

# A Collaborative Online Learning Activity (COIL) Between Japan and United States of America on Culture and Language Studies

Shinichi Shoji

Center for International Education and Research, Mie University, Tsu, Japan

Noriko Okura

Department of World Languages and Cultures, University of Mount Union, Alliance, USA

**Abstract**—This paper reports on the outcomes of a Collaborative Online International Learning Activity (COIL), conducted between a Japanese and an American university. Both schools gave their students a total of eight weeks of activity. Sixty students from two institutions participated in this study. During each week, students received various cultural topics to discuss, and students from both schools exchanged opinions on Zoom. The Social Networking Approach (SNA) (“3x3+3”) was used to assess students’ competencies: the three content realms contain (1) linguistic; (2) cultural; and (3) global social domains, and within each of these three domains, three different skills: (i) “Can Understand”; (ii) “Can Do”; (iii) “Can Connect”, that need to be developed in language education. Our findings show that Zoom Talk provided a positive experience for the students by facilitating connectivity among the participants. However, Japanese students were more confident in their “can understand” than “can do” skills whereas the American data was entirely positive, making determination difficult.

**Index Terms**—COIL, language, culture, Japan, USA

## I. INTRODUCTION: COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING (COIL)

Given the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic starting in 2019, the importance and integration of online technologies in educational environments have rapidly increased. An example of one of these online educational approaches is Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). COIL is a pedagogical approach initially developed by the State University of New York’s (SUNY) COIL Center in the early 2000s, through which participating faculty in two (or more) countries collaborate to develop a joint project where sets of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds work together through online communications, such as Zoom, Microsoft TEAMS, Padlet, and/or other instructional tools. SUNY’s COIL Center (n.d) suggests that successful COIL activities typically last for 5-15 weeks and put emphasis on cross-cultural interactions and understanding. COIL links students and classrooms around the world through co-taught multicultural and blended online course work (Onorevole, n.d) and enables all students to have a significant intercultural experience while advancing their academic skillset.

The COIL center at SUNY introduces the basic components of COIL and suggests that effective COIL collaborations follow the four stages shown below:

1. Introduction - meetings and icebreakers between participants, team building, comfort with software and routines;
2. Discussions and Organization - grouping participants and deciding topics to work on;
3. Project Work - participants’ discussions, problem-solving, and activity lead to the creation of an outcome;
4. Presentation and Reflection - collaboration is reflected in the work of both student groups, grades assigned.

The COIL approach has been recognized by the American Council on Education (ACE) for over a decade and previous research has been conducted in the US. According to Rubin and Guth’s (2022) research with the 92 institutions in the world, the numbers of the institutions which identified themselves as engaged in COIL in the academic year of 2018-2019 were 47 from North America, 18 from Latin America, 14 from Europe, 10 from Asia, 2 from Australia, and 1 from Africa. In Japan, the first recorded use of COIL is in 2014 at Kansai University in Osaka (Onorevole, n.d) and during that time, relatively little research on COIL has been published in Japan. In the past few years, COIL activities have rapidly become more popular in Japan under the impact of Covid and this popularity is increasing. Unable to go study abroad, there are relatively few chances for learners to authentically learn and engage with foreign languages and cultures by peer-to-peer communication with the target-language speakers; COIL provides such opportunities online (Anzai & Shimizu, 2022). Note that online activities do not compete against or replace actual studying abroad; it is possible that online experiences motivate students to go abroad (Ikeda, 2021).

Nowadays, COIL activities are widespread, and numerous studies have been conducted about COIL and its benefits. The most cited benefits are enhanced communication skills, increased cultural awareness, exposure to international education, and improved teamwork skills. Gokcora (2021) observed that COIL activities are an opportunity to enhance

academic skills (via peer review, learning to react to peer' comments, cross-cultural engagement, research, and writing). Munoz-Escalona et al. (2022) note that COIL activities are not a substitute for the experience of living or studying abroad, yet they can at least provide a stimulus to encourage students to consider international opportunities in the future.

The current paper reports on a specific COIL activity conducted between a Japanese and an American university: Mie University in Japan and the University of Mount Union (UMU) in America. The following sections explain the module of the COIL activity and the results of the post-activity survey with the participating students.

