

Opening Doors for All in Self-Access

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We are delighted to present this new issue of JASAL Journal which follows the theme of the 2022 JASAL National Conference, inclusion and accessibility in self-access.

Although we certainly all hope that learners feel comfortable within our respective self-access facilities, existing research shows us that this is not something that can be taken for granted. Especially within Japan, numerous studies have highlighted the obstacles that dissuade learners from engaging in regular, active self-access learning (Gillies, 2010; Murray & Fujishima, 2016; Mynard et al., 2020). From the perspective of communities of practice, Wenger (1998) cautions us that the communities we create may, despite our best intentions and efforts, still appear as intimidating and inaccessible to newcomers.

Practice can be guarded just as it can be made available; membership can seem a daunting prospect just as it can constitute a welcoming invitation; a community of practice can be a fortress just as it can be an open door. (p. 120)

A realization and heightened awareness of the potential barriers that may exist within self-access for learners with a diverse range of identities and needs has stimulated a recent movement within self-access in Japan advocating for greater inclusion and accessibility

(Thornton, 2021). This movement paved the way for the 2022 JASAL National Conference, and indeed this issue of JASAL Journal, which we hope will extend and deepen the conversation on these issues going forward.

Coming back to physical self-access spaces after the pandemic provided us with opportunities to reconsider whether our Self-Access Centers (SAC) are welcoming and comfortable spaces for **all** students regardless of their background, linguistic proficiency, learning styles, identities, needs, and the like. How can we create a SAC community where students feel safe expressing their authentic selves, and develop a sense of belonging and respect for one another? In this issue, we feature four research papers, four discussions of practice, and one conference report that share ideas to invite various learners to SACs while meeting their diverse needs and raising awareness of inclusion among students and faculty members.

We are grateful to all the reviewers and contributors who made it possible to publish this issue.

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本号の出版を可能にして下さった、寄稿者や査読者、その他ジャーナル運営に関わる全ての方々に、お礼を申し上げます。

In the opening research article of this issue, **Pemberton, Marzin, Mynard, and Wongsarnpigoon** report on-going and future efforts of inclusiveness of a Self-Access Center to acknowledge all users' identities and provide them with equal access and opportunities. Moving on, **Hooper's** ethnographical study explores feelings of discomfort and sociocultural obstacles that new Self-Access Center users experienced and the efforts of a student-led learning community to reduce such anxiety and challenges. Keeping the theme of learner-created support structures, **Moriya and Kawasaki's** exploratory study presents the impacts of peer advising among Japanese learners including expanding students' knowledge of language learning resources, facilitating self-reflection, and maintaining friendly relationships with students. In the final research paper, **Taylor, Ornston, Walters, and Thompson** illustrate, in a collaborative

autoethnographic study, the value of community of practice and beyond-class learning through their experiences of self-directed language learning using progress-tracker applications.

Proceeding to the Discussion of Practices section of the issue, **Griffiths** and **Dojoin** share their experiences of creating and implementing a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) program which aimed to expose students to the SDGs and increase language proficiency while expanding their time in their self-access centers on two campuses. Next, **Kushida**, **Lege**, **Haughland**, and **Green** discuss the opportunities that a social and creative learning space facilitated by teachers - Maker Conversation - provided to Self-Access Center users. Practice indicates that curiosity and creativity sparked students' English communication skills. In a much-appreciated Japanese-language contribution to the issue, **Yamamoto** introduces a unique Student Assistant (SA) program aiming to support first-year college students with their mandatory English classes outside the classroom context. The paper describes the positive impacts on students' agency and motivation for both SAs and first-year students while working together through workshops in their self-access center. Our final article in this section shows how the push for accessibility in self-access learning extends beyond the tertiary sector, as **Chung** contributes a report on a self-access initiative that she has spearheaded in a public high school. By utilizing "in-between spaces" in school corridors and by following a promotional model influenced by social marketing campaigns, she has created an active language learning space that has continued to evolve and grow in popularity. Chung's study offers a fascinating perspective on self-access innovation going on outside the standard tertiary education bubble.

This issue concludes with a conference report by **McCrohan**, **Thornton**, and **Yamada**, who summarize two presentations given during a conference - *Learning from Students, Educating Teachers: Research and Practice* - organized by the Japan Association for Self-Access Learning in November 2022.

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