

In today's world, when second language acquisition is becoming more important to establish a career in a global society, the place of culture within language education has been the subject of debate (Thanasoulas, 2001; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003; Choudhury, 2013). The question of whether foreign language cannot truly be taught without attention to foreign culture is part of this discussion. Recent scholarship, however, suggests that with more people learning foreign languages to use in their home country, using native cultural contexts to teach foreign language allows for greater language gains (Alptekin, 2006; Demir, 2012).

At Otemae University, we have taken two approaches to our work with culture and language education. First, we have established a series of content and language integrated learning courses as a program of study, Global Japan Studies. These courses are content courses about Japan taught in English. We also use Japanese cultural content and a comparative studies approach to culture in our language education courses (Language Education of Otemae, or LEO).

Furthermore, we took the premise that culturally familiar contexts allow students to make greater language gains as a starting point for a government funded research project into the place of culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Japan. Our research into this area is ongoing, but our initial results have suggested that using Japanese cultural examples to teach English does indeed have benefits (Sheridan, Tanaka, & Hogg, 2016).

As part of our research project into culture and EFL, we organized a symposium, Culturally Familiar Material Development for EFL Education, held in December 2017. With 19 presenters and about 100 participants, we were treated to a stimulating and insightful day of presentations into how culture can be part of the English classroom in Japan. We are proud to feature a number of articles from our symposium in this volume.

Otemae University believes in innovative academic work and collaboration, and it is for this reason that we are very excited to be partnering with Hiroshima JALT for this special issue of the Journal of Research and Pedagogy. At the same time Otemae hosted a symposium on culture in material development, Hiroshima JALT also held a conference with over 40 presenters on "Teaching Language and Culture in a Global Era" featuring a symposium on international education in Japan. The themes were similar and we believed the research and papers presented could become the ground for a more inclusive and open discussion. It is in that spirit that we have partnered together to co-edit and publish this special issue of our journal, published as a joint conference proceedings volume entitled *Language and Culture in a Global Era: Theories and Practices*.

We are pleased to present in this volume qualitative and quantitative research, blending theory, praxis and considerations of culture and the impact on our classroom. The articles range from high school writing projects, incorporating Kubota's "Four Ds" in EFL and culturally relevant songlet singing. Furthermore, included separately in this volume are extra articles pertinent to culture and Japan, with a greater focus on Otemae. This includes a brief examination of our bilingualism approach to course design, a study of students' needs and textbook choice, and a wider examination of Otto Neurath and non-formal education.

We would like to again express our excitement at the possibilities opened up by this collaboration and express our hope that this joint proceedings volume will be the beginning of a rich and productive academic dialogue. We want to

thank our other editors, Daniel Hougham and Philip Head, and other Hiroshima JALT members, for their enthusiasm and hard work they contributed to make this journal possible. It is because of their contributions that we are able to present such a diverse selection of engaging and interesting papers. We look forward to future collaborations and deeper discussions about culture and EFL research and practices in the future.

Finally, we'd like to acknowledge and thank our peer reviewers, who were involved in the double-blind peer review process. They are as follows: Dr. Jonathan Aliponga (Kansai University of International Studies), Mehrasa Alizadeh (Osaka University), Todd Allen (Hiroshima University), Blair Barr (Tamagawa University), Jennifer Borio (University of Tokyo), Gordon Carlson (Otemae University), Dr. Paweena Chatsungnoen (Maejo University), Chad Cottam (Kindai University), Dr. Ali Dincer (Erzincan University), John Jackson (Otemae University), Jeanette Kobayashi (Konan University), Laura Kurotobi (Hiroshima Prefectural University), Damian Rentoule (Hiroshima International School), James Ronald (Hiroshima Shudo University), Robert Sheridan (Kindai University), Dr. Jordan Smith (Josai International University), Dr. Pramarn Subphadoongchone (Chulalongkorn University), Mulia Teguh Nguyen (Ritsumeikan University), Benjamin Thanyawatpokin (Ritsumeikan University), Dr. Aurelio Vilbar (University of the Philippines, Cebu) and Michael Wilkins (Ritsumeikan University).

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