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Welcome to the Fall Issue of *Learning Learning!*

Message from The LD Sig Coordinators

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At my school, only a quarter of the students attend university after graduation, so many of them generally feel unmotivated to study most of their curricula. They're definitely not "bad students", but rather, students full of potential who have not practiced engaging in class for a long time. Over the years, I have learned that providing a context for them is the key to motivate them and essentially create a framework for their learner development. [Read more ...](#)

#### Learner Autonomy: A Question of Motivation

Adrian Wagner

It became clear to me that the most effective practice and best use of my time and effort was not to make people learn, but to make people want to learn. Since then, I have found the key to developing autonomous learners, is to identify motivation (or lack of) and build upon that together with the learners. [Read more ...](#)

#### Japanese Learning Websites for Self-directed Learning: An Interview with *Tofugu's* Koichi

Andrew D. Tweed

As learners of Japanese, one of the biggest frustrations is learning kanji. Not only is it notoriously difficult to learn, but not knowing kanji also makes it challenging to acquire other Japanese skills such as reading, writing, and vocabulary. While there is no magic formula to learning kanji, some methods are more effective and efficient than others. The best resource that I have found for learning kanji is the website *WaniKani*. [Read more ...](#)

#### Students Interacting in the "Flow"

Darin Schneider

An important dimension of intrinsic motivation is a coexistence of self-competency and autonomy among the learners (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is because learners have a basic human psychological need to feel they can complete a new social task with competence and without any perceived outside aid. Teachers can evoke and support intrinsic motivation, crucial in cognitive, social, and physical development, with positive performance feedback (ibid: 58-59). [Read more ...](#)

#### Mimicry: The Straightest Path to Mastery

Trevor Raichura

... extra awareness of the gap between textbook language and local jargon, and setting aside ample time to practice mimicking native speakers, can go a long way towards improving pronunciation and language ability. [Read more ...](#)

#### Knowing about Autonomy

Dominic G. Edsall

For many language teachers, theories of knowledge begin with the ideas of explicit and implicit knowledge learned in a TESOL or CELTA class, and often end with staged debates between students respectively assigned to represent either side of the qualitative or quantitative debate ... [Read more ...](#)

**FOCUS ON****Diary Studies: A View from the Heart**

*An interview with Christina Gkonou, University of Essex (England), about using learner diaries for learner development research*

Jenny Morgan

At the October 2016 Tokyo get-together we were extremely fortunate to have Christina Gkonou as our guest workshop leader on using diary studies for learner development research. Christina was in Tokyo on a brief visit to different universities to arrange joint postgraduate TESOL programmes between her university and potential partner universities in Japan. After her workshop I had the pleasure of interviewing Christina about her work with diary studies.

[Read more ...](#)

**LD GRANT UPDATE****The 2016 JALTCALL Conference: A personal reflection**

Sean H. Toland

In many ways, teaching English in Japan can be an individualistic and isolating endeavor. A large number of English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors have long commutes, busy schedules, and are often segregated from one another in their own classrooms. Cuban, Kirkpatrick, and Peck (2001) argued that the “cellular organization” of the teaching profession as well as various other constraints reduced the “cross-fertilization of ideas” and sharing of technical expertise ...

[Read more ...](#)

**INFORMATION****CALL FOR PAPERS**

[Read more ...](#)

*PAN SIG 2017*

Akita International University (May 19 – 21, 2017)

Theme: *Expand Your Interests & Visualizing Learner Development*

Deadline: Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> 2016

*The Learner Development Journal, Issue Two*

Theme: *Qualitative Research & Learner Development*

Deadline: Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup> 2017

*Learning Learning* (Spring 2017)

Theme: Share your stories & expand your practice. Rethinking the role of education

Deadline: Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**JALT2016: Transformation in Language Education**

*42nd Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Exhibition*

**Learner Development Forum: Learner Transformation as Personal Maturation**

We have a lively and active forum for JALT 2016 in Nagoya! Here is a summary of the individual presentations.

[Read more ...](#)

**LD CONNECT**

A place to find out about upcoming local LD-SIG events in your area!

[Read more ...](#)

**LEARNING  
LEARNING**  
publication team

**EDITORS:** *Arnold F. Arao, Lee Arnold, Andy Barfield, Charlotte Murakami, Alison Stewart*

**WEBMASTER:** *Hugh Nicoll*

**TRANSLATORS:** *Chika Hayashi, Michiko Imai, Yoko Sakurai*

If you would like to join the LEARNING LEARNING team, please let us know! email: [learninglearning.editor@gmail.com](mailto:learninglearning.editor@gmail.com)

As the cold winter weather winds its way ever southward, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the fall edition of *Learning Learning*, the Learning Development SIG's biannual online publication. Fall is often a busy time for educators as we not only wrap up the term but also begin preparations for the upcoming academic year. It is also a bust time for JALT as SIGs and their members busy themselves to prepare workshops, seminars and presentations for the upcoming International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning. We hope that you can take advantage of some of the great opportunities to re-examine and refresh your practice at this year's events.

Central to this year's conference is *transformation in language education*. In this issue, we present several articles that examine two fundamental concepts to transformation, motivation and autonomy. Unlike appeal, which is often transient and has its origin in external factors, motivation consists of a conscious and deliberate effort to engage in an activity to bring about change. Key to this is learner autonomy, which places the responsibility of learning in the hands of the learner.

This issue of *Learning Learning* brings together the observations and investigations of Learner Development members who attempt to respond to such questions as "What motivates my students?" "How can classroom learning become meaningful?" "How can we transcend classroom practice to make learning authentic and applicable?". Farrah Hasnain examines student motivation in her classroom as she attempts to develop a learning framework based on the interchange of language and culture; Adrian Wagner shares his experiences with learner autonomy as he facilitates the development of engaged and active language learners; drawing from the work of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (pronounced *chick-sent-me-hi*) on *flow*, Darin Scheider shares his perspective on exposing learners to meaningful challenges that create opportunities for growth and engagement.

Turning toward teacher motivation, Trevor Raichura shares with us his experiences learning Japanese by bridging the gap between textbook learning and practical, real-world applications, while Andrew D. Tweed sheds some interesting light on self-directed learning in his interview with the creator of a popular Japanese-learning website. Maybe you've heard about it? Dominic G. Edsal

shares some of his studies and challenges us to rethink learner autonomy through an epistemological lens.

In an interview with Jenny Morgan, Christina Gkonou from the University of Essex, explains how learner diaries can function as effective assessments to inform and guide learner development. Sean H. Tolland reflects on his own experiences and insights gained at the 2016 JALT CALL.

In addition, you can also find how the Learner Development SIG has grown and developed over the past year, and in what direction the SIG plans to move in the coming years.

With so much to read in this issue, we hope that you enjoy what we've put together and perhaps even find something that motivates you! We invite you to share your responses and ideas with other members of the learner development SIG on the LD-SIG forums or in your own observations and reflections of your practice and experience.

However, before you begin, I'd like to take just 25 seconds of your time to quickly introduce myself. My name is Arnold F. Arao and I am the new editor for *Learning Learning*. I am excited to be part of this publication and am looking forward to hearing your comments, questions or suggestions. Please feel free to drop me a line at [learninglearning.editor@gmail.com](mailto:learninglearning.editor@gmail.com) and let me know how we're doing. Well, my 25 seconds are almost up; so, with further ado ...

Happy discovery!



*Arnold Arao, Head Editor*

*On behalf of*

*Lee Arnold, Andy Barfield, Charlotte Murakami, and*

*Alison Stewart*

*(Learning Learning Editorial Team)*

*November 2016*

## はじめに

厳冬の時期が南の方角にもやってまいりましたので、年2回発行されるLDのオンライン出版物である『学習の学習』秋号を温かく迎えたいと思います。秋になると学期末の総括だけでなく新年度に向けた準備も始まるため、教員にとっては忙しい時期になります。JALT/SIGも同様で、国際年次大会でのワークショップ、セミナー、プレゼンテーションの準備でメンバーは忙しくしております。大会に参加される皆様が、自分自身の実践を省察しリフレッシュされることを願っております。

本年度の大会テーマは言語教育における変容です。そこで本号では、変容、モチベーション、オートノミーに関する2つの核となる概念を考察した論文が多数ございます。アピールは一時的なものであることがほとんどで外的要因に依りますが、モチベーションは変化をもたらす活動に従事する意識的かつ入念な努力から成ります。この鍵となるものが学習者オートノミーであり、学習における責任は学習者に委ねられています。

学習者のモチベーションを高めるものは何か、教室での学習を意義あるものにするにはどうすべきか、学習を現実的で応用可能なものにするためには、どのようにして教室実践の枠を超えることができるのかといった問いに対する答えを探究しようとするLDメンバーの見解や考察を寄せ集めたものが本号です。Farrah Hasnain は言語と文化のインターチェンジに基づく言語フレームワークを開発しながら、教室での学習者のモチベーションに関して考察します。Adrian Wagner は積極的かつ主体的な言語学習者の発達を支援した学習者オートノミーに関する自身の経験を共有します。Darin Scheider は Mihály Csikszentmihályi の研究を基盤に、学習者に成長と関与の機会にチャレンジさせることに関する見解を述べます。

