

LOOKING BACK

Language, Literacies, Learners: Development Beyond the Classroom

LD SIG Forum, JALT Pan-SIG 2012, compiled by Jim Ronald

言語、リテラシー、学習者：教室を越えた成長 Jim Ronaldによるまとめ

At the end of June, the JALT Pan-SIG conference was held at Hiroshima University. At the conference, 12 of us presented at the Learner Development SIG Forum. Our overall theme was “Development beyond the Classroom”—with a wide range of topics presented. As it was on the last day, our audience was about the same size—about 12 people! However, since topic groups took turns presenting and being the audience, in three presentation “corners”, we were all guaranteed both an interested audience, and a chance to join other people’s presentations. Here is a brief report from most of the presenters. If you want to know more, please watch out for the conference proceedings—or get in touch with us!

English Camps—Why?

Jim Ronald, Hiroshima Shudo University

A couple of decades ago, sitting in a taxi, on the radio they were reporting a speech contest for high school students, with the prize being a ten-day trip to Hawaii. The taxi driver scoffed at this, saying something like, “What good is ten days? They’ve already been studying English at school for years, for all the good it’s done them!” In fact, if they had won the speech contest, it obviously was doing them good! But it made me think...

Years later, when I had a chance to start running an English camp at my university in Hiroshima, that taxi driver’s question was still challenging me. Obviously, in terms of how much grammar or vocabulary anyone might learn in a 10-day trip or a four-day camp, the taxi driver was right. But what if through the trip or the camp a language learner could change in a positive way that would extend far beyond those few days?

In the first year of the Spring English Camp for university students majoring in English, the aimed for change was improved motivation, with the far from modest goal of providing the students’ most enjoyable days of their time at university. From the second year, the focus shifted consciously towards learner autonomy, with the overall camp motto of “It’s up to me!” In the third year, another layer was added to this—“Together we can do it, if we try!” These three goals, combined, have underpinned the running of the camps.

The camp has had no focus on language learning or practice, only on making friends and doing things together, and using English in a wide range of fun, challenging activities: cooking food from various countries including Jamaica, the Philippines and Britain; fun sports and games played inside and outside; writing and singing songs; preparing and performing skits, and mini debates.

English Camp Activities for Business Students

Joy Jarman-Walsh, Yasuda Women’s University

Planning an excursion or doing camp activities can be a great way to connect with students on a deeper and more motivating level outside of class. I’ve been doing summer camps with

my business department students for the past 5 summers and with the English department before that. As each year of students is different and studying business is our focus, I try to base materials on what is available from travel agent brochures, newspaper articles and maps before we head out to the mountains. Then the English camp activities can be based on real materials that are good models as they are successfully and commercially in use. Based on these models, we create maps and travel brochures for the lodge or area we are staying at. I get students to work in groups wandering around our location, mapping out where everything is located, noting the good and useful areas, interviewing staff at the lodge about their recommendations, and drawing sketches about the natural view, lodge landmarks or other charming points of the facility or grounds. Once we regroup, the students have time to work together to put all their information on their maps or brochures and then later in the day we have poster sessions where some group members will stand next to their poster and explain it to listeners. After about 5-10 minutes, we shuffle the speakers and listeners.

In the evening, we have movie time where we all bring pillows and wear pajamas to a main room where we can enjoy an English movie together (students usually choose it) while snacking on popcorn. We also do many active games, campfire, cooking curry or BBQ together and doing an adventure course.

English Camp Nuts and Bolts

Joseph Tomei, Kumamoto Gakuen University

My focus has been to incorporate and integrate these sorts of events within the school and the schedule. While this brings headaches, it does offer opportunities. Organizing a camp within the schedule rather than vacation periods requires *nemawashi* (literally “tending to the roots of a plant”, but means talking to teachers/staff to reach a consensus) and a willingness to adapt the event to fit.

Try and find Japanese antecedents for what you are doing. School clubs and circles, where students often organize *gasshuku* and *kenkyukai* where they stay overnight to practice intensely are one source. Pay particular attention to the types of student committees that these clubs create. The job titles and responsibilities form prefabricated roles and help students understand what they need to do to organize a camp.

Bureaucracy will say no when faced with the “never been done before”. Preface your plans with something that has already occurred at the institution, or argue that what you are doing is “just like” something else to get approval.

Student committees can shoulder a lot of work, so give them a sense of team spirit. Getting t-shirts printed with a camp logo for the committee members or organizing an *uchiage* can be magic.

Food is a remarkable way to have students enjoy and raise their level of participation. A meal of food that people can assemble (we’ve done soft tacos, sui gyoza, and makizushi) can be remarkably inexpensive and make for a memorable experience.

It is important to try and get a budget for these events, a task that is growing more difficult by the day. Still, even if you don’t get a budget, understanding that process can pay dividends in your work and your interactions with colleagues.

Lastly, talk to other folks about what you do, as ideas from other people doing similar things can be pure gold.

Probing the “Intensive” Aspects of an English Camp

Ken Ikeda, Otsuma Women’s University

I identify five intensive aspects of a two-credit language seminar offered by Otsuma Women’s University’s Department of English these past 37 years, concerning its name, principles, duration, the camp itself, and management.

“Intensive” has been retained in the course name since it started as an Intensive Training Course (英語特殊演習) in 1975. The name was revised as ISEC (Intensive Spoken English Camp) in 2004. Another aspect is in ISEC’s two guiding principles upheld throughout its 37 years: keep students focused only on using English, and allow anyone of any language level to attend. Here I associate “intensiveness” with “fervency”. The third intensive aspect is one of instilling students with ongoing awareness of ISEC’s principles and contents. Students must attend three preparatory sessions (事前授業) spaced one month apart prior to the camp, which is held at the end of summer vacation. These sessions orient students to components (lesson topics, presentations, plays) to ensure their readiness from the camp start.

The 4-day camp timetable is intensively packed with lessons and sessions from morning till night. Play-staging is a group activity in which students autonomously develop a skeleton idea into a skit over five sessions. A 3-hour orienteering scavenger hunt has been added this year.

Finally, “intensive” points to the ongoing and engaging correspondence between the ISEC director and instructors to maintain the camp’s inventive yet instructive features. Eliciting instructor ideas for improvement have resulted in renovating camp elements (e.g., the play-staging and this year’s orienteering), reducing the number of lessons, and creating greater rest time for the students.

What keeps ISEC “intensive” is not just the name or tight scheduling, but renewal: carefully preparing students, sustaining their involvement during it, and maintaining intimacy between the ISEC camp director, instructors and students.

