

# Collaborative Approaches to Outreach

Natsumi Magatake

Gakushuin University

Kazutoshi Musashi

Restaurant owner

Runa Musashi

Kesen Junior High School

Ted O'Neill

Gakushuin University

Mathew Porter

Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University

Caroline Kocel-Ross

Nakamura Junior and Senior Girls' High School

Alison Stewart

Gakushuin University

## Reference Data:

Magatake, N., Musashi, K., Musashi, R., O'Neill, T., Porter, M., Kocel-Ross, C. K., & Stewart, A. (2015). Collaborative approaches to outreach. In P. Clements, A. Krause, & H. Brown (Eds.), *JALT2014 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

Over the course of a year from late 2013 to the end of 2014, a large-scale collaborative project was conducted between English teachers and their students and a school in Rikuzentakata, one of the cities worst affected by the tsunami that devastated the northeastern coast of Japan in March 2011. The project involved translating into English a collection of personal accounts written by junior high school students on the first anniversary of 3.11, and a website was built to display a bilingual version of the collection. A forum was organized at JALT2014 in which organizers, authors, translators, and project managers presented their experiences in the project. This paper is a report on these presentations and concludes with a brief discussion of issues arising from the project concerning future development of the website and the pedagogic value of authentic translation in language teaching.

2013年後半から2014年末の一年間、英語科教授とその学生、そして陸前高田市の中学校による大規模な共同プロジェクトが行われた。陸前高田は、3.11で最も津波の被害を受けた都市の一つである。この共同プロジェクトは、陸前高田の中学生が3.11の一年後に当手を振り返って書いた作文を英語に翻訳し、日英二か国語で作文を閲覧できるようウェブサイトを作成する

# JALT2014 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



というものだった。JALT2014で開かれたフォーラムでは、プロジェクトの主催者、作文の著者、翻訳者、そしてプロジェクトマネージャーが、それぞれプロジェクトを通じて体験したことを発表した。本論文はその発表を記録し、プロジェクトで生まれた「ウェブサイトの今後の発展について」や「言語教育における正しく信頼できる翻訳の教育的価値について」といった問題について、簡潔に論じて、まとめとする。

**T**HE EARTHQUAKE and tsunami of March 11, 2011 (called 3.11 in Japan) devastated the coast of northeastern Japan and swept away whole towns, taking the lives of approximately 20,000 people. The recovery of Tohoku, including rebuilding of infrastructure and the local economy and enabling people to move out of temporary accommodation where they have been living for nearly 4 years, remains one of the most pressing social issues in Japan. A few members of the JALT Learner Development Special Interest Group (LD SIG) had been discussing ideas of educationalists from the field of critical pedagogy, who attempt to connect what happens in the classroom with wider prevailing social issues, and had been considering how this might be achieved in our own working contexts in Japan.

The term *critical pedagogy* is often associated with the work of scholars such as Freire (2000), Giroux (1983), Hooks (2014), Kincheloe (2004), and Smyth (2011). What these authors share is a vision of social justice and the role that education can play in striving toward it. Critical pedagogy in language education is often regarded as a politically engaged critique of inequities of power within education itself (Norton & Toohey, 2004). However, built on three fundamental principles of equity, activism, and social literacy, *social justice education* (Ayres, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009) also looks outward to challenge instances of political and economic inequities in the wider society around us. In the context of English language education in Japan, activism might involve putting learners' developing language skills to practical use in the service of those who are struggling against social injustice. In Tohoku, large-scale unemployment and delayed rebuilding of homes have become endemic social problems. Although there has been an outpouring of charitable

support both nationally and internationally since the disaster, these continuing problems put the local inhabitants, including children, at a disadvantage compared with the rest of the country. Any activism oriented towards rectifying a social injustice would therefore have to aim at some kind of empowerment of the disadvantaged.