教員のモチベーションについては、Trevor Raichura がテキスト学習と実生活・実社会での応用の間のギャップを埋める自身の日本語学習経験を共有し、Andrew D. Tweed は人気のある日本語学習サイトのクリエイターとのインタビューで、自主学習を異なる視点から見つめ直します。また、Dominic G Edsal は自身の研究を共有し、認識論的観点から学習者オートノミーの再考を提示する。

また英国エセックス大学の Jenny Morgan と Christina Gkonou のインタビューでは、学習者の日記が学習者の発達を示し導く効果的な評価方法としていかに機能するかを説明し、Sean H. Tolland は 2016 年度の JALT CALL での経験と知見を省察する。

さらに本号では、LD SIG がこれまでにどのように発展してきたか、また今後の方向性についても知ることができるでしょう。

本号は大変読み応えのあるものですので、楽しみながらお読みになり皆様のやる気を起こさせるものに出会えることを願っています！皆様の感想やアイデアそして実践や経験の見解や考察についても LD SIG フォーラムで他のメンバーと共有していただきたいと思っております。

本号をお読みいただく前に 25 秒頂戴し、自己紹介をさせてください。私は Arnold F. Arao と申します。『学習の学習』の編者を新しく務めさせていただきます。この出版に携わることができ嬉しく思っております。皆様からのコメント、質問、提案を以下のアドレス宛にお送りいただければ幸いです。

[Learninglearning.editor@gmail.com](mailto:Learninglearning.editor@gmail.com)

25 秒があつという間に経ってしまいました。

アラオ・アーノルド／林 千賀

## MESSAGE FROM THE LD SIG COORDINATORS

November is a busy time for JALT organizations and the LD SIG is no exception. Just about the time this issue of *Learning Learning* is released, members of the LD SIG committee will be meeting in Nagoya for our annual general meeting (AGM). The JALT constitution requires all chapters and SIGs hold an AGM to report on their state of affairs, hold elections, and discuss the future of their groups. SIG members are dispersed throughout Japan, so this is a perfect time to put faces to email addresses and talk in person about the SIG, its mission, and how we can improve the services we offer to our members.

Preparing for the AGM, we have read reports from each of the committee teams and are happy to be able to announce that the SIG has continued to fulfill its mission of supporting learner and teacher development. There are active get-together groups in Tokyo, Kansai, and Hiroshima, and this is the first year that each group will be holding an event for students and their teachers: Tokyo will hold the third Creating Communities mini-conference in December, Kansai just recently held their first “From Kansai to the World,” a student-led conference, and Hiroshima will have their eighth annual inter-university Scrabble competition in December. In addition, the SIG continues to focus on producing publications of high quality and maintains a policy to support less experienced writers and writing styles that differ from the standard academic article format. This approach allows us to grow and develop as teachers, researchers, and learners together. One exciting project to look out for is the inaugural issue of the SIG’s new journal, which should be released in the spring of 2017.

The SIG is able to do so much thanks to the dedicated service of a handful of volunteers, people often already busy with their careers and families, who are asked to sacrifice their private time to help organize, edit, review, write receipts, design flyers, and a range of other duties without complaint and with a positive energy that is inspiring. We are grateful to be able to work with so many amazing people on this committee.

However, as it is November there will be changes to our committee after the AGM. It is with sadness that we have accepted resignations from a few long-standing committee members who have decided to move on, but they have helped introduce new members to the teams. These changes will be announced in the next issue of *Learning Learning*. One change we can mention here, however, is the addition of Arnold Arao to the *Learning Learning* team. Arnold first took over the role of Layout Editor from Monika Szirmai with the special edition and now, with this issue, takes over the Head Editor position from Alison Stewart. We are grateful to Monika and Alison for their long years of dedicated service to *Learning Learning* and are very excited to welcome Arnold to the LD team!

The reports also revealed current challenges that the SIG is facing. One is the need for volunteers to join the committee. The SIG has a very supportive team-based system led by experienced team members. This allows for a period during which new volunteers can shadow and duties can be allocated appropriately, giving volunteers the opportunity to grow into their new roles. Please get in touch with Mathew or Mayumi if you are interested in joining the committee, particularly if you are interested in helping with *Learning Learning*, coordinating, publicity, or the web site. We are also still coping with changes to the base grant we receive from the JALT national organization. At this year’s AGM, one of the most important conversations we will have is how to better budget our operating fund to support grants for members, publication projects, and events. Finally, we are also interested in learning more about our members. *Why did you join this SIG? What do you hope to get out of your membership? Are you satisfied with what the LD SIG’s services?* How to explore these questions is another item on the agenda at the AGM.

The AGM is open to all, so if you are attending JALT2017, please stop by the AGM in room 1202 on Saturday from 3:35 to 4:20. The LD forum will be held in the same room just after the AGM finishes. We hope to see you there!

Mayumi Abe & Mathew Porter  
*Coordinators, LD SIG*

## LD SIG Members' Voices

LD SIG Members' Voices offers spaces for SIG members to introduce themselves to other members of the SIG in a variety of accessible and personalised text formats and lengths:

- a short personal profile of yourself as a learner and teacher (100-200 words or so)
- a short critical reflection on your history as a (language) learner at (a) particular stage(s) in your life (around 200-500 words)
- a story of your ongoing interest in, and engagement with, particular learner development (and/ or learner autonomy) issues (around 500-800 words)
- a short profile of your learner development research interests and how you hope to develop your research (around 500-800 words)
- a short profile of your working context and the focus on learner development that a particular institution where you work takes and/or is trying to develop (about 800-1200 words)
- some other piece of writing that you would like to contribute and that is related to learner development.

Many thanks to the following new members of the Learner Development SIG in 2016 for sharing their voices with readers of *Learning Learning*. We hope other SIG members will also contribute their voice to the next issue of *Learning Learning*. If you are interested in doing so, please contact the Members' Voices coordinator, Andy Barfield, at <barfield.andy@gmail.com>.

## LD SIG メンバーの声

“LDSIGメンバーの声”は、SIG会員の皆様が他会員の皆さんに向けて多様な形式・文体・長さで、ご自身の考えや活動をご紹介していただくためのスペースです。例えば、以下のような様々な声を歓迎しています：

- ・ご自身の学習者および教育者としてのプロフィールを短く紹介したもの。(約 100-200 語) ・ご自身の(語学)学習者としての経験で、特定の場における逸話を批判的に考察したもの。(約 200-500 語)
- ・ご自身が現在取り組まれている、もしくは関心を寄せていることで特に学習者ディベロップメント(または学習者の自律)に関する問題についてのもの。(約 500-800 語)
- ・学習者ディベロップメントに関するご自身の研究についての短い概要と、今後どのようにその研究を展開していきたいと考えているか紹介するもの。(約 500-800 語)
- ・ご自身の勤務環境の短い概要と、勤務される特定機関で学習者ディベロップメントに関し注目している、または取り組もうとしていることについて。(約 800-1200 語)
- ・その他、学習者ディベロップメントに関する内容のもの。

2016年学習者ディベロップメント研究部会に新たに参加され、今号で「学習の学習」の読者の皆様と様々な声を共有いただくSIG会員の皆様に、感謝申し上げます。

## Learner Development in Japanese High Schools



**Farrah Hasnain**  
*Hamamatsu Higashi Senior High School*  
 Email: [farrahhas@gmail.com](mailto:farrahhas@gmail.com)

I started my journey in teaching English abroad a while ago. I'm currently a third-year Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) at a senior high school in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka through the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET). After JET, I hope to develop an academic career teaching and researching at the university level.

As a first-generation American, I have always felt drawn to exploring the intricacies of learner development. Watching my parents achieve their own ability in speaking English growing up inspired me to instill the same motivation in my students. My parents immigrated to the United States from Pakistan in the early 1990s, and our family lived in a Latino community on the outskirts of the Washington DC area. Before attending preschool, I would only hear English from *Sesame Street* and the local news. My first day at preschool was also my first day of integrating with American society. Since that day, I started to bring English home with me. By the time I was around 6 years old, my parents were able to interact with almost everyone and everything in English so freely. I want my students to also become more curious about English and create their own voice when they express themselves in an L2 environment.

Before coming to Japan, I was a literacy tutor for 5th and 6th graders at a public charter school in Washington, DC for two years. Although I have taught L1 learners how to read in their first language in an English-speaking country, when I first arrived to Japan, I experienced a few challenges that contrasted with teaching back home. In the US, I was able to show the students that learning to read efficiently in English was relevant to their ability to connect with their environment and expand their knowledge of it.

How could I instill similar values onto my current students, who realize that their native language is all they need to thrive? My main challenge was motivating my Japanese students to participate in class.

At my school, only a quarter of the students attend university after graduation, so many of them generally feel unmotivated to study most of their curricula. They're definitely not "bad students", but rather, students full of potential who have not practiced engaging in class for a long time. Over the years, I have learned that providing a context for them is the key to motivate them and essentially create a framework for their learner development.