## II. COIL ACTIVITY: JAPANESE CULTURE, AMERICAN CULTURE, AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

### A. Participants

The participants from Mie University were those registered in the "Learning Cultures in English" class. The student body included 15 Japanese students and 52 non-Japanese international students (from 12 different countries). The aim of the class was to learn about the cultures of many different countries of the world through discussions among students on weekly topics. The participants from the University of Mount Union were seven American students, who are either majoring or minoring in Japanese, and were enrolled in one of the Japanese language courses.

### B. Procedure

The COIL activity was conducted outside of class meetings at both universities from the second week of October to the second week of December 2022. A total of eight weeks of activity were assigned for both sets of students. The language used in this project was predominantly English. However, when American students wanted to practice Japanese or/and when both participants needed some clarification of English, they used Japanese as a communication tool. Over eight weeks the instructor/students followed the following steps:

- 1) Mie University instructor uploaded an introductory movie on Padlet, briefly explaining the topic of the week and introducing the focus of discussion of each week's topic.
  - The weekly topics were:
    - Week 1: "knowing each other" (self-introduction)
    - Week 2: the college lifestyle in each country
    - Week 3: students' particular interests
    - Week 4: food
    - Week 5: travel
    - Week 6: the image of "Cool Japan"
    - Week 7: cultural celebrations in each country
    - Week 8: students' major fields of study and future careers
- 2) American students watched the above-mentioned introductory movie and were given about a week to prepare their responses/answers.
- 3) American students recorded and uploaded their responses on Padlet.
  - Even though American students were asked to respond in English, at UMU, these topics were also covered in Japanese language class, so there were some students who added their answers in Japanese as well.
- 4) The Mie University instructor created seven groups (one American student, one Japanese and one international student at Mie University) for "Zoom Talk" discussions.
- 5) The UMU instructor sent an email to the students to introduce the group members of the week.
- 6) Each group member exchanged information about their available times and set up the Zoom Talk as a group.
- 7) Each group joined a Zoom meeting on the scheduled date and had a Zoom Talk to exchange opinions on weekly topics for roughly 20 minutes.

### C. Goals

In 2013, a professor of Pacific International Affairs at The School of Global Policy and Strategy at UC San Diego, Dr. Yasu-Hiko Tohsaku proposed the Social Networking Approach (SNA), in which the educational philosophy of foreign language learning is described as: to "discover others, discover oneself and realize connections between them" (Tohsaku, 2021, p. 7) in the interest of human development. Tohsaku (2013, 2017, 2021) has published several reports about SNA and he explains the learning goals proposed by SNA. In his summary in 2017, foreign language learning goals comprise three content domains, three skills domains, and three connected domains, which he later named "3x3+3" in 2021.

The three content realms contain (1) linguistic; (2) cultural; and (3) global social domains. Within each of these three domains, Tohsaku proposes the following three different skills that need to be developed in language education: (i) "Can Understand"; (ii) "Can Do"; (iii) "Can Connect." The COIL activity reported in this paper sets its goals in a matrix based on SNA.

TABLE 1  
LEARNING GOALS OF THE SNA (TOHSAKU, 2017, 2021)

	Linguistic Area	Cultural Area	Global Social Area
Can understand	Can understand your own and the other languages	Can understand your own and the other cultures	Can understand global cultural features and issues
Can do	Can use the target language	Can apply diverse cultural knowledge	Can utilize global skills
Can connect	Can connect with others by using the target language	Can connect with people with diverse cultural backgrounds	Can use the target language and connect with global society and contribute to society

*D. Issues*

During the eight weeks of activity, we observed several issues during COIL. The first issue was the imbalanced number of students enrolled between the two universities. While American students participated in the Zoom Talk every week (eight weeks = eight times), students from the Japanese university were more infrequent (Japanese students participated twice or more, and international students participated only once on Zoom Talk). In other words, we were not able to give equal chances to students to participate in the COIL activity.

Another issue was time related. Many students were busy and sometimes they were unable to find a good time for every member (3 people in total) of the group to meet online (Zoom). Also, we sometimes found that some students who were scheduled to participate in a Zoom conversation of the week did not reply to emails that were sent from the other group members in order to decide what day and what time they could meet. In either case, we instructors decided that a Zoom conversation was allowed to be done by two students when three could not meet. Also, it was allowed for American students to have conversations twice: once with a Japanese student and the other with an international student at Mie University. In addition, on one occasion, an instructor participated in a Zoom Talk substituting for an unavailable student.

