Looking Back 報告

Reflections on Creating Community: Learning Together, Otsuma Women's University, December 14, 2014

To see photos of the afternoon: http://ld-sig.org/creating-community-photos/

In bringing people together to explore learner development and community building through discussion and reflection, our aim was to keep presentations formats informal and interactive. Creating Community: Learning Together involved two rounds of digital display and poster presentations. Both rounds were followed by small discussion and reflection circles for 30 minutes in pairs and small groups in each presentation room. In total, there were 38 poster presentations/digital displays given by both teachers and students, with 48 teachers and 42 students attending. The whole event finished with a plenary session celebrating the publication of two new collections of research by the Learner Development SIG. We would like to say a really warm thank you to everyone who supported, presented at, and participated in the conference, with special thanks to the following individuals—Keiko Sudo, Martin Mullen, Agnes Patko, Ken Ikeda, Devon Arthurson, Nozomi Tajima, Jenny Morgan, Ian Hurrell, Karin Takahashi, and Alison Stewart—for sharing their reflections on Creating Community: Learning Together. Thank you, one and all!

Andy Barfield, Ken Ikeda, Fumiko Murase, and Stacey Vye (Conference Organizers)

みなさまに集まっていただき、ディスカッションやリフレクションを通して、学習者ディベロップメントやコミュニティービルディングについて研究していただくため、プレゼンテーション形式をカジュアルにそしてインタラクティブにする事を目標としました。Creating Community: Learning Togetherでは、デジタルディスプレイとポスタープレゼンテーションのセッションを２周行いました。また１周ごとに、それぞれのプレゼンテーションルームで、ペアもしくは少人数グループでの、３０分間のディスカッション・リフレクションサークルが行われました。合計４８人の教師と４２人の学生が参加し、教師や学生による３８ものポスタープレゼンテーションやデジタルディスプレイが発表されました。そして、このイベントは、学習者ディベロップメント研究部会（ＬＤＳＩＧ）による研究成果をまとめた２冊の本の出版を祝う全員会議で幕を閉じました。この会議の開催に協力してくださった方々、またプレゼンテーション発表、参加して下さった方々、全ての方々に心から感謝いたします。そしてCreating Community: Learning Togetherに対する様々な意見をくださり、Keiko Sudo, Martin Mullen, Agnes Patko, Ken Ikeda, Devon Arthurson, Nozomi Tajima, Jenny Morgan, Ian Hurrell, Karin Takahashi, Alison Stewartには大変感謝しております。みなさん、ありがとうございます！

Andy Barfield, Ken Ikeda, Fumiko Murase, and Stacey Vye （会議主催者）

Keiko Sudo, Graduate School, Keisen University

I had chances to listen to the following presentations :

Jenny Morgan's "Learning together—researching NGOs and social change"
I found aspects of the pleasure of being a teacher in Jenny's presentation very interesting, particularly the aspect of her enjoyment of learning together with her students. She introduced one of her students who did qualitative research in an NGO for elderly people. The elderly people the student interviewed are still active in society after their retirements. The student who is not confident yet with his English did great research. It means one of Jenny's goals in her teaching succeeded—the student is now hoping to pursue a career with an NGO. I like her idea of exploring how domestic and international chapters work together for social change. (Thank you for your tasty and seasonal tree biscuits and chocolate!)

Yukiko Aoyama's "The living and working conditions of indigenous people: Struggling for community with the modern world"
When I talked to Yukiko, I felt her sincerity and her earnest engagement for her topic. I am sure these feelings stem from her caring for indigenous people. Her research was well explored (?) so I learned a lot from her presentation. I hope she continues researching this topic and meets many people concerning this issue domestically and internationally.

Sumika Morita's "Meguro Children Theatre: A learning and social community for children's psycho-social development"
Sumika's report and research support the importance of fostering these kinds of community activities where young and older people mix and spend time together, even for a short period of time. I was amazed to know that even her younger brother was involved in these activities. I hope many young people,

including college students get involved in these kinds of activities.

