

Nihongojin Connect!

Issue No.5, December 2023

coined from NIHONGO (Japanese language) and JIN (person)
- refers to native/non-native individuals involved in Japanese Language Education

Hirogari ひろがり

As the memory of the COVID-19 pandemic has faded, The Japan Foundation, Manila (JFM) is back to its full operation. It has always been our thrust to reach out and extend support to Nihongo speakers and enthusiasts not only from the metropolitan areas of the Philippines, but also from the far-flung provinces through cultural events and language training courses. This edition of the Nihongojin Connect! centers around the theme, 「ひろがり」(Hirogari), or the expansion of people-to-people connections. Let us share the connections we have seen and made among the Nihongojin communities throughout the Philippines and beyond this year.

Director's Message	1
Nihongojin Support	2
JFT-BASIC	8
Hello & Goodbye	12,26
Training in Urawa	13
Nihongojin Across the Philippines.	14
CJH	18
Nihongo Partners	20
EPA	24



Nihongojin Connect!

Message from the Director



The year 2023 marks the 50th commemorative year of ASEAN-Japan relations. To celebrate this milestone, JFM participated in arranging several events, namely YAMATO THE DRUMMERS OF JAPAN Live! Philippine Tour 2023, The ASEAN-Japan Youth Forum 2023: Take Actions for Social Change, and ITO KASHITARO ASEAN Tour 2023. I hope many of you were able to attend and enjoy these events, as I firmly believe that events like these contribute to the strengthening of our transformative and forward-looking friendship.

This year, our Japanese Language programs are back in full throttle, creating a wide range of opportunities to cultivate the Nihongojin-to-Nihongojin connection across the Philippines and beyond. As we thrive in the post COVID-19 period, JFM will work hard to create more exciting opportunities for all Nihongojin to come together.

SUZUKI Ben

Director
The Japan Foundation, Manila

About the Nihongojin Support Team



The Nihongojin Support (NS) Team provides support and means to connect the community of Nihongo learners, teachers, and institutions in the Philippines. Building a reflective professional community of Nihongo teachers in the Philippines is the primary goal of the NS Team. Supporting the objective, the team has been focusing on teacher capacity development by utilizing the Marugoto courses as a platform. Related activities include the Sensei no Wa (Teachers' Circle), the biannual Philippine Nihongo Teachers' Forum (PNTF), and events for Nihongo learners, like the Nihongo Speech Contest and Oshaberi Salon.



Sharing Ideas for Innovative Teaching: 37th PNTF in Davao

The Association of Filipino Nihongo Teachers (AFINITE), in partnership with JFM, held the 37th PNTF in Davao from November 17 to 19, 2023. Nihongo teachers from different regions in the Philippines - from Baguio in the north and Bukidnon from the south-attended the forum. The forum entailed presentations that expand on the theme, “Unleashing Creativity in the Digital World: Innovative Activities for Nihongo Learners,” starting with keynote speaker Dr. Stella Marie Arcenas (Chair, Department of Languages, Literature and Arts, Ateneo de Davao University) conveying that creativity is also a matter of social factors, and that language teachers must seek authenticity to be able to impart to learners the communicative ability to navigate the world.

The presentations that followed captured this essential paradigm. Topics ranged from: 1) Adult Learning Principles for Digital Games, 2) Micro-vlogs that foster the new ‘viewing’ language macro skill, 3) Digital Creativity for Teaching through utilizing platforms such as Discord and mediums such as podcasts, and 4) Technology Application in the Classroom featuring various game-based Nihongo learning activities for high school students. After which, select teachers and a representative from the Association of Nihongo Teachers in the Visayas (ANT-V) shared updates on how Nihongo learning resources, such as the IRODORI, have shaped their language classrooms along with a response from JFM representatives. During the second day, participants were given the chance to practically apply their

learnings through a collaborative workshop. In three groups facilitated by the speakers, attendees discussed, conceptualized, and presented activities that they could use in their classrooms – both digital and face-to-face.

In closing, JFM Deputy Director TANAKA Yojiro conveyed that the forum proved that creativity comes in various shapes and forms. What might count as creative for one educational setting may differ from another. Precisely because

of this, collaboration as educators takes on a new importance. Echoing the same sentiment, Senior Japanese Language Education Advisor FUJIMITSU Yuko shared that teachers are ‘generators’ – active participants in the creative learning process. Indeed, in this digital age, teachers bear the vital role of harnessing the power of technology to encourage collaboration among colleagues and students who are their essential learning partners.

Marugoto Course for Teachers

JFM continues its mission in supporting Japanese-language education by offering language courses and teacher training courses. Striving to raise Nihongo proficiency and equip aspiring and practicing Japanese language educators with teaching skills, JFM took on the challenge of designing a course that aims to address both objectives. Thus, Marugoto A2-1 Module 1 Brush-up Course for Teachers was born.

The tagline “学習者として、先生として、いろいろ学ぼう! Sama-zama tayong matuto!” encompassed the two objectives. Utilizing the Marugoto A2-1 coursebook, participants can switch on their “student-mode” to brush up on their Nihongo skills, as well as observe the lesson under “teacher-mode” to experience the course from a teacher’s viewpoint. Moreover, “Teachers’ Corner” sessions are conducted throughout the course for learners to

develop their knowledge and skills as Nihongo teachers. Topics include: The JF Standard and the concept of the Can-do statements, the Bottom-Up and Top-Down teaching strategies, and Types of Assessments. The Teachers’ Corner sessions are not just lectures but also opportunities for the participants to reflect, discuss, and reassess the ideas presented about the topic.

The course also serves as a venue for the JFM course instructors to level up on their teacher competencies by facilitating the class activities and mentoring each participant through individual consultation sessions.

The course runs twice weekly online, via Zoom, from September 1, 2023, to January 30, 2024. We look forward to the prospect of the participants becoming caring and effective Nihongo teachers.



Scan the QR Code to learn more about MARUGOTO!



Let's talk! Oshaberi Salon!

Meet Juan!

Juan is a Nihongojin. He has somehow gotten used to the language, being able to listen to spoken Nihongo and reading familiar characters. However, when Juan tries to converse in Japanese, he realizes he still can't speak as well as he wants. Seeking to improve his speaking skills, he stumbles upon JFM through their social media.



Oshaberi Salon is a free event that aims to create a space where Japanese language learners can practice their conversational skills with fellow learners interested in the same topic. Each session provides an opportunity to speak in Japanese, form new connections, and learn together with Nihongo speakers from various backgrounds. Let's find out more about Oshaberi Salon with Juan!