Also, it was difficult for some students to grasp the time difference between Japan and America (Ohio State, EST). The time difference is 14 hours (or 13 hours when daylight saving applies), and the time in Japan is ahead of that of America. It became an issue when students were deciding the time to meet on Zoom. Accordingly, we instructors provided a website that converts the time between Japan and Ohio, US.

Finally, we believe the biggest challenge to Zoom Talk activities was that some students were apparently insufficiently motivated or uncomfortable talking with other students whom they do not actually know (what could be called “shyness” in a general sense). For example, we received feedback from a student to the effect that he had a hard time keeping the conversation going because other students did not actively participate in the conversation. In addition, some Japanese or international students’ English proficiency seemed insufficient to contribute meaningfully to conversations. As a solution, prior to the Zoom Talk within a group, we instructors advised the students to prepare a few questions to ask beforehand.

III. POST-ACTIVITY SURVEY

*A. Survey Questions*

After the eight weeks of COIL activity ended, we used Google forms and conducted an anonymous survey to evaluate the participants’ achievement levels in terms of Tohsaku’s (2017, 2021) nine goals of comprehensive communication ability (see Table 1). The survey questions are shown on Table 2.

TABLE 2  
POST-ACTIVITY SURVEY

	Question		
can understand	1. You can understand your own and the other languages	[linguistic area]	Yes / No
	2. You can understand your own and the other cultures	[cultural area]	Yes / No
	3. You can understand global cultural features and issues	[global social area]	Yes / No
can do	4. You can use the target language	[linguistic area]	Yes / No
	5. You can apply diverse cultural knowledge	[cultural area]	Yes / No
	6. You can utilize global skills	[global social area]	Yes / No
can connect	7. You can connect with others by using the target language	[linguistic area]	Yes / No
	8. You can connect with people with diverse cultural backgrounds	[cultural area]	Yes / No
	9. You can connect with global society and contribute to society	[global social area]	Yes / No

The survey questions comprise 9 questions, where students simply answer “yes” or “no”, and to encourage optional answers, we asked students to provide the reasons/experiences for each answer. Students could further explain their answers, should they choose to do so.

*B. Post-Activity Survey Participants*

We received 60 responses in total, which included 11 from Japanese and 43 from international students at Mie University, as well as six from UMU students. In terms of demographics there were: 51 undergraduate students, 6

graduate students, 1 research student (from Mie University), and 2 students who chose “other” and “international student” (they did not clearly specify if they were undergraduate, graduate, or research students).

### C. The Number of Zoom Talk Conducted

As explained earlier, while all American students joined the Zoom Talk on a weekly basis (8 weeks, 8 times), the Japanese and international students joined infrequently due to the enrollment gap between the American and Japanese universities. Participants from Mie University, specifically the Japanese students, joined our Zoom Talk at least twice, but only five international students were able to join the Zoom Talk more than twice, while 33 international students joined only once, and five international students never participated in the Zoom Talk at all. As for the five participants who did not participate, the reasons for not having done so were: “My partner(s) did not reply to my email that I sent to him/her/them” (n = 3), “I forgot that I had to” (n = 1), and “My schedule (available time) and my partners’ schedule did not match (n = 1).

### D. Selection of the Data Reported

Since the goal of this research was to evaluate students’ achievement levels through COIL activity, we needed to ensure that our data was valid. An isolated one-off Zoom Talk is insufficient to assess the outcomes. Therefore, the instructors decided to use only the sample who participated in Zoom Talk two times or more. Moreover, although there were five international students who participated in the Zoom Talk twice or more, thus fitting our criteria, none of them provided further responses in the survey, so we omitted these as NR (Not Reportable). Therefore, in this study, we report Japanese and American students’ outcomes, while excluding international students’ responses.

## IV. RESULTS OF POST-ACTIVITY SURVEY

### A. Japanese Students

Japanese students’ responses are shown on Table 3.

