

Director's Preface

When I took over as Director of the Research Center for Global Language Education (RCGLE) in April 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning to bite. And there is no doubt that this has been uppermost in our minds as we have sought to try and maintain some semblance of normalcy in our academic activities whilst accepting that we were going to have to make several changes to our usual *modus operandi*. Our initial response to the pandemic was to prioritize our core educational curriculum – as a result of which all the events that the Center had planned for the Spring semester were cancelled. Unfortunately, this also meant that, for the first time in some four decades, we had to cancel our Summer Courses in Japanese program.

However, as Autumn arrived and we grew more accustomed to the new realities of Zoom meetings etc., we were able to resume a few of our core activities – and to host a series of events. The first of these was a one-day workshop on October 10 entitled “The new normal for university Writing Centers: focusing on the role of individual writing support”. December started with a session entitled “Task based language learning: Theory and practice”. And this was followed by a two-day event on December 5-6 in which participants engaged in lively discussion on the theme of development of reading skills in culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children living in Japan. Ironically, given the possibilities of at-home participation, attendance at these events far exceeded what we might have expected had this event been held on campus here at ICU.

As we entered 2021, we hosted a couple of follow-up events on the theory and practice of task-based language learning on February 13 and March 11. A follow-up session on writing support scheduled for March 13 has been postponed until the next academic year.

Meanwhile, as Director of the RCGLE, I am delighted to introduce the 17th volume of the Center's bulletin. In this edition, my colleagues in the Center have solicited written versions of many of the above-mentioned seminars. In addition, however, they have also sought to provide topical discussion of some of the unique pedagogical challenges that have been induced by the current COVID-19 pandemic. With the need for so much activity to be shifted to online format, often at very short notice, language teachers worldwide have struggled to find the most satisfactory solutions to the issues inherent within such a radical new paradigm. Many of these are common to all such endeavors; but, as shown by the essays on the topic contained within this volume, there are specific obstacles confronting the Japanese language teaching community that require our particular attention. Finally in this issue, we are happy to provide an update on the various textbook projects with which our JLP colleagues have been engaged.

I trust that you will find these essays of interest and would be happy to receive any comments or feedback that you might wish to offer.

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目 次

まえがき	マーク・ウィリアムズ	
研究論文		
感謝に対する応答の日韓比較－大学生を中心に－	呉 惠卿、金 明熙	3
実践・調査報告		
コロナ禍における日本語教育課程（JLP）の取り組み	武田 知子	23
COVID-19 パンデミック下でのオンライン中級日本語コースにおける学び －インタビュープロジェクトとチュートリアルの意義－	西野 藍、布村 猛、金山 泰子	31
オンライン初級後半日本語授業におけるストーリー作成	吉田 睦	45
入門レベルの学習者向けの仮名教材作成プロジェクトについて －整った文字を書くスキルを習得させるために－	宇賀持 綾子、荒川 好子	57
夏期日本語教育報告		
2020 年度夏期日本語教育報告	金山 泰子	71
ライティングサポートデスク報告		
2020 年春学期におけるライティング支援のオンライン化 －ライティングサポートデスクの取り組み－	相場 いぶき	77
講演会・シンポジウム報告		
「大学ライティングセンターのニュー・ノーマル －個別相談によるライティング支援に焦点をおいて－」		85
「効果的なタスクベース授業の作り方」		86
「日本国内在住の文化的・言語的に多様な子ども（CLD 児）の読書力の発達」		87
「多様な言語的背景を持つ CLD 児の『読み』を探る －日本語母語児童の読み書き能力の習得過程との比較から－」		88
「言語教育における内容言語統合学習（CLIL）－Soft-CLIL の英語授業の事例－」		89
活動、教職員一覧（2020 年 4 月～2021 年 3 月）		
活動		93
教職員一覧		94