
BEYOND INCLUSION: FACILITATING LGBTIQ+ AFFIRMATIVE JAPANESE LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

While there is increasing interest in exploring issues of equity and discrimination around gender and sexuality as it relates to Japanese society, culture and language, there is still a perception that discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity is taboo. How can Japanese language professionals facilitate learning and exploration around sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in Japanese? I turn to work by Knisely & Paiz (2021) which advocates for “locally relevant” LGBTIQ+ inclusive pedagogies. I present a brief overview of developments in education policy, shifts in public attitudes and recent guidelines for inclusive language. I also introduce some of the creative ways in which Japanese speakers navigate gendered language norms. The paper concludes by an invitation to consider how Japanese language professionals might collaborate to create and maintain learning spaces which not only include a diversity of SOGIESC, but also affirm LGBTIQ+ students and teachers.

INTRODUCTION

There is growing recognition that Japanese language learners in Australia are eager to explore issues of equity and discrimination around gender and sexuality as they relate to Japanese society, culture and language. One indicator of this is the request I received to deliver a keynote on that topic at the National Symposium on Japanese Language Education (NSJLE) 2022¹ and the comments I received following the talk. Colleagues teaching at primary, junior and senior high schools approached me to share their experiences of teaching trans² and non-binary³ youth. They spoke of students who were keen to explore ways in which they can express their own diverse gender identities and ways to refer to trans and non-binary family and loved ones in and through Japanese. In the “Be Inspired Be Inspiring’—Creating affirmative and supportive learning environments for LGBTIQ+⁴ teachers and learners of Japanese” later the same day,⁵ we discussed what terminology or linguistic strategies might be appropriate for different levels of Japanese Language Education (JLE) in Australia. Colleagues mentioned the entrenched view that any discussion of sexual orientation was taboo in Japanese language and culture. This viewpoint often makes it difficult to respond to the needs of sexuality and gender diverse students as well as of staff. This is complicated by anti-gender, anti-LGBTIQ+ discourse, which circulates globally.

Within a climate where there is inquisitiveness, but also caution, how can language professionals facilitate learning and exploration around sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)⁶ in Japanese? How might we do this at time where there is an increasingly vocal anti-gender backlash playing out across the globe? Contemporary research into LGBTIQ+ affirmative language teaching (Knisely 2023; Knisley and Paiz 2021; Paiz and Coda 2021), seeks to explore those questions in relation to a diversity of languages (see, for example, Paiz and Coda 2021).

Looking towards Japanese language education (JLE), previous research has pointed to the lack of representation of sexuality and gender diverse individuals in textbooks and other teaching materials (Arimori 2017; 2020; Maree 1998; 2011; 2020b; Moore 2019; Sall Vesselényi 2019; Yoshida 2023) and the difficulties in incorporating queer perspectives into JLE (de Vincenti, Giovanangeli and Ward 2007; Maree 2020b; Yoshida 2023). Less attention has been paid to approaches that incorporate trans-affirming pedagogies and gender inclusivity.

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- 1 Many thanks to NJSLE for inviting me to present a keynote on this topic in Melbourne, and to all who shared their experiences and thoughts.
 - 2 Trans and transgender are umbrella terms used for those whose gender identity differs from the one they were assigned at birth. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Revised 2018) defines transgender thus: “Designating a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond to that person’s sex at birth, or which does not otherwise conform to conventional notions of sex and gender.”
 - 3 Non-binary is an umbrella term for those who do not identify as men or women. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Revised 2018) defines non-binary as: “Of a person: not identifying as male or female; having a gender identity that does not conform to traditional binary notions of gender (according to which all individuals are exclusively either male or female). Also: designating such a gender identity; of or relating to (people with) such a gender identity.”
 - 4 In this article I use the acronym LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, plus) except in instances where alternatives, such as LGBT and/or LGBTQ are used in Japanese. The “+” is used to express other identities that may not be expressed by this acronym.
 - 5 “Be Inspired Be Inspiring’—Creating affirmative and supportive learning environments for LGBTIQ+ teachers and learners of Japanese” was coordinated by the International Network for Gender and Sexuality in Japanese Language Education (INGS-J) and featured Claire Maree and Maki Yoshida as presenters and workshop leaders. Many thanks to all participants.
 - 6 The acronym SOGIESC is used widely, including within the United Nations.