Group Discussion
In the second group discussion, I talked with two university students who sincerely hope to put their university learning to use at school environments in their communities. Some Japanese teachers still teach in a teacher-centered way. We agreed that cooperative learning can be more focused so that students can decide through autonomy and learn a great deal from other individuals in many ways. To find new things from your friends is a lot of fun and you can expect a very lively environment with a lot of laughing and active exchange.

Impressions
I was able to see that in this SIG, both teachers and students are in fact creating a community with a spirit of "Learning Together" where both counterparts in a way bring up interesting and questionable aspects of their learning and express their honest feelings and exchange ideas. For example, for my presentation, those who came and listened to my presentation asked me quite a lot of questions and gave suggestions. While answering those questions I slightly became aware of what I was not sure about, in other words I was able to realize the point I was missing. I think I can include that point in my thesis. It was a big finding for me.

Teachers are learners as well as students. Is this one of the important concepts in this LD SIG?

As a Japanese student, the way the conference team organized (?) proceeded the conference was very interesting; the conference was very relaxed, with snacks and drinking, while it was very systematic in terms of time. The conference team was very warm and their instructions were very clear in the group discussions; therefore, we were smoothly guided and the discussion was pretty fruitful. Is this normal at this type of

conference? As a matter of fact, I really enjoyed it.

Thank you very much for your sincere help and support at the conference.

Martin Mullen, Meisei University
I've been to quite a few different conferences, and kind of conferences in Japan, and I've heard people say that different events have different 'atmospheres'... and to be honest, I've always been skeptical of that. They all seem much the same to me! So attending the LD Conference on December 14, 2014 was such a pleasant surprise as it really did have a different, more relaxed, friendly atmosphere than any other I'd been at before in Japan. I was presenting myself during the second session, so my comments relate mainly to the first session.

Even before the presentations started, there was a warm and welcoming feel to the event. Because it is a SIG event, I guess everybody knew more people than usual, which helped people to relax.

Throughout the first session, one thing which struck me again and again was that there was a wonderful ratio of student presenters to teacher presenters. As I mentioned during the plenary session after the first round of presentations, conferences in Japan are usually full of teachers talking about what students want, what students need, what students are interested in. Of course, this is often very well informed, well intended, and accurate, but it was a breath of fresh air to get to hear so much from the students themselves. It was a great experience for me as a teacher to hear from students directly, and know what it is that they are interested in and what their wants and needs are.

From the students' perspective (putting on my teacher's hat) I think that it is a very useful experience for students to see their teacher from a different perspective. For students to realize that there is a community of teachers out there, of which their teacher is a part, will help them better understand and respect their teachers and where their teachers are coming from.

Overall, perhaps we don't have enough opportunities like this where we share our perspectives in such equal measures. It can be a very worthwhile and perhaps eye-opening experience for both sets of people. And through more events like this, where students and teachers attend and present together—perhaps it can help to bridge the gap that may exist between the two groups (from both perspectives).

Agnes Patko, Meisei University
Creating Community: Learning Together was a great opportunity for both teachers and students to meet and learn from each other in a relaxed environment outside the traditional classroom setting. This one-day mini conference met my expectations; that is, I could take away new ideas of classroom management and student support. I talked to other teachers about some of the difficulties I had met in my classes and we shared techniques of dealing with them. Yet, the most memorable part of the conference was listening to and discussing issues with student presenters.

I remember how anxious I was before my first conference presentation, even though I had been teaching for years then, so I was used to speaking in front of other people. When I listened to students' presentations, I recalled my own experiences of anxiety and tried to be as supportive as I could when I saw that they got stuck or forgot what they were about to say. I was impressed by their courage and preparedness. I got lots of energy from them. Let me introduce two student presentations that were the most interesting to me.

Students from Tokyo University of Science talked about how they proposed to improve the English Lounge sessions. Originally, they discussed various topics each time with the help of the teacher in these sessions; however, they were not satisfied

with this and recommended implementing debates. The preparation process for the debates was also outlined in the poster.

Unfortunately, as I arrived only a few minutes before the end of the round, there was not enough time for them to finish their explanation. Still, there was enough time for me to feel their enthusiasm. The question that arose in me after talking to them is how I could encourage my students to take such actions as these presenters on their own learning processes.