In March 2013, ten members of the LD SIG traveled up to Tohoku from Tokyo to meet people in local communities and to explore with them the possibility of meaningful collaboration (Barfield et al., 2013). During that visit, some members of the group met Kazutoshi Musashi, former head of the Kesen Junior High School Parent Teacher Association (JHS PTA), and listened to a junior high school student reading a speech in English based on her experiences of 3.11. Musashi was open to the possibility of collaboration but stressed that the purpose of any joint venture would be to ensure the children's experiences could be read widely and thus be of benefit to others living through disasters around the world. As a starting point, it was agreed that one area where the LD SIG might be of service would be to translate the essays that were written by the children of Kesen JHS on the anniversary of 3.11 and publish them on a website. A project management team, consisting of Sayuri Hasegawa, Caroline Kocel Ross, and Mathew Porter, was formed to coordinate the translators and to edit and prepare the translations for publication. A follow-up visit was made to Rikuzentakata the following March (see Barfield et al., 2014a) during which an initial sample of translations was shown to Musashi and issues concerning the presentation of the essays on a website were further discussed.

The purpose of this paper is to bring together the personal views of some of the participants in this project that were presented in the JALT Forum. First, Musashi summarises the situation in Rikuzentakata before and after 3.11. Next, we include an original essay written by his daughter Runa and its English translation. After this, Magatake and O'Neill describe their experiences as translators, and finally, Kocel-Ross and Porter discuss the challenges of editing the translation and managing the project. We conclude by highlighting

some of the pedagogic issues that arose and proposing some directions for exploration in future projects of this nature.

## Rikuzentakata Residents

Two key participants in the project, Kazutoshi Musashi, former PTA president of Kesen JHS, and his daughter, Runa, one of the authors in the essay collection, were invited to the Forum to present their views and to take part in the discussions that followed.

## Rikuzentakata Before and After 3.11

**Kazutoshi Musashi** (for original Japanese text, see Appendix A)

Before the earthquake, Rikuzentakata was a town with a population of about 24,000 mainly involved in primary industry. When the Great East Japan Earthquake struck on 3.11, 1,763 lives were lost to the giant tsunami. Since then, the government has financed the building of a massive sea wall and raising the ground on which the city center is to be rebuilt over 10 meters. An evacuation road and other infrastructure are also included in the massive budget for reconstruction. At the same time, over 2,000 families remain in temporary housing where their lives are severely hampered. Temporary housing units line the grounds of the elementary and junior high schools that escaped the tsunami. The future of Rikuzentakata remains uncertain as it struggles also with the wave of low birth-rates and aging population that are afflicting regions and cities across Japan. But in the midst of this, the students of the town have not given up their hopes and dreams and continue to study hard and do their best in all their activities while being grateful to all for the support they received through the disaster.

Before the earthquake, Kesen JHS was the closest school to the sea in Japan at 0 meters above sea level. From the third floor verandah you could feed the seagulls. Since the earthquake, three school buses have been hired to transport the children every day from the

temporary housing to a decommissioned school in the mountains. As the school had been the closest to the sea at the time of the disaster and all students and staff managed to safely evacuate, the principal of Kesen JHS at that time thought it might be helpful to future generations' efforts to prepare for unpredictably large earthquakes and tsunami if the students wrote while their memories were still fresh one year after the disaster when things started to settle down. He also wanted to put in writing the feelings of gratitude for all of the support received from around Japan.

This collection, *Looking Back on the Day One Year After the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake*, is a compilation of essays written in March 2012 by the children of Rikuzentakata Municipal Junior High School. In December 2013, while acting as President of the Kesen JHS PTA, I was introduced to LD SIG through Professor Hideo Nakazawa of Chuo University. The LD SIG was interested in raising awareness around the world about the Great East Japan Earthquake through the experiences of the people who lived through it, and so it was that the LD SIG was asked to translate the collection of essays. In the following section one of these essays, together with its translation, is reproduced in full.

## Looking Back on That Day

### Runa Musashi

1-23 中1女子

あの日、三月十一日午後二時四六分。わたしは、長部小学校の三階にある六年生教室で卒業式について担任の先生から話をされていました。

その時、地鳴りがなりました。皆が、「地震だ。」

といって机の下に潜り込みました。それから少し経って地鳴りが地震に変わりました。校長先生が廊下を走りながら、「校庭に避難して下さい。」と叫んでいました。

地震後の廊下は暗く、煙が立ち込めていました。私達はハンカチ等で口と鼻をおさえ、身体をかかめて外まで歩きました。外へ出て校舎の方を見ると、壁に亀裂が入り、二宮金次郎像が足だけを残し、倒れていました。私達

