
INTRODUCTION

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The theme for the 2022 National Symposium for Japanese language Education was 'Be Inspired! Be Inspiring!'. The theme reflects the importance of ongoing innovation in teaching practices and being a good role model to students across the education sector. This theme also recognises the need for new and innovative ways of teaching that resulted from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the consequential switch to online learning. Importantly, as discussed by a number of presenters at the Symposium, the sudden shift online did not prevent innovative collaborative projects between education institutions in Australia and Japan from continuing albeit perhaps in a different format to what was originally envisaged.

Japanese language education and research on Japan has a long history in Australia. The University of Sydney offered the first Japanese language classes in 1917. Since then, Japanese language education has spread across Australia and to all levels of the education system. This situation is clear from The Japan Foundation's 'Survey Report on Japanese-Language Education Abroad 2021' which shows that Australia, with 415,348 Japanese language learners, ranked fourth in the world for Japanese language learners (2023: 13).¹ An interesting anomaly continues to be the high number of learners (258,811) in primary schools (2023: 40). Unfortunately, the same survey showed a fall in teacher numbers since the previous survey in 2018 which while disconcerting, is not unsurprising in the light of the ongoing nation-wide shortage of language teachers. The breadth of learners across all levels of the education system is reflected in the range of articles in these Proceedings of the '2022 National Symposium of Japanese Language Education'.

This volume is divided into three sections. The first – *Inclusive Practices* - includes an updated version of Professor Claire Maree's keynote on *Beyond Inclusion: Facilitating LGBTIQA+ Affirmative Japanese Language Learning*. As Maree writes, there is a growth in Japanese language learners who are 'eager to explore issues of equity and discrimination around gender and sexuality as they relate to Japanese society, culture and language' (page 10). Importantly, this growth occurs at all levels of the education system: primary, secondary and tertiary. The second article in the section – by Victoria Poulos - outlines how differentiation in teaching practices can serve to include, and motivate, gifted learners to continue in their language studies.

The second section - *Teaching Practices* - includes articles by Oldmeadow et al which discusses the successful implementation of a whole-school Japanese language program at Mernda Central College on Melbourne's northern outskirts. The section also includes articles by Nathan Lane and one by Okumura Shinji and Uekusa Masae on the integration of innovative teaching practices into the classroom. Both articles introduce useful examples of their respective practices which can be expanded and / or modified for other classroom settings. The last two articles in this section address how practices used in Japan can be adapted for the Australian classroom or vice versa. In their article on a trial implementation of the Dialogic Language Assessment for Japanese as a Second Language (DLA) in a bilingual school in Australia, Kadowaki and Morita show how after the implementation, the Japanese language teacher in the Australian school modified her teaching practice to encourage students to speak more in Japanese in class. In contrast, Okumura Keiko discusses how she utilises the principles and practices of Community Language Education which she acquired while teaching in Australia in her teaching practice in a university in Japan. The authors of both articles recommend further trials into the implementation of the practices they introduce.

The third section – *Japanese as heritage/community language* – includes two articles. The first by Hashimoto et al notes the increasing diversity among Japanese heritage learners in Australia and some of the problems which they face in local schools. Importantly, they also recommend one solution to some of these issues in the form of the *Watashi-go Portfolio* and explain how it can be used. The second article – by Matsui Miyako – discusses the Japanese language maintenance

1 <https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/project/japanese/survey/result/survey21.html>