Worthy of Consideration? A Critical Look at Media Values

Philip Shigeo Brown, Konan Women’s University

To what extent do we tend to consume the news at face value? Many people pass through the education system with only a limited understanding of how media represents and recreates the news. Yet a clear and critical understanding of the process can help to produce a more aware and informed voting populace, strengthening a cornerstone of society. This short presentation shared a practical three-stage approach for promoting critical media awareness and empowering students with not only a basic understanding of media values, but also opportunities to use them as a tool for improving learner-generated content:

1. Introduce newsworthiness and media values. In addition to Google© Advanced Search's website readability feature, InstaGrok© helped learners to find more accessible material. Further understanding was promoted through an information gap-fill for 12 media values (CyberCollege®, 2012). These values were partially rewritten using a free online vocabulary profiler (Cobb, 27th June 2012) to identify low frequency words and then change them to improve readability.
2. Analyse simple news items using the 12 media values (CyberCollege®, 2012), then share and post comments (in a private Facebook group) to foster peer-to-peer interaction and learning. *The Shukan Times* and other English news media were introduced via ELT News.
3. Finally, students use the 12 media values as a checklist to review their own presentations (or stories) to help generate more newsworthy and appealing content.

For students who may need more support to understand newsworthiness and media values, a background reading assignment might prove helpful. Lastly, Digital Disruption also offers tools for developing students' critical awareness of media and, "building a web-savvy generation" (<http://www.digitaldisruption.co.uk/>).

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ELT News: <http://www.eltnews.com/>

Google© Advanced Search: http://www.google.com/advanced_search

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Shukan Times: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/shukan-st/>

Learner Development Newsletter: JALT Pan-SIG, June 17th

Beyond the Classroom: A Talk in the Park

George Higginbotham, Hiroshima Kokusai Gakuen University

Talk in the Park is a semester-long project that has been running for five years at Hiroshima International Gakuin University. It is the central component of a first-year speaking course. All students are non-English majors studying technical subjects. Despite three years of English at high school they enter with TOEIC scores averaging around 300; typically students are not motivated to study English. As their high school studies have clearly failed them, a project was designed that takes quite a different approach. There are three main parts:

- (1) Students prepare and practice questions in regular classes;
- (2) Students go to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and interview English speakers;
- (3) Students give a presentation (using presentation software) about their interviews.

In the first half of the semester, the students prepare for their interviews. In groups of three or four, the students choose a topic and are guided through the process of creating questions. Halfway through the semester, having prepared and repeatedly practiced their questions, a day is organized (usually a weekend) to try them out for real. At the Peace Park, each group is given a voice recorder and told to approach English speakers and interview them. In the third stage of the project the students prepare and deliver a short talk about their interviews.

The assessment for this course is threefold:

- The recorded interviews are graded on objective criteria;
- There are regular vocabulary tests throughout;
- The presentation is graded.

The main strengths of this project are: it can be adapted to a variety of ability levels; it encourages student autonomy; it provides an authentic language experience; and there is meaningful use of the language studied. Most importantly, on completing the task students have a real sense of achievement.

Get Inspired, Listen to the Experts: Interviews with People Who Use English at Work in Hiroshima

Midori Kanmei, Hiroshima Shudo University

English textbook creators and classroom teachers make various efforts to make the students' experience of language learning relevant to their lives. This was true of a course I taught using the textbook with DVD, *Global Encounters* (Maeda, 2009), in which students listened to non-Japanese people's interviews about their lives in Japan in English. However, with this course as with many others, there was still a wide gap between what the course materials demonstrated and what the students experienced: listening to people interviewing other people rather than doing it themselves, and doing class-bound language practice rather than preparing to use, and actually using, language for a purpose.

As part of the Pan-SIG LD SIG Forum in Hiroshima, I reported on a project that aimed to create opportunities for students to have real experiences using English. They conducted interviews with people who use English with their jobs in Hiroshima outside class and then gave presentations about this in class. The procedure is described below:

1. Making groups, deciding roles (liaison, interviewing, filming, handout making), and choosing who to interview (from nine people from five countries and various professions)
2. Contacting the interviewee and arranging the interview
3. Preparing interview questions, based on the textbook
4. Meeting the interviewee and recording the interview
5. Editing the video and preparing the class presentation handout
7. Presenting the interviewee in class showing the video of the interview, answering questions, and evaluating each other's groups
8. Preparing and sending thank you letters to the interviewees.

There were some problems with this project: lazy students, technical recording problems, and evaluation issues. However, student responses confirmed many perceived benefits:

A chance to meet professional people, to get a glimpse of possible future career plans, and to hear useful stories and advice. They enjoyed each other's presentations, and speaking in front of people in English was a good experience. The whole project gave students various benefits: opportunities to gain various social skills; communication with unfamiliar classmates and with the interviewee; planning and time management; cooperation through group work; and taking action positively.

Scrabble at Leisure, Scrabble for Pleasure

Monika Szirmai, Hiroshima International University

Scrabble is an excellent language game for people of all ages in any language. As the title suggests, though, you should have enough time—leisure—to play it and you should also have fun—pleasure—while doing it. Although the Scrabble sets available in Japan come with set rules in English and Japanese, they can be easily modified according to one's needs. Depending on the age, or the level of English skills of the players, for example, the use of dictionary can be allowed, or common abbreviations or acronyms can be accepted.

According to a survey carried out before we started organizing Scrabble events on a regular basis, not many students knew what Scrabble was. In order to attract students to an extracurricular activity, it was necessary to show them first what kind of a game Scrabble was. The best way to do this is probably if 5-10 minutes of class time can be used for the introduction of the game and its basic rules with the help of worksheets. About 4-5 sessions should be enough for this purpose.

Scrabble is not only motivating but also serves as a good way to reinforce spelling skills, review vocabulary, learn new words, and in general, it is an excellent mental exercise. When students gave feedback about my courses, a majority put down Scrabble as their favourite activity, in spite of the fact that most of them had never played a full game but only used the worksheets.

The Hiroshima Inter-University Scrabble Project started in April, 2009. One of the main aims was to offer a chance for students to practice English outside classes. The next event will take place on Sunday, January 20th, 2013. It is a friendly contest where everybody is a winner.

Useful web pages:

http://www.hasbro.com/scrabble/en_US/

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/scrabble/id284815117?mt=8>

<http://www.grahams-games.co.uk/dwi.html>

<http://www.facebook.com/Scrabble>

Promoting Independent Pronunciation Improvement

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In-class pronunciation activities outside of a pronunciation class may be limited by class size, differences in students' weaknesses and abilities, pedagogy, and the teacher's knowledge

of phonology. Enabling students to study pronunciation on their own can be an appropriate countermeasure to these limitations while also empowering students to take charge of their own learning. The three websites below are especially appropriate for that aim.