は亀裂が入っている校庭で迎えを待っていました。ほとんどの人が帰ってしまった時に脳裏に浮かんだのは、じいとばあのこと。「倒れた家具の下じきになっているのではないか。だから迎えに来れないのでは?」と思ってしまったりもしました。

その時に感じた恐怖は二度と体験したくないと思いました。

### 1-23 First-Year Girl

On that fateful day, March 11, 2011, at 2:46 in the afternoon, I was in my year 6 classroom on the third floor of Osabe Elementary School, listening to the teacher talking about plans for our graduation ceremony [scheduled for the end of March]. It was then that the ground started rumbling. Everyone dived under their desks shouting “It’s an earthquake!” After a little while, the rumbling turned into a real full-force earthquake. The headmaster came running down the hallway telling each class to evacuate to the playground.

The hallway was dark and gloomy, and there was smoke. We put handkerchiefs over our noses and bent down low as we made our way outside. Once outside we saw that the wall of our school had cracked in some places and that the statue of Ninomiya Kinjiro<sup>1</sup> had fallen down—only his feet remained on the pedestal.

We waited in the cracked school playground for people to come and pick us up. When nearly everyone had been met, I suddenly thought about my grandma and grandpa—were they ok? Or were they trapped beneath some toppled furniture? Is that why they hadn’t come to pick me up yet?

I never want to experience the same terror as I did then ever again in my life.

*Notes.* 1. Born into a poor farming family, Ninomiya Kinjiro famously became very wealthy and influential thanks to his grit and determination. He became a symbol of thrift and hard work and statues of him were placed in many elementary schools across Japan.

## Translators

Over 70 students and their teachers from various universities and schools were involved in translating the essays into English. Each group of teachers and students organized the work of translating independently. The work of two groups is described below, the first from the point of view of a student, and the second from the point of view of a teacher.

## Students’ Involvement

### Natsumi Magatake

At Gakushuin University, a seminar class of 3rd- and 4th-year English majors was asked for volunteers to participate in the project. In this group, the translation was conducted in four stages. In February 2014, eight students (six female, two male; two 3rd-year and six 4th-year) volunteered to be translators and were assigned two to five essays to translate. After they had translated the essays, the students worked in pairs to check each other’s translations. Then, in June, a group of seven students, only two of whom were part of the original group of translators, worked together as a group to check the translations for accuracy and against a glossary of terms and names. Finally, three different students volunteered to produce typed versions of the Japanese essays, copying the handwritten essays from the *bunsho* [composition/essay].

I gathered feedback from my fellow participants by email. As Japanese native speakers, the students struggled to translate the texts into English. Commenting on the experience afterward, one of the students stated that simple or everyday language caused the most problems. In this student’s experience, phrases such as 「これからどうなるんだろう」 (*kore kara dou narundarou*) and 「これからもよろしくお願いします」 (*kore kara mo yoroshiku onegaishimasu*), which are quite formulaic, are two examples. 「これからどうなるんだろう」 may express a range of meanings from a particular anxiety to a general concern for the future, and the students puzzled over alternative translations,

such as “Where am I going?,” “Where will I live?,” “What should I do?,” and “What kind of future awaits us?” Similarly, the phrase 「これからよろしく願います」 may also include a wide range of meanings from “We will do our best” to “Please continue to support us” or “Please watch over us.” Together with her partner, this student worried that as they were not from Tohoku themselves, they were not confident that they were able to fully understand what the children intended in their essays.

The experience of checking each other’s translations, however, was regarded very positively by the participants. They valued the opportunity to work together to determine what they thought was the most appropriate translation of the texts, as well as to correct grammar errors. One male student commented that this process enabled him to review his own English skill. He found his partner’s translation to be most useful as a basis for re-evaluating his “language system” and improving the translation that he had worked on.

In the final group check, because the majority of the 4th-year students who had participated as translators had graduated, five new 3rd-year students joined the project. In addition to checking for accuracy, one of the purposes of this stage was to check for consistency, referring to a checklist of words and place names. The Japanese word, 津波, for example, was to be translated as *tsunami*, not *tidal wave*. Again, during this group session, the students worked in pairs so that they could check each other’s findings and discuss areas of difficulty. As in the previous round of translation, the struggle to determine the most appropriate translation was what many students commented on. As one student stated, “I was surprised at the fact that there are a number of ways to express Japanese words in English. At the same time, we had to use these expressions consistently in order to make a book of essays.” For all of us students, the translation project was a chance to think about questions of accuracy and appropriateness in translating the children’s lived experience of the tsunami, as well as issues of style and consistency in creating a single written document.