Acknowledging that the legal, social and cultural circumstances of LGBTIQ+ people differ significantly across the globe, I turn to work by Knisely and Paiz (2021, 29), which advocates for “locally relevant, culturally responsive pedagogies.” Trans-affirming queer-inquiry based pedagogies, or TAQIBPs (2021, 31), critique heteronormativity⁷ and also focus on the “(de) construction of gender and *cisnormativity*” (2021, 29) as it operates in the language classroom and language more broadly. Cisnormativity is a mechanism of oppression that privileges cisgender⁸ individuals and sets cisgender as the norm on which social, legal and cultural structures are formulated and operate. The TAQIBPs toolkit commences with “a self-inventory for instructors to investigate their knowledge, practices, and positionality” (Knisely and Paiz 2021, 31). Provoked by the prompt to “investigate knowledge” in the target language, and aware that developments in education policy and shifts in public attitudes in Japan towards LGBTIQ+ people and SOGIESC issues are not widely known to Japanese language educators, I first present a brief overview of activism-led change. I then introduce recent guidelines for inclusive language and, building on Japanese language research, touch on creative ways in which Japanese speakers navigate gendered language norms. Finally, in conclusion I invite us to think about how we can aim to build and/or maintain learning spaces that not only include a diversity of SOGIESC, but also affirm LGBTIQ+ students and teachers. At all points, I am mindful of the constraints of local teaching and learning environments and advocate for collaborative networking to offer support across the profession.

CIVIC ACTIVISM AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

In Japan, civic activism around sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sex characteristics has had some impact on educational policies. One of the earliest examples is the removal of the reference to “homosexuality” (同性愛 *dōsei'ai*) as “sexual perversion delinquency” (倒錯型性非行 *tōsakugata seihikō*) in the Ministry of Education’s *Basic document about problem behaviour of students* (生徒の問題行動に関する基礎資料 *Seito no mondai kōdō ni kansuru kiso shiryō*, 1979) from 1993. The legal case that gay and lesbian peer support and activist group OCCUR filed against the Tokyo Municipal Government (TMG) in 1991 was the catalyst for this change. After lodging a complaint about discriminatory behaviour experienced by members of OCCUR whilst using the Fuchū Youth Center Facilities, which were under the management of the TMG (Watanabe 2017; for an overview of the case see Nakagawa 2019), the TMG refused the group permission to use the facilities again. As part of their defense, the TMG cited the *Basic document about problem behaviour of students* as well as dictionary definitions of “homosexuality” as evidence of a “lack of consensus” around homosexuality in Japanese society at the time. OCCUR went on to win the case at the High Court level in 1997.

The passing of the Gender Identity Disorder (GID) Special Cases Act (commonly known as the GID Act) in 2003, effective in 2004 (for an overview of the law see, Nohno 2004) has also impacted on support offered to trans and gender non-conforming students at primary and secondary schools. Under the GID Act, individuals who meet specific conditions⁹ can alter their gender on official government documents. As GID, or *seidōitsusei shōgai* (性同一性障害), is classified as a “disorder” (障害 *shōgai*) and therefore a treatable medical condition, education institutions were duty-bound to establish policies for GID students who could not yet alter their legal gender (Watanabe 2017; Mitsunari 2017). It wasn’t until 2010, however, that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) issued a “notice” (通知 *tsūchi*) outlining the necessity of schools to “take into consideration” (配慮する *hairiyosuru*) children with GID.

As Watanabe (2017) notes, Japan’s National Cabinet formally endorsed human rights policies in 2002, which means public schools offering compulsory education are also duty-bound to include provisions to counteract anti-homosexual discrimination. It wasn’t until 2017, however, that direct reference to “homosexuality” (同性愛 *dōsei'ai*) appeared as part of the MEXT Act for the Measures to Prevent Bullying (MEXT 2017) in a clause that calls for schools to adopt appropriate

7 As Wieringa notes, “(h)eteronormativity refers to a system in which sexual conduct and kinship relations are organized in such a way that a specific form of heterosexuality becomes the culturally accepted ‘natural’ order. Thus biological sex, sexuality, gender identity and expression and normative gender roles are aligned in such a way that a dominant view on sexual and gender relations, identities, and expressions is produced” (2014, 210).