First, the University of Iowa phonetics website (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/>) can be used as a diagnostic tool by students to discover gaps in their production capabilities. Using multimedia, the site introduces characteristics of American English phonemes and also has discrete examples of sounds occurring in different positions in a word. It can also help develop much needed meta-linguistic knowledge about pronunciation, which can benefit self-monitoring skills (Wrembel, 2005). However, since the site uses some technical terminology, preparing a Japanese handout might be helpful for students.

After students have identified troublesome phonemes, they can register at English Accent Coach (<http://www.englishaccentcoach.com>) and practice recognizing those sounds. This is essential in pronunciation practice because improving sound perception has been shown to have an effect on production (Flege & Eefting, 1987). Using a large variety of voices, EAC begins with phoneme-level minimal pair activities gradually moving to more complicated pairings. Registration is necessary, but free, and the software tracks the student's progress.

Finally, English Central (<http://www.englishcentral.com/>) has both free and for-profit content. It provides a wide range of graded, subtitled videos from YouTube for vocabulary and pronunciation practice. Using voice recognition software, it gives individualized feedback to all users, although only paid subscribers can see their progress on specific sounds. Furthermore, non-subscribers can only practice two videos per month. EC is full of natural, contextualized sounds for pronunciation and can be a "sandbox" to play in and discover along Kolb's learning cycle, which, according to Eckstein (2007), is a suitable model for pronunciation learning with its focus on input/practice, feedback/noticing, hypothesis forming, and hypothesis testing.

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**Maxims for Developing Students' and Teachers' Learning Experiences:
A Constructive Review of the Pan-SIG Conference, 2012.**

学習者と教師の学習経験を発展させるための格言：

Pan-SIG 2012大会の建設的な批評

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Clichés, stereotypes, and proverbs can be applied to many situations in life. Often, I wonder if their messages are sometimes diluted by their overuse, but more often than not, I think that they are apt and sum up a range of experiences perfectly—that is why their use became widespread in the first place. So, to review the recent pan-Special Interest Group (Pan-SIG) conference in Hiroshima, I would like to use three maxims: “be prepared”, “humans are social animals” (therefore [language] learning is a social activity), and “two heads are better than one”. The first one helps me think about what I will do at conferences. The second is a personal observation that may be true of most people, in particular myself. The third is a theme that I am becoming increasingly aware of in teacher-to-teacher conversations and professional development literature, and that was also prevalent in the presentations I watched at the Pan-SIG.

“Be Prepared”

Conferences can be tiring and difficult to enjoy. Firstly, you may have to travel a long way from early in the morning; you may, like me, have to carry a bulky laptop, stationery, and other things through multiple train changes. You then arrive at a busy place where you know no one. Then, in order to see as many presentations as possible, you rush from one room to another, arriving breathless and disorganized. Finally, you may either be disappointed by the relevance of the presentation to your needs, or be inspired by the enthusiasm of the presenters and the quality and enjoyability of the presentations. Having a plan and an awareness of what you want to achieve can greatly enhance the professional and social experience of a conference. To date, the Hiroshima 2012 Pan-SIG conference was one of the most satisfying conferences I have attended for the following reasons :

1. To make sure I had enough energy to talk with others during the conference, I took breaks from some of the presentations, even though they were of interest to me .
2. I prepared a schedule of the day, highlighted the presentations I wanted to see, and kept this schedule in a plastic wallet so I could find it easily.
3. In planning my day's presentations to see, I followed a single theme. I was thus able to stay in the same room for quite some time, saving energy and developing ongoing conversations with some people who were following the same theme.
4. I got to know the layout of the building by walking around it, checking signs and room numbers, and annotating my day's intended schedule so I could know if it was possible to make it to all of the presentations that I had planned to go to.
5. I have started to develop a professional network (I used my SIG for this)—knowing people to chat to and bounce ideas off can make the day far more enjoyable.

This simple shift in my approach to conferences helped me to take full advantage of the learning opportunities available at the Pan-SIG conference, and I will be making sure that I do these things again whenever I attend a conference.

In the next paragraph, I will describe how another shift in my attitude towards work is also helping me learn more from my colleagues, not just at conferences, but also on a daily basis.

“Humans Are Social Animals”

I am including this idea in my conference write-up because whenever I have attended conferences in the past, I have always tended to be a passive attendee—watching presentations, taking notes and thinking things over on my own. This time, I attended the presentation with a growing awareness of how important it is to be socially active at a conference. I am naturally a shy person, who, during the course of my teaching career, has had to develop something of a second persona in the classroom. However, when it comes to research work and lesson/curriculum development, I find myself really enjoying reading, and I find the idea of reading a teaching-related or language-related academic paper refreshing and useful. I also find myself feeling guilty when I start chatting to other people at work, when I know I have lots of written work to attend to. Nevertheless, I have become aware of some of the limitations of my bookish approach. In my previous job, I had a private office—useful for reading and typing, but not useful for conversations. In my current job, I work in a large open-plan teacher’s room; sometimes a little noisy and difficult to concentrate on reading and writing, but, because of the social set-up, it is a wonderful learning environment.

In the past 12 months, I have noticed the following benefits from sharing an office with fellow teachers: (1) conversations are great places to share ideas for teaching events to present at, share publication ideas, and find out about calls for papers; (2) we can easily share recommendations for good books and websites; (3) we can share teaching ideas; (4) we can arrange to peer check applications, submissions and lesson plans; (5) we can help each other in our understanding of, for example, complicated grammar points, and confirming facts, plans and ideas; (6) and, last but not least, we can support and encourage each other when we are feeling under pressure or encountering difficulties in the classroom, or with research-related activities. With my growing awareness of the importance of playing an active social role at work, I attended the Pan-SIG conference with far more focus on meeting people and joining in conversations. These conversations left me with a whole host of useful tips that I may not have gained without talking with other people. For example:

- Recruitment information: some universities seem to employ a point-based system to sort applicants and CVs. So, for example, if we know that a university attributes more points to a university journal article we could concentrate on writing more of those, or on the other hand concentrate on presenting more if a university deems presentations to be more valuable for job hunting.
- Useful books and materials
- Lesson activities
- Useful websites
- Applications of (alternative ways to use) different software and websites
- Ideas concerning our approaches to students who have failed to pass our courses

I have always been an enthusiastic proponent of a communicative and collaborative approach to language learning. Naturally, I think the idea that people can learn from interacting with each other, has been, can be, and should be extended to the classroom, and, in particular, to the language classroom. As an extension of this idea, I would next like to share the content of some presentations that I watched at the Pan-SIG conference that

specifically promoted the concept of encouraging and training students to help students, in a more deliberately direct way than encouraging learning from interaction.