The context I have found to be the most successful is role-reversal; having them teach me how to navigate their own language and culture. In my classes, I show different scenarios where they would be able to use English in a real-life setting. Most of them are based on jobs or daily life experiences that they would have after graduation. This includes helping other foreigners order food, explaining Japanese customs to English-speakers, and acting as tour guides. Additional themes that have worked for my students are foreign cultures and traveling. Before starting their role-play activities, I would show my students videos of high school life in America and of Japanese Youtubers exploring English-speaking countries to fuel discussion. Exposing them to these themes through different forms of media has also seemed to develop their vocabulary and grammar through repeated exposure and use. Showing them real-world examples of L2 communication in an L1 and L2 environment helps them remember that learning and using English could fulfill them socially and academically even after graduation.

As a new member of JALT and the Learner Development SIG, I hope to expand my knowledge of building my students' language comprehension and use as an ALT. I would also like to use this group as an opportunity to share my experiences with learner development in the JET Program to prepare to teach in a university setting.

## Learner Autonomy: A Question of Motivation



**Adrian Wagner**  
Email: [adrianwagmr@gmail.com](mailto:adrianwagmr@gmail.com)

Since beginning teaching at universities in Japan about 7 years ago, my teaching practices and research interests have been deeply influenced by the concepts of motivation and autonomy. Early on, what was actually a cynical comment from a slightly jaded veteran (but very effective educator) became an invaluable piece of advice and has guided me ever since: “If someone wants to learn something, they will; if they don’t they won’t.” It became clear to me that the most effective practice and best use of my time and effort was not to make people learn, but to make people want to learn. Since then, I have found the key to developing autonomous learners, is to identify motivation (or lack of) and build upon that together with the learners.

Currently, I work at three universities in the Tokyo area. These teaching situations are extremely different, and they each challenge me to build upon the students' motivation in different ways. At two of the universities where I teach, my primary responsibility is compulsory first year English classes, which are prevalent at universities all over Japan. Of course, ability levels and general interest in learning English vary greatly across classes and individuals. On the first day of class, I always include an activity in which students identify their goals for the semester. After writing down their goals, these are passed around the class. Students then write advice for other students to realise their goals. Every semester, the most common goals are to “receive all credits” and to “make friends”.

So, in conducting these classes and attempting to foster development of the learners, I keep these two motivating factors in mind. First is the practical desire to pass the class and receive compulsory credits. For this purpose I encourage and integrate learning techniques such as vocabulary notebooks, self-evaluations and student generated practice tests. Secondly, I seek

to motivate students through the social aspects of second language classes. The more they are able to express themselves in the class, the more likely they will be able to connect with other students and form friendships.

Last year, I suddenly found myself teaching in a very different educational context. I was asked by a colleague to teach IELTS and TOEFL exam preparation classes at a top tier university. Although the general English ability, study experience and motivation levels are generally very high, there are of course a multitude of differences across the individuals. Also, the students' motivation is not always as simple as improving their scores on the test. While many students had already taken or were planning to take either the IELTS or the TOEFL, many were taking the class to improve/maintain their current level of English without any intention of taking either of these exams.

To build upon the motivation of the students and help the students to develop independent study methods that will be useful beyond this particular course of study, I use the first classes for simulation tests. Then, in the following class, students analyse their performance on the test by section and question type. Next, they select from a number of self-access homework assignments to be submitted online and develop a self-study plan based on their weaknesses and goals. Students then complete these homework assignments over the course of the semester. This enables students to personalise their study, study when and where they are able, and to focus on their own goals, whether these are specific to a certain test or more general. In the near future I hope to publish an action research article about using these student-selected homework assignments to improve individual scores on the TOEFL.

As an educator I have found that by identifying and utilising the key of motivation, I can help students to develop self-awareness and independence as language learners. Whether the motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic, everyone is in the classroom for a reason. Considering the factor of motivation informs my approach to learner development and my own development as a teacher.

## Japanese Learning Websites for Self-directed Learning: An Interview with *Tofugu's* Koichi



**Andrew D. Tweed**  
Meijo University  
Email: [adtweed@gmail.com](mailto:adtweed@gmail.com)

As learners of Japanese, one of the biggest frustrations is learning kanji. Not only is it notoriously difficult to learn, but not knowing kanji also makes it challenging to acquire other Japanese skills such as reading, writing, and vocabulary. While there is no magic formula to learning kanji, some methods are more effective and efficient than others. The best resource that I have found for learning kanji is the website *WaniKani*.

Before I knew about *WaniKani*, I was a fan of *Tofugu*, Koichi's blog about Japanese culture and language. Reading *Tofugu*, I was intrigued that Koichi not only included a list of recommended Japanese dramas, but that he also wrote an article on how to use dramas for learning Japanese by using shadowing and other techniques. In fact, all of Koichi's sites include some focus on particular learning strategies. These can range from tips on how to avoid distractions, to using a spaced repetition system (SRS), and mnemonics for more effective memorization.

Koichi says that his most popular sites are *WaniKani* and *TextFugu*—the latter is a general Japanese course which goes from beginner to intermediate levels. He is also working on a new advanced site called *EtoEto*. As I myself am interested in self-directed learning—I work as a learning advisor at a university in Japan—and learning Japanese, I recently asked Koichi if he would do an interview so that I could learn more about the thinking behind these websites. In our exchange below, Koichi discusses how he got started designing Japanese learning websites, as well as his ideas on self-directed learning and motivation. The interview is followed by some closing remarks by me, including my own experiences with *WaniKani*.

**AT (Andrew Tweed):** What were you doing before you started your Japanese learning websites?

**K (Koichi):** I started *Tofugu* while I was in college. Somehow I was able to convince a professor to let me do independent study, so I even got credit for doing it. Afterwards I spent about a year working at an education startup called *eduFire*. The goal of this company was to let anyone create a class and teach it live (online). So, in my free time I would actually teach Japanese classes on the *eduFire* platform. I got to experiment with various “non-traditional” teaching techniques, which I think helped me a lot later on as I started writing my own materials.

**AT:** How did you get into creating online Japanese learning sites?

**K:** *eduFire* got sold and I was not part of the future owner's plans, so I glued together *TextFugu* with *Wordpress* and a few really hacked together plug-ins. *WaniKani* was just something I always really wanted to do. I liked the idea of using mnemonics for learning kanji/vocabulary, and I had put together a method for myself. Doing this isn't particularly convenient or easy, it takes a lot of work. *WaniKani* isn't particularly groundbreaking. Other people use mnemonics. Other people use SRS. Other people consider various studies on how people learn. But, we're the only ones that put all those things together in a way that's seamless, and easy for the user. If you 'show up' every day and follow the instructions, you'll learn the kanji.

**AT:** What motivated you to create Japanese learning materials?

**K:** A lot of it has to do with the question “what do I wish I had back in the day?” And then, we build it. The other half comes from my time spent studying things other than the Japanese language. I've studied and practiced mnemonic methods. I've studied people's works on memory. I've studied child development in relation to education and learning. Then, I applied them to Japanese. With *WaniKani*, we were able to take something that takes the average person 5 or 10 (or more) years, and reduce it down to 1-2 years.

**AT:** Could you tell me some ways you think your Japanese learning materials are different from more traditional Japanese textbooks?

**K:** First, we focus a lot on motivation, and keeping people's motivation for the long term—not just long enough to get people's money. Second, we spend a lot of time teaching people how to learn. If I could change one thing about the education system here, it would be that all students would have to learn how to learn. It would save so much time in the long run. So much of traditional education goes completely against how humans naturally learn things, so we have to spend a lot of time undoing all the damage that's been done.

**AT: In your experience, what are some problems that learners have with self-directed learning?**

**K:** There's a lot of them, of course. But there's a lot of problems no matter what path you take. If I had to make a guess, I'd say motivation is the key problem with self teaching. Learning something new basically goes like this<sup>1</sup>:

**Unconscious incompetence:** You don't know enough to know what you're doing badly / wrong. Every thing is new, too, so proportionate to the time you spend, you're learning a lot more than you will be later on. Also, ignorance is bliss.

**Conscious incompetence:** Then you learn enough to know that you're doing things wrong. You know enough to know that you're not that good. This is where most people quit, because you go from 100 mph in the last step to 10 mph, and you just assume it's because you're stupid.

**Conscious competence:** If you can make it through the previous step (the wall), you start to learn enough to direct your progress. You know what you need to practice in order to move forward and get better. This is when things become fun again.

**Unconscious competence:** You're so good that you do things automatically. You get better automatically without thinking. This is the best step of all, and you are able to get a lot of joy out of your skill and

progress.

That's a long way of saying that most people just quit at step two, conscious incompetence. They don't know how to get past it. They don't have people who are doing it with them, or teachers who have been there already and can guide them through more quickly. I definitely spend a lot of time focused on getting people through conscious incompetence as quickly as possible, but I think it's impossible to make it painless. So, maybe that's the biggest problem with self-teaching. Just getting through that learning step. It really is tough. Next time you learn something new, pay attention. If you stick with it long enough you'll run into all four steps.