8 The term cisgender “can be used to describe individuals who possess, from birth and into adulthood, the male or female reproductive organs (sex) typical of the social category of man or woman (gender) to which that individual was assigned at birth” (Aultman 2014, 60).

9 The individuals must be unmarried, not have children who are minors, have a diagnosis of GID and have completed sex affirmation surgery (referred to as sex reassignment in the laws). These conditions represent severe incursions on human rights and have been contested by UN Human Rights experts. A recent case brought to the Japanese courts has resulted in a 2023 ruling that the condition of forced sterilization, one part of required surgical interventions, is unconstitutional.

measures to strengthen teachers' "correct understanding" of "gender dysphoria" (the term used in Japanese legalese), "sexual orientation and gender identity" as a counter measure for bullying.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF LGBTIQ+ STUDENTS AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL

Since the 1990s, students have created communities and organised LGBTIQ+ peer support events on Japanese university campuses. The formation of an intercollege sexual minorities network called Rainbow College in 2006 saw support grow across Japan. Since the mid-2010s, too, university initiatives framed around discourses of diversity and inclusion have complemented student led clubs. The tragic suicide in 2015 of a graduate university student who was a victim of outing has been a catalyst for further change. A survey conducted by Kawashima (2017), however, indicates that in 2017 university campuses in Japan lagged behind secondary schools in regard to support for, and initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of, the needs of LGBTIQ+ students.

Kawashima (2017, 220–231) lists ten problematic areas in relation to SOGIESC at universities and suggests countermeasures for the tertiary sector. These include making systematic changes to awareness raising training for staff and students and increasing the expertise of university counselling services. In an updated examination of the state of support for LGBTIQ+ students and staff, and SOGIESC related measures, Kawashima (2020) notes that more student support services include reference to LGBT students through diversity initiatives and that the number of universities who issue guidelines on "gender/sexual diversity" (性の多様性 *sei no tayōsei*) has increased. Students can use their preferred name at an increasing number of universities, and some do not require a diagnosis of GID to do so. An increasing number of women's universities accept or have plans to accept trans students: Ochanomizu University and Nara Women's University (2020 ~), Miyagi Gakuin Women's University (2021 ~), Notre Dame Seishin University (2023 ~), Japan's Women's University (2024 ~) and Tsuda College (2025 ~). On some campuses trained psychologists can coordinate with the student affairs office to offer aid to students. Support for job hunting and career development is available using information from community organizations such as Work with Pride.

PUBLIC OPINION

Advocacy, activism and lobbying have raised public awareness of the issues LGBTIQ+ individuals face in Japan in regard to partnership rights and discrimination in the job market. The most recent surveys indicate that over the past decade, the Japanese public has come to demonstrate more positive attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people (Ikuta et al. 2018; Kamano et al. 2020; PEW 2020). As of June 2023, 328 local governments had enacted same-sex partnership ordinances by which couples can register their partnerships locally (Nijibridge, 2023). The partnership certificates do not offer the same rights as legal marriage, and a campaign for marriage equality is currently being orchestrated through a series of civil court cases across the country (see the Marriage for All website for more details).

Looking to the workplace we find that, although figures decreased between 2018 and 2020, over 38% of LGBT workers in Japan report experiencing harassment and/or discriminatory behaviour (Muraki, Hiramori, Mikami and Yamawaki 2021, 8). Lobbying by civic sector groups to raise awareness around "SOGI Harassment" (ソジハラメント *sojiharasumento*) led to the inclusion of reference to sexual orientation and gender identity in amendments pertaining to power harassment in the workplace under the Act on Comprehensive Promotion of Labor Measures and Stabilization of Employment of Employees and Enrichment of Their Working Lives, Etc. (the "Labor Measures Comprehensive Promotion Act") (2021). Employers are now required to implement measures to prevent workplace harassment, including breaches of privacy.