TABLE 3  
RESPONSES FROM JAPANESE STUDENTS

			Answers
can understand	1. You can understand your own and the other languages	[linguistic area]	Yes (n = 9) / No (n = 2)
	2. You can understand your own and the other cultures	[cultural area]	Yes (n = 11) / No (n = 0)
	3. You can understand global cultural features and issues	[global social area]	Yes (n = 10) / No (n = 1)
can do	4. You can use the target language	[linguistic area]	Yes (n = 9) / No (n = 2)
	5. You can apply diverse cultural knowledge	[cultural area]	Yes (n = 5) / No (n = 6)
	6. You can utilize global skills	[global social area]	Yes (n = 5) / No (n = 6)
can connect	7. You can connect with others by using the target language	[linguistic area]	Yes (n = 11) / No (n = 0)
	8. You can connect with people with diverse cultural backgrounds	[cultural area]	Yes (n = 10) / No (n = 1)
	9. You can connect with global society and contributed to society	[global social area]	Yes (n = 9) / No (n = 2)

Given a sample size of eleven, the Japanese students expressed the most confidence in understanding culture (their own and others) and in connecting with others using the target language (English). However, the students had the least confidence in their ability to apply their cultural knowledge and to utilize their skills socially (globally). Students described the ability to understand other languages as the weakest skill within the “can understand” category and connecting with global society as the weakest skill in the “can connect” category. Students had the most difficulty with the “can do” category, specifically with the “cultural” and “global social” aspects, but overall responses to this survey were highly positive.

### B. American Students

American students’ responses are shown on Table 4.

TABLE 4  
RESPONSES FROM AMERICAN STUDENTS

			Answers
can understand	1. You can understand your own and the other languages	[linguistic area]	Yes (n = 4) / No (n = 2)
	2. You can understand your own and the other cultures	[cultural area]	Yes (n = 6) / No (n = 0)
	3. You can understand global cultural features and issues	[global social area]	Yes (n = 6) / No (n = 0)
can do	4. You can use the target language	[linguistic area]	Yes (n = 5) / No (n = 1)
	5. You can apply diverse cultural knowledge	[cultural area]	Yes (n = 6) / No (n = 0)
	6. You can utilize global skills	[global social area]	Yes (n = 6) / No (n = 0)
can connect	7. You can connect with others by using the target language	[linguistic area]	Yes (n = 6) / No (n = 0)
	8. You can connect with people with diverse cultural backgrounds	[cultural area]	Yes (n = 6) / No (n = 0)
	9. You can connect with global society and contributed to society	[global social area]	Yes (n = 6) / No (n = 0)

As shown in the table, American students' answers were mostly "yes", indicating that they think that they achieved these goals. Their responses with "No" are found only in the language area, which indicates that some of them are not confident in making a conversation in their target language, Japanese. This was true in both the "can do" and "can understand" categories.

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. Japanese Students

In the linguistic area, most of the Japanese students assessed that they understood and could use the target language, English. Students who answered "Yes" expanded their answer in the following ways: "I was able to participate in the conversation smoothly" and "Even though I couldn't understand completely, American students know some Japanese, so the conversation could continue". Students who answered "No" added that "I have no problem with my own language. However, when I try to communicate my thoughts in English, I can only come up with few words (not full sentences). Because of my lack of confidence, my voice became quiet, and I might annoy the other person even more". One student also wrote that "I can't tell my opinion perfectly." Those students who answered "No" seem to put a high bar on their language skills and because of their high expectations, this may have negatively affected their confidence. Regarding the "can connect" skill, all Japanese students responded "Yes", representing a positive outcome for the activity. One student wrote that, "By knowing that American students [are] also learning [a] foreign language, it brought me motivation to study". When both sets of students share the same challenges learning a foreign language (Japanese students studying English, American students studying Japanese), they may relate to each other more and therefore inter-personal communication might go more smoothly.

Regarding the cultural area, although all students agree that they developed cultural knowledge, more than half were still not confident about practically applying their diverse cultural knowledge in real life. Through the Zoom Talk sessions, students had the benefit of interacting with peers overseas over cultural differences and issues. As we noted in the earlier discussion. The Zoom group was composed of not only Japanese and American students, but also international students. Many Japanese are quite familiar with American culture; however, when it comes to other countries, there is much information that Japanese students find surprising. Therefore, due to unfamiliar topics and responses, it seems they might struggle. This can be assumed from a comment: "My knowledge is not enough." On the other hand, as for "connection", one student wrote: "what matters is our minds, not languages." This shows that students can respect other cultures (despite their imperfect language skills), and that there is hope that they can develop a better sense of global citizenship.