**AT: Some students get derailed from their pursuits with self-directed learning? Do you have tips for dealing with this situation?**

**K:** Another one of those things where it really depends on the individual, but here's some general tips:

- Just know that conscious incompetence, (etc) exist. Knowing you're supposed to be bad at something 2-4 weeks after you start really helps you to come to terms.
- Get rid of the things that are stopping you from progressing. Put those *Playstation* controllers in really inconvenient places. Turn off notifications on your phone. Basically, become a Luddite.
- Focus all your efforts on studying more often, but not longer. Ten minutes a day is better than five hours only one day a week.
- Try to talk to people who have done the same thing you're trying to do. They can tell you about pitfalls, good techniques, etc.
- Try to visualize where you want to go. Paint a picture in your head. Then, come up with training methods that will get you there, one step at a time. If you have no concrete idea of what it is you are trying to do, it's awfully hard to come up with a way to do it. This is kind of a professional sports technique, but I think it applies well to education as well.
- If you are having trouble motivating yourself to study, promise yourself just 1-5 minutes of studying then you can be done. Most likely, once you start, you'll keep going for longer than this.

<sup>1</sup> See Adams (undated) for more details about the Learning Stages model, which was originally developed over 30 years ago by Noel Burch.

In the end, though, it's going to come down to your own motivation, and grit.

**AT: Could you share some techniques that you use for motivating learners in *TextFugu* or *WaniKani*?**

**K:** I'll mention a few. First, we try to steer our online community in a direction where people help each other out. It's hard to do on the internet, and our success in this goes up and down depending on who's being a troll that day. Also, we focus on getting people to come back daily. Learners should create a habit, so that *WaniKani* is just something they do, not something they have to do. Another thing is that we try to make things actionable. With *WaniKani* it's easy, the actionable task is doing your reviews, or doing your lessons. With *TextFugu* and *EtoEto*, it's a little harder. I have to come up with actionable tasks for the user to do that will help them to acquire the lesson content. Finally, we keep sessions short. In *TextFugu* and *EtoEto* I keep the pages fairly short, so people have that sense of progress in small but frequent increments. In *WaniKani*, we have it set up so you shouldn't have to sit down for more than 30 minutes a day, depending on your review speed.

**AT: Finally, do you have any predictions on how technology will change language learning in the next 5-10 years?**

**K:** I don't even know what I'm going to be doing next week, so predicting the future is a little difficult for me! Virtual reality (VR) would be really cool. Humans learn best when in a visual environment. We can memorize the layouts of new rooms very accurately and instantly, but trying to recall a sequence of numbers is really difficult. VR would add a much more visual element to learning, and I can think of a lot of

interesting applications that could be done. That being said, to make VR a *really* good tool, there'd need to be a lot more advancement in artificial intelligence (AI)—reacting to the things you do in the VR world—as well as speech recognition—so you could interact more with the world, while getting good feedback from the AI. I guess I could see that happening in 5-10 years, though I'm not terribly optimistic.

**A: Thank you very much for your time.**

*Closing remarks*

The thing that strikes me most about Koichi is that his experiences come not from being a trained teacher, but rather from being a successful learner. He therefore approaches learning from the point of view of the learner. Koichi is clearly passionate about helping people learn more effectively and this is what really separates him from many other authors of Japanese learning materials.

I'd like to close by saying a few words about my own experience with *WaniKani*. As Koichi mentions, the SRS and mnemonics are two of the attractive features of this kanji learning website. In most cases, I find the mnemonics to work, but in cases where I prefer to use my own, I can enter in whatever personally helps me to learn. Another really helpful element is how *WaniKani* uses radicals as the building blocks to learn Kanji and vocabulary. By memorizing radicals quickly, it is much easier to see how they combine to form Kanji. One minor issue I have had with *WaniKani* is that I find the text to be a little small. When I'm on a PC, I enlarge the screen, but I do not have this option on my smartphone. Hopefully this is something that they will look into in the future.

If you would like to try any of his Japanese learning websites, they offer free trials so that you can see if you it works for you. You can find out more at the following addresses:

- Tofugu: <https://www.tofugu.com>
- Textfugu: <http://www.textfugu.com>
- WaniKani: <https://www.wanikani.com>

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## Students Interacting in the “Flow”



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When I look back on my ten years of teaching EFL to Japanese learners of English, there was a light-bulb moment that became a benchmark in my teaching approach early on. It happened when I was an ALT teaching a lesson to Japanese elementary learners. The students began an activity that I had set up and they became so engaged in the activity that I do not think they realized they were even learning English. It was amazing to watch. The kids were having so much fun. I thought: “Wow! This is what I want to reach for every time I teach English.” Second Language Acquisition (SLA) psychologists and experts such as Csikszentmihayli (1997) call this “*flow*”, and it can occur when learners are in an optimal state of immersion during an intrinsically motivating task.

That day I developed as a teacher because I became aware of what is possible. I learned that with an engaging activity and a bit of motivation, English language learners (ELLs) who might not initially be interested in learning English could enjoy learning. Even if some ELLs are not interested in external rewards such as getting a good grade, I think it is possible to ignite their intrinsic motivation by tapping into their curiosity and interests. The “*flow*” can happen if the task triggers students’ curiosity and they can perform it successfully on their own. An important dimension of intrinsic motivation is a coexistence of self-competency and autonomy among the learners (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is because learners have a basic human psychological need to feel they can complete a new social task with competence and without any perceived outside aid. Teachers can evoke and support intrinsic motivation, crucial in cognitive, social, and physical development, with positive performance feedback (ibid: 58-59).

In my present work, I am teaching elective and required English courses at university to first- and second-year students. My students are comprised mainly of Japanese students with a few other nationalities mixed in (i.e., Chinese, Korean, Thai, and Saudi). I have a few students each semester that are majoring in English or tourism. However, most students have majors that run the gamut and they do not see the importance of learning English in their field of study. Many do not have a direct (or indirect) interest in learning English. I believe if they had a choice to learn English or not, they would choose not to. Unfortunately, many do not foresee the importance of English within their fields of study. I often find myself trying to enlighten them on the potential benefits of being able to use English in their future careers, but many fail to picture themselves in these situations. Perhaps activating enough of their intrinsic motivation will build up their confidence so they can see themselves utilizing English.

In the required English courses, there is often a lack of English language learners (ELLs) who already possess the intrinsic desire to learn English. Therefore, the goal of helping ELLs become absorbed in their learning of English is a challenge. It is an especially tall order when you have to balance curriculum requirements that may not be ‘stimulating’ with teaching methods and techniques that are more appealing. But it is a challenge I enjoy. As long as the new material is at the right level, I try to create a safe and motivating learning environment that can bring forth “*flow*” in the classroom.

One activity that comes to mind is an activity called “Profiles”. As a part of Profiles, students think of a question they want to ask their classmates and then physically move around the room and find out their classmates’ answers. In the mean time, they also get to answer questions. Since the students in the class are at the same English level, the questions are usually comprehensible and the activity builds upon their curiosity of getting to know their classmates. Students are motivated to discover new facts about their classmates. As Krashen (1985) asserts in his “*i + 1*” formula, the task must be at the right amount of difficulty (comprehension) for the

student to want to pursue interaction. The right combination of task difficulty and motivation can help bring about “*flow*.”

Overall, I have an interest in finding out what works best for student learners. Recently, the relatively new field of language priming has peaked my interest. In terms of language acquisition, general language priming can be defined as, “... the phenomenon in which prior exposure to language somehow influences subsequent language processing, which may occur in the form of recognition or production.” (McDonough & Trofimovich, 2011, p. 1). There are many more specific kinds of priming, such as phonological priming, morphological priming, and lexical priming. There has been a lot of research on these types of priming, but little on the effects of priming used before assessments. I would like to investigate what I call “pre-assessment priming.” I often wonder how priming done just prior to a speaking assessment, influences students’ speaking performance on a test. In particular, I would like to investigate the differences in performance and production in students that have a warm-up period before a speaking test versus those that do not. It is another exciting challenge I plan to pursue in helping students develop their English capabilities and may serve as an additional way to get students in the “*flow*.” As a language educator and learner, what does “*flow*” mean to you, and what experiences have you had as a teacher or learner that you remember for their “*flow*”?

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## Mimicry: The Straightest Path to Mastery



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Despite the common theory that native-like pronunciation of a second language is highly unlikely after age 10, I have (so I’m told) managed to achieve a near-native Japanese pronunciation. I didn’t start learning until I came to Japan when I was 23. Perhaps my mastery of Japanese pronunciation was aided by previous experience with learning a second language, though. From age 5 to 15, I attended a French Immersion school in Winnipeg, Canada. Surely my mind benefited from the flexibility required to process sounds from two languages at a young age. Coming to Japan as an adult with no knowledge of the language other than a few greetings, I found one key secret to pronunciation that, in retrospect, had helped me when I was learning French, too.

Textbooks can help with grammatical structures and vocabulary, but often do not help learners sound like genuine speakers of the target language. Upon arrival in Japan, I had ample time to pore over my textbook to learn how the language worked. But as is common with such publications, the phrases in the textbook are seldom heard from native speakers. My keen sense of observation, both of people around me and those on television, helped me to bridge the gap between textbook and person. Then came the fun part: mimicry and practice.