Hi! My name is Juan and I have been studying Nihongo by myself for a while. I'm looking for places where I could practice speaking in Japanese and I came across your page.

Would you happen to have any recommendations?

Konnichiwa! Thank you for reaching out to us. I'm JFM's Beri and I'm in charge of an event that you might be interested in.

At JFM, we organize an event called the "Oshaberi Salon," which aims to create a space where Japanese language learners can practice their conversational skills with fellow Nihongojin interested in a particular topic. Anyone who is at least a high school student can join!



Thank you for responding!

The event name stands for "Talking Salon," right? I'm interested in joining but...it will be my first time participating in an event like this and I tend to get nervous easily.

That's alright! We get a lot of first-time participants who say that as well, so we always have simple icebreakers during our sessions.

0.03 cm

Also, people from various backgrounds and different Nihongo levels join the event, so we do our best to create an environment where everyone can freely share stories.



こんにちは NIHONGOJIN SUPPORT



Oh I see! I'm curious to know what happens during the event. Can you tell me more about it?

Sure! After explaining a few guidelines along with the goal of Oshaberi Salon, we introduce subtopics with a sample conversation. Then, we group participants and let them converse as they like. We usually do two rounds of groupings.



I would like to join the next one to see how that happens. When will the next Oshaberi Salon be?

We generally hold the Oshaberi Salon online, monthly and during the evenings at around 6:00 to 7:30 PM. Some sessions are mixed-level while some are split among Beginners and Intermediate to Advanced levels.



Then, around 2-3 times a year, we hold mixed-level face-to-face sessions at our office in Makati.



Ah. I currently live far from Makati, so I won't be able to go there. For the online sessions, are there many chances to talk despite the event being online?

Of course! We always have interesting and relatable topics that get participants excited to practice their Nihongo. Here are some examples from our previous sessions for Oshaberi Salon.





Anime, Matsuri, and even Christmas - I wonder what the next topic would be! I see that Anime already had a part 2! How do I join the next session?

Yes, we always check suggestions from previous participants and consider the current seasons for our topics. We're also glad that you're interested in participating in the next session. To join, you only have to fill out a registration form by the deadline. We usually post the registration form on our social media and website a week before the event date.

Please visit www.jfmo.org.ph or www.facebook.com/jfmanila



Thank you so much for all the information. I will be waiting for the updates on your social media. 本当にありがとうございます!

You're welcome! I hope you can join us soon. いっしょにおしゃべりしましょうね!



Connecting NIHONGO Teachers

Sensei no Wa (先生の輪: Teachers' Circle) is an event that aims to facilitate resource and information exchange while building a community among Japanese-language teachers. It is open to aspiring, new, and practicing teachers who have been teaching all levels of Japanese-language and various types of learners.

This year, the Sensei no Wa was held three times online via Zoom with the following themes:

January 26, 2023: こんなときどうする?

April 27, 2023: 漢字って…こわい?

August 31, 2023: よんで! 正しく言えますか?

During the two-hour sessions, participants take part in interactive ice breaker activities, share their experiences both as a Nihongo learner and as a Nihongo teacher, and do brainstorming on how teaching concerns in the classroom can be addressed. Guided group work is conducted wherein participants come up with an output - this promotes active learning and collaboration among peers and provides a venue for the participants to practice their communications skills and gain feedback from others.

The latest Sensei no Wa was conducted under the theme Japanese Pronunciation for Communication. The program started with a Warm-up activity and participants were called upon to try saying Nihongo Tongue Twisters. This was followed by a skit demonstrating how to deal with mispronunciations during a lesson. The skit served as



こんにちは NIHONGOJIN SUPPORT

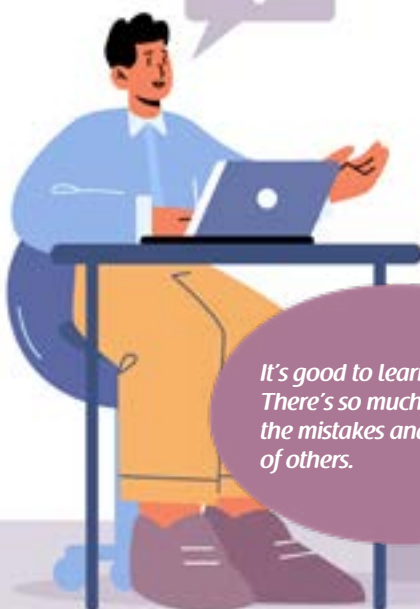
a springboard for the small group discussions wherein each group member shared their experiences on pronunciation issues encountered in the classroom, followed by a discussion on the best practices of each member in dealing with common pronunciation concerns of the students. Each small group then came up with another skit that incorporates newly shared techniques for handling a particular pronunciation concern. The presentation

of each group provided all participants with abundant ideas regarding pronunciation issues and diverse techniques on how to cope with these in the classroom. Based on participant feedback, Sensei no Wa continues its purpose of connecting teachers with one another to further enhance each other's teaching practice.

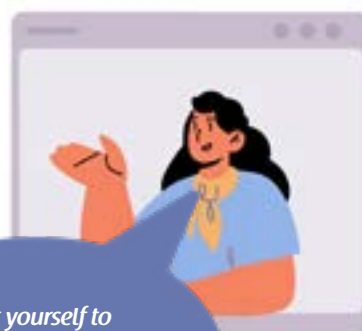


Rather than just explaining the actual class situation, we were able to show it clearly through skits or role-play. This is a good opportunity/avenue for short demo teaching. It's learning by doing.

It was a great experience to learn about various teaching resources we could all use in class. As a facilitator I really enjoyed listening to other teachers of all kinds – aspiring, new, and experienced.



It's good to learn together. There's so much to learn from the mistakes and experiences of others.



Don't limit yourself to learning new things with Nihongo. Develop yourself by attending this kind of activity.

About the JFT-Basic Team



The JFT-Basic (Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese) Team supports Japanese language education for those who wish to work in Japan under the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) visa. It disseminates information regarding JFT-Basic and its corresponding teaching material, IRODORI: Japanese for Life in Japan.

In 2023, the JFT-Basic Team reached a broader geographical coverage by visiting Japanese language schools in Bulacan, Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod, Camarines Sur and Davao. It also trained and reached out to potential

Nihongo Language teachers by targeting former Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) participants and the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme participants in its entry-level teacher training seminars.

