

2023年度『日本語教育』論文賞受賞論文—概要—  
**Research Paper Summary for the 2023 Best Paper Award  
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**A Study of Local Governance Structures for Foreign Residents in  
Depopulated Areas:  
From the Perspective of Community-based Japanese Language  
Education Supporting Life Career Development**

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The purpose of this study is to examine how community-based Japanese language education supports the life career development of foreign residents, focusing on the local governance structure for accommodating foreign residents in the community.

After the Law for the of Japanese Language Education, enacted in 2019, came into effect, the process began of establishing a legal and organizational framework for community-based Japanese language education. It is highly significant that the government has clarified its obligation to provide language education to foreign residents living in local communities. However, when looking at the set of national policies currently being advanced to provide localized Japanese-language education, there is still a lack of research and studies that place community-based Japanese-language education within the context of the local social systems that should support the formulation of such policies. Policies become more effective when they are constantly examined and reexamined. This principle applies as well to policies for localized Japanese-language education. This study aims to be one of the basic studies toward this end.

### **Survey and analysis**

In this study, we conducted three field surveys in city X, an area with a dispersed population of foreign residents: (1) interviews with involved organizations and individuals, including foreign residents; (2) observation of various activities of support groups for foreign residents, including support for Japanese language learning; and (3) collection of materials and observation of facilities and events. Based on the survey data, the manner of accommodating foreign residents in X city was clarified employing the local governance framework.

Local governance refers to “multiple stakeholders involved in the region working together” and “responding to specific local issues” (Ishii et al., 2019, p. 52). In this study, using this concept of local governance, we analyzed how local communities accommodate foreign residents, that is, what kind of organizations and individuals participate in the surveyed areas, the roles they play, and how they work together to respond as a community. The results are then presented as a local governance structure (Figure 1).

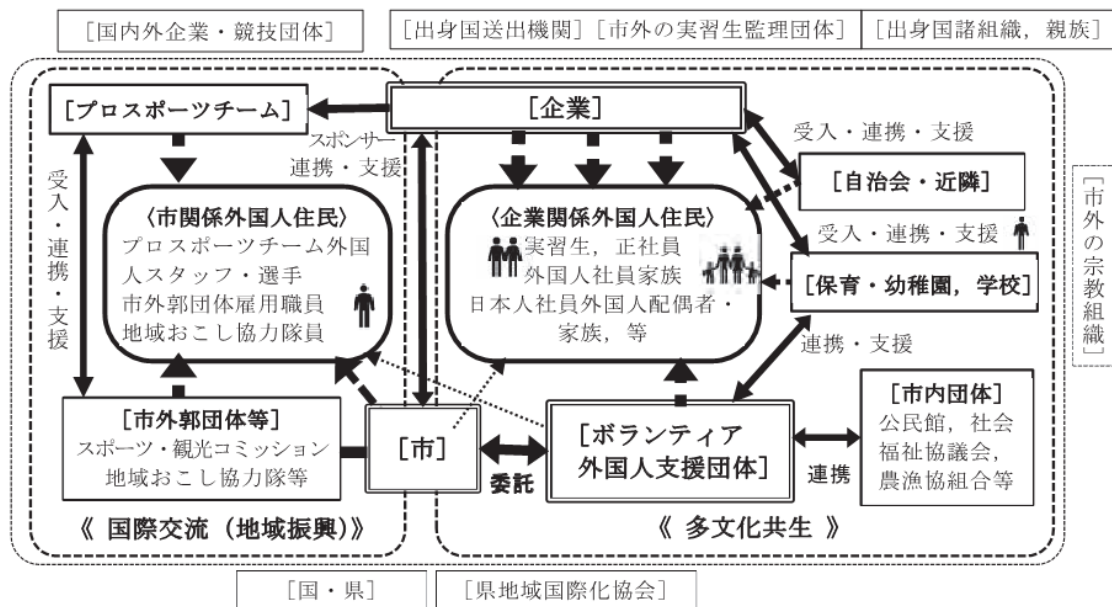


図1 X市の外国人住民対応におけるローカル・ガバナンス構造

※破線矢印は外国人対応を、実線矢印はアクター間を示す。線の太さは関係の強さを示す。

(Please see the list at the end of this summary for translations of the labels in this diagram.)

As shown in Figure 1, the local governance structure for accommodating foreign residents in city X can be roughly divided into two categories: international exchange (regional development — left side of the figure) and multicultural coexistence (right side). The former is a system for welcoming, accommodating, and supporting foreign residents for the purpose of regional revitalization and international education for children, and the latter is a system mainly for businesses to accommodate and support their foreign employees along with their families in order to achieve multicultural coexistence. These two parts of the framework may be characterized as follows: First, accommodation on the international exchange (regional development) side is centered on the city, city-affiliated organizations, and local businesses, and is mainly achieved through institutional collaboration based on contracts, while the multiculturalism side is centered on a volunteer group providing support for foreign residents. Furthermore, above and beyond the institutional cooperation, we observed much of the coordinated accommodation being carried out via personal connections, in which specific key persons provided the necessary contacts between various organizations and groups. City X has a small population with a limited number of schools and businesses, and thus many of the citizens involved have some kind of personal connection with each other, being fellow alumni, business colleagues or former colleagues, or parents of children attending the same school. This sort of governance structure for accommodating foreign residents held together via the existence of such key persons with their

personal ties has often been noted in previous studies of sparsely populated and depopulated areas.

## **Discussion**

Based on the above analysis, this paper next examines the position of Japanese language education within the local governance structure of city X. There are no Japanese language schools or other Japanese language education institutions in city X, nor are there any vocational schools, universities, or other educational institutions above high school level. The role of providing Japanese language education and support for Japanese language learning for local foreign residents was undertaken by a volunteer support group for foreign residents, which is an actor in the local governance structure.