Legislative changes and changes to public opinion, however, occur within an emerging backlash of anti-LGBT, anti-trans rhetoric. Most recently this has occurred alongside public debate surrounding the term "gender identity" in relation to legislation to "Promote public understanding of diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity" (性的指向及びジェンダーアイデンティティの多様性に関する国民の理解の増進に関する法律 *seitaki shikō oyobi jendā aidentiti no tayōsei*) that was passed in 2023. Three expressions are commonly used for *gender identity* in Japanese: *Jendā aidentiti* (ジェンダーアイデンティティ) in the katakana script, *seijinjin* (性自認) and *seidōitsusei* (性同一性). *Seijinjin* (性自認), is comprised of

the character *sei* (sex/gender) and *jinin* (self-acknowledgement). *Seidōitsusei* (性同一性) is comprised of *sei* (sex/gender) and *dōitsusei* (identity/oneness). The use of *dōitsusei* (同一性) as a term for identity can be traced to the translation of Erikson's *ego identity* (自我同一性 *jigadōitsusei*) and this makes the latter more commonly used in medical and psychological discourses, hence its use in the GID Law (see above). Conservatives argued that the term *seijinjin* (性自認) was inappropriate as *jinin* (self-acknowledgement) had connotations of self-determination. After heated debate with a transphobic thrust, *jendā aidentīī* (gender identity) was adopted making the "SOGI understanding Bill" one of the few to use a loan word rendered in *katakana* for a central concept contained in the legislation.

FACILITATING LGBTIQ+ AFFIRMATIVE JAPANESE LANGUAGE LEARNING

The developments in Japanese education and legislation outlined above provide evidence that counteracting discrimination, and enacting inclusive and affirmative practices in the Japanese language sector, are relevant concerns for the teaching profession. Research in applied linguistics and second language pedagogy, too, argues that we must go beyond the "inclusion" of LGBTIQ+ language learners towards "affirmation." Indeed, the limitations of token inclusivity are central to discussions of critical applied linguistics (Pennycook 2001; 2022) and queer approaches to language teaching and learning (Nelson 2006; 2009; Moore 2019). Token inclusivity, which relegates discussion of SOGIESC to only one lesson, may reinforce the notion that LGBTIQ+ events and issues are "controversial" or relate to the "special interests of a small group" (Knisely and Paiz 2021, 30). To avoid this and move towards affirmation, in recent approaches educators are encouraged to adopt an "early and often" approach (Knisely and Paiz 2021, 30) whereby LGBTIQ+ language and peoples are fully integrated into the curriculum from as early as possible.

The way in which facilitating LGBTIQ+ affirmative Japanese language learning may be achieved will differ for each learning environment. Any approach must be relevant for the level at which the language is being taught, and the context within which it is being taught. Knisely and Paiz's TAQIBPs encourages respectful engagement. The aim of respectful engagement is to "raise students' awareness of LGBTQ+ lives and how they are mediated and constrained through language" (Knisely and Paiz 2021, 29). Through respectful engagement, students become empowered to "not only perform gender and sexual identities in locally relevant, linguistically fitting ways that render them understandable to socially significant others, but also to advocate for themselves and others" (29). Note here, the emphasis is on the "locally relevant" and "linguistically fit"—that is it must be "fit" for the local learning environment, and "fit" for the target language.

One pathway to building respectful engagement is to "draw student's attention to the queer world around them" and to bring "local LGBTQ+ content into the classroom instead of relying on often problematic, mass-produced representation" (Knisely and Paiz 2021, 29). Within the Australian JLE context, it may be possible to incorporate local LGBTIQ+ celebrations such as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and/or local Pride festivals into teaching and learning activities, especially as reported on Japanese language media such as SBS Japanese. This can be one way of offsetting representations of LGBTIQ+ people and individuals in Japanese mainstream media, which continue to be somewhat problematic, as suggested by guidelines such as those prepared by the Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation (2022) and Pride House Tokyo, in association with GLAAD and Athlete Ally (2021).