## An Instructor Learns From Translation Ted O’Neill

My main experience with translation in education has been through entrance exam writing committees. And, like many instructors in Japan, my view of translation was synonymous with the Grammar Translation method, which is viewed negatively by many language teachers (Gorsuch, 1998). Both of these approaches to translation construe the activity as something “hard.” Passages that are more difficult than learners can fluently read and understand are analyzed, or very tricky passages are selected for prospective students to struggle to translate from English to Japanese. Through participation in this project and subsequent reflections on it, I have instead come to see translation as a deeper process. The following example, which is described in greater detail in Barfield et al., 2014b, illustrates how this project helped me understand translation as a deep classroom learning experience.

One account included the following passage:

朝になり唯一の食べ物だったものが津波で流されてきたさんま  
で、僕はそんなことを気にせず、どんどん食べていきました。  
*Asa ni nari yuuitsu no tabemonodatta mono ga tsunami de na-  
gasa rete kita sanma de, boku wa son'na koto o ki ni sezu, don-  
don tabete ikimashita.*

A member of my group translated this as “In the morning, all we had to eat was the sanma left behind by the disaster and I ate a lot of them. I did not care [about] the fact that I was eating sanma from the tsunami.”

The lexis and grammar of the Japanese text were not hard, but in checking the translation, both of us were perplexed. The student-translator wrote, “Actually, I am confused too. Here Japanese sentences said that ‘the tsunami brought the sanma,’ if we catch the meanings naturally. It does not make sense for me . . . But, also we

have to make sure that the earthquake was so ‘special’ that we cannot imagine what happened. I mean it could had happened . . .”

In order to make sense of this, I took the problem to the team discussion board where Sayuri explained how the tsunami had flooded a fish processing plant and spread hundreds of tons of sanma up the hillsides. I brought this back to my group and we looked for more information and images of this. This one sentence in Japanese was the seed for greater discussion in English and a way in to learning more deeply about the events in the accounts we were translating.

Returning to this incident almost one year later, the persistence of this puzzle in my mind and attention continued to bother me; why had this one issue in a large translation project taken on so much importance for me? To me as a language instructor, there were many other words, phrases, and sentences that presented difficulty in translation. Working out how best to translate repeated words such as 悲しい (*kanashii*, sad) showed how learners discovered and worked through linguistic choices, which perhaps should be more important to language learning and therefore my concern. However, these smaller questions of words did not capture our attention as much.

Examined more closely, I believe this may show how my thinking about translation as a learning activity has changed from an orientation towards assessment to inquiry. In these Tohoku reflections, none of the language was hard in and of itself. In fact, these direct, sometimes simple, usually emotionally moving accounts served as motivating prompts for deeper thinking, questioning, discussing, note taking, and only finally translation. Though the final output is important, it was, as usual, doing the work and solving problems that was the learning experience.

## Project Management

### Developing a Unique Approach to Challenges

*Caroline Kocel Ross & Mathew Porter*

From its beginnings, this project has been inherently collaborative, dynamic, and continuously evolving, involving a large number of people on translating and transliterating the Japanese originals and checking and proofreading the resultant English translations. These activities were completed in stages that unfolded over almost all of 2014. As a result of so many people’s involvement, project management was essential for making decisions about the final product and ensuring the delivery of an English translation that accurately represented the original authors’ written reflections.

Challenges arose at each stage of the project, and resolving these questions required wide-ranging discussion and deliberation among project managers and between project managers and project members. Although the collaborative aspect of this project is perhaps one of its strongest elements, it was necessary at times for members of the project management team to make final decisions without consulting the larger group. Two important decisions that were made by project managers related to a uniform approach to handling certain Japanese terms laden with cultural significance and dealing with the different varieties of English used across the translated accounts.