Within my first month in Japan, I was making a conscious effort to adopt the speech mannerisms of my colleagues at the school and board of education. When do they pause? What are their common speech dysfluencies? What vowel sounds get reduced? What suffixes are used? What does intonation sound like on the sentence level? After hearing enough patterns, it was time to practice them in the privacy of my home. And practice I did, for hours on end. Watching recorded television shows (particularly variety programs)

multiple times also helped me improve my cadence and use of trendy phrases.

Come to think of it, I did the same thing (to a lesser degree, and in a way that only a child can) when learning French. By the time I went to Quebec at age 20 for a summer study program, I had local instructors convinced I had spent significant time there. (I hadn't.) Perhaps accents and pronunciation are innate gifts, but I could not have reached the levels I did without working at it.

I believe it was a combination of intuition, effort, and a fearless spirit (not worrying about sounding weird or making mistakes) that helped me achieve a native-like Japanese pronunciation. Perhaps not everyone can put in the amount of time I did, but extra awareness of the gap between textbook language and local jargon, and setting aside ample time to practice mimicking native speakers, can go a long way towards improving pronunciation and language ability.



## Knowing about Autonomy

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**E**pistemology. It isn't very often that we talk about epistemology in language teaching. I had to look up the pronunciation nearly a year ago when I first started working with this word meaning a theory of knowledge. For many language teachers, theories of knowledge begin with the ideas of explicit and implicit knowledge learned in a TESOL or CELTA class, and often end with staged debates between students respectively assigned to represent either side of the qualitative or quantitative debate in a graduate student course. For the most part, we don't need to worry about what knowledge is or is not - we just need to get our students to perform in the target

language in certain prescribed ways depending on what level they are deemed to be,

what goal they are striving for, and often what methods are expected in our classes. Teacher accountability, or rather its modern administrative interpretations, often leaves teachers with little time to worry about how we are imparting knowledge even if we have some choice about what knowledge to impart. So why bother worrying about a theory of knowledge?

Well, if you have read this far, past at least two repetitions of the word epistemology (now three), then you probably already know that knowledge and the traces of theories of knowledge can be found in everything we do as language instructors and teachers. Those debates between quantitative and qualitative "sides" have delineated the boundaries of education for a long time. Many of us are evaluated through somewhat quantitative end-of-semester surveys - surveys that may define the beginning and end of our employers' knowledge of our classes and us as educators.

Many LD SIG members will have attended research workshops, talked in hushed tones about closed versus open interview questions, surveys, SPSS, coding, NVivo<sup>2</sup>, and maybe R<sup>3</sup>, and most are likely to have cursed Excel under their breath more than a few times. Both the education we give and the education we receive revolves around knowledge, and many of us are required to prove how fresh our knowledge of SLA is through long lists of research papers and detailed answers to interview questions. Yet we never really have time or opportunity to think about knowledge itself in the wider pedagogical sense.

So what got me thinking about epistemology? Autonomy. Not my autonomy, but the autonomy of my students. Some have argued that the concept of autonomy is a western concept misapplied to collectivist Asian cultures (see for example Holliday, 2003; Oxford, 2008; Schmenk, 2005) like that in Japan: autonomy is thus limited to learner training. Yet, over the last decade, I have seen Japanese EFL students display a large amount of individual and collective agency by simply choosing autonomously not to do

<sup>2</sup> Software used to code qualitative data.

<sup>3</sup> A programming language used in data modeling and statistical analysis.

homework, not to speak in class, or refuse to engage with lessons; these observations are not limited to just my students either.

Notably, this negative autonomy does not fit with Holec's (1979/1981) often cited definition of a constructivist autonomy, where "objective, universal knowledge is ... replaced by subjective, individual knowledge" (Holec, 1979/1981, p. 21) in pursuit of positive learning outcomes. It must be noted that Holec's definition came out of work with adult learners who had already taken the decision to engage positively with language education (Smith, 2008). In the Japanese context, our students obviously have some knowledge to base any decision to engage positively or negatively with education, because on the whole it appears to be a conscious decision and not a reflexive habit or some psychological problem. As teachers, we should not rush to label a student decision as irrational or a random choice just because it contradicts our own opinion. Obviously, I'm excluding here very young students or those with special needs who may not have developed any autonomy. The question remains as to what knowledge of language learner autonomy students have that influences their decision to engage positively (or not) with learning tasks and activities. The fact that knowledge and theories of knowledge are always lurking in the background allows us to examine autonomy from the viewpoint of epistemology.

However, few have questioned the definition of autonomy from a knowledge theories viewpoint. Holec's definition is itself actually based on an earlier definition by Schwartz<sup>4</sup> (Holec, 1979/1981, p. 3; Schwartz, 1973). It takes a highly constructivist stance where students can literally (not just figuratively) create their own reality. Holec notes that autonomy and self-directed learning mean that the learner must construct and control the contents of learning without external mediation through personal discovery (Holec, 1979/1981, p. 13) and that there is no objective language – just their own personally constructed idiolect; that language can only be theoretically defined beyond the individual (ibid., p.21). Ironically, a lot of recent research in autonomy

using Holec's definition is based in cognitive or positivist approaches to knowledge from the other side of this divide, where quantitative statistics is the main research tool used to define language within an objective reality (see for example Akbari, Pilot, & Simons, 2015; Ting, 2015). Mixed methods research very rarely does anything to address the split between approaches, and most SLA research mirrors this divide; however, there have been moves to suggest a bridging of this gap between cognitive and social approaches with several recent proposals, for example, by the Douglas Fir Group (2016) and Toth and Davin (2016). From the social approach, the Douglas Fir Group argues that SLA has been too narrowly defined by the legacy of linguistics and psychology and that a more holistic approach is required. In parallel, Toth and Davin make the cognitive case for a meeting of minds in a social world. Yet, educational sociologists from mainstream education got there first with critical realist (see Scott & Bhaskar, 2015) and social realist approaches to knowledge (see for example Moore & Young, 2010) attempting to bridge the qualitative and quantitative divide separating such cognitive and social approaches. Critical realism and social realism are related modern schools of thought in the social sciences, with critical realism being derived from Bhaskar's philosophy of science (see Bhaskar, 2008), and social realism being a later extension of critical realism dealing with social phenomena (see for example Maton & Moore, 2010). Both offer ways of combining qualitative and quantitative knowledge with that being one of the specific aims of the more philosophical critical realism, while social realism attempts to go further with a more specific focus on the social production of knowledge, particularly within the field of education. Thus, we have more than one possible epistemology to re-examine student autonomy, and in a somewhat roundabout way, I have the basis for doing my doctoral research into teacher negotiation of student autonomy in Japan.

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## Diary Studies: A View from the Heart

*An Interview with Christina Gkonou, University of Essex, England, about using learner diaries for learner development research*



Jenny Morgan, Wayo Women's University, with Christina Gkonou, University of Essex

At the October 2016 Tokyo get-together we were extremely fortunate to have Christina Gkonou as our guest workshop leader on using diary studies for learner development research. Christina was in Tokyo on a brief visit to different universities to arrange joint postgraduate TESOL programmes between her university and potential partner universities in Japan. After her workshop I had the pleasure of interviewing Christina about her work with diary studies.

**Jenny:** *Hi Christina, thank you so much for making the time for this interview following the Tokyo get-together workshop in October 2016.*

**Christina:** Thank you very much for inviting me.

**Jenny:** *First, as a bit of background, how did you become interested in the area of language learner anxiety (LA) and learner diaries as a research tool?*

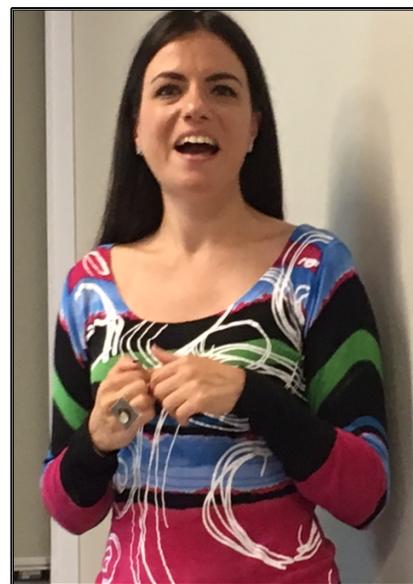
**Christina:** Well, I think I was a bit of an anxious learner myself.

**Jenny:** *Really?*

**Christina:** Yes, haha, and not only an anxious foreign language learner, but an anxious student generally. So, I would feel that whenever I would be called on to speak in class I would start experiencing all of these physiological symptoms of anxiety, like sweating, strong palpitations, and so on. I think I was a very good student, but I wasn't very keen to volunteer answers, although I knew the answers and so on. I always wanted to be, well, not necessarily hiding, but somewhere at the back of the class. But not being that easily seen by the teacher. So, I think that this (interest in LA) emerged from my own experience as a learner, and also from my experiences as a teacher, as a language teacher. I would see different kinds of students in the classroom, students that were very good, they were clearly capable and intelligent, and so on, but they wouldn't talk in class.