To make Japanese language education more accessible for general learners, the Filipino version of all three IRODORI coursebooks, with their brand-new localized covers, was published in 2023. We hope IRODORI will reach more people and make their Japanese language learning experiences enjoyable.

Teacher Training Across the Philippines

The JFT-Basic Team has conducted teacher training seminars for Filipino Nihongo teachers online and onsite after the pandemic. The seminars have inspired Filipino Nihongo teachers with the learner-centered, communication-based approach embodied in IRODORI. They were developed by The Japan Foundation for foreign people to learn basic Japanese communication skills from A1 to A2 level of the JF Standards, which are needed for daily life and working in Japan.

This year, the team had a 4-month teacher training program online from February 11 to June 17. Six experienced teachers completed the program by discussing and sharing their ideas and concerns about teaching Nihongo with their methodology. They are continuing their professional development through their Mini Action Research even after the seminar. The team also held short-term seminars in Davao for experienced teachers (July 8, 15, and 16) and at the JFM office for those who have worked in Japan as TITP Trainees (July 29, August 5, and 12), English teachers, including the JET Program participants,



もっと知ろう JFT-BASIC



and other aspiring Nihongo teachers (October 7, 14, and 21). We are glad to meet those aspiring to become Nihongo teachers and create a place for their peer learning, developing, and networking. The participants commented, “The seminar helps me as an aspiring teacher to learn how to create a lesson plan according to the flow of the lesson/topic, which is very interesting and engaging to the students,” and “What I like most about this seminar is that I became connected with other teachers and future teachers thru IRODORI. Having connected with people with the same objective is such a blessing”. The team hopes the participants will develop this valuable network with their fellow Nihongo teachers. We will have more seminars and events planned in 2024!



Let's Keep on Learning! IRODORI Marathon in 2023

The JFT-Basic team at The Japan Foundation, Manila, is conducting a workshop-style course (Benkyokai) entitled the “IRODORI Marathon” with Filipino Nihongo teachers who want to learn about IRODORI and how to use it in their classes. It has been one year since the IRODORI Marathon started!

As its name and map suggest, IRODORI Marathon

conducted for long durations of time. We can advance little by little, stop and think, or talk with others to enjoy exploring a new method of teaching and learning. So far, 26 teachers have conducted IRODORI mock classes. We hope this will be an opportunity to study IRODORI together to deepen exchanges among Nihongo teachers.

Nihongo and Cultural Course for Nikkeijin Continues

In 2022, The Japan Foundation, Manila, together with Philippine Nikkei Jin Kai Rengokai, conducted a six-month Japanese language and cultural course for Nikkeijin (Japanese descendants), entitled “Nihongo & Cultural Lessons for Nikkeijin”. This was the first collaborative attempt to teach the Nikkeijin the Japanese language and culture to foster shared identity, expand employment opportunities, and strengthen the network among the Nikkeijin community.

In total, 21 young Nikkeijin attended the course; they were recommended by various chapters across the Philippines for their leadership potential and had little or no prior Japanese language learning experience. Conducted twice a week from September 2022, the online course consisted of a Japanese language session, a cultural session, and an individual guidance session. In the Japanese language session, IRODORI coursebooks were used to build conversational skills. The course focused on listening and speaking portions so that the participants could use what they learned in the course when they communicated with their family members in Japan. In the cultural session, the participants learned about similarities and differences between Japanese and Filipino cultures from instructors and from Nikkeijin senpai (senior fellow Nikkeijin).

The course was completed in March 2023, followed by a five-month weekly follow-up session. The course successfully improved the participants' Japanese language skills; they attained

A1 level Japanese skills and became able to talk about themselves with basic phrases confidently. Furthermore, the course nurtured the participants' identity as Nikkeijin. As many of the participants were fourth generation Nikkeijin, they did not grow up having the older generation of their family members speaking in Japanese or talking about Japan. The coursework and the network established throughout the course period built their self-awareness about their linkages to Japan, and some of the participants started to look into traveling to Japan.

While the course was generally successful and well-received by the participants, its implementation was not without challenges. The biggest challenge was regarding the unstable internet connection. As the Philippines is a disaster-prone country, the inclement weather often affected the learning environment. It was not unusual for heavy rains or typhoons to affect some parts of the country, which made the internet connection from some areas spotty.

Learning from the experience, JFM will hold the course onsite this year. Upon visiting several chapters, the Negros Occidental Filipino-Japanese Descendants Association Inc. (the Bacolod Chapter) was selected as the target chapter for the FY2023 course. To be launched in January 2024, the six-month course will be participated in by the members of the Negros Occidental Chapter with three Nihongo teachers in the Visayas. ビサヤ地域でも日系人コミュニティ活動を盛り上げていきましょう。



IRODORI Training in Bacolod by ANT-V

The Association of Nihongo Teachers in the Visayas (ANT-V), together with JFM, held a Teacher's Training Seminar in Bacolod on October 28 and 29. Sixteen Nihongo teachers, including several aspiring teachers, gathered in Bacolod from all over the Visayas, namely Bacolod, Cebu, Sagay, and even Antique! The seminar participants reflected on their teaching techniques and learned how to teach using IRODORI coursebooks. Through the seminar, participants learned from each other and bonded as a group of like-minded Nihongo teachers with similar interests. We hope that the Nihongo teacher's network formed through the seminar will contribute to continuous learning and growth as Nihongo teachers. Thank you, ANT-V!



"It was the first face-to-face seminar after the pandemic. We are so happy to create an opportunity for Nihongo teachers in Visayas to connect with each other."

ANT-V was organized in 2008. Currently, there are 113 members, and we have monthly Benkyokai. Since most of the members reside in Cebu, our benkyokai is usually held in Cebu. However, sometimes we also offer online events. Please follow us on Facebook for updates."

- Mr. Reneir Val Perez (President of ANT-V)

Basic-Kun Attends Another Cosplay Event

Our Basic-kun appeared at the Otaku Expo Tanabata Festival 2023 to promote the Filipino version of the IRODORI books! The said event was held at SM Megamall on August 19 and 20, with foot traffic of approximately 9,000 people. Accompanied by some members of JFT-Basic team, he gave out prizes to the participants of Japan Foundation Manila's stage activity.

Two of which are physical copies of the IRODORI Filipino version books. We also set up a fun photo booth and enlisted the help of promoters, attracting a sizeable crowd. To view the pictures taken on the photobooth, please visit our Facebook page IRODORI: Japanese for in Japan by JFM (facebook.com/IrodoribyJFM). For more information about IRODORI Filipino version, see the magazine's back page.