Project managers decided that some terms should remain in Japanese because they held significant cultural value that would be hard to convey in English. They also hoped that preserving certain terms of high cultural value would help readers unfamiliar with Japan and Japanese to learn more about the culture of the original writers. A glossary of these terms was created as the accounts were edited and the terms were italicized and footnoted in the translations. To avoid distracting the reader from the main text, the glossary definitions were kept brief. One example of a term that was chosen for translit-

eration is *onigiri*, which is often translated as *rice-ball*. Although this is a functional term that comes close in describing the appearance of *onigiri*, the project managers felt it failed to convey the warmth and comforting feelings associated with a food that would be as familiar to school children in Japan as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches might be to someone who grew up in the United States. In an attempt to communicate the concept of *onigiri* succinctly, it was described in the glossary as “cooked rice formed into a triangle or oval shape with a filling such as fish or pickled plum” and later was amended with the words “often homemade.”

Members of the project did not share a consistent variety of English, and it was decided that there would be no preference for American or British English spellings across the entire collection but that each account should use a consistent variety of English. As all of the original writers shared the same regional dialect and were writing in standard dialect Japanese for a school setting, this decision can make it seem as if the original texts were written by people who did not share a common dialect when only the final product is considered. However, we also wanted to respect the work of all of the volunteers involved and felt that the varieties of English illustrated the multicultural character of the project members.

To ensure consistency of the final project, the project management team took on the task of terminology management, creating the list of terms that would make up the glossary and maintaining a list of place names that were mentioned in accounts. The reading of the kanji that make up Japanese place and family names are subject to regional variations, frequently unknown by Japanese people from other regions, and there were occasions when student translators were unable to properly transliterate the names of towns and villages. Internet tools such as Google Maps were indispensable in figuring out that 古谷 was Furuya not Furutani or Koya, but there was one place name that appeared on no maps and was not referenced on any websites, so a call to the local elementary school was necessary. The place name actually referred to a small collection of

a few houses that, according to the school official, no one outside of the village would have known.

When the draft translations were finished, the project management team undertook a line-by-line check of translations against the source texts and identified many instances where translation of substantial source text had been omitted or the translator’s interpretation of the source text led to unsupported additions. Each omission was corrected and additions were eliminated. Furthermore, the source texts had been written by boys and girls in their early teens still honing their ability to write in their first language. Some of the original accounts had unclear grammar and the vocabulary, in particular adjective use, was often repetitive. These are important characteristics that help create the original author’s voice. However, the translated accounts often sounded formal and educated, and unclear grammar and word repetition was often not represented in the English translations. These characteristics were all restored in the subsequent draft.

Finally, the contents had an emotional effect on all involved, and this was intensely felt by the project managers. It was impossible to detach oneself from the content of the writing even when attending to tedious details while checking, proofreading, and editing. The project managers read the Japanese and English accounts repeatedly, eventually being exposed to the traumatic experiences of each author countless times. Similarly, they also got to feel the joy of young people expressing gratitude, realizing the meaningfulness of strong community and family bonds, and finding comfort in the everyday routines brought by school life.

## Future Directions

The first stage of the project is nearing completion as the website is now complete and ready and will be made publicly available pending final permissions from the original authors. Discussions surrounding further development of the website include adding

supplementary information and materials about the places and cultural features mentioned in the essays, as well as interviews with the children and other people from Rikuzentakata. We are also considering who will be the ultimate readers of the website. In keeping with the wishes of the school, we would like the website to reach a wide audience who can learn from the experiences of these children. As such, we believe that it can serve an educational purpose for schoolchildren around the world, not only in places prone to natural disasters.

A key issue that arose throughout the project was the difficulty of translation itself. As O'Neill mentioned in his section, translation is a contentious area in language teaching, either valued as a vehicle for classical literature and a "hard" discipline in its own right, or disregarded as having little to do with second language acquisition. The tide may be turning on the role of translation in second language education (Cook, 2010), and this project highlights some of the ways in which translation can play a vital role in illuminating grammatical and lexical aspects of a language, as well as the culture that it embodies. As an exercise in authentic translation, there is clearly a problem in having Japanese students translate out of their native language and into English. However, as the student's account above suggests, this activity may be a very powerful learning tool for students who are strongly invested in the outcome.

Through our discussions, we have come to think that there is a place in the classroom for authentic translation activities such as this, particularly as a way to engage with wider social justice issues (Ayres et al., 2009; Smyth, 2011). However, we also realize that students need preparation and support in order to benefit from and contribute more usefully to such an activity. They also need time: all the participants in the project were faced with problems in the translation that caught them by surprise and that took time and ingenuity to solve, freedoms that may not easily be factored into a regular syllabus or curriculum.