**Jenny:** *Sort of... volunteer?*

**Christina:** Yes, they wouldn't do that. Whereas, there were other students who were so loud and forth-coming, and they were not as diligent as the other group of students that I have identified. So,



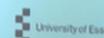
I was just trying to think of why there is such a difference between the students, and I started reading about LA because it was one of the assignment topics for one of the modules in the MA I was doing. I thought this was very interesting, I could identify with what was already reported in the literature, so I thought this (LA) was a very interesting topic.

And then, diaries...because all my work was on anxiety which is a negative emotion and emotions more generally, other negative emotions, I mean, my supervisor actually suggested that I use a more personal kind of research tool, of data collection tool, and he suggested diaries. So, I started reading about diaries, how to use them, what they are, and so on. I thought yes, that's a very nice match. And I used it with EFL learners in Greece in private language schools, and I got some very interesting data.

### A diary is...

... a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analysed for recurring patterns or salient events.

(Bailey, 1990: 215)



**Jenny:** Yes, because if you're talking about emotions then, something like a diary is going to give a much closer insight, the learner's view...

**Christina:** Yes, an insider's view...

**Jenny:** Rather than just what us (teachers) are looking at in the classroom... is that student paying attention, is that one anxious?

**Christina:** Yes, a view from the heart, giving insider knowledge about the students, about the participants, and diaries I think help to a large extent (to achieve this).

**Jenny:** Yes, well you've kind of answered my next questions about why it is important/useful for both learners and teachers to be aware of the issues of LA and its effects in the learning or teaching process?

**Christina:** Yes, because I think research and all our theorizing about learning has moved away from what was considered true, what people believed in the past. Intelligence is of course very important for learning. So (we thought) a student who is not participating in class, is not a capable student, and I think research has shown that these are outdated thoughts, that there are other factors that play a role in language learning, and they influence how our students behave in class. And the same goes for teachers. I mean if a teacher is anxious this does not mean that the teacher is not clever. So, we shouldn't over-generalise about our learners, we need to think of ourselves (in their place) - like when would I feel anxious? I would feel anxious when this happens because of this or that. It has nothing to do with how intelligent we are as teachers, or how creative, or flexible, or good teachers we are. It might actually have to do with something that's happening in our life outside of the class or which is not related to the job.

**Jenny:** Yes, of course we bring our whole selves into the classroom, as a student or a teacher...

**Christina:** And the same goes for our students.

**Jenny:** Yes, I often have to remember...are they sleeping or switched off because me, or because of their part-time job, family issues, daily things... it really takes a load off us if we can remember that students have whole lives as well.

**Christina:** Yes, exactly.

**Jenny:** You did your study in Greece, you're teaching in the UK, and now you've visited Japan- have you found

any cultural differences or universal tendencies with how learners experience anxiety and how they cope with it, or manage it?

**Christina:** No, not really, I would say, it's just the context is different and I think aspects of classroom culture are different. I think people say that people from south Europe or the Mediterranean are actually very loud and so on, and I think this comes out in the classroom as well. I mean the majority of students are not shy in the classroom, and I think this is part of the classroom culture and also the (wider) culture more generally. In the UK, foreign language learning has got a different status and the levels of motivation in foreign language learning in schools are different. There, students who are learning English in the UK are in completely different contexts, have completely different motives- they might be bilingual children, they might be children who came to the UK at the age of six without knowing the language but they're thrown into a primary school classroom with English students and also with students from other countries. So, I think there are contextual differences.

**Jenny:** Yes, which bring up different anxieties...

**Christina:** Exactly, there are some aspects of classroom cultures and perhaps in the institutional culture. I haven't conducted any research to compare these contexts yet. So, what I'm saying is based on my own experiences as a student in Greece and the UK, and as a teacher in both countries, and as a visitor in Japan.

**Jenny:** Yes, you have some rich insights for sure. Particularly, with what's happening in Europe now...well, we won't get into Brexit! But all of those issues, as insiders and outsiders, add to anxiety, how much you need to learn that new language (for survival) or not, EFL and ESOL...

**Christina:** Yes, the different, let's say, status of English or EAL<sup>5</sup> in UK school where English is an additional language for many primary school students.

**Jenny:** Yes, they may have different home languages, and are they valued at school too, or not? Well, moving on

*I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train.*

Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest

<sup>5</sup> For more information on EAL, see <http://www.naldic.org.uk/eal-teaching-and-learning/eal-resources/>

*to learner diaries, how have you seen diaries or reflective writing in learner journals, help learners to reduce their anxiety, and foster language learning? Can you give some specific examples?*

**Christina:** Yes, that's a good question. I think the more self-aware we are the more we understand about ourselves, what we like, what we don't like, what worries us, what probably scares us, (what we struggle with), what are our difficulties, our concerns and worries. But also what are the positive things, our strengths, not only negative things. The more we know about ourselves, the better we can understand what is going on in the classroom around us; both as teachers and as learners. Being able to report on your thoughts, in a personal diary certainly helps because our students in this way can really focus on what worries them, what thrills them, and what makes them happy at the same time. They can identify (these things) with some help from the teacher, or from the researcher, they can identify all these different things and emotions that emerge and they can work towards this. If there's something they find difficult they can make an action plan to overcome this difficulty. Or, something that they like a lot, they can in their spare time spend time to focus on this (activity) that makes them happy. So, that they experience more positive emotions that then reflect in the classroom.

**Jenny:** *Yes, using their strengths to foster other things. How frequent do these written reflections need to be to have the positive effects? How about the length of written entries?*

**Christina:** Again, there are no clear guidelines, and as I said in the workshop I myself had very high expectations in the first diary study I did. So, it depends on the context, and on the students who volunteer. It would be great if we can have the whole classroom do it, so all the students are doing the same thing, all of them are writing a diary and they might be having the same questions, so we can help them. But that might not be the case, some of them might not want to do it, and as we explained in the workshop we cannot push them, and we *shouldn't* push them. It has to be something which is not too prescriptive, it has to be free. I mean, students shouldn't see it as homework...

**Jenny:** *But often as language teachers, some of us may find we have to set journal writing as homework...*

**Christina:** ...Yes, sometimes we need to 'pack' it like that otherwise they won't do it. So, it really depends on the context and what we expect our students to get out of this, and how they perceive this as well. Whether they think this will help them...

**Jenny:** *Yes, that kind of 'training' or scaffolding the diary writing is clearly important for their engagement in the diaries.*

**Christina:** Yes, really important.

**Jenny:** *And what about the length of diary entries - a few sentences, a page? I guess it depends on the language level of the learners?*

**Christina:** Yes, the length, what we were saying earlier about beginners. It depends on the language level. The proficiency in English or in the foreign language will determine the language in which the diary entries will be written, (*how deeply they can express themselves*). So, if we're dealing with beginner level learners of English it's most likely we'll ask them to write their diary in their L1 because it will be difficult for them to express all these things in the foreign language. So, it depends on the level of proficiency in English and the language we have chosen to write the diary in.

Actually, I wouldn't go for very short entries, longer entries are a lot better than shorter entries. Sometimes we cannot avoid short entries because our students might be tired, or whatever. But monitoring or moderating the process can help towards getting students to write longer entries.

**Jenny:** *Yes, one way I've scaffolded reflective writing is have students do their first one in class, like Alex mentioned at the end of the first class, saying to them, that I'm not looking at their English grammar, but just try to write about how you feel about the classroom activities, etc. Then, get students to do a word count each time, their goal each week is to write a little longer, a bit more deeply, using some teacher prompts. It might take them longer each time, or it might not, it depends on what they are reflecting on at the time, e.g., skills, content, etc. I'm teaching a global issues content class right now and learners write reflections about their research process, about their own performance in presentations, and also what they've learnt from their peers, so it's a mix of things they are reflecting on and writing about.*

**Christina:** Yes, scaffolding is very important, they can do the first one in class, you read it and tell them what they could focus on, "*it was a bit short, try to write a little more, you could have expanded on this point, you could have added reasons,*" as so on, and

they will gradually produce longer texts, longer entries.

**Jenny:** *You mentioned in your PowerPoint workshop about “private and public diary entries”... I know some of us in our research skills courses have our learners write regular reflections about how their research process is going, they reflect on the content they are engaging with, set goals for their next homework, also what they are learning from class-mates - they write these journal reflections either in class or for homework, then they come to class prepared to share their reflections with peers each week. So, this makes their diary or journal “public” with one or two classmates, ... is this OK? Do you have any comments on this public-private tension?*

**Christina:** Yes, here the diary entries are public in this sense, but if students already know they will share it with their peers they wouldn't... this will change the content of their entries, so if they already know they'll share it, they wouldn't probably say too much (personal). They will focus on the class, whereas in the examples that we were talking about earlier where students shared quite personal information knowing it would be just their teacher who would read it. The context of the recipients of the diary entries play a role in that case ...