JFT-Basic

国際交流基金 日本語基礎テスト

TAKE THE TEST WORK IN JAPAN

MANILA

CEBU

DAVAO



www.jpf.go.jp/jft-basic/e/

TEST FEE | PHP 1500



Hello! Hello!



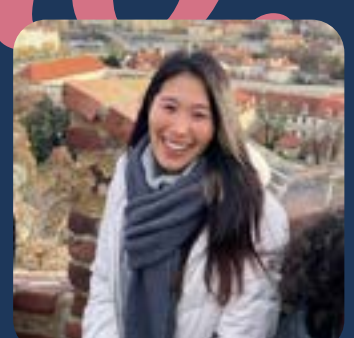
SHIGEMATSU Yuiko

みなさん、こんにちは。はじめまして！重松 結子です。2023年10月からJFMで働いています。フィリピンに来たのは初めてなので、毎日新しい発見ばかりです。楽しいことやおいしいものについて、たくさん教えてください。何でも試してみます。今は、そろそろ海を見に行きたいなと思っています。どうぞよろしくお願いします！



ITO Aki

みなさん、はじめまして。伊藤 亜紀です。10月末にマニラに来ました。フィリピンのみなさんのように、いつも笑顔でたのしく仕事をしていきたいと思っています。そして、フィリピンでたくさんの人やものと出会い、いろんな経験をしたいです。どうぞよろしくおねがいします。



SAIMYO Eri

みなさん、はじめまして。西明 絵理と申します。2023年11月にフィリピンに来ました。フィリピンは初めてですが、人の優しさ、そしてスイーツの美味しさに感動しているところです。これからフィリピンの素敵ところをもっともっと発見していくのが楽しみです。どうぞよろしくおねがいいたします！



HORIKAWA Toru

みなさん、はじめまして。11月頭に着任した堀川徹と申します。EPA研修の調整員として候補者・講師・教務のサポートを担当します。フィリピンは初めてですが、人は明るくて優しく、食べ物もおいしくてとても嬉しいです。皆さんと話し、いろいろ教えていただきたいです。どうぞよろしくお願いいたします。



Bea Naling

はじめまして！I'm Bea Naling, a Program Coordinator from the Nihongojin Support Team. I love Ghibli films, ramen, and discovering different ways to learn Japanese. I look forward to meeting a lot of learners and teachers of Nihongo through JFM. よろしくおねがいします！



Eron Olegario

Hello! I'm Eron, a new program coordinator of the JFT-Basic team. I am looking forward to learning from everyone.

Teacher Training in Urawa



The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Urawa offers training opportunities in Japan to Filipino Nihongo teachers. The available onsite courses for Filipino Nihongo teachers are: 1) Basic Training Program (six-month program), 2) Japanese-Language Program (six-week program). (3) Comprehensive Japanese Teaching Method Program, and (4) Japanese Teaching Methods Program for Teachers of Specified Skilled Worker Candidates (one-month program).

Voice of an Urawa Training Participant



Reynalyn A. Tayaban
(Irisan National High School, CJH Batch 5)
Course: Japanese-Language Program
(dispatch period: June 7-July 21, 2023)

Upon my arrival in Japan, I had a big smile on my face, a mixture of excitement and nervousness, knowing that the training ahead of us would not be easy. On the first day of our orientation, we were introduced to and met thirty-two participants from eighteen different countries. It was evident that we were all enthusiastic about learning and that we sincerely wanted to improve our understanding of the Japanese language and culture.

Our knowledge of the Japanese language and culture is expanding every day, and we had a great time on our course. We were able to appreciate teaching, since our training teachers demonstrated a range of teaching and learning strategies. Although there were difficulties, they taught in an engaging style that allowed me to learn from them.

Cultural experiences like taiko, shodou, wearing kimonos, and field trips are made possible during our training. Moreover, I had one of my first-ever home stays, where I got to know locals and had the opportunity to experience Japanese weekend life. For the first time, I tried dango and natto.

Our language class also included projects and presentations, which were exciting but nerve-racking. I will always remember our weekly task, which required us to create a presentation that would enhance our knowledge and speaking skills. A project to know more about Japan and look for the visible and hidden cultures. As a result, we uncover things every day that,

while initially invisible, will become visible as we continue to work on our project. Despite coming from different nations, we worked together as a team, and we learned about and appreciate not only the cultures of Japan but also those of each other's home countries.

During this training, I gained new friends. Every day, in addition to making each other laugh and smile, we provide each other company and comfort. We laugh a lot because we are having so much fun learning and discovering new things together. We are delighted to learn more about Japan, and as a result of the cultures we are familiar with, we are also able to learn more about our own countries. With the aid of the training, we all hope to deepen and enrich the vibrant cultures and values of the nations we each represent.

In addition to the training itself, I had a fantastic time learning about Japan and daily life, during the six weeks. I use the train, shop at convenience stores, ride a bike around the city, or just go for walks in the park, along with visiting, exploring, and discovering locations with noteworthy stories to tell. I have had warm and approachable talks with people I have met around town. I visited a number of locations during our spare time or weekends and saw the moral principles they uphold.

Finally, I am able to overcome the challenges of the training because I am driven to learn more about the Japanese language and culture for the benefit of my professional development as a Nihongo teacher, and for the development of my students as well as fellow teachers. The training has given me a new purpose, and I now consider Japan to be my second home.



Nihongojin Across the Philippines

Young or old, just a budding student or already a seasoned professional, Nihongojins come from all walks of life. Despite a variety of differences, they are all united by one goal—that is, to expand their world through learning Japanese. This is what Nihongojin Stories are all about: depicting the struggles and successes of those who faced the challenge head on. This edition of Nihongojin Connect! features three stories of Nihongojin from all three regions of the Philippines - Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—with one story that features learning Nihongo in the midst of the pandemic. May our fellow Nihongojins be inspired through their stories, and know that they are not alone in this journey.



Learning in a time of Struggle

by Leah Chan from Metro Manila

As the world attempts to transition out of the state of global pandemic, each person is affected by this change in various ways. As a people, perhaps, nothing can compare to the comfort of being with others, while to some, it is a welcomed veil.

In March 2022, a sudden debilitating pain sent me to the emergency room and on a year-long trip between hospitals and doctors. The cause was simple - cancer. A ruptured cancerous cyst took two surgeries to completely remove. What followed was months of chemotherapy. As a young professional, my priorities were skewed, like the rest of my generation. My first thought was how can I miss work. Despite this, by December 2022, my chemotherapy started.