MISGENDERING

Going beyond inclusion to practice affirmation of LGBTIQ+ in the classroom begins with creating an atmosphere in which lived experiences, when shared, are not negated. This includes *not* engaging in misgendering. The Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation produced media guide defines misgendering as using "incorrect language" such as honorific address terms and pronouns that "do not respect the individual's gender identity" (本人の性自認を尊重せず *honjin no seijinjin o sonchō sezu*) (2021, 13).

In Japanese, pronouns form part of a complex network of self and other address terms that relate not only to gender, but also social hierarchies and the formality of the language setting. Queer and trans speakers adopt different strategies to negotiate the complex pronoun system. In Maree's (2007) work on queer Japanese speakers, for example, a lesbian woman discusses how she uses the hyperfeminine first-person pronoun *あたし* (*atashi*) so that she can have it understood that "I'm a woman." Another lesbian speaker spoke of being "stunned" when they were told not to use (informal first pronoun) *ぼく* (*boku*), but (formal first-person pronoun) *わたし* (*watashi*) when they entered primary school. It is not only LGBTIQ+ Japanese language users who negotiate these norms. We only have to turn to autobiographical writings and

popular culture to find a variety of writers recounting their personal experiences of navigating Japanese self-reference. Japanese users (that is, those who use Japanese, Japanese speakers) negotiate self-referencing and pronouns in their everyday language use. Not everyone uses the **same** self-reference term in **all** interactions. The same individual might use *ぼく* (*boku* I/me), *おれ* (*ore* I/me), *わたくし* (*watakushi* I/me), *パパ* (*papa* Dad/me), or *わし* (*washi* I/me) to refer to themselves over the course of a single day.

Well-known studies by Miyazaki (2004; 2023) note how linguistic repertoires in friendship groups in a high-school homeroom class vary significantly due to the power dynamics within the group, and their positionality viz-a-viz localised gender norms. Within their friendship groups, students used a range of terms from *ぼく* (*boku* I/me), *おれ* (*ore* I/me), *あたし* (*atashi* I/me), and would even avoid pronouns all together due to bullying. As Miyazaki explains some groups of girls used *ore*, which they evaluated as being “cool,” “powerful,” “independent,” and “assertive” (2023). Not all pronouns and/or address terms might be deemed appropriate for the local classroom context. However, rather than offering an account of pronoun usage as a grammatical “rule” bound to cisnormative gender binaries, it may be possible to demonstrate the richness of Japanese self- and other-references as one pathway to encouraging respectful engagement and affirmation in the classroom.

In the language classroom, exercises focused on discussing oneself and one’s family and friends are common. In these contexts, students may wish to avoid misgendering their siblings. Indeed this is one concern that educators—from primary school to tertiary level—have often voiced to me in conversations. Japanese kinship terms, which mark both gender and age, may be a challenge here if we adhere to textbook patterns. However, just as English has the alternative gender neutral term sibling, the term *kyōdai* (きょうだい) can be used in a similar manner. While *kyōdai* can be written in a combination of characters that indicate gender (兄弟・兄妹), writing it in the *hiragana* script (きょうだい) removes the visual reference to gender. Along the same lines, to refer to a non-binary older or younger sibling in Japanese, using alternatives to indicate relative age and not gender, is also a possibility (see Table 1).

Table 1
ALTERNATIVES FOR REFERENCING OTHERS

Expressions	Gendered terms	Alternatives
Referring to family	きょうだい きょうだい しまい 兄弟, 兄妹, 姉妹 あね あに いもうと おとうと 姉, 兄, 妹, 弟	きょうだい 年上のきょうだい, 年下のきょうだい
Referring to others	~ちゃん, ~くん	~さん

As noted above, introducing inclusive alternatives to the JLE classroom may be met with resistance from other teachers and/or colleagues. To counteract this, it can be strategically useful to indicate that such initiatives emerge from Japan. For, as well as the media guidelines mentioned above, many local governments have guidelines on how to avoid cisheteronormative assumptions about gender and/or sexual orientation in dealings with the public.