**Jenny:** *Yes, that's right, it would... but reflecting on research processes is quite different from reflecting on anxiety which is much more personal and emotional, or reflecting in a study abroad journal...*

**Christina:** Absolutely.

**Jenny:** *OK, thank you, I feel OK about having students make their entries public then... I guess the main thing is getting them engaged (in writing) and they know what will happen, and the recipient also gives feedback so then it's co-created research/peer reflections in this class...and we always talk about why, what the goals are for peer-sharing their reflections...*

*So, now moving on to using the diary entries in research, I was reading in your article about “content-analysing learner data.” Right now, I'm doing some research using the reflective journal entries done by my students in a small content-based research class- they've been writing regular reflections, initially in class, and now for homework. I've collected my learners' weekly reflections, and also results of an end-of- course survey which I encouraged them to answer in Japanese so that they could write in more depth and detail. But I'm still unsure what connections, aspects and dimensions of learner development I could/ should be exploring for my research. In the past, I have usually tried to talk with my learners and learn from informal discussions with them, so I am not experienced with*

*analysing the reflective writing that they produce. I wonder if you might share with us kind of “coding schemes and relational models” you have identified in your own diary study research?*

**Christina:** Coding means you *label* your data really. So, you have the diary entries, the texts, you read them line by line, and any thoughts that come to your mind while you're reading the data, you write them in the margin, and the “codes” are like “labels.” Or, you can write your thoughts while you're reading the data, then go back and try to *reduce* those notes to just a few words. If you can do it straight from the beginning, just noting down two or three words for each section of the data that you think is important then that will be great. But, you can start with noting down thoughts then reducing those to a few *keywords*. Then, you need to put them all together, all these labels, topics, or themes (codes). And then you can *count* them, you can see how many times each of these labels might appear in your data. See, for example, your idea of “culture,” why there are more mentions of it than say the word “course book,” and why was that? Then, you take this a step further. You are trying to see if there are any links, any relations, associations between the data. You know your context better than anyone else because this is a class you're teaching. You will be able to see a little bit beyond the data, a little bit beyond what is in the diary entries.

**Jenny:** *Thank you, that's a lot clearer now. So, for example what were some relational connections you found in the learner anxiety data in Greece?*

**Christina:** For instance, the students commented on different aspects of the lessons, but also they talked about the fact that the Greek foreign language education system is so heavily based on exams. They take so many exams. Your proof of knowledge of a foreign language has to be a B2 exam according to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This is something that is very important. These are like the Cambridge exams, testing the four skills, grammar, syntax. Because the education system is so much exam-influenced, and success- oriented to a certain extent, the students will also talk about causes of anxiety that stem from this. So, this is like the wider national culture, or let's say the wider educational culture, or whatever you want to call it. So, there was a strong link between the classroom culture which is one environment and environments that were outside this and were not

controlled by the students. The students did not set up the rules for exams. It is Cambridge, then, it's the country's system that pays a lot of attention to this. Of course, having a certificate is important, it does show a lot about your knowledge of a foreign language but it shouldn't be the end in itself. (Knowledge) is not just that, how about communication, how about intercultural understanding, how about in our highly globalized world? In the classroom you're doing OK, in the exams you're doing OK, but how about outside of this?

I found that there were lots of causes for anxiety. For these particular learners because of factors that were really beyond their control

**Jenny:** *And what was their age range?*

**Christina:** They were adults, all above 18 but again within these groups there were different age ranges. The majority were university students around 20 years, 22 years old. But there were some students who were already finished with all this, they had a job, but they knew that if they could improve their English they would get a better job, or a promotion, so they had to take extra classes and that was why they were in the classes I worked with.

**Jenny:** *You mentioned in your article about the attrition rate in your study, and you still got some really rich data from the seven learners that remained. I've found my current learners seem to struggle with their reflective writing, perhaps in part due to their low English proficiency, and also because reflections are a new concept for many; they also struggle with **what** they should/can write. So, I've been providing a list of writing prompts or "reflective questions" but I worry, that these prompts make the whole personal reflection process too prescriptive, not spontaneous or honest enough. What are your thoughts on scaffolding for diary studies with prompts?*

**Christina:** Yes, I would definitely go for prompts too because otherwise it's too open-ended. And you can increase the number of prompts and tell them to focus on any number of these. So, one option would be to have short list of prompts and you ask them to reflect on *all* of this. Or, you can make the list longer and ask them to *choose* what they want to focus on. So, in this case, you are making it less prescriptive. And as they go along and they have written more diary entries, you can reduce your input in this, like you can take away the prompts, they are used to (reflecting), they know what to do. The help from

the teacher is very important; we can't just leave them (to write) on their own.

**Jenny:** *Do you have any final tips for teachers new to using diaries, learning journals, or who wish to help their learners develop their self-direction and greater autonomy?*

**Christina:** Well, the first tip would be to keep in mind that in any research we do there will be some hiccups, there will be some obstacles there. So, we need to be prepared and we shouldn't be thinking that this happened I had not predicted it, I'm doing something wrong. It doesn't work this way. It happens in any kind of research we do whether we are using diaries or any kind of research tool...

**Jenny:** *Because it involves people...*

**Christina:** Yes, I think the more research we do, the better we learn about all this, the more aware we are of all these issues, and how to overcome them. When it comes to diary studies and learner development in particular, I would say that diaries or journals are a very helpful tool for collecting data without necessarily putting your students on the spot because they might be doing it in class but it is something that only they themselves and the teacher will see. So, it's not like a classroom discussion where they might be exposed, where they might lose face and so on. Diaries and journals are a very useful tool for collecting data for these purposes, in particular if we want to focus on relationships in the classroom, feelings towards inner aspects of our students.

A tip for research on diary entries and learner development is to make sure we focus on development. So, by this I mean that we need to look at change, we need to focus on how learners develop. First of all, *whether* they develop, I think all students develop from one lesson to the other, but we need to see what kinds of changes took place, and why? Who is responsible for that? Did the students take extra steps, is this an indication that they are becoming more and more autonomous? Do I as a teacher need to give some more input to make them even more autonomous? Or to help them develop, am I really tracking their development in what I am doing?

**Jenny:** *Well, thank you again, Christina, for making the time for this informative discussion, particularly making the connection between learner development and diaries, and also diaries as a research tool.*

**Christina:** Thank you very much, I really enjoyed the discussion with you.

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If you or someone you know would like to share your conversations with professionals in the field of education about learner development, please let us know by sending an email to [learninglearning.editor@gmail.com](mailto:learninglearning.editor@gmail.com) We are interested in what YOU find interesting in your teaching and learning practice!

## The 2016 JALTCALL Conference: A personal reflection



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*If anyone ... is teaching the same thing they were teaching five years ago, either the field is dead, or they haven't been thinking.*

– Noam Chomsky –

In many ways, teaching English in Japan can be an individualistic and isolating endeavor. A large number of English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors have long commutes, busy schedules, and are often segregated from one another in their own classrooms. Cuban, Kirkpatrick, and Peck (2001) argued that the “cellular organization” of the teaching profession as well as various other constraints reduced the “cross-fertilization of ideas” and sharing of technical expertise amongst the educators they researched (p. 827). Although there will always be an element of seclusion in the EFL educational arena, attending conferences and participating in a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1998) such as the JALT Learner Development SIG can help to alleviate the isolation, frustration, and sense of ‘burn-out’ teachers might experience working with large classes of reluctant English-language learners. Added to that, they are fantastic forums that foster the sharing of knowledge (i.e., technological tips) and effective teaching strategies.

Keeping these ideas in mind, I decided to attend the 2016 JALT CALL conference. I felt it was the ideal professional development opportunity for me as I have been studying technology enhanced learning for the last few years through a distance education graduate studies program. The JALT CALL 2016 conference, which was cohosted by the JALT CALL and Mind, Brain, and Education SIGs, took place from June 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> at Tamagawa University in Tokyo. Although it was a jam-packed hectic weekend, I left Tokyo feeling inspired and reenergized. The next section will highlight some

of the more memorable events from the conference.

### Day 1: Saturday

When I arrived at the venue early Saturday morning, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the conference timetable had a total of 114 presentations/workshops that covered a diverse array of topics. Needless to say, it was difficult to create a personalized schedule of the sessions I wanted to attend. I decided to sidestep the more abstract or theoretically dense presentations, and instead focus on practical ones that had the potential to help frontline educators improve their students’ learning and communicative competencies.

The first order of business was to meet up with my colleague and co-presenter, Daniel Mills, in order to put the finishing touches on our slides and have one final practice before our presentation. Afterwards, I wandered around the poster sessions and talked with Oliver Rose about [PhraseBot](#), an online mobile game app he developed that can help students learn words, phrases, and sentences. This conversation was the first of many that I would have over the weekend, which focused on the value of mobile device vocabulary apps to enhance students’ learning. The online flashcard program [Quizlet](#) appeared to be a popular choice among many EFL instructors, and it was featured in ten different presentations. After lunch, Daniel and I delivered the findings from our action research project on the use of mobile-video recordings to enhance Japanese university students’ English language presentation skills.