As with many portrayals on TV, chemotherapy is a torturous treatment physically, mentally and emotionally. Because of its demands, I left work. When I wasn't delirious with pain and self-loathing, I wondered what to do with myself as I waited for the schedule of my next session.

By some luck, or perhaps the mighty listening powers of social media, I came across an advertisement for Japanese and German lessons. It was my childhood wish to learn Japanese. Life, finances and priorities got in the way of that, but now, I had no excuse. Immediately, I clicked on the ad. By the end of that very day, I had signed up and paid for the lessons that I promised myself I would get some 10 years ago.

I count myself lucky that I had the benefit of taking on classes three times a week. My career had taken a backseat and I believed I could pursue more passions during this time. My outlook was positive that I could conquer both my cancer and basic Japanese in the few months that I had. But, I was also naive in that way of thinking.

First of all, getting textbooks, writing supplies and even the documents needed to complete my class registration was a challenge. As a person with a disability, every step outside was a chance at catching viruses and at worse illness or complications. I

persevered, however. I count myself again lucky that I could afford to venture outside during times when most people are at work.

I dreaded meeting my sensei and my classmates despite classes being online. One of the requirements was to open your camera during lessons. Though I do understand and favor this, I could not do it confidently. Every time I opened my camera, I felt conflicted. By this time of my treatments, all my hair was gone - on my head, eyebrows, eyelashes and anywhere else. I also struggled with my weight as the medication affected my appetite along with the new diet restrictions. Rashes on my face and body led to my wearing of a mask even during online classes. This transformed me. Whenever I would look up from my textbook, I could see a strange person in our virtual class - that person who happens to be my reflection. Thankfully, by the end of the first week, no one was opening their camera and the sensei did not seem to mind.

As a consequence of my weakened body and the sudden excessive use of my hand, stiffness occurred along with fluid buildup. No surgery was recommended. The pain and disfigurement could go away on its own. I realized I was so out of practice. In the office, the most exercise a person gets is by typing away on the keyboard. Transitioning from this daily clicking into writing unfamiliar character strokes with a pen in a rush made physical suffering inevitable.

Despite the physical struggle of learning, my biggest hurdle came from the mental battle. What I initially thought would be a welcome distraction and personal achievement while I battled my illness, studying became a commitment I had difficulty in

fulfilling. There were days I felt like myself and normal enough to attend classes. On other days, especially following every treatment, my physical condition would fluctuate affecting my mental ability. I suffered from a painful shaking body that prevented me from moving out of bed, itchy rashes and a sensitive skin that appeared sporadically from my head to my toes, and a lack of energy to focus on my day ahead. It pained me every time I would send a message to my sensei to share that my current condition was unfit to join the lessons. In this way, having classes three times a week was a clear disadvantage.

I must say, during the times I did feel well enough, my participation was good. I enjoyed asking questions and comparing what I heard from watching anime and drama. Understanding the gap between a beginner and the Japanese used everyday is important. There is a lot to maneuver when first grasping the difference between your native tongue, the English language you are familiar with and Japanese. To my untrained ears, the Japanese used on TV is the language for everyday use and what I aimed to reach.

To learn in a time of this struggle, I am proud of myself. I set myself up on this arduous path, made more treacherous by my medical struggle. I am determined not to give up halfway. Though I am yet to be considered having successfully beaten cancer, much like my Japanese studies, it has also not beaten me yet. My fight is just beginning, and I want to see it to the end; hopeful to emerge victorious.



Bridging Worlds: Transcending Language for Family

by Alpha Romer N. Coma from Bulacan

People study languages for different reasons, may it be for money, status, or academics. But how about family?

At the height of the pandemic when everyone was inside their homes, I started to learn Japanese. I was still in high school back then. As there was no strong reason to learn a new language, much harder ones like Japanese, my family was dumbfounded. However, I was driven to learn the language as a hobby, so my mother reminded me that I had familial connections in Japan through my aunt. From then on, my aunt, mother and I started to occasionally speak via Skype. At first, I was shy, but our conversations felt natural in time. When I told her that I was studying Japanese, she cheered me on and even tested my speaking skills.

A few years went by, I am now in university. Last month, my aunt and Japanese cousin in Japan, whom my family had not seen in 15 years, called to let us know they were visiting the Philippines. Our grandmother had always prayed she could see

her daughter and granddaughter again. Lo and behold, her prayers were answered!

We went to pick them up at the airport and eagerly awaited their arrival. Grandmother became so overwhelmed with excitement that she was going to see them after more than a decade. Upon their arrival, I greeted in Japanese, Okaerinasai (Welcome back home), to which my aunt cheerily replied, Arigatou (Thank you).

On the first day of their stay, my cousins and I bonded and got to know each other. On the second day, we went sightseeing together in the capital city of the Philippines, Manila, where I volunteered to be a tour guide. From the Manila Bay, Luneta, Intramuros, and Fort Santiago to MOA, to the modern sights of Venice Grand Canal Mall and High Street in Taguig, we went everywhere! For me the highlight of the day was visiting the Fort Santiago Museum where I explained to my cousin about our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal and the history of the Japanese in the

Philippines, all in her native language! At that moment, I felt like a professional interpreter. Other interpreters were present, and I felt part of the trade.

The third day was when our whole family gathered, feasted, and celebrated. I stayed by my cousin's side, tending to her needs and translating for the for hours. The following day, my aunt and cousin's flight was in the early morning, and we went to the airport before dawn broke. We joked that Grandmother would be the one who could not hold back tears; as we bid them goodbye, it was I, instead. The three days were very precious; every moment we spent together, I will cherish and remember very dearly.

Throughout their stay, my aunt was surprised that I seemingly knew what she and my cousin were saying at any given moment. She was not wrong. I reviewed diligently and prepared beforehand for their arrival.

I have learned so much and become more confident in myself in many ways. I have become interpreter, the bridge of worlds, one sentence at a time. I hardly ever express my emotions to anyone, yet I want to say this: from the bottom of my heart, I love my family.



Journey of Finding a Second Soul

by Zashe Mea Ybañez from Cebu City

Charlemagne once said, “To have another language is to possess a second soul.” When I discovered that my school offered Japanese language classes, I found myself contemplating whether or not to enroll. Questions such as “What is it like to learn this language?” and “Do they use a writing system similar to ours?” consumed my thoughts. Ironically, deep down, I was convinced that the chances were slim that I would join the program. However, in the end, my curiosity triumphed, and I decided to leap.