As for the Global Society area, the result suggested that Japanese students developed their understanding of the characteristics of global society. One student explained that: "high school experience, social studies' classroom discussion helped". However, it was found that using critical thinking skills in a conversation is still challenging for more than half of the students. Many students expressed an eagerness to contribute to society and it was found that Japanese students had an overall positive experience. Even though two students answered "No" for question 9, one student commented: "I am still studying at university and would like to work hard to contribute to society in the future". There was a very positive answer.

### B. American Students

In the linguistic area, two students responded "No". The COIL activity was assigned to be conducted in English. However, in some cases, speaking in Japanese was necessary to better communicate among group members. The UMU instructor observed this by watching a student-recorded Zoom conversation (one UMU student thought she needed to record Zoom Talk and shared this with UMU instructor). From their recorded video, it was clear that students had to speak in Japanese (an international student in this group could not speak much English, so a group member had to help explain in Japanese). Each Zoom Talk group was composed of three people (Japanese, American, and International), and following further investigation and observation, it became clearer that for some international students, their Japanese was dominant rather than English, and their ability to interact in English was very limited. Therefore, it seems that there were many situations where American students were encouraged to explain in Japanese. Those who chose "No" explained: "I picked no because even though I do know some Japanese, it's not enough to hold a conversation" and "Even though, I am not fluent in Japanese yet, I can still talk with Japanese people and understand some of what they are saying. Also, when we used English, I could understand and/or help them with what they wanted to say. For this question, I am between "yes" and "no"". As for the "can do" skills, the student who chose "No" commented: "I'm still in the beginning phase of learning Japanese, so I wouldn't say I can use the language yet, but I'm getting there. Also, we mostly used English during the Zoom".

In the cultural domain, all American students showed positive outcomes. As students commented, because each Zoom group member was from a different country, students could learn not only about two countries (Japan and America), but other (less predictable) countries (China, Korea, Germany, Thailand, etc.). This provided great opportunities to expand on their views toward other cultures, especially when they discussed annual events and traditions. American students found some similarities and differences compared to the other cultures, and they seemed

to have enjoyed and learned new things. Students commented: “cultural knowledge is useful and when I travel abroad, it is useful to have the diverse cultural knowledge” (summarized for brevity). This comment suggests that students are willing to use their knowledge (which they obtained from group members) and are willing to apply the information when they visit the country. American students showed an interest in visiting abroad (not only Japan, but other countries as well) which leads to a potential bridge with other countries.

With regards to the global social area, all responding students displayed confidence in three domains “can understand” “can do” and “can connect”. Through COIL activity, students had opportunities to broaden their world view by comparing their lives and their experiences with their group members’ countries. The international students were from 12 different countries. COIL activity allowed American students to study cultures outside the context of textbooks or PowerPoint; they could hear and learn from another person’s own voice, and they noted: “it was easy to relate and compare between cultures”.

### C. General Discussion

An overall observation of the post-activity survey through Japanese and American participants’ responses, indicates that both sets of students learned that they can connect with each other through Zoom Talk. However, some of them still were not particularly confident in their language skills, possibly a reflection of high standards or embarrassment. In other words, in respect to Tohsaku’s (2013, 2017, 2021) nine goals, the “can connect” skill seems to be what the participants gained or realized that they have. This realization is important; by knowing or believing that they can connect with people with different cultural backgrounds, people would be less hesitant in initially communicating with them, which can be the most positive effect or learning experience for the participants of this COIL activity. The effect is reflected in some specific American and Japanese students as they unofficially report that they are still connected online after the COIL activity, and they talk on Zoom and play games together once in a while. Also, some American participants have plans to study abroad in Japan in the near future, and some Japanese students said that they would be amenable to guide the Americans in Japan.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This paper reports on a COIL activity between a US university and a Japanese university, and we showed the results of the post-activity survey. One limitation of the post-activity survey is that some Japanese students’ responses were out of the scope of this questionnaire. Some responses were obviously not based on the COIL activity but drawn from their other experiences. For example, a Japanese student’s response to question 9 was “Yes, I can connect with global society and contribute to societies because... I joined parties when I studied abroad in England. Also in Japan, I interacted with international people as a student organization activity.” This statement is apparently from the student’s personal experience, not an experience specific to the Zoom Talk conversation. Inclusion of this kind of responses makes it difficult for us to find which responses can be considered to be the effects of COIL and which are not. Thus, more data is necessary to properly assess the effects of the COIL activity. It may also be worthwhile to access metrics and responses to COIL before the activity, during the activity and after the activity, to see if patterns or trends in data emerge. Tailoring of survey questions can also help to reduce ambiguity and improve specificity of responses. Finally, creating a survey that allows responses beyond the binary yes/no response can help to give nuance and an additional layer of data.