“Two Heads Are Better Than One”

I don't know if it was a result of the presentations I chose to see, or a developing trend, but I noticed that many of the presentations I saw were about using students as a resource to help other students. The first presentation I saw was a really great example of this. Craig Manning described how he had taken students in remedial classes and set them into small groups of three with a peer leader in each group to facilitate discussion. This structure encourages students to help each other, rather than fulfilling a more traditional “teacher as the holder of information” role. The positive results of this approach to the classroom were startling and made me very aware of the power of student discussion. Craig explained the positive results come about because the students' advice to other students can be timelier, in higher quantity, and at a better level of comprehension than advice from a teacher who has to divide his or her time among a whole class rather than a small group. Craig's key idea for me was that we as teachers/instructors can help our students to give each other better advice—not just through direct answering of questions, but by encouraging students to ask each other questions, elicit points from each other and support their peers in their classwork. These are all things that I will be aiming to implement.

The second presentation I watched was also an interesting one, using the power of students' peer reviews to develop students' speaking skills. The presenter, Katherine Song showed us how she was able to use a simple feedback system to give students opportunities for peer feedback. The important point here was that the advice given by students to their peers would be at an appropriate level for them and can also help the teacher to realize when language delivered in the classroom (in this case presentations) is at an appropriate, audience-specific level.

Both presentations highlighted that firstly, as teachers, we need to help guide students in what is useful feedback for peers. Secondly, the feedback process needs to be and can be simple. And, finally, students can be trained to give each other better, more useful feedback.

The next presentation I watched again showed the effectiveness of students helping students. Bill Mboutsiadis and Masashi Nakamura presented on two themes through a poster session in the LD SIG Forum. The first theme was the idea of the students exploring their own L2 self to develop motivation, in accordance with Dornyei's 2009 theory, in a fun way with digital storytelling. The second theme focused on how student Teaching Assistants (TA) helped, advised, and motivated students by acting as successful, English-speaking role models in a student-centered computer lab course. Comments from students who appreciated the student TA's help revealed (in line with the earlier themes) that TAs were able to give timely, comprehension level-appropriate help to students on the course, and were also able to help with relevant advice on language learning skills—something teachers may not be able to do, as they do not share the same background and experience that TAs and students do.

Having watched these excellent presentations at the Pan-SIG conference, I am convinced that encouraging peer-to-peer help and advice unlocks significant synergies in content and language learning. As a result, students learn to better interact in English, share their content knowledge, and gain in subject matter and language confidence. Therefore, I think

it is an important area for further development and research for teachers interested in learner development. With this in mind, here are 10 ways I have been, and will be using to encourage peer support in the classroom.

- 1) Letting students assign team members to concentrate on specific sections of a listening exercise or task, while not ignoring other sections. To facilitate this, students can pass one pen / pencil around the group to make notes during the listening activity.
- 2) Allowing students pair or group discussion time after a listening to check answers and further build schemata.
- 3) Sharing ideas in schema-building activities by having students work individually, then in pairs, and finally in small groups to develop lists of phrases and vocabulary. These are then written on the board to create a class-developed vocabulary and phrase list.
- 4) Encouraging students to individually prepare vocabulary lists at home which can be shared amongst team members in class time.
- 5) Deliberately allowing exaggerated pauses after teacher explanations—giving students time and space to realize their natural tendency to ask classmates to confirm comprehension of teacher instructions.
- 6) Using Google docs to create small peer review groups for paragraphs, essays, and other written submissions.
- 7) Developing banks of example sentences in groups—when practicing grammar points, students write four sentences and dictate them to their group. Students write all dictated sentences down, and then the teacher indicates errors on one student's sheet in each group. This sheet is used as a master copy for the group to try to correct group member's sheets in a discussion activity.
- 8) Creating one-off peer grading teams for an in-class oral test practice—two or three students grade their team members' oral test practices and discuss good points and weak points.
- 9) Assigning on-going peer review groups so that students can review homework, assignments and tests with their teams and discuss in class, or before class, how to improve their language performance and grades.
- 10) Training students in pair work for checking answers by pre-teaching phrases such as “What did you write for question one?” and “Me too, I have the same answer”, and so on.

In conclusion, reading back through this article, I have noticed that the behaviors that I feel that I need to engender in myself to be a better teacher/researcher are also ones I expect my students to have in the classroom. *Be prepared.* Do I expect students to be prepared for class and university in general? Yes. *Humans are social animals.* Do I expect students to talk to each other, as a medium to develop language, run good classes and help keep all students up to speed? Yes. *Two heads are better than one.* Do I expect students to collaborate by working through study difficulties together, by helping each other improve specific skills, as well as by practicing language together? Yes. Do these things always happen in class? No. But it is worth remembering that, while I struggle with these things at work on a daily basis in my own native language, of course my students working in a second language or third language will struggle with these things—we are, after all, *only human.*

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Nakasendo Reflections, compiled by Rob Moreau 中仙道大会を振り返って Rob Moreauによるまとめ

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Looking Back on The LD SIG Forum at the Nakasendo Conference, June, 2012

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From December 2011, the focus of the monthly get-togethers held by the Learner Development SIG in Tokyo has been on classroom research and teacher reflections on their practices. Working in themed groups, SIG members have been sharing ideas on a variety of topics. It seemed natural, therefore, to use the LD SIG Forum at this year's Nakasendo Conference as an opportunity to present these ideas and gain new insights from each other as well as from conference participants.

Although the conference was held on the same weekend as JALT CALL, the SIG was well represented by 10 presenters: Tim Ashwell, Andy Barfield, Peter Cassidy, Stephanie Corwin, Robert Moreau, Debjani Ray, Miyuki Sakai, James Underwood, Kazuko Unosawa, and Stacey Vye. The presentations included topics and learning contexts ranging from the use of code-switching in a pre-kindergarten class to vocabulary development in a junior high school setting to collaborative learning in university English classes, among others.

This section of *Learning Learning* will give the reader a taste of the LD SIG Forum experience at Nakasendo through presenter and participant reflections.

