

## **iBooks in the Classroom: Creating Digital Tools for Learning Italian in a Japanese University**

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### **Abstract**

In this day and age college students are both producers and consumers of digital contents. For this reason, language instruction at the university level now requires a multilayered learning environment that goes beyond the traditional classroom lecture and is accessible twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Widely used by college students, smartphones and tablets are the ideal platforms to teach foreign languages in a way that is both active and engaging.

Starting in April 2013, two of the "Italian for beginners" courses offered by the Italian language program that I coordinate at the Open Education Center of Waseda University in Tokyo began offering students a variety of digital tools to enhance the learning process.

Most prominent among these is a course for iTunes U that showcases a full set of 15 digital booklets created with iBooks Author. These booklets facilitate a gradual learning of elementary Italian in a way that addresses the specific needs of Japanese students. The course integrates audiovisual and interactive elements with exercises to test the learner's language proficiency.

Using data collected during the first six-months of this innovative experiment, my talk will focus on the following points: 1) How to create an effective environment to learn foreign languages by way of iTunes U; 2) The role played by e-books in contemporary language education in Japan; 3) the pros and cons of creating digital textbooks with iBooks Author; 4) How to use widgets to create meaningful and creative exercises; and 5) Issues and expectations for the near future.