Another interesting presentation was given by a Chuo University student. The topic was about the rights of indigenous people, with special attention to the Ainu people in Japan. During my university studies I read a lot about the Ainu in various books and papers. However, in Japan I have never heard about them in the media and when I ask Japanese people about them they seem to be reluctant to answer. I do not know if it is because it is a taboo, people actually do not know much about the Ainu or are just uninterested. Thus, this was the first time I had heard about this issue in Japan. This presentation made me think about the difficulties of preserving the culture of minorities and indigenous people.

The participants at the Creating Community: Learning Together conference not only benefited from listening to teachers' presentations but could familiarize themselves with various topics that students were interested to research and present. I believe that both teachers and students got closer to each other. Moreover, it was a great opportunity for students to get to know students from other universities and talk about their research interests. I hope that in the future there will be similar events where we all can learn together from each other.

Ken Ikeda, Otsuma Women's University
As one of the conference organizers (and presenters), I had few moments to mingle in the program itself. So, I felt privileged to attend one of the first round discussions as a

moderator. I chose it on the basis of several students visiting from my university being there (they are in a teacher training program). I was surprised that four of them came, considering that I teach them on Saturdays, and had made no offer of extra credit.

The discussion group was attended by a lot of students from various universities. I asked if there were any thoughts about what they learned from the session. A native English speaker teacher (Devon Arthurson) responded first, speaking in Japanese, which really helped usher the discussion to become open and interactive between teachers and students.

Later on, a Japanese teacher (sorry, I don't remember her name) asked the students directly why they would come to a conference of their free will. Several students answered either in Japanese or English. Among them, one explained he was unable to present at the JALT National Conference in Tsukuba so he was glad for the chance to do it here. Another (one of my students) said she came wanting to learn new things and meet people. She learned for the first time what "autonomy" meant. The Japanese teacher was overcome by the willingness of these students to freely participate. She broke into tears, leading another to cry as well. Everyone was moved. Devon complimented me on the moderation, but I felt I hadn't done anything to guide it. The discussion had moved on its own to create a community and everyone had learned something together.

It was truly a magical moment and this alone made me feel our conference was worth it all. I felt the walls that separate teachers and students and between themselves (especially between students who likely otherwise would refrain from meeting due to school ranking, etc.) had come down momentarily. We could regard each other as like-minded and like-motivated participants. I told my students that what they shared in that discussion would inspire teachers to teach with reinvigorated vision for years to come.

The only question I have, which may echo many others, is whether conferences like this one, where students and teachers do freely present alongside each other, already exist in Japan. So far it remains unanswered.

Devon Arthurson, Rikkyo University
I felt incredibly privileged to do a poster presentation about increasing learner autonomy in the first round of the conference along with one other presentation by a teacher and two other presentations by students. This was the first time I presented and I was surprised by the positive feedback other instructors gave me—in addition to the interest students showed. Immediately I felt I was in a nurturing environment. Everyone I meet seemed very eager to share ideas and learn more from one another.

After the round of presentations, we had a sharing-circle style session guided by Ken Ikeda. The nurturing environment continued as Ken let everyone take time to gather their thoughts and ideas before sharing them. He also encouraged us to speak in either English or Japanese so that students would feel more comfortable participating. Some instructors attending were moved to tears as students shared their ideas. It was evident that the students were interested in actively taking part in learning and teaching. Power imbalances between instructors, students and within universities were dramatically decreased. It was a very special moment.

The students who presented and those who attended were incredibly brave to be at the conference, especially since it was predominately held in their second language. The students truly deserve praise for being there. Many instructors recognized this and tried to put students at ease by encouraging them and asking for their feedback. Though some questions asked by instructors may have been unexpected for students, I am certain that the students pondered those questions and were prompted to examine their ideas about learning more deeply. It is more

important to have students start exploring these questions than giving concrete answers about concepts as before that session they had probably never been asked to consider such things.