Towards Exploratory Practices Around Learners' Vocabulary Development

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Words. More words. Phrases. Vocabulary. So much practice—learners', teachers', researchers'—reifies vocabulary and removes it from the quality of life and the mutual development of learners and teachers. In this poster presentation I tried to take a different look at learners' vocabulary development, and bring together some key developments that my students and I have been going through in a second-year seminar on International Migration Issues. In this seminar we have focused on first developing students' migration histories (where they look at migration within their family across generations), then built up

migration concepts such as *discrimination* and *remittances* from students' action knowledge. In this work learners' vocabulary develops naturally through a living engagement with international migration issues and an exploration of their worlds and surrounding social contexts. Students' vocabulary development is sustained by building knowledge together through doing research projects into international migration issues.

The poster display showed how, at the start of the academic year, my seminar students had gone and collected photos and pictures from the Internet to do with migrant workers, and then later done fieldwork in the greater Tokyo area by taking photographs of the different spaces that migrant workers and their families create, move through and/or author. The students brought these photos to class, discussed and classified them, before creating mini-posters about "migration concepts". They then used these posters in the seminar to explain their starting interpretations of migrant workers in their local communities. The process involved a number of important shifts in learner, teacher and researcher roles, and also led to some striking changes in how students develop concepts and record vocabulary.



Figure 1. Sorting and classifying migration pictures (April 20).

"Through grouping migration I found there are many ways to group. Before I talked with the seminar members I grouped only one way. That way is country they came from, but I talked with others. Other people have many thoughts and to group these pictures so I found many aspects of migration for example there are happy migration groups, official migration and discrimination group," reflected one student after sorting and categorizing different photos and pictures. Another expressed their development like this: "I've come to think of migrants as less strange and less fearful. To be honest, I had some negative feelings and prejudice that migrants might have some bad effect on our community, our country or our future...but after learning in this seminar I take migrants and migration more objectively and more calmly... Once I understand foreign people or how people migrate some of my negative feelings about immigration diminished. Somehow I had some strong belief not ... it's difficult for migrants to live happily in the country they migrate to and the country that accepted immigrants also have trouble I thought so...."

This semester, we have since been talking together about the different processes that students engage in doing research projects in English. We've moved away from a narrow focus on vocabulary for vocabulary's sake, and come closer to seeing lexical development as part of a much more complicated engagement with complex issues. For the past few weeks, the students have been working on their own research projects on international migration issues. In the seminar each week, they spend about an hour in pairs talking through their research notes, explaining what they have been finding out and developing their knowledge further together. As a group we have also been exploring the development of "critical thinking" and what that means as part of their overall research and development.

This exploratory approach has let me notice how clearly students come to see different processes that they engage in. For example, when we discussed the key processes in making research notes, they agreed that the following four processes are key:

- writing notes in a clear way
- identifying important information and ordering it
- summarizing ideas
- making notes easy to see (including visual elements, pictures, graphs); and when we talked about “explaining”, the students identified these processes:
 - planning/imagining how to explain your notes
 - explaining from general to specific, using details, examples, stories
 - making the explanation real
 - checking whether your partner is understanding
 - making your explanation easy to understand / directing your partner’s attention



Figure 2 . Explaining research (June 28) .

Their ideas encompassed both rehearsal and engagement, and their sense of explaining as a co-constructed act with others was very striking.

I’m not sure what will happen next in this seminar, but the Exploratory Practice direction that it has taken is interesting and exciting for all of us. We will probably get back to focusing on vocabulary development at some point, but it does not seem to be a problem if we don’t get there for a while. We are talking about the quality of what we are learning together, and we are following our interests about international migration issues and how we research them. From week to week, we are continuously reflective, both individually and collectively, through dialogue, writing and discussion. We share our reflections with each other, and we seem to be creating, in any case, our own approach(es) to learner autonomy, content-based learning, and vocabulary development.

The Problem of Assessment and Collaborative Learning

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At the LD SIG Forum, the Collaborative Learning Group presented a poster on what we have been discussing at the monthly get-togethers. Starting from basic questions such as “What is collaborative learning?” and “How is collaborative learning different from group work?” we have talked about a wide range of subjects, from theory to practice, sharing experiences, suggesting resources and giving feedback to each other on collaborative learning (CL) activities we have tried in our classes. All of these ideas were collated by Tim Ashwell, who kindly made the poster on behalf of our group.

One attendee at our poster session raised questions we had been discussing but had not focused on in any detail. He explained that his daughter, who was studying at a Design College, was dissatisfied with group work because she felt she had pulled more weight than other group members, and yet she had received the same grade as everyone else in her group. All projects in the course were done in groups and they were evaluated. Some members lacked motivation, and she was facing difficulties in interpersonal relations. We discussed the daughter's case and continued to discuss issues that can hinder the effectiveness of CL in a language course, such as lack of students' motivation and low language proficiency. We agreed at the end of the discussion that the effectiveness of CL should be measured and proved. The conference was a good opportunity to discuss these topics with the attendee as well as with the group.

After this conversation, I reflected on the issue of evaluating group projects and the importance of establishing the effectiveness of CL. I have considered ways to implement CL; however, though I have tried group project work before, I have started to avoid projects that require a product by more than three people recently, in order to avoid conflicts and issues concerning the evaluation of groups and individual contributions. Although group projects may cause conflicts in interpersonal relations and disagreements over the way to do tasks, they are worthwhile because collaboration may add another dimension to learning as students can exchange ideas on tasks, and assume a variety of roles. According to Dörnyei and Murphey (2003), "There is a general agreement that roles are of great importance to the life and productivity of the group..."(p.109). To resolve the problem of the attendee's daughter's case, assigning specific roles to group members, dividing their responsibilities in terms of tasks, might have led to more cooperation. I would like to further discuss how to organize group projects at our meetings and seek better ways to facilitate CL.

At the get-togethers, we had discussed the importance of proving the effectiveness of CL over non-collaborative methods in achieving a range of goals. A few months ago, we agreed to collect qualitative data from our students relating to their experiences of collaborative learning, and I asked the students in my writing class to discuss their experience of giving peer feedback at the end of the first semester. One student wrote, "It was a new experience as it was an opportunity to become conscious of the structure and grammar of the compositions and helped [me] to have an objective perspective when writing [my] own." Although some students mentioned the difficulty of giving peer feedback and their discomfort with the responsibility it entailed, they also wrote that giving and receiving feedback helped them revise their writing. In the second semester, students will continue giving peer feedback, and I hope they will find it more beneficial. Other than collecting students' reflections on giving and receiving peer feedback, I will consider other forms of data collection in order to discuss the effectiveness of CL.

Since then, at the last LD-SIG get-together on June 24th, our group agreed that our long-term goal could be participating in the 2013 LD SIG Forum at the JALT National Conference and, as a mid-term goal, contributing an article to the April 2013 issue of *Learning Learning*. The Nakasendo Conference was an opportunity to reflect on what we have been doing so far, and I look forward to exchanging ideas with group members further on the theory and practice of CL.