My journey with learning Nihongo has been marked by unforgettable experiences. I had the privilege of participating in a Shodo Performance Workshop, where I had the opportunity to learn the art of Japanese calligraphy, specifically writing Kanji characters, under the expert guidance of Mr. Mohai Suzuki. The workshop introduced me to a whole new world of artistic expression as I was shocked by the texture of the papers we used for writing the characters, which surprisingly proved to be more resilient than I anticipated. Holding the brush, I discovered the nuanced balance between gentleness and accuracy required to masterfully write Kanji characters. Despite the initial challenges, I found immense joy and fulfillment in every moment spent immersed in the art of Shodo. This experience opened my eyes to the complexity and beauty of writing Kanji characters, leaving me with a profound appreciation for the intricate art form.

The first Japanese festival that I attended was Bon Odori in 2016. The atmosphere was filled with excitement and joy as I witnessed the crowd adorned in an array of cosplays and traditional Japanese costumes. Although my knowledge about the festival was limited, I felt a sense of belonging and my heart was filled with happiness. I will never forget the first time I tasted takoyaki and a caramelized apple; it burned my tongue, and I was searching for water. As they say, your first experience in everything will

always be remembered. Furthermore, seeing the diverse array of people, and delicious food, and experiencing things beyond what I learned in school made me realize the importance of engaging and communicating with people who share the same interests. It's through interacting with others that true learning takes place.

Another major milestone in my second soul-searching journey was when I joined cosplay contests. When my Nihongo teacher announced the upcoming Festival of Talents, I immediately decided to participate in the division round. In this competition, contestants introduce the character they are portraying in Nihongo, showcasing their abilities and convincing the judges that the character has taken over their minds and body. The most exciting part of the event is the Show and Tell segment, where participants must describe a picture shown on the screen in Nihongo. This requires a solid grasp of vocabulary, phrases, and names, as well as constructing sentences effectively. For my Show and Tell, the picture displayed was a bullet train. At the time, I didn't even know its Japanese name. However, I described its color, size, and purpose. Fortunately, I emerged as the champion in the division round. This victory allowed me to represent our region in the regional competition, which had the same mechanics of describing a picture shown on the screen. This time, the picture featured traditional slippers, and again, I was unfamiliar with the Nihongo term. Despite my limited knowledge of the subject, I utilized the same approach as in my first competition and secured another championship title!

My next competition was the National, and I was excited to showcase my talents. The competition took place at Foundation University in Dumaguete. I encountered different contestants who were fluent in Japanese, leaving me in awe. I never thought I would have a chance to win, but instead of putting myself down, I gained confidence. I knew I had trained hard for

this competition, and my mentor had done her best to enhance my knowledge and vocabulary. Above all, I was grateful for my parents' support and trust. During the Show and Tell portion, I had to describe Hachiko. It took me only five seconds to deliver my description. Despite feeling overwhelmed with emotions, I composed myself and fulfilled my duty. I put my utmost effort into depicting Hachiko with my fierce cosplay character. When the winners were announced, I was thrilled to secure 2nd place.

Making myself, my school, and my parents proud was incredibly gratifying!

My ongoing journey of exploration and learning is a priceless endeavor, as learning is a powerful tool to share with the world. As I reflect on the journeys and adventures I experienced, I realize I found a new and established soul.



From Becoming a Teacher to Learner: My Nihongo Learning Journey

by Nyra D. Gray from Davao



I can still vividly remember; it was the 17th of June 2022 when I had my teaching demo at an international school for a Japanese Language Teaching Position. It was never part of my plan to teach Nihongo. I sent my resume in hopes of being accepted as an English teacher but

various jobs that helped me financially. I continued to study hard and also passed the JLPT N3 Examination in July 2023! I then transitioned from teaching primary students to teaching older students whose goal is to work in Japan. As my father saw how committed I was in studying Japanese, he gradually became supportive.

My story might have started oppositely (I became a teacher first before a learner); learning Japanese turned my life in a surprising way that I do not regret. Still, learning never stops, well, for those who have the will and purpose to continuously move forward! And I intend to always move forward, for my students, my family, and myself. Thank you, Nihongo, for this new world you welcomed me in!

as cliché as it may sound, fate works in mysterious ways. From applying to become an English teacher, the conversation then shifted to me applying for a Japanese teaching position. Despite my lack of confidence and fluency in the language, I was able to complete and practice my teaching demo with the support of several Japanese friends. Fortunately, I was accepted.

As a teacher, how can I teach when I do not entirely understand the language? How can I understand if I do not learn? How can I learn if I do not study? So, I started studying Japanese seriously. This happened without support from my family. My father wanted me to have a stable job and being a government employee guarantees that - being a Japanese teacher, however, may not. Despite my father's protest, I continued to pull an all-nighter studying Japanese. I want to be, no... I have to be good at Japanese.

It was exhausting, waking up at 4 a.m. to study Japanese and then preparing for work at 5:30 a.m. At lunchtime, I practiced chokai while eating lunch. After school, I continued to study as late as 10 or 11 p.m., and the cycle repeated again and again. After months of studying, I passed the JLPT N4 examination. This led countless doors and windows to open up for me. I was offered





About the CJH Team

The primary mission of the CJH team is to support Japanese language education in public high schools in cooperation with the Philippine Department of Education. The main support includes training for high school teachers teaching Japanese, support for curriculum revision, maintenance of the textbooks “enTree Halina Be a Nihongojin!” developed by Japan Foundation

Manila, Nihongo Center of Japan Foundation, and Filipino Japanese language teachers in 2009 for Japanese Language Education in Public High Schools, creation of teaching materials, implementation of “Nihongojin” events for high school students, and support for Japanese language partners dispatched to each high school.

In-Person Japanese Speakers Forum Is Back!



The Japanese Speakers Forum in the Philippines (JSFP) is an event to encourage Japanese language learning for High School learners that has been held jointly with the Kamenori Foundation since 2013. JSFP is an exchange event for “Nihongojin” who aim to “use the Japanese language to achieve something.”

On February 6-8, 2023, 15 Filipino high school students, 11 teachers, and 11 core teachers gathered at Bohol Bee Farm and learned about ecotourism in Bohol. After three years of online JSFP, the in-person JSFP finally returned! The forum is managed and conducted by 11 Filipino core teachers. They decided on “To a New World or New Normal: Let’s Think About Ecology, Tourism, and Regional Promotion! Tana! Discover, Promote, Sustain! フィリピンのこころをまもろう!” as the theme for this year’s JSFP.

