

(Re)creating Russian as a Foreign Language Education Policy in Japan:
Teacher learning and agency in Language Education Policy

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This 2-year-long qualitative study examines how two teachers of Russian locally negotiate the top-down FL education policy and recreate the Russian as a foreign language (RFL) education policy in their classrooms at two high schools in Japan. Data collected in this study include participant observations and audio-recordings of Russian classes and two professional development workshops that the teachers attended, interviews, as well as textbooks and teaching materials used at the schools, and any documents related to the RFL education policy in Japan.

The content and micro-discourse analysis of the data reveals how top-down policies including the Course of Study and high-stakes testing such as college entrance exams may impact the local policy processes in individual classrooms. The analysis also highlights moments in which the two teachers locally negotiated and recreated the RFL education policy to meet their students' needs within their individual school contexts. In such moments, the teachers often reflected on their practice and/or took risks to try what they had learned in their professional development workshops in their own classes. Thus, the present study broadly argues that professional development may play a significant role in language education policy processes, giving opportunities and tools for teachers to practice their agency, challenge and recreate the given policy through their daily practices.