

Introduction

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2020 has been a difficult year for self-access centers in Japan, as the global pandemic caused most universities to close campus facilities for the spring semester, shifting SAC services, such as advising, online. This inevitably led many SAC researchers to pause ongoing research projects, and focus instead on supporting their students during this challenging period. As a consequence, the number of submissions to this issue was a little lower than for the first issue. Nevertheless, the papers collected here address some of the core aspects of SACs, and their unique contribution to students' lives. Three very central themes are explored:

- *SAC language policies.* One of the main factors that sets self-access centers or social language learning spaces apart from other spaces in which learners gather to form learning communities is the fact that each SAC will have a language policy. In her paper, **Thornton** explores how students at two different universities understand the policies in their respective learning spaces, and the complex factors that affect the students' language choices and use in these semi-naturalistic settings.
- *Motivational factors in SALCs.* **Andersson and Nakahashi** look at the L2 Motivational Self System and SALC users in Japan, exploring what motivates university students to make voluntary use of SALC services.
- *Student staff.* SACs typically have student staff working alongside professional staff in either a paid or voluntary capacity. **Kanduboda** explores how this work experience—with the opportunities it presents to put L2 learning to practical use, and to reflect and collaborate in a supportive environment—can lead to deep learning for participants.

In addition to these research papers, **Taylor, Hooper, Kushida, Lyon, Sampson, Hayashi, Wolanski, and Thornton** provide a report on the JASAL Forum which was held at JALT2020 (the annual international conference for the Japan Association for Language Teaching) in November of this year. This was JASAL's first time to participate in the JALT

annual conference as a domestic partner, and it is very exciting for us as an organization to be building bonds with other organizations within Japan and beyond.

As we approach the JASAL2020 national conference, held online for the first time due to the pandemic, these papers help us focus on the students who make up our SAC communities, keeping their voices at the center of our attention, which is what we need to do in order to support them through the changes and challenges that this year has presented.

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Notes on the Editors

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Hisako Yamashita is a lecturer and learning advisor at Konan Women’s University in Kobe, Japan. She is the student involvement coordinator and former president of JASAL, and is one of the plenary speakers at JASAL2020. Her research interests include affordances, reflective dialogues and learner autonomy.

Joseph Tomei is a professor in the Faculty of British and American Studies at Kumamoto Gakuen University and has taught EFL in Europe and Japan. He has published in computer-mediated communication, student autonomy, and functional/typological grammar and his doctorate is on the use of metaphor by EFL writers.