Though I don't have any direct questions about creating community and learning together, I hope the success of this event can be shared with others in JALT. It is important that instructors see students as wanting to be active participants in their learning despite the predominantly passive learning that Japanese students experience. We as instructors must give students at all levels of learning opportunities large or small, so they can have involvement.

Nozomi Tajima, Third-year student, Chuo University, Faculty of Law
It was the first time for me to make a presentation outside Chuo. When Prof. Barfield invited me to this conference, I felt a bit nervous, but I thought it was my big chance to collect various comments on my research topic, trafficking in persons (TIP), so I decided to join.

Actually, many listeners came and left some comments. Some said the topic was interesting, some asked critical questions to me. For example, I introduced "JK business" (female senior high school student business) as one of TIP cases in Japan; however, one listener pointed out that it contradicted the definition of TIP. In TIP Protocol, trafficking in persons is defined as "transnational" organized crime. She said JK business is "national," and then asked why I recognized it as TIP. This point is something I have not considered, so her question gave me a trigger for further research.

Moving on to the presentations, there were various kinds of topics. Some presenters had interviews collected from sources. I think it is very challenging and important; however, sometimes we should be sensitive when contacting people. For example, if you want to research about homeless people, do you directly ask them about their situation? If you

do so, it not courteous, letting them shut their mouths. Another problem of having interviews tends to be personal. When quoting data from personal interviews, researchers should compare that data with general information. If there are gaps between them, it is interesting to research why they happened, which makes topics more detailed.

In conclusion, this conference gave me two benefits. One is that the listeners' comments motivated me to preserve in my research. The other is that I could meet people from various fields (other university students, lecturers, etc.) through listening to presentations and having discussions. Again, I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Andy Barfield for inviting me to this wonderful community.

Jenny Morgan, Wayo Women's University
At the recent LD mini-conference I gave a presentation (NGOs and Social Change: Creating a community of student researchers) in the first round. It was exciting to be in a room with diverse presentation topics but with the common thread of 'group-work learning' and 'community-sharing of knowledge'. We reported on: a community theatre group, Ainu rights, Tohoku Children's Voices (a story project), human-trafficking, student research about NGOs and social change, and cheerleading. I was particularly impressed with the learner presentations in each room—students had clearly spent a lot of time and energy (with their teachers) preparing interesting visual materials in order to share their individual research projects with us in English. It was heartening to be in the minority as a teacher amongst highly motivated student presenters from various universities and one high school.

While I certainly picked up useful classroom tips from all the presentations I saw, for me the most useful and relevant presentation for my own teaching-learning contexts would have to be Fostering "Active Listening" Skills in EFL Discussion Classes by Natalie M. Gravillis, Rikkyo University (thanks

Natalie!). As a teacher, I invariably focus on planning activities, which have students practice output and produce language so they become confident and skillful speakers of English. However, language use is about multifaceted communication, having conversations and discussions, the back and forth of ideas and opinions, making meaning and building knowledge together. So, learners need to be able to not only produce language, but also to react to what they hear, to comment and agree/disagree; they need to know how to expand conversations and discussions with their classmates—they need to be active listeners as well as speakers.

One of the specific teacher issues or puzzles that I described in my own presentation was how to help my research students make the most of their 'peer-share discussion' time so that it is a really focused, useful and dynamic process (not a one-sided conversation or monologue). The aim of these discussion rounds is for students to each present their research notes, then ask each other questions so that the researcher thinks more deeply, investigates points more fully, and so refines their research. Furthermore, the peer-share discussion process aims to foster a community of researchers amongst the class members. My students do come with research to share but many have struggled with expanding their discussions and asking useful questions which help class-mates develop and refine their topics.

In her presentation, Natalie Gravillis shared a very transparent, dynamic procedure to help her students develop their "active listening" skills during discussions by learning and using functional verbal reactions, expressions for agreeing/disagreeing, phrases for checking understanding and useful follow-up questions. Right from the start of her course, she has students practise various common English reaction expressions; they use a question 'grid' sheet to encourage pairs to engage fully in their discussions and to expand the conversations about various topics.

