feelings), and the first point, cooperation. Cioè abbiamo detto ‘collaborazione’. E ho scritto la mia motivazione (We discussed together, and so I wrote about my motivation). In others’ eyes, quindi (that is) inside their eyes. Quindi il proprio vero io sta negli occhi altrui (truth of myself).
- Learner F : Discussion is to talk about the others, so the participants find new ideas. Cioè parlando con altri si scoprono cose nuove. (That means, during the discussion the participants talk with the others and get new things).

The learner D described the purpose of activity by mixing Japanese and Italian. He mentions that explaining own feeling helped him to understand himself, which motivated him to do the activity. Again, the conversation reveals that he regards creativity and cooperation as important by saying that ‘one will find the truth about his/herself in the eyes of the others’.

- 学習者 G : 間のその経験は私のテーマ再、発見します Grande esperienza ho scoperto la mia tema (私のテーマを発見した素晴らしい経験) その経験はとても xxxx でした。
- マリオッティ : 経験 significa? 経験は何ですか? 経験?
- 学習者 G: Esperienza (経験) だから私は指輪物語の関係を分かりました。尚、アレッサンドロの意見も分かりました。Anche Alessandro è stato utile per me (またアレッサンドロの意見は私に有用でした) だから今私にとって私の意見はすべて奇抜です。Cioè essere innovativa (それは革新的であることです)
- 市嶋 : すべて、き、ばつ?
- 学習者 G : 奇抜です。
- マリオッティ : すべて? 奇抜?

市嶋： 奇抜って何か、変というかおかしい。変わってる。
 マリオッティ： 彼女はオリジナルと言いたかった。
 市嶋： じゃあ、オリジナル？
 マリオッティ： オリジナル。
 学習者 G： Si (はい)

Learner G: This experience allowed me to re-discover my theme. Grande esperienza. Ho scoperto il mio tema (This great experience where I discovered my theme), was really ***.

Mariotti: Experience significa (What does 'experience' mean)? Experience is what? Experience?

Learner G: Esperienza (Experience). That is why I understand my relationship with *the Lord of the Ring*. Anche Alessandro è stato utile per me (Alessandro's opinion too was useful to me), and his opinion was useful to me. Therefore, my opinion now is all very 'kibatsu' (eccentric) for me, cioè essere innovativa (because it's innovative).

Ichishima: All kibatsu?

Learner G: Kibatsu.

Mariotti: All kibatsu?

Ichishima: The word *kibatsu* means 'eccentric', or 'freaky'. Very strange.

Mariotti: She wanted to say 'original'.

Ichishima: So original?

Mariotti: Original.

Learner G: Si (Yes).

The learner G defines the activity as the great experience to re-discover her own theme. By hearing others' views, she deepened the understanding of the linkage between her and *The Lord of the Rings*—her report theme—and managed to reach original ideas according to her.

学習者 G： È solo mia, è diverso. Il confronto con Alessandro è stato interessante
 なぜなら私は新観点を見出しました。

マリオッティ： 観点はなに？新しいは新しい nuovo 観点？マルコさん、観点？

学習者 A： Non lo so

学習者 G： その自分は面白かったです。なぜなら私は新、います
 Praticamente ho scoperto dei nuovi aspetti (私は実際に新しい要素
 を発見しました)

マリオッティ： 新要素？

学習者 G： Dovrebbe essere 'aspetti', non so. È un verbo?

学習者 H： Nuove aspettative (新しい期待)

学習者 G： Sarebbe 'nuovi aspetti' (それは新しい要素でしょう)

マリオッティ： 新しい要素を見出しました。ですね。ありがとうございます。
 (拍手)

Learner G: È solo mia, è diverso. Il confronto con Alessandro è stato interessante (Only it is mine and different. Dialoguing with Alessandro was interesting). Because I have discovered a new perspective.

Mariotti: What is 'new perspective'? New, nuovo 'perspective'? Marco, 'perspective'?

- Learner A: Non lo so (I don't know)
 Learner G: I found really interesting. Because there it was a new me. Praticamente ho scoperto dei nuovi aspetti (Indeed, I have discovered new aspects).
 Mariotti: New aspects?
 Learner G : Dovrebbe essere 'aspetti', non so. (Should be 'aspects', I don't know.) Verbo?
 Learner H: Nuove 'aspettative' (New expectation)
 Learner G : Sarebbe nuovi 'aspetti' (That would be new aspects)
 Mariotti: You have discovered new aspects, right? Thank you very much.
 (crap)

Again, the learner G mentions that she discovered new aspects for the theme during the activity. The participants gave a round of applause for her comments, showing that the participants appreciated her view on the purpose of the activity.

6 Conclusion

This study has analyzed the perception and learning process of the activity for the zero-beginners who participated in *dialogic assessment* activities.

The outputs of the learners illustrate the evaluation standard set by the learners and their reasoning. At the beginning of the activity, in the second week, the teachers proposed three evaluation criteria, 1) originality, 2) acceptance of comments from others, and 3) logicity. The learners had revised these proposals to 1) originality, 2) Was the exchange of opinions cool? Why?, 3) Even if the themes are different, the feeling is the same, 4) Comparison of the thought and 5) *Changement* (change).

Again, the learners themselves provided reasoning for each criteria. Moreover, the class conversation data reveal the process where the learners clarified and revised the criteria and activity purpose proposed by the teachers, with their own words.

The learners on whom this study focused were zero-beginners. As the outputs of the learners and class conversation data show, they sometimes use vocabulary/grammar that are considered advanced. Despite having little previous learning experience in the Japanese language, zero-beginners can cooperatively develop expressions to express themselves as long as they have the willingness to do so. The learners had learnt new vocabulary and grammar through project activities and finally managed to establish evaluation criteria.

As shown, securing place to develop evaluation criteria cooperatively is important when conducting the *dialogic assessment*. Besides, such a place requires annulling teachers' exclusive authority to set evaluation criteria. Again, what is more important is not simply aiming to develop 'perfect' evaluation criteria, but rather to deepen understanding of the reasoning of the criteria under mutual cooperation at the learners' own initiative. The participants of the activity should develop and revise the interpretation of the evaluation throughout the activity. As illustrated, even zero-beginners with little experience of learning the Japanese language can participate in *dialogic assessment* activities. During the activity, they, often mixing their mother-tongue Italian, expressed what they wanted to say in Japanese. Their conversations reveal that as long as they have themes and contents to talk about, and willingness to express, they can co-construct and engage with fruitful dialogue. That is, the most important elements are enough content to facilitate such fruitful dialogue and their strong desire to express.

The scholars started providing the philosophy of evaluation and logical suggestion based on dynamics and relationship of linguistic ability since the later 1990s. However, this linguistic ability theory has remained conceptual, with few reports about case studies based on theory

reported. So far the discussion about issues on evaluation had left theory-driven. The author will analyze this issue using practical studies which set specific issues on the classroom scene as an analytical viewpoint to be explored.

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