The translation project, however, was more than an opportunity to provide authentic language use for students. It was first and foremost a way to give voice to people in the Tohoku region, to learn about their lives in the process, and to share that learning with others.

## Acknowledgment

We wish to express our thanks to the LD SIG for awarding an Outreach Grant to enable Kazutoshi and Runa Musashi to travel to Tsukuba for the conference.

## Bio Data

**Natsumi Magatake** is a 1st-year masters student at Gakushuin University.

**Kazutoshi Musashi** was president of the Parent-Teacher Association of Kesen Junior High School and now owns a restaurant.

**Runa Musashi** is a 3rd-year student at Kesen Junior High School and the author of one of the essays in the essay collection.

**Ted O'Neill** teaches at Gakushuin University. He is a member of the International Advisory Board for the International Academic Forum (IAFOR). <gotanda@gmail.com>

**Mathew Porter** is a learning advisor in a university self-access learning center and a trained translator with 7 years of experience. <portermathew@hotmail.com>

**Caroline Kocel-Ross** teaches at Nakamura Junior and Senior Girls' High School. <c.jkoross@gmail.com>

**Alison Stewart** teaches at Gakushuin University and is one of the coordinators of the Learner Development SIG. <alison.stewart@gakushuin.ac.jp>



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## Appendix

### Text of Presentation Given by Kazutoshi Musashi, Kesen JHS PTA Former President, at LD SIG Tohoku Forum

#### 震災前と震災後の陸前高田の様子について

震災前の陸前高田市は、人口が約24,000人の一次産業が主な基幹産業の陸前高田市でした。東日本大震災では、1763人の尊い命が津波の犠牲により奪われてから3年8ヶ月が経過した被災地陸前高田市ですが、復興計画に基づき巨大な防潮堤や中心市街地の10m以上の盛土による嵩上げ、避難道路の整備等巨額な復興予算でインフラ整備が行われております。

しかし、未だに2,000世帯以上の被災した住民が仮設住宅の不自由な生活を余儀なくされ、津波で被災を免れた小・中学校の校庭には未だに仮設住宅が立ち並んでおります。日本の多くの地方都市が抱える超少子高齢化の波は、陸前高田市も抱える最大の悩みであることは事実であり、将来震災復興を果たした後、まちとして本当に機能して行くのか、将来を見据えたまちづくりが今の最大の課題のように思います。そんな中、当市の学生は夢と希望を諦めず、震災で多くの支援を頂いた皆様に感謝しながら勉学や部活動を頑張っております。

気仙中学校について。そこでの武蔵さんのお役割について

震災前の気仙中学校の校舎は、海拔0mの日本でもっとも海に近い学校でした。3階のベランダからはカメメ餌をあげられる校舎でした。

震災後は、廃校となった山里にある校舎をお借りしてスクールバス3台で市内の仮設住宅から通学する日々を送っております。

私は平成24年度に気仙中学校PTA副会長に歴任し、翌年にPTA会長を任せられPTA活動に従事致しました。

震災の1年後に作文を書くというアイデアはどのようにして生まれたのか

東日本大震災で海に一番近い学校の生徒・職員全員が一人の犠牲者も出すことが無く安全に避難できた経緯を、震災から一年経過し落ち着きを取り戻した学生達の記憶が鮮明な内に、後世の日本で予測される大地震と津波被害からの避難や防災にお役に立てればと言う思いと、全国からご支援いただいた感謝の気持ちを文章に書きとめる狙いがあったと、当時の気仙中学校長先生からお伺いしております。

LD SIGと英訳プロジェクトを始めるにあたっての武蔵さんのお役割について

この文集は3.11東日本大震災の一年後の2012年3月に陸前高田市立気仙中学の生徒たちがまとめた文集です。その翌年の2013年12月、当時気仙中のPTA会長を務めていた私と、全国語学学会のLD部会様を中央大学中澤秀雄教授からの紹介を頂き「被災地を忘れないでほしい、この東日本大震災の経験を世界の方々に伝えたいと思う」その一念から、LD部会様に英訳をお願いすることになりました。