A Newcomer's Point of View

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The Nakasendo Conference on June 2nd, 2012 was very significant for me as it was my first time attending it as a member of the LD SIG. I had joined the Nakasendo Conference several times before, had listened to many interesting presentations, and taken part in the group discussions. This time, I was one of the presenters at the LD SIG Forum.

The theme of the poster presentation in which I was involved was Collaborative Learning in Language Teaching. We discussed our experiences of trying to facilitate collaborative learning in our classes, and some of the

participants who came by were keen to discuss their difficulties regarding their students/ children in a collaborative classroom setting and sought some advice and suggestions on how to solve their problems.

Collaborative learning might be a welcome addition to student-centered classrooms but, unfortunately, a departure from the traditional teacher-controlled classrooms can also cause problems. In some cases, certain students might feel used by others; some students may tend not to do their share during the group work but may push the workload onto the other hardworking group members.

One visitor to our group was really troubled by this phenomenon, as his daughter had been facing a similar type of problem in her college classes. As a newcomer myself to collaborative learning, I did not have much to offer, but some of my group members were experienced in using collaborative learning in their classrooms and tried to provide some realistic ideas for how to deal with the problem. One memorable suggestion was to assign group members a distinct role, which would make it harder for them to evade or neglect their duties but would also reinforce individual contributions and boost overall productivity of the group. This sounded convincing and practical to me and I gained some new information out of that discussion.

Later, I went to the other booths to listen to some talks or to see some posters and had a wonderful time learning a lot in different fields of Learner Development. Last but not least, I really enjoyed the vigorous and informative “My Share” presentations by the Teachers’ College Tokyo Alumni Association members. Overall, I felt the excitement of an explorer and felt proud to be a part of the great expedition.

Viewing Research and Laundry from a Different Angle through Peer Collaboration

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The Learner Development SIG Forum at Nakasendo 2012 afforded the participants a glimpse of how teachers are working in partnerships via collaborative groups and pairs, primarily in the Tokyo area, not merely to provide support and guidance to each other, but also to creatively look at different ways of learning and researching in language classrooms and seminars. In previous years, I have always been very much a part of these monthly get-togethers, yet this year I was not able to attend them, so being able to share ideas about learning, teaching, and researching at the LD SIG Forum after such a long

hiatus gave me a particular thrill. For me, the venue could not have been better because it was close enough that I could view my balcony from time to time from where I was discussing my research study and see if my clothes were drying. In addition, I was able to view not only my apartment and laundry hanging out to dry from a different angle, but also my research about my Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) study on university seminar students' learning of English thanks to the insightful comments from peers.

Mingling with other participants and presenters gave me a wide and varied array of views about how teachers and learners conceptualize learning. Stephanie Corwin reminded me that learning vocabulary by making visual collocations of the target words and/or phrases is not only useful for learning second (or other) languages, but also a valuable learning practice for language development in general. With Tim Ashwell, Robert Moreau, Debjani Ray, and Kazuko Unosawa's inclusive and exciting discussion group, I could actively gather ideas about and ponder on how learners (myself included) learn more when they collaborate with others. From Andy Barfield, who was explaining Miyuki Sakai's poster on her behalf, I could see that building an English vocabulary repertoire means so much more to junior high school students when they can create original designs in their vocabulary records. Then Andy himself showed me how the vocabulary development of his seminar students led them to the discovery of a whole new world of migrant communities in close proximity to their homes, bringing the issues closer to their minds and hearts.

Lastly, from Peter Cassidy, I was able to view the complex development of code-switching in young learners and know how allowing L1 language helps with concept-building in both languages. When the Forum was over, I called my friend who wanted to attend, but could not. She was proud of our work, and wished she could have been there. We chuckled together about the fact that I could see my flat (and my laundry too!) from the room where

the Forum was held. The message I got was that different perspectives are needed in learning, and this was precisely what the LD SIG Forum offered.

A Participant's Reflection

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I enjoy Nakasendo for its diversity, inclusiveness, and unpretentiousness; qualities that make it an ideal venue for LD-SIG members to share insights from their research. Having arrived late at this year's forum, I only had time to listen to and speak in depth with two of the presenters, but learned much of value from both.

Intrigued by the photos and mind maps featured in his poster, I first visited Andy Barfield. Andy explained how he had explored a new approach to concept-development with learners in a seminar he teaches on international immigration issues. Learners in the seminar had gone out into their communities, taking photos of places near them, which were of importance to local migrant workers and their families. Andy showed how, through reflecting on these photos via mind maps, learners developed a fuller, more sensitive, and complex understanding of the issues they were studying and did so right in their own back yards. What impressed me most about Andy's approach was how it facilitated learners' discovery of the interconnectedness between themselves and migrants living in their communities. Both learners and their communities are surely better off for it.

Next, I listened to Peter Cassidy talk about his research on L1 use in the language classroom and its relationship with learner output. Peter described and showed photos from a study he had conducted in which children at an English school were either allowed to use their L1 or not allowed to use it while playing with blocks together. Afterwards, Peter looked at the complexity not only of the explanations learners gave of their block creations, but also of the creations themselves. Photos of the respective block structures made by the children in each condition revealed a stark difference in complexity in favor of the condition in which learners were allowed to use the L1. I found these results intriguing and spent the rest of the remaining time at the forum discussing ideas for possible follow-up studies on L1 use with Peter.

Once again, the Nakasendo LD SIG Forum proved to be an engaging event with presentations full of original ideas and fresh insights. Though I only had time to visit with Andy Barfield and Peter Cassidy, it was time well spent that left me looking forward to next year's forum—to which I plan on arriving early!

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The Japan-United States Teacher Education Consortium (JUSTEC)
2012 in Shikoku
JUSTEC 2012大会について

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Many foreign language teachers in Japan have heard of the Japanese Association of Language Teachers (JALT) and the Japanese Association of College English Teachers (JACET), but recently I discovered a similar group that consists of educators from both the US and Japan called the Japan-United States Teacher Education Consortium (JUSTEC). JUSTEC was established 24 years ago and was originally designed as a three-year project, but through the efforts of its members, and a few key figures in the Japanese and US education systems, JUSTEC was able to continue, and has now developed into a thriving organization dedicated to the advancement of education in both countries. The 24th Annual JUSTEC Conference was held at the Naruto University of Teacher Education in Naruto, Shikoku from July 6th-9th. The conference featured keynote speakers and discussants from the United States, Japan, Thailand, and Korea. The main session began Friday afternoon with Dr. Donna Wiseman, Dean of Education at Maryland University, giving her plenary address.