The students deepened their understanding of ecotourism by listening to a keynote lecture on ecotourism, visiting facilities where ecotourism is practiced, and interviewing a key person. Then the student groups came up with their own eco-tour of the Philippines and produced posters and flyers to promote it to other Nihongojin. The excellent output produced by the students can be found on the website created by the core teachers <https://sites.google.com/view/jsfp2023/home>.

Through this forum, students learned not only the Japanese language but also considered the Philippines’ tourism resources, how to protect and develop them, and how to promote them to the outside world. The teachers and JFM staff also learned much from the students’ activities. We would be happy if this forum could lead to the growth of the students and further expansion of the Nihongojin community!

Summer Intensive Training (Batch 6)

In late July 2023, the CJH Team held the two-week Summer Intensive Training for high school Japanese language teachers in Makati and Cebu. The target group consisted of Batch 6 high school teachers who debuted as Japanese language teachers at their high schools last year. They have taught Japanese for almost a year and have continued their training through the previous year's 5-week Summer Intensive Seminar and twice-monthly follow-through training from September to May. Their Japanese has reached A1 level of the CEFR through the training.

During this training, they improved their Japanese language knowledge necessary for teaching. At the same time, they acquired a deeper understanding of the teaching method of “enTree Halina Be a Nihongojin!”. The first week was conducted online, and the second week was conducted face-to-face in Luzon and VisMin, with every Batch 6 teacher giving at least two demonstration classes.

This training was only possible with the efforts of the senior teachers, who have been teaching Japanese for a long time. There was much to be gained from the senior teachers, not only through their reflections on the lessons and demo classes, but also through their various advice, suggestions, and knowledge of Japanese and Filipino culture. Although it was only for one-week sessions, the friendly competition among the teachers brought them closer together, and their motivation to learn was further heightened. We hope that this experience and what they learned from it will be applied to their teaching in the classroom.



Batch 5-Group 2's Immersion Program in Japan: Cultural Exchange Extravaganza



Allen Ann D. Delica
Valenzuela City School of Mathematics and Science

In a heartwarming culmination of their journey that began in 2019, 17 dedicated Filipino educators recently completed the CJH Teachers' Immersion Program held in Japan from August 17 to 26. Hosted at The Japan Foundation Japanese Language Institute in Urawa, this program served as a bridge for cultural exchange and professional development.

One of the program's highlights was a visit to Saitama Prefectural Soka High School, where the teachers had the opportunity to interact with Japanese students and gain firsthand knowledge of the Japanese educational system. This exchange fostered cross-cultural understanding and opened doors for potential collaborations.

The CJH Teachers' Immersion Program in Japan was a resounding success, equipping these educators with a deeper understanding of Japan's culture and education system. They return to the Philippines with fresh perspectives and a renewed commitment to enrich their students' lives through cross-cultural education. This initiative exemplifies the power of international cooperation in fostering global understanding and educational excellence.



About the Nihongo Partners Program



The Nihongo Partners program dispatches Japanese people mainly to secondary schools to support the local Japanese-language teachers during Nihongo classes, and to spread the charms of Japan and its culture to students by sharing their authentic knowledge and experiences of Japan.

On 5 September 2023, the selected public high schools warmly welcomed the 10th batch of the Nihongo Partners (NP). After a week-long training at JFM, the 10 Japanese citizens were

dispatched to their respective places in Luzon and Cebu. This time, 16 high schools were selected as the NP host schools, including seven new schools (1 in Region 4-A, 2 in NCR and 4 in Region 3). Also, in October 2023, the short-Term Nihongo Partners, consisting of eight people, were dispatched for the first time; they went around learning institutions in Manila and Davao for ten days.



Meet our Nihongo Partners!



Name: SATO Haruna

Assigned School: Capas National High School
Dolores, Capas, Tarlac

I have been working for the education industry for a long time and there have been some Filipinos at my workplace. They have always been supportive and friendly, so I was interested in their culture. I am incredibly happy to be in Capas. The students of Nihongo classes welcomed me warmly and sang a Japanese song. I was impressed that they remembered all the lyrics and sang it very well.

I did a couple of Japanese cultural sessions, like origami and chopsticks, but there is a limit to what I can do in three months with them. I value the time I spend with the students inside and outside the classes. They talk to me about their concerns, or romantic crushes as well as asking me about the Japanese language, and they try to teach me Tagalog or Kapampangan. I really enjoy talking with them. I would be happy if they became more interested in Japan through these opportunities. cooperation in fostering global understanding and educational excellence.



Name: MIYASHITA Kaho
Assigned School: Abellana National School
Osmeña Blvd, Cebu City

I started to be interested in Japanese language education since I talked with Japanese learners when I was a high school student. Furthermore, I had an opportunity to support the elementary school students who have roots outside of Japan. Because of these experiences, I wanted to become a Japanese teacher. As the first step towards it, I applied to the Nihongo Partners Program.

Now, I have been in Cebu for a month. Thanks to the kindness of the Filipino people, I am really enjoying my stay. Since it is my first time living here, I sometimes face difficulties in my daily life, but they always help me willingly. On my way to school, they always greet me with a smile. It gives me energy every day. I would like to emulate their friendliness and kindness. I will continue communicating with not only teachers and students, but also with the people living in the community and contribute to the mutual understanding between the languages and cultures of Japan and the Philippines.



1st Dispatch of Short-Term Nihongo Partners

From October 18 to 27, the first batch of Short-Term Nihongo Partners, consisting of eight people, toured around Manila and Davao, to teach Nihongo and to share Japanese culture to Filipino students from high schools, universities, and Japanese language schools.

The presented Japanese cultural activities included furoshiki wrapping, festive games, tea ceremony, hanagasa odori, and much more. Students and teachers had the opportunity to talk about their places of origin, as well as their favorite foods, while using Japanese as much as possible.

This experience also allowed the Nihongo Partners to deepen their understanding and learn more about the Philippines and its culture. Hopefully, the connections formed this time will continue on in the future!



*A celebration of all Nihongo learners
across the Philippines!*



The JFM is delighted to hold a face-to-face Nihongo Fiesta at Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong City on February 24, 2024! This event offers the public an opportunity to experience different activities relating to Japanese language, arts, and culture. As always, we will have the Nihongo Speech Contest. We will also showcase photos submitted for Minna no Nihongo Fiesta (celebration of the Japanese language and culture held at educational institutions across the Philippines) and features traditional Okinawa dance performance. For more details, visit our event page on our Facebook!