Table 2 shows some alternative phrasings used in the Chiyoda Wards LGBTs pamphlet. The term *pātonā* (パートナー partner) is given as an alternative to gendered terms such as *danna-sama* (旦那様 your husband) and *oku-sama* (奥様 your wife). *Hogosha no kata* (保護者 guardian) or *go-kazoku no kata* (ご家族の方 family member) are offered as alternatives for mother and/or father. Note, too, the suggestion to avoid phrases such as *otoko rashii* (男らしい manly/masculine) or *onna rashii* (女らしい womanly/feminine). The suggestion is to replace the *otoko* (男 man) and/or *onna* (女 woman) with the referent’s name and the address suffix *san* (さん). The resultant phrase *~san rashii* (~さんらしい) does not translate well into English but could be rendered as “name-like,” “very name” to describe some aspect of the referents behaviour and so on.

Table 2
ALTERNATIVE TERMS INCLUDED IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES

Gendered terms	Alternatives
だんなさま おくさま 旦那様、奥様	パートナー
おとこ おんな 男らしい、女らしい	〇〇さんらしい

Gendered terms	Alternatives
とう かあ お父さん、お母さん	ほごしや かた かぞく かた 保護者の方、ご家族の方

Recent research into LGBTIQ+ affirmative language classrooms promotes the use of examples from the target language yet also cautions care when bringing examples to the local context. A wide range of resources is available via the internet; however, it may be difficult to ascertain the most appropriate materials for the age group language level and local context. To that end, it may be useful to explore materials available on local government websites that have official relations in the city or state in which the classroom is located. For example, Osaka, which has a long-standing relationship with Melbourne, has a comprehensive handbook for employees as well as posters with public service messages around SOGIESC and a range of other resources. This includes a pamphlet for children and their guardians titled *LGBTってなんやろ* (*LGBT tte nan yaro* I wonder what LGBT is), which has suggestions for further reading.

Another resource that may be useful is NPO ReBit's *Ally Teacher's Tool Kits*, which are available online. The tagline for the Tool Kits is “すべての学校をセクシュアルマイノリティの子どもにとっても過ごしやすい場所に” or “Please be a Teacher Ally who makes school a comfortable place for sexual minority children.” The term *sugoshiyasui* 過ごしやすい—literally “comfortable to be in” aligns with notions of safe(r) space. ReBit uses a cute *arai-guma* (アライグマ raccoon) to promote the concept of allyship. Mascots are commonly used in Japanese culture to promote public awareness campaigns and local government initiatives (see for example, Occhi 2021). The racoon figure plays on the Japanese pronunciation of ally (アライ *arai*) which is a homophone of *arai* (あらい) in *arai-guma* (浣熊 raccoon). ReBit explains the concept of “ally” as “a term meaning” supporter [lit. a person who understands], which “refers to people who think “I know about LGBT things!” Rebit's LGBT tool kit for primary school includes a lesson plan, teachers' and students' worksheets, a list of recommended books and audiovisual materials available via YouTube.

TERMS FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN JAPANESE

As well as concerns around self-determination and misgendering, Japanese language learners may want to use a variety of terms to reflect their own personal identities, or those of their loved ones. As terms for sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sex characteristics are constantly in flux, contemporary audiovisual content can be instructive here to demonstrate the range of terms in use. One YouTuber by the name Kazue-chan has produced short videos for Coming out Day (October 21)¹⁰ for the past few years. Available via the internet, the videos feature people from LGBTIQ+ communities who introduce themselves using a variety of different Japanese terms. The terms used by those who appear in Kazue-chan's 2022 video demonstrate the wide range of terms currently in use in Japanese to refer to sexual orientations, gender identities and/or SOGIESC (Table 3.).

Table 3
SOGIESC TERMS USED IN CONTEMPORARY YOUTUBE VIDEOS

Sexual orientations	パンセクシュアル、ジニセクシュアル、バイセクシュアル、ポリアモリー、アセクシュアル、	pansexual, gynosexual, bisexual, polyamory, asexual
Gender identities	FTM, Xジェンダー、トランスジェンダー、ノンバイナリー、FTX、無性別、トランスジェンダー-MTF、MTF、FTM寄りFTX、トランスジェンダー・FTM、男性でも女性でもない	FTM [female-to-male transgender], X-gender, transgender, nonbinary, FTX [female-to-x], no-sex/gender, transgender MTF [male-to-female], male-to-female, FTM leaning FTX, transgender FTM, neither man nor woman ¹¹
Sexual orientation and/or gender identity	ゲイ、レズビアン、ゲイ寄りバイセクシュアル、アロマンティックセクシュアル、クィア、Q (決めなくていいと思います)	gay, lesbian, gay leaning bisexual, aromantic asexual, queer, Q (no need to decide)

10 National Coming Out Day originated in the USA but has spread to many regions and countries globally.

11 FTM (female-to-male) and MTF (male-to-female) are not widely used in contemporary Australia as they are considered inaccurate representations of lived experiences.