Despite the above limitation of the survey, and suggested areas of improvement, we conclude that our COIL activity contributed to students’ achievements according to Tohsaku’s outlined goals, as evident by many participants’ responses based on the Zoom conversation. In future projects and studies, we may conduct more qualitative research in order to more deeply understand how COIL activity affects participants’ skills and minds.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Anzai, Y., & Shimizu, H. (2022). *Action Research of Collaborative Online International Learning Based on Educational Technology Theories*. Proceedings of International Conference for Media in Education 2022. Retrieved February 1, 2023 from <https://2022.icome.education/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ANZAI22008-Yayoi-Anzai.pdf>
- [2] Gokcora, D. (2021). Benefits of collaborative online international learning projects. *Academia Letters*. Retrieved February 5, 2023 from <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL202>
- [3] Ikeda, K. (2022). Effects and issues of COIL, a collaborative international learning with oversea students using ICT [ICT o katsuyo shi kaigai no gakusei to okonau kokusai renkei gata no kyodo gakushu “COIL” no kyokumkoka to kadai]. *International Exchange [Kokusai Koryu]*, 171, 20-25.
- [4] Munoz-Escalona, P., de Crespo, Z. C., Marin, M. O., & Dunn, M. (2022). Collaborative online international learning: A way to develop students’ engineering capabilities and awareness to become global citizens. *International journal of mechanical engineering education*, 50(1), 89-104.
- [5] Onorevole, V. (n.d.) *FACT SHEET Virtual Exchange/COIL Partnerships*. Retrieved February 10, 2023 from [USJP-HEES-Findings-VECOIL-FactSheet.pdf](https://www.acenet.edu/Findings-VECOIL-FactSheet.pdf) (acenet.edu)
- [6] Rubin, J., & Guth, S. (Eds.). (2022). *The guide to COIL Virtual Exchange: Implementing, growing, and sustaining Collaborative Online International Learning*. Stylus Publishing.
- [7] SUNY COIL. (n.d.) *Welcomoe!* Retrieved February 5, 2023 from <https://coil.suny.edu/>

- [8] SUNY COIL Center. (n.d.). *What is COIL?* Retrieved February 5, 2023 from <https://online.suny.edu/introtocoil/suny-coil-what-is/>
- [9] Tohsaku, Y. (2013). *NIPPON 3.0 no Shohosen* [Prescription for Japan 3.0]. Kodansha.
- [10] Tohsaku, Y. (2017). *Gurobaru shakai no tsunagaru nihongo kyoiku: sosharu nettowa-kingu apurochi* [Connected Japanese language education in the global era: Social Networking Approach]. *Journal CAJLE*, 18. Retrieved February 6, 2023 from <http://www.cajle.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/volume-18.001-020.pdf>
- [11] Tohsaku, Y. H. (2021). Social Networking Approach: Language education for global citizenship. In *Social Networking Approach to Japanese Language Teaching* (pp. 1-17). Routledge.
- [12] Tohsaku, Y. H., Nazikian, F., & Park, J. (Eds.). (2021). *Social Networking Approach to Japanese Language Teaching: The Intersection of Language and Culture in the Digital Age*. Routledge.

**Shinichi Shoji** received a PhD in linguistics focusing on reference resolution in Japanese from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA, in 2016, with his dissertation *The Repeated Name Penalty and the Overt Pronoun Penalty in Japanese*. Currently he is an Assistant Professor at Center for International Education and Research, Mie University, Japan.

**Noriko Okura** received a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Eastern Kentucky University, USA. She obtained a master's degree in Japanese Language Pedagogy from Columbia University, USA, and a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree from Mary Baldwin College, USA. Currently, she teaches as a language instructor at the University of Mount Union, USA. Her field of interest includes technology-based learning, language pedagogy, leadership in language education, and curriculum design.