I currently use a simple version of the above in my English communication courses and have found the transparent teaching-learning of reactive phrases and follow-up questions to be largely effective at helping learners develop natural conversation skills. I look forward to implementing a more clearly scaffolded procedure to "active listening" to enrich my research and discussion course this year.

The LD mini-conference was a rewarding opportunity to exchange ideas with other teachers and witness the ways in which students are involved in their language learning processes. For me, creating community(s) for learning together involves a constant process of sharing knowledge by asking-speaking-listening, reacting-commenting, adapting-refining and learning-teaching together.

Making Good Feedback Principles Work
Ian Hurrell, Rikkyo University

In my interactive presentation, I discussed a learner-centered, peer-reflection activity that I use in an English discussion course that I teach at Rikkyo University which aims to develop communication and discussion skills. In a typical EDC lesson, micro-classes of 7-9 students are presented with a new discussion skill, such as discussing advantages and disadvantages of various topics. After practicing these phrases in controlled activities, the students attempt to use these skills in a 10-minute group discussion in groups of three or four. The students are then provided with feedback which they try to act upon in a second 16-minute discussion.

It has been suggested that self-assessment and peer-reflection are much more effective in developing a sense of ownership and personal responsibility in students than teacher-fronted feedback (Birjandi & Siyyari, 2010). Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick (2006) outline seven useful principles for good feedback practice, which should be considered when designing feedback

activities. According to these principles, good feedback should:

1. Help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards).
2. Facilitate the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning.
3. Deliver high quality information to students about their learning.
4. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
5. Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
6. Provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
7. Provide information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching.

(Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick 2006, p. 206)

Using these principles, I created a peer-reflection activity designed to have students reflect on their discussions and their performance of certain discussion skills. In this activity, students work in pairs to discuss their performance after a diagnostic 10-minute discussion, and ways that they can improve their performance in the next 16-minute discussion. Below is an example of one peer reflection activity, which focuses on raising student awareness of how deeply they considered advantages and disadvantages of the topics in their discussion.

1. What topics did your group talk about in your discussion?
2. What advantages and disadvantages did your group say for each topic?
3. Did discussing both sides of the topic help you to have a deeper discussion?
4. What could you improve in your next discussion?

The first question is designed to activate the students' memory of the discussion they just had (in this case, the advantages and

disadvantages of studying abroad) to more easily facilitate peer-reflection in the proceeding questions. The second question has the students reflect on their performance of advantages and disadvantages in the discussion. While the third question is more formative in nature in that it has the students consider whether discussing advantages and disadvantages improved the quality of their discussion. The final question is designed to focus on closing the gap between current and desired performance by having the students decide on ways that could improve their performance in the next discussion.

While the students are discussing the questions in groups, I can walk between them listening to their reflections and ask questions if necessary, which allows me to discreetly address problems with individual students and provides me with a great source of information into the various issues that students are having in the class. Finally, after the students have finished their reflections, we summarize the key ideas together as a class, and this is used to generate focus points for the next discussion.

In presenting this activity, I was able to have many interesting discussions and conversations with the various audience members. Many of the conversations centered around the level of English necessary for students to do these kinds of tasks. To answer this question, I generally use this activity with intermediate level university freshmen, and have found that my students can usually complete this activity with few problems. In addition, as the students develop their discussion skills, I often observe that they are able to apply these skills to better reflect with their peers throughout the course. However, even with my lower level classes, my students have been able to utilize their limited resources at their disposal to reflect with their effectively with their peers. If we look at the example above, we can see that the first and second questions simply require the students to remember and repeat examples from their discussions. The third

question is more abstract, and can consequently be more difficult for lower level students, but the answer could be as simple as "Yes" or "No". This will at least give the teacher an idea of how the students feel that can be expanded upon by the teacher after the reflection activity. Finally, the answers to the final question can be as simple as "I think we should ask more questions" or "We should give more disadvantages next time." In my experience, even these simple answers help the students to become more involved in the feedback process and also provide me with valuable insight into the students' attitudes toward the class which I can use to shape my teaching.