Dr. Wiseman spoke about the two current schools of thought regarding teacher training and licensure in America. She described the two schools as being traditionalists and reformers. The traditionalists are those who believe teacher training should remain rooted in university education programs that require anywhere from four to seven years of education and training, whereas reformers believe in alternative licensure programs that can be completed in a much shorter time period. For traditionalists the main goal is to equip new teachers with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to make a smooth transition into the classroom and be effective teachers in today's rapidly-changing global society. Conversely, the reformers believe that education should focus on promoting student performance on standardized tests. According to reformers, the best way to promote student performance is by filling classrooms with new teachers who can succeed in this aim as quickly as possible. Traditionalists understand that every student is an individual and that some students will not perform well on standardized tests regardless of intelligence or ability.

Traditionalists believe that students learn in different ways, and that teachers should treat them accordingly. Dr. Wiseman's presentation gave the overall impression of a warning against the ideals being put forward by the reformists. I tend to agree with the traditionalists' ideals because I believe one of the most important factors in overall student success is the influence of a quality teacher, and the reformists' method of truncated training and student test score-based teacher evaluation are detrimental to the development and retention of quality teachers.

There are an increasing number of programs in place today that implement the reformers' alternative licensing ideals, such as Teach for America (TFA), where high-performing recent

college graduates, regardless of academic subject area, are recruited and trained in only a few months and then placed in schools in low-income and rural communities for a two-year term. Regardless of effectiveness, many TFA teachers leave after their initial contract period and are replaced by new recruits.. Conversely, the traditionalists are more concerned with the long-term goal of growing education as a profession by investing time and resources to train and retain quality teachers.

Dr. Wiseman was followed by Dr. Katsuyuki Sato from the host University who spoke about the state of teacher training and development in Japan. Dr. Sato expressed the belief that there is a divide between teacher training programs and effective classroom teaching. He discussed two main problem areas: insufficient consensus among professors regarding curriculum, and a conflict between knowledge of subject content and practical ability. Dr. Sato outlined the somewhat limited training that teachers receive in Japan as one of the main causes of unprepared or underqualified teachers, citing specific weaknesses such as the inability to give quality lessons or maintain student interest. He went on to discuss the changes that are needed in the Japanese education system, such as an increasingly specific curriculum and training that provides a more focused skill base for Japanese teachers, although he did not discuss in detail any specifics about the curriculum or the skills that teachers should be taught.

Dr. Fred Hamel from the University of Puget Sound in Washington spoke next. He discussed the new trend in America for teaching licensure called Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA). Currently 25 states in the US have adopted the TPA standards for preservice teachers. A few highlights of the TPA are more in-depth self-evaluations from the teacher candidates, including 40-50 pages worth of written self-evaluations, videotaped lesson delivery and evaluation, and close contact with mentor teachers throughout the program. The teacher candidates are also required to pay \$300 to an independent evaluating company for grading of certain required tests that the candidate must take during the teacher training process. I was amazed at the amount of time and effort that is required of preservice teachers, and my final thought on the subject was to wonder if the TPA program is so demanding as to actually discourage some potentially high-quality teachers from entering the profession.

Dr. Kim from Gyeongin University of Education spoke next, followed by Dr. Narumol Inprasitha from Khon Kaen University in Thailand. Both speakers discussed education and teacher licensure in their respective countries. One interesting point from Dr. Kim's presentation was that the social status of teachers in Korea is fairly high and therefore teaching is a field that has an abundance of candidates, many of whom are unable to pass the difficult teacher training courses and exams required of future teachers.

The afternoon session ended with a lively discussion where many interesting viewpoints were expressed. One idea that stood out among the various topics was the popularity of homeschooling in America and whether it is a viable option in Japan. The responses to this idea were mixed, but the majority of responders seemed to believe that homeschooling would not work in Japan. One reason given was that, even if a child were successfully

homeschooled, society would not accept it as a proper form of education, which would greatly hinder the child's future prospects.

The conference continued on Saturday with an interesting list of short paper presentations on teacher education practices and contemporary issues related to education in the US and in Japan. I presented early Saturday on the topic of building a positive learning environment. I discussed my experiences of teaching high school students both in America and in Japan, focusing on strategies for increasing student motivation and performance that have worked well in my classes both in the US and in Japan. The response was very encouraging, and several attendees shared positive thoughts with me afterwards. Another presentation given by Eriko Fujita, a graduate student from Purdue University, and professor Hiromi Imamura, her mentor teacher from Chubu University, provoked a bit of a heated response in the ending discussion. The topic was incorporating World Englishes into English education in Japan. In her presentation Eriko made a powerful case for the autonomy of Japanese English teachers in Japan, citing reasons such as the high cost of importing Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), the relatively short tenure (usually 2-3 years) of most foreign teachers, and the idea that Japanese teachers are more in tune with the feelings and reactions of their students because they share a common culture. During her presentation she also discussed the idea that Japanese students have self-perception problems relating to their accents and pronunciation of English words, which causes them to view native speakers as being perfect or better than Japanese speakers of English. This was a very interesting idea for me because I have not heard this concept expressed by either my Japanese high school or adult students, but it is something that I would be interested in researching further.

The last presentation of the day was a viewing of an entire videotaped fifth-grade science lesson in a Japanese public school. After the viewing, all the participants divided into groups and discussed the strong and weak aspects of the lesson, followed by a full discussion of the various group interpretations. This activity highlighted one of the key features of JUSTEC: the opportunity for comparative perspectives on education.

Sunday saw another group of paper and poster presentations, including presentations on loss of identity and the subsequent grief this caused adult returnees to Japan and on assessment portfolios for Japanese elementary school children.

The JUSTEC Conference was an enjoyable event that helped me to gain a stronger perspective on the state of education in Japan and the US. One aspect that I particularly enjoyed was the consecutive presentations which allowed all the participants to attend every presentation if they chose to. There was also ample opportunity for individual or small group discussions between each presentation. I was able to make some genuine connections with educators from all the countries represented at JUSTEC, and I am looking forward to attending this conference again in the future.

Reinventing the wheel? A conversation about the Independent Learning Association Conference in Wellington, New Zealand,

「車輪の再発明」？ ILA大会（於：ウェリントン、ニュージーランド）

についての会話

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Alison: Spending a week in New Zealand to attend the ILA conference was a refreshing break from the pressures of everyday work at the end of a hot and humid summer in Japan. Wellington was enjoying the first days of spring; there were daffodils in the Botanical Gardens and in the buttonholes of Wellingtonians, including that of the Vice-President who came to deliver the Mihi, a traditional welcome chant in Maori to the hundred-odd delegates from all over the world. The hospitality and warmth of the organizers, plentiful refreshments during each day, memorable social events, including a journey by boat across the bay followed by a bus ride up a precipitous cliff road to a farm lodge for the conference dinner, added to the smooth running of the conference itself, all made for a constructive and congenial atmosphere in which to share new research and practice.