About the EPA Team



Based on the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) signed in September 2006, The Japan Foundation provides Japanese language training for Filipino Candidates for Nurses and Certified Care workers. JFM is responsible for conducting a six-month preparatory training for the candidates. On November 16, 2022, the pre-departure training for Batch 15, consisting of about 250 candidates, started. Upon arrival in Japan, the candidates undergo additional six-month training.

In this edition, the EPA team interviewed several candidates on their reasons for deciding to work in Japan and their hopes and expectations for their new chapter in life. Furthermore, the team also asked two EPA Japanese Language Lecturers about their experiences being a part of the EPA team and the areas they wish to focus on in the upcoming training for Batch 16.

Let's Learn about the EPA Program! EPA Candidates (15 Batch)



Cielo



Cenny



Franz



Kris

Q: Why did you choose Japan as a place to work overseas?

Cielo: Aside from its amazing culture and scenery, Japan is one of the safest countries to work in.

Cenny: Japan is only 4 hours and 30 minutes away from the Philippines. The time difference is only one hour; I can still talk to my family with ease. I also want to experience their advanced technology in the nursing home.

Q: What was your family's reaction when you decided to work in Japan?

Franz: At first, they asked me why because they knew that learning Nihongo is really hard and then they got curious. I explained to them my reasons and both benefits and disadvantages, and then they understood.

Cenny: They were so happy because this is my dream since the start. They are so proud of me because they believe that I have a strong will to work abroad.

Q: How was your pre-departure Japanese training?

Kris: I started with zero knowledge. Eventually with the help and perseverance of our teachers, I have improved my understanding and my communication skills in Nihongo. I know I still have a long way to go, but I will do my best.

Cielo: We all struggle with conjugations. With the help of our sensei, classmates and learning materials. I was able to catch up and I noticed a big improvement in my grammar.

Q: What are your plans and expectations in Japan?

Franz: My plan is to take and finish everything step-by-step: first graduate from my language training school; second, pass the Japan Nursing Licensure exam, and then the language proficiency exam. My expectations about Japan... Japan is a country that follows rules and laws; I will also have to abide by them. The country is known for its beauty, food, and people. I plan to enjoy my stay in Japan.

Cenny: To pass the National Licensure Exam in Caregiving so that I can stay in Japan as long as I want and to bring my family in the future. I expect that I will have a great time in Japan while studying Japanese language, culture, and caregiving.

Meet our EPA Teachers!



Janice F. Dais, RN
EPA Japanese Language Lecturer
formerly Batch 1 EPA Nurse candidate (2009)



Kristofer Masahito B. Katsumata, RN
EPA Japanese Language Lecturer

It was 9 years ago when I first joined the EPA team as one of the part-time Japanese Language Lecturers. Previously, I was an EPA nurse candidate myself – part of the pioneer batch in 2009! Back then we flew to Japan without any knowledge of Nihongo, just studied in Kansai Kenshu Center (AOTS) in Osaka for six months and started worked right away after the training. After three years of working in a hospital in Fukuyama City, I went back to the Philippines.

In 2015, I was invited to share my experiences with Batch 7. After which I was pleasantly surprised when the EPA asked me to be a part-time Lecturer! I was hesitant at first since I had no teaching experience. Thankfully there were training sessions and demo-teaching; and the feedback, support, and encouragement from the Team made me competent and confident.

This year is my 9th year at EPA, and it is my honor that I am made full-time Lecturer. I will continue to share all my learnings and experiences with current and future EPA candidates. Learning the Japanese language may be difficult, but I want to testify that there is nothing impossible if one has perseverance and determination to reach his dreams. Indeed, witnessing fellow Filipino nurses and caregivers reach their dreams is also my happiness!

I first started teaching for JPEPA in 2020. My journey in teaching Japanese language began with a mix of excitement and nervousness. The prospect of imparting knowledge to eager minds of each nursing and caregiving Candidates filled me with enthusiasm, yet I also felt the responsibility heavily weighed on my shoulders. But with the guidance and advice from my mentors and colleagues in the program, I was able to learn various approaches and methods about teaching Nihongo and how to manage the classroom efficiently. I feel very grateful and fortunate to be able to meet a lot of wonderful colleagues and be part of this program.

In November this year, JPEPA Batch 16th started its Japanese language training. In line with our slogan 『れれれの学習』 where 『れれれ』 means “Review” “Repetition” and “Reinforcement”. This year we aim to help and assist candidates to develop more understanding and appreciation for Japanese culture and to develop language knowledge and skills to facilitate significant interaction in Japanese society personally and professionally.

Thanks for reading Nihongojin Connect!
ありがとうございます!

See you soon!
またね!



Goodbye! Goodbye!



MATSUMOTO Takeshi

約3年間お世話になりました。パンデミック下でフィリピンに赴任し多くを学びました。ECQ、MECQ、GCQ・・・今となっては死語でしょうか。でも、これらの規制に悩んだ日々をまるで昨日のことのように思い出します。この3年間、様々なチャレンジがありました。それらを乗り越えられたのは皆さまのおかげです。フィリピンを去るのは後ろ髪を引かれる思いがしますが、フィリピンで出会った全ての方に心から感謝しています。Will see you soon!



YAMAMOTO Haruna

あっという間の3年間でした。パンデミック中に着任したおかげで、なかなかできない体験ができたと思います。ロックダウン、ステイホーム、在宅勤務、オンライン研修などなど・・・大変だったことも、今ではいい思い出です。お世話になったみなさま、どうもありがとうございました！Maraming salamat po!



OBINATA Haruna

3年間お世話になりました。フィリピンで仕事をして、たくさんの人と出会い、とても楽しかったです。機会があったら日本で会いましょう！ありがとうございました、Maraming salamat po!







Two years after the release of the IRODORI Elementary 1 in Filipino, JFM published the Filipino version of all three IRODORI coursebooks, with their brand-new localized covers. Everything is fully translated, from the Can-Do's instructions to the detailed and lengthy Grammar Notes and Culture Tips. IRODORI covers several topics and social situations found in daily life in Japan, from the mundane to more formal encounters.

Download a free copy of IRODORI Filipino version!

<https://jfmo.org.ph/education-tools/>



Nihongojin Connect is Published by
The Japan Foundation, Manila (JFM)

23F Pacific Star Building, Sen. Gil Puyat
Ave., Cor. Makati Ave., Makati City,
Philippines 1226

(632) 8811-6154
www.jfmo.org.ph
JFManila