What became clear in this study was that the local Japanese language class and support for Japanese language learning by the volunteer support group were intended to play multiple roles within the local governance structure of city X. For example, they were intended to raise awareness of multicultural coexistence in the community and to revitalize the local community via the international exchange side of governance. Furthermore, these roles were not limited to the support group and classroom, but widened the scope of Japanese language learning support to other collaborating organizations and groups in the local community. In this sense, it can be said that the role played by the community-based Japanese language classes in city X was localized Japanese language learning support activities involving local governance as a whole.

Localized Japanese language classes and support for Japanese language learning in the context of local governance will serve as a foothold for foreign residents to participate in the local community through their participation in Japanese language classes, and will also lead to the creation of a multiculturally inclusive social environment that facilitates such participation. In this collaborative local governance structure, Japanese language classes and Japanese language learning support, developed with a view to helping foreign residents become integrated into local community social networks, will have a vital influence on the life career development of foreign residents, as well as on their Japanese language learning and general language learning for that purpose. In particular, it is important to expand Japanese language classes and support for Japanese language learning in collaboration with other organizations in the community in order to provide more foreign residents with opportunities for language learning in society. By expanding the governance partnerships to include more organizations, groups, and individuals, and by involving foreign residents in their activities, it may be possible to provide foreign residents with a wider range of opportunities for supported Japanese language learning through their participation in activities in the local community.

This also suggests that the accommodation of foreign residents by local governance can be made more inclusive by involving a greater variety of actors. More inclusive governance is also important for the life career development of foreign residents. This is because the life career development of foreign residents requires comprehensive involvement with a long-term perspective.

## Conclusion

In this study, we analyzed local governance structures for accommodating foreign residents in city X, and showed that localized Japanese language learning support for dispersed residents has a particular role to play in governance, which does not necessarily coincide with the current national policy for community-based Japanese language education. In Japanese language education, which supports the life and career development of foreign residents, local support for Japanese language learning and the national system of localized Japanese language education are inseparably linked. In this paper, we show that the local Japanese language education support system, via the support for Japanese language learning in which diverse human resources from the local community collaborate, serves to integrate foreign residents into local social networks, thus enhancing their life career development and motivating their Japanese language learning and other language learning, as well as connecting them to various resources outside of the community.

As shown in this study, localized Japanese language education, which is positioned in the context of the local community's governance structure, is different in content, nature, and role from Japanese language education undertaken by the state. The former is a local community activity in which language learning is linked to the formation of a community that is inclusive of foreign residents, while the latter is geared toward Japanese language learning by individuals, guaranteed by the nation's obligation towards the foreign residents it has welcomed. Only by recognizing the difference between the two, and by ensuring that both perform their separate functions, will Japanese language education adequately support the life career development of foreign residents. Life careers are formed through participation in society, so Japanese language and language learning that supports participation in social activities must be multifaceted and integrated. In addition, for such participation and continuous learning, the formation of an inclusive local community and the guarantee provided by the national system are both essential. Based on the above discussion, it can be said that the evolving relationship between local Japanese language education as a part of the local community system and Japanese language education as a guarantee provided the national government must be examined in the future.

## Reference

Ishii, M., Jinnai Y., Murayama F., & Nagaoka M. [石井 雅章, 陣内 雄次, 村山 史世, 長岡 素彦]. (2019), Wakamono no manabi ga sōshutsu suru rōkaru gabanansu no kanōsei [若者の学びが創出するローカル・ガバナンスの可能性]. In *Journal of Engaged Pedagogy* [関係性の教育学], 18-1 (pp. 51-70).

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## List of the labels in Figure 1

**Figure 1: Local Governance Structure for Accomodation of Foreign Residents in City X**

### **Arrow labels indicating types of relationships:**

Arrows with broken lines show accommodation of foreigners;

arrows with solid lines show relations between actors.

Width of the lines shows strength of the relations.

受入・連携・支援

acceptance, collaboration, support

スポンサー連携・支援

collaboration and support by sponsors

委託

outsourcing

### **Actors:**

[国内外企業・競技団体]

Domestic and international companies; sports organizations

[出身国送出機関]

Dispatching organizations (of technical interns) in the country of origin

[市外の実習生監理団体]

Internship supervision organizations outside the city

[出身国諸組織, 親族]

Organizations related to country of origin, relatives

[企業]

Businesses

[市]

City

《国際交流（地域振興）》

### **International exchange (regional development):**

[プロスポーツチーム]

Pro sports team

〈市関係外国人住民〉

Foreign residents affiliated with the city:

プロスポーツチーム外国人スタッフ・選手  
foreign staff and athletes on the pro sports team  
市外郭団体雇用職員  
employees of city affiliated organizations  
地域おこし協力隊員  
community-reactivating cooperator squad

[市外郭団体等]

City affiliated organizations:

スポーツ・観光コミッション

sports and tourism commissions

地域おこし協力隊等

community-reactivating cooperator squad

《多文化共生》

**Multicultural coexistence:**

〈企業関係外国人住民〉

Foreign residents affiliated with businesses:

実習生，正社員

interns, regular employees

外国人社員家族

foreign employees' families

日本人社員外国人配偶者・家族，等

foreign spouses of Japanese employees, family members, etc.

[自治会・近隣]

Neighborhood associations, neighborhoods

[保育園・幼稚園，学校]

Nursery schools, kindergartens, schools

[ボランティア外国人支援団体]

Volunteer groups for support of foreign residents

[市内団体]

City organizations

公民館，社会福祉協議会，農漁協組合等

community centers, social welfare council,

agriculture and fisheries cooperatives, etc.

[国・県]

National, prefectural governments

[県地域国際化協会]

Prefectural and local associations for international relations