

Introduction

These papers herein are a record of some of the papers presented at a conference held on May 23rd - 24th, 2009 at the Nagareyama Campus of Toyo Gakuen University in Chiba, Japan. This event was co-sponsored by 10 special interest groups (SIGs) and 3 chapters of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). About 50 presentations and poster sessions were featured during this two-day event. This conference was devoted to the overall theme of expanding limited opportunities in language education. To those not familiar with Japan, the notion that Japan offers "limited opportunities" for foreign language education might seem puzzling. The nation devotes at least 5 trillion yen a year to foreign language education and many classrooms in Japan have equipment that would be envied in other parts of the world. Moreover, each year hundreds of foreign language learning materials are printed in Japan and at least 70% of Japanese adults have some sort of Internet-capable mobile computing device. Given these facts, it would be easily assumed that language education in Japan holds almost infinite possibilities.

However, in several other senses, Japan's foreign language opportunities can be described as "limited." Bilingualism is still widely regarded as a "special" accomplishment rather than a norm. Moreover, whether all of the policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology facilitate language learning is a matter of ongoing debate. In addition, the nation's overall economic downturn and shrinking population has heightened competition among existing language education service providers, so it would not be inaccurate to say that an sense of "scarcity" pervades many foreign language-learning programs.

The reports in this volume reflect both visions of foreign language education in Japan by highlighting ways that current resources appear to be limited, and other ways that possibilities for growth and learning are abundant.

The opening article by Sarah Mulvey and Brian Cullen shows how scrapbooks can be used in creative ways to facilitate foreign language learning. The authors provide a compelling rationale for the use of scrapbooks and a practical list of dos and don'ts for scrapbook use.

In the following article, the correlation between the STEP BULATS Speaking Test and the TOEIC® is explored by Michihiro Hirai. A moderate .66 correlation between these two tests was observed among 493 Japanese adults. Hirai commented on how Japanese businesspersons lack experience and/or training in real-life business speaking skills. He further cautioned against over-relying on TOEIC scores as a sole measure of English proficiency.

Next David Williams reflects on the factors that prompt Japanese university students to study in the UK. He notes how *ryugaku* – which is often translated as “study abroad” – is a social institution with a long history in Japan. Ethnographic interview data from eight Japanese in the UK in 2008 suggests that Japanese are prompted to study abroad for a variety of reasons.

Following this, Mark Brierley considers issues involved in the assessment of extensive reading. Fundamental concepts such as content validity, reliability, and backwash are briefly highlighted. Instead of advocating a single method to evaluate extensive reading, Brierley exhorts teachers to choose carefully from a range of assessment approaches.

After this, Miori Shimada examines how opportunities for language learning among both children and teacher trainees are afforded through English drama. Details of how two books for young readers were adapted to live performances are provided. Participant feedback suggests that EFL drama performances are a good way to engage audiences as well as those doing the performing.

Michi Saki then investigated the use of genderlects (gender-mediated communication patterns) in an American movie screenplay. A systematic analysis of Warren Adler's 1981 novel, *The War of the Roses*, which became a Hollywood screenplay in 1989, is provided. Saki demonstrates how the feminine and masculine characteristics in this screenplay seem to belong to different subcultures.

Last but not least, we would like to offer a special thanks to the following people for generously helping out with various aspects of the 2009 Pan-SIG Conference: Folake Abass, Andrew Atkins, Sarah Louisa Birchley, Andy Boon, Kevin Cleary, Brian Cullen, Salem K. Hicks, Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska, Rieko Matsuoka, Rudolf Reinelt, Rory Rosszell, Greg Rouault, Ed Schaefer, Jim Smiley, Eric M. Skier, Daniel Stewart, Clair Taylor, and Todd Thorpe.

Without the hard work and valuable service of these individuals this conference would have never taken place.

- Eric Skier & Tim Newfields

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