Steve, when we were talking about the conference on the final evening, one of the things that struck both of us, as I remember, was the emphasis on defining or redefining the big concepts: What do we mean by autonomy? What is agency? How does identity fit into the picture? Do we need to revisit them, or is it better to let them fall out of fashion and go with the next best thing? In the first plenary, Mike Levy from the University of Queensland introduced us to Gartner's Hype Cycle which shows typical public attitudes to new products or ideas rising sharply at first to a *peak of inflated expectations*, then falling just as sharply into a *trough of disillusionment* before rising again more slowly this time up a *slope of enlightenment* to a *plateau of productivity*. The final plenary speaker, Peter Gu cleverly recycled the Hype Cycle into his talk about strategies, a concept that he maintained has gone through precisely this trajectory. Is this true of all the concepts that we deal with in the field of independent learning?

Steve: Yes, I think it probably is true. Though I'm not sure that a trough of disillusionment is the right phrase—perhaps a period of re-evaluation would be a better way to describe it. (Having said that, without rigorous re-evaluation of concepts which no longer seem quite adequate, then a trough of disillusionment seems the natural next stop.)

Somebody commented to me after the colloquium that you were involved in, Alison ("Learner Autonomy or Personal Autonomy: Language, Identity and the Struggle for Participation" led by Naoko Aoki), that they recognized the same debates over defining terms that they'd heard ten years ago. But actually I don't think that was the case. I saw that

discussion not so much as reinventing the wheel, but rather as a necessary re-evaluation / reconstruction of the terms and concepts we use, making sense of them in ever-changing contexts and in the light of our continually-developing understanding.

And actually things have moved on. We weren't debating what we mean/understand by autonomy per se but rather, as part of a process of de-/reconstruction, we are exploring terms which can more accurately convey what we mean by autonomy—and goodness knows how baggage-laden that particular term is! Agency and identity were two of those terms which particularly resonated with me, and I found myself making connections with Kelleen Toohey's conceptualization of learner autonomy as “socially-situated agency” (Toohey, 2007, p. 232) based on her work with Bonny Norton (Toohey & Norton, 2005). This positions learners in particular social contexts which will constrain/enable their access to different practices and resources . . . and to potential identities.

Alison: Yes, that idea of *situatedness* was one that stood out for me too and this was something that came out in various interesting ways in a number of the presentations I went to. Andy Gao from the University of Hong Kong and the second plenary speaker drew on Ahearn's definition of agency as a “socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112) to conceptualize agency as a reflexive and reflective capacity that stands between the choices we make and the goals we set for ourselves as autonomous individuals and the society in which we exercise those choices and work towards those goals. Andy's examples were taken from a variety of Chinese contexts: a novel about learning English during the Cultural Revolution, the narrative of a disabled learner, “English Corners”—public gatherings where people met to practice speaking English, language choice and group identification among mainland students in Hong Kong. These examples were particularly resonant coming from China, a country that is emerging as a new superpower whose identity appears to be undergoing considerable change. The constraints on individuals there are quite different from those individuals face in other contexts, such as here in Japan, and a good reminder for us to reflect on the limitations we and our learners face at home and the kinds of actions we can take to overcome them or do something else instead.

This resonates with the work on identity and personal constructs that you talked about in your presentation, too, doesn't it, Steve. The student who became accustomed to giving and receiving hugs from her host family during her study abroad found she had to negotiate this kind of behaviour with her own family. What is normal in one context may not be in another. Another presentation that brought this aspect of place home to me was “The Power of Place: Autonomy and Space” by Garold Murray, Naomi Fujishima and Mariko Uzuka describing the creation and development of a “social learning space dedicated to language learning.” The key role in the development of the English café at their university was played by student administrators, and thus it is a social space, but, as the title implies, it was the physical place itself that acquired a particular significance for the learners who used it, offering them affordances for language use and learning that they couldn't get elsewhere. Since my own presentation focused on the concept of affordances, I found this particularly intriguing.

But going back to the concepts (or back to basics as Andy subtitled his talk), there was quite a bit of discussion about this thing called agency—and not necessarily agreement.

Steve: That's right. In your colloquium, Naoko was talking of agency as an ability, though I'm not entirely sure I fully understood what she wanted to say (perhaps something she could elaborate on this here in *Learning Learning?*). In the discussion session after the colloquium, someone mentioned the importance of intent as an essential element of what we understand by agency. (And again, that element of intent seems to me to connect very strongly with the concept of self-direction, another autonomy-synonym which popped up regularly in Wellington.) That seems to make sense to me. Agency without intent is not agency: seeing it as only an ability or capacity seems to me to be very limiting.

Tanya McCarthy, in her poster session, was considering the question of how controlling or directive language advising should be. She spoke about being quite directive in early sessions with her first year university students, as they don't have enough background knowledge of strategies or experience of making decisions about their learning, but then gradually ceding control to them. The point being that even with intent, learners still need appropriate information to make meaningful choices—a kind of informed intent, leading to a more effective exercise of agency. And perhaps, harking back to Naoko, that's where the issue of ability (i.e., as an informed capacity) fits into the question of agency?

In his plenary, Peter Gu spoke of the decline of interest in learning strategies over the last decade or so, suggesting that this was perhaps partly due to the way they had been dealt with—as tools which are somehow just given to learners. A better approach, he argued, would be to talk of *strategic learning*, which puts the focus back on to learners and the whole process of learning, rather than on the strategies, the tools. This would be a more autonomy-friendly approach than conventional strategy training: focusing on learners' understanding of their own learning (and awareness of themselves as agents of their own learning), it would enable them to make informed choices which are appropriate for their context.

Alison: I agree, turning the concept on its head from learning strategies to strategic learning can help us see that what is important is the learner's understanding of what they want and how they can achieve that. Strategic learning isn't merely the application of meta-cognitive strategies, it isn't learning to learn; rather, it's a considered and deliberate planning of the best way to achieve particular learning goals. And that has quite different implications for the role of teachers or advisors.

Steve: As practitioners, I think we need to consider how learners (and teachers) are able to exercise their agency as individuals within the constraints and/or opportunities of differing social contexts, as they construct identities as L2 learner-users. This, I think, then brings us closer to a reconstructed understanding of autonomy.

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