Table 3 contains terms that have entered Japanese over decades of interaction with international and/or global communities. Many of these “loan words” have undergone processes of semantic change. That is, the terms are used within communities at different times with slightly different meanings. In contemporary Japanese, the term “gay” is used predominantly by men as a self-reference term. However, as McLelland (2004) notes, the term “gay” can be traced back to what he calls an “original gay boom” in occupation Japan when it was a slang term that played on the English “gay” and Japanese “*gei*” (芸 art/artistic skill). Table 3 also contains terms that have emerged from the sociopolitical and cultural context of Japan. The term x-gender, for example, emerges from the Kansai area of Japan. As Dale (2014, 270) notes, *X-jendā* “can be taken to signify that one’s gender is neither female nor male but ‘x.’” X-gender is not commonly used in “cultural contexts outside Japan” and Dale goes on to explain that many *x-jendā* people “frame their identity using terms such as FTX (female to X), MTX (male to X), or XTX (used by intersex individuals or those who say that they have never identified as a specific gender).” Within contemporary English language discourse, this framing is often labelled as “obsolete” or “out of date” because it suggests a transition from “sex assigned at birth” rather than centring the lived experience of many transgender people.

A key component of the discussion of terms used by LGBTIQ+ individuals in reference to their SOGIESC, therefore, must also touch on the potential derogatory and/or pejorative force that terms may carry when used to refer to others, especially by individuals who are not part of the LGBTIQ+ community, and for how meanings change as terms are adopted into Japanese. Depending on the context of the specific classroom and/or learning environment, these issues may be linked to content-based approaches that encourage students to explore loan words and/or reflect on their own education around SOGIESC.

The many terms used by Japanese users in Kazue-chan’s Coming out Day 2022 video gives an indication of the variety currently in use. Not all of these terms will be relevant and/or appropriate for each age-group or each classroom context; however, turning to resources such as this facilitates awareness of the ways in which language associated with SOGIESC is in constant flux and change. This awareness is, I venture, key to the self-reflection required to build inclusive and affirmative teaching and learning spaces.

BEYOND INCLUSION

Building and maintaining inclusive and affirmative teaching and learning spaces requires reflection and flexibility. It is no easy task. It can rarely be done alone. It is also constrained by local politics and discriminatory structures. We must, therefore, be mindful to proactively plan for resistance (Knisely and Paiz 2021) and have strategies for managing any transphobic and or homophobic discourse that may emerge in our local contexts. Identifying allies who will offer support and encouragement is key to going beyond inclusion and moving to affirmative practices within local contexts. The International Network for Gender and Sexuality in Japanese Language Education (INGS-J), formed in 2020, and coordinated by JLE practitioners in Canada, the USA and Australia, is one such initiative that aims to offer support and work towards change. As well as facilitating workshops and online seminars, the network supports the sharing of resources through publications and the online portal.

Building on research into LGBTIQ+ inclusive and affirmative language teaching that advocate for self-reflection on the state of the target language and culture, in this short article I have presented a brief overview of how activism and advocacy have impacted on the representations of LGBTIQ+ people in educational contexts and contemporary measure being adopted in schools and universities. I have also provided concrete examples of inclusive language that is used at the local government level in Japan, and drawn readers’ attention to the vast diversity of identity terms that are used by LGBTIQ+ individuals in Japan. It is hoped this may aid JLE professionals in navigating any perceptions that LGBTIQ+ inclusion and affirmation is not relevant to the Japanese language classroom as they move beyond inclusion to facilitate more LGBTIQ+ affirmative Japanese language learning.

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