

Student Power: The Driving Force in Self-Access Centers

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It gives us great pleasure to present to you the fourth issue of the JASAL Journal. This collection encompasses a variety of articles: a research paper, discussions of practice, reports on conferences and a panel discussion, as well as a book review. While the genres may vary, a common theme runs through them: the invaluable contribution of students to the daily operation and long-term success of self-access centers.

Students who regularly participate in self-access centers bring so much with them: energy, knowledge, skills, talents, creativity. They bring diversity—of language, culture, learning styles, experience and perspective. Self-access centers thrive on diversity and dynamism. As educators, we work to ensure that students have opportunities to share these attributes in environments that foster freedom of expression. In complementarity, we strive to put in place programs, activities and events, which invite student engagement. Students who actively engage in such an environment can be awarded with affordances for language learning, metacognitive growth and self-actualization. Regular participants come to self-access centers as students, but leave as learners.

The key to success in self-access centers is engagement that taps into student potential and power. Because not everybody will choose to participate in the same way or to the same degree, it is essential to provide possibilities for engagement on multiple levels. On the level of the individual learner, as **Motomura** notes in her book review, the fundamental role of self-access centers is to encourage students to assume responsibility and take direction of their learning. Self-assessment is an important feature of self-directed learning. **Cotterall's** article illustrates the creativity and enthusiasm learners can bring to this process. On the administrative level, **Yamashita's** article highlights how self-access participants can provide administrators and their fellow learners with insights, support and even inspiration. On the level of day-to-day operation, there are numerous possibilities for engagement ranging from serving as peer tutors—as students did in **McCrohan and Caldwell's** center—to actively participating in the face-to-face or online services, such as those discussed by **Hayashi, Nehlah, and Wolanski** in this issue. On all of these levels, the success of programs and daily activities is reliant on the energy and resources that students bring to them. Therefore, it is imperative that learners have the opportunity to engage in ways that enable them to exercise their attributes and which, at the same time, foster their linguistic, metacognitive, and personal development.

This Issue

The articles in this issue explore the following themes:

- *Self-assessment.* **Cotterall** argues that, as a support for self-directed learners, teachers have a responsibility to encourage them to engage in self-assessment.
- *The role of peer tutors.* In their research paper **McCrohan and Caldwell** examine the beneficial and even crucial role peer tutors can play in delivering lessons in self-access centers that lack the resources to hire professional language educators.
- *Online and face-to-face hybrid approach in delivering self-access center services.* In their practice article **Hayashi, Nehlah, and Wolanski** take readers behind the scene as they examine the decision-making process behind the new approach and how staff went about the implementing of an onsite-online system.
- *The vital role of students as staff members in self-access centers.* In her conference report **Yamashita** argues student staff members have the requisite abilities, insight and enthusiasm to “create motivating, enjoyable and challenging learning opportunities” for their fellow learners.
- *Lessons learned during the pandemic concerning the use of technology in language education.* In her report on the recent International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) conference, **Ijiri** focuses on how lessons learned during the pandemic provide insight into how technology might change the landscape of language learning forever.
- *The defining features of self-access centers in Japan.* In his report on a panel discussion at the IALLT conference, **Cameron** summarizes the participants’ key points surrounding the goals and foundational operating principles of self-access centers in Japan.
- *The conceptualization of “language education spaces” in the U.S. in comparison to other international contexts.* In her book review, **Motomura** notes that the key difference between language centers in the U.S. and those in other parts of the world is that the latter are conceived as self-access centers whose prime goal is to promote self-directed learning.