Another question from a conference participant focused on the quality of the students' reflections. Based on my observations, I can say that when introducing these activities, it is useful to provide some simple examples of what students might say, so that they can have an idea of how to structure their reflections. However, after students get used to these peer-reflection activities, I have found that are able to engage in these activities well and provide each other with detailed, positive feedback, which I feel has a much greater impact than purely teacher-fronted feedback. Interestingly, with the large number of student presenters attending this event, I had the rare opportunity to hear their views on these issues. I was encouraged to hear that many of them would like to try this activity and would also like to have more opportunities to be more involved in controlling the course of their learning.

In conclusion, it was a very rewarding experience to interact with both teachers and students all from different contexts and backgrounds and hear their different views on this activity. Having done several interactive presentations at LD SIG events, I am always struck by how new directions to expand my research come out of the conversations with my audience. Particularly in this presentation, one person mentioned that rather than

encouraging 'self-esteem', which is mentioned in Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick's principles, the focus should be on encouraging 'self-efficacy'. Although I can appreciate that what Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick (2006) meant by encouraging 'self-esteem' is that students should feel positive rather than negative after the feedback process, the fact that the term 'self-efficacy' is not mentioned in these principles is something that needs to be addressed and I'm now looking further into how this concept might be incorporated into my feedback activities.

References

Birjandi, P., & Siyyari, M. (2010). Self-assessment and peer-assessment: A comparative study of their effect on writing performance and rating accuracy, Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 13(1), 23-45.

Nicol, D. J., & Mcfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. Studies in Higher Education, 31(2), 199-218.

Karin Takahashi, First-year student, Faculty of Law, Chuo University
When Andy said "Let's participate in a conference!" I was very surprised and very worried about whether I could do it or not. I had negative thoughts about English and I had never participated in conferences before.

Although I participated in a conference for the first time, my mind was very changed. There were many Japanese and non-Japanese teachers and students I had never seen before. I felt covered with an English world. I felt my mind dance. At that time, I felt that I might like English.

I presented on my development of learning and using vocabulary phrases. This is not studying using vocabulary books. Outside class, as preparation each week, we watched and listened to news and global issues reports, and wrote down key points and vocabulary phrases. Finally we made vocabulary maps about different news stories or global issues. When we used the maps in class, we could introduce the news or global issue very clearly to other people. That was the focus of my presentation at the conference.

I think I could grow by participating in the conference. The reason is that I could present with confidence. The first time I was anxious. But I presented on, and many people understood my presentation. They not only understood what I explained, but also they took pictures of my poster and notebooks. I was very happy and I got confidence about English. One of the best growth experiences for me was that I found it was interesting to be talking English with people I didn't know about my development, my presentation, and many other things.

The conference was very exciting. There were new ideas about English education and new people to meet. I could meet and talk with the students from other universities and get to know ideas from teachers. So I want to say thanks to Andy, the organizers, and participants. Thank you for giving me these wonderful experiences. I started to think that I want to study English more. If I can, I want to study abroad in an English-speaking university. That's my new plan now.

Thank you very much for coming to meet me!

Alison Stewart, Gakushuin University
Creating Community, Learning Together was exactly the right title/theme for the LD SIG Tokyo get-together's mini-conference. The mix of students and teachers in every room worked really well and really did create a sense of togetherness that is inspiring to see and feel.

The posters I saw and discussed were really high quality: thoughtful and thought-provoking. I particularly enjoyed talking to Huw Davies about Silent Communities—as teachers we seem to worry when students don't say anything. But if we can see that they are engaged and interested, if we know they are listening or reading, perhaps we shouldn't

worry unduly? Belonging to a community means participation, but what do we mean by participation?

I also had great discussions about sustainable motivation and project-learning in elementary schools, undergraduates' depictions of autonomy, different kinds and methods of feedback, trafficking of persons, etc., and of course all the conversations on the sidelines of the conference.

This was a great, festive end to the year. I'm looking forward to seeing how the ideas and synergy from this event will develop over the next year. And I'm already looking forward to this year's mini-conference!

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For more information on Tokyo get-togethers, please go to: http://ld-sig.org/get-togethers/

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