Unfortunately, two of the sessions I really wanted to attend, one on Pecha Kucha<sup>1</sup> presentations and the other on student-generated podcasts, were scheduled at the exact same time as our talk. Thankfully, there were still a number of stimulating presentations to see on my afternoon agenda. I listened to Paul McKenna discuss how he scrutinized 1,499 TED Talks using a genre

<sup>1</sup> A Pecha Kucha is a visual presentation format whereby the presenter shows 20 images and speaks for 20 seconds per image. The total time of the presentation is under 6 minutes and 40 seconds. (20 images X 20 seconds = 6:40)

analysis. For me, the most interesting part of his presentation emerged during the ‘Q & A’ period when various audience members shared how they utilized TED Talks in their lessons. Immediately after the session, I had a brief conversation with Darren Elliot regarding his blog [‘The lives of teachers: Teaching and learning languages’](#). This site is definitely worth checking out, especially the impressive archive of interviews he has conducted over the years with renowned researchers in the field of English language learning.

My next stop was to see Robert Cochrane’s enthusiastic presentation on his experiences using Google Apps for Education in a collaborative learning project with Japanese university students. Cochrane noted that the participants in his study were highly proficient at playing games and accessing social networking sites on their smartphones. However, many learners still lacked basic digital skills when it came time to using technology in an educational context. This presentation appeared to resonate with the audience and one instructor commented: “... *they are iPhone geniuses ... but have a hard time using [Microsoft] word to format their essays.*”

After this session, I decided to mix things up a bit by attending a workshop. Rab Paterson’s ‘Unleash your inner Tarantino with iMovie’ had piqued my interest with a catchy title as well as the desire to improve my mediocre video editing skills. In addition to being highly entertaining and informative, Paterson provided the participants with a blueprint on how to organize and conduct an effective information and communication technology (ICT) workshop. I filled my notebook with numerous practical pointers and a variety of websites where I could obtain high quality images for my future video projects. The seventy minutes flew by and then it was time for the keynote address.

Mark Pegrum’s plenary speech ‘Beyond traditional language and literacy: The rise of mobile literacy’ was fascinating and provided the audience with a tremendous amount of food for thought. Pegrum started his talk by highlighting various types of digital literacies such as

information, multimodal, network, and code, as well as providing examples for each one. He then defined ‘critical mobile literacy’ and emphasized its significance in our technologically-charged world. Without question, this notion reverberated the most with me because it underscores the importance of incorporating critical thinking into lessons that revolve around ICT tools. The keynote address also tied in nicely with an article I had recently read urging educators not to become trapped in a technologically deterministic mindset. Selywn (2012) argued that technologies are constantly undergoing “... a series of complex interactions and negotiations with the social, economic, political and cultural contexts into which they emerge” (p. 84). Clearly, effectively integrating ICTs into an EFL classroom is something that requires a tremendous amount of thought and careful consideration.

After Pegrum’s plenary address, the conference attendees reconvened at a nearby building for a networking reception. This event was notable on a couple of different fronts. First, everyone appeared to thoroughly enjoy the great food, cold drinks (especially the frothy ones), and friendly service. Next, it was an excellent opportunity to mingle with new people and reconnect with old friends. I had a number of interesting conversations during the two-hour gathering, including one with Stephen Ryan about the connection of the mind and brain to language learning.

## Day 2: Sunday

The second day of the conference started out significantly slower for me than the first one. I decided to kick start my morning by grabbing a cup of coffee before venturing off to any sessions. In retrospect, this proved to be a wise choice as I found myself immersed in a series of thought-provoking discussions with John Blake, Philip Norton, and Gary Ross. Blake highlighted his presentation ‘Ten hacks for academic writing’ and made some helpful suggestions for my own university writing classes. He also talked about living, working, and studying martial arts in

Thailand and Hong Kong. Likewise, Philip Norton outlined his workshop ‘Creating animated storyboards with Web 2.0’ and provided some practical pointers on using the online video editing software [WeVideo](#) in an EFL setting. Norton also shared an inspiring story of transforming himself physically via kettle bell workouts and a healthy lifestyle. Gary Ross’s technological acumen was equally impressive. Ross talked about a computer program he developed that allows students to have practice conversations with their computers. The most obvious benefit of this software is that EFL educators can grade hundreds of assignments in a short time.

However, Ross’s words also made me consider the negative impact that ICTs can have on the post-secondary EFL teaching sector in Japan. More specifically, I started to wonder if voice recognition programs, massive open online courses (MOOCs), the Skypefication of English lessons (i.e., online language tutors from the Philippines), as well as the seemingly never-ending quest of many university administrators to find ways to cut costs (i.e., larger class sizes; using outsourcing agencies) will eventually make many jobs redundant. It is likely that my feeling of trepidation is rooted in an article I read a few years ago that discussed the possibility of interactive robotic avatars eliminating the need for EFL instructors. In 2010, the South Korean government spent \$45 million (USD) developing robotic English language teaching assistants (Hsu, 2010). Undoubtedly, many educators will find the idea of a robot taking their jobs to be utterly ridiculous. However, economist Kim Shin-Hwan predicted that these machines would eventually replace more than 30,000 native English teachers working in Korea, especially those employed by private language institutions (Kim, 2010). More recently, Sherman (2015) reported that new types of technology have had a detrimental effect on a number of white-collar occupations such as financial analysts and sports reporters. These professions had “previously seemed invulnerable” whereas now there is a strong possibility that they will be eradicated in the near future (par. 4).

Having said all that, I was nevertheless intrigued to find out how voice recognition software could enrich the language learning process. Thus, I found myself attending the ‘speaking with your computer’ ‘unconference’ session. Before venturing on, it is probably a good idea to pause for a moment to define this concept. The ‘unconference’ presentation format is a unique “free-form, bottom-up” type of talk whereby the participants set their own topics (JALTCALL & the Brain, 2016). Added to that, it is perfectly acceptable for a person to parachute into a conversation and leave the room once she/he has acquired enough information about a topic or lost interest in the discussion. Needless to say, I was curious to see how the unconference sessions would actually unfold. In addition to the aforementioned voice recognition program, attendees could chat about the following topics: physiology and wellness with technology, active learning and neuroscience, and mobile device apps. I was able to observe a hands-on demonstration of Gary Ross speaking with his PC as well as listen to other instructors discuss the trials and tribulations of using speech recognition software in their EFL classrooms. Initially, I had planned on attending three unconference sessions. Unfortunately, the allocated time slot of thirty minutes evaporated before I could wander into any other rooms. Even though I really enjoyed the informal climate of the unconference presentation format, I felt that the time should have been extended to an hour or more to prevent the participants from feeling overly rushed.

The final event on my agenda was the LD SIG forum. On one hand, the session shared some similarities with many of the presentations and workshops at the conference. For example, the majority of the presenters believed they could foster a more interactive learning environment by weaving ICTs into their EFL lessons. However, the LD forum’s unique flavor could be found in the fact that it also emphasized the students’ voices in regard to the effectiveness of these technological tools. There were a total of five presenters on hand to discuss the findings of three action research projects. I decided to first stop at Robert Morel’s

poster to learn how he deployed the learning management system (LMS) [Schoolology](#) in his teaching context. A Venn diagram highlighted the ‘online resources used at three levels of interaction’ in his project. Thus, it was easy for the audience to see the interconnectedness of information and file sharing, regular study, and messaging. I thought Morel’s presentation would have been especially valuable for a teacher who works at several institutions or someone not overly familiar with how a LMS works.

My second pit stop at the LD forum was highly useful and informative. As I noted previously, discussions about the online flashcard program [Quizlet](#) were prevalent at the conference. Although I had a basic understanding of how it worked, I was fortunate that Blair Barr could shed more light on this educational software. Barr discussed the student feedback he received as well as the highlights from his earlier presentation ‘Is Quizlet an effective tool for learning how to use vocabulary?’ Not only that, he patiently answered my barrage of questions, including ‘*What do you do if a student has an antiquated cellphone?*’ and ‘*Do privacy concerns ever prevent learners from participating in a task?*’ Barr, like many good teachers, came up with a variety of innovative solutions that helped him overcome unexpected technological barriers. This conversation made me realize that Quizlet could breathe new life into my reading class and add some spice to painfully tedious TOEIC courses.

The third and final presentation that was featured at the LD forum was titled ‘Students voices: Evaluating an app for promoting self-directed language learning’. My first observation was the research triumvirate of Jo Mynard, Elizabeth Lammons, and Kie Yamamoto produced an amazing poster (see Figure 1) that was quite self-explanatory. Fortunately, I was able to have an interesting chat with Kie about the ‘Self-Access Learning Centre’ (SALC) at Kanda University of International Studies, and the benefits of the mobile device app her team created. Without question, this was another worthwhile session for me because my institution is currently in the process of introducing a new ‘Self-Access Learning Support Area’ (SALSA).

## Conclusion

The 2016 JALTCALL conference was a resounding success thanks to the hard work of a large group of dedicated volunteers and the organizational efforts of the site coordinators. Over the course of two hectic days, I learned a tremendous amount and felt like I was hit by a jolt of renewed inspiration that will hopefully help me to improve my teaching performance. My positive conference experience would not have been possible without the 2016 LD SIG JALTCALL bursary. I would like to express my gratitude to the LD team for not only the grant, but also their warm hospitality during my visit to the LD forum session. Finally, I would like to say thanks to Yoko Sakurai for her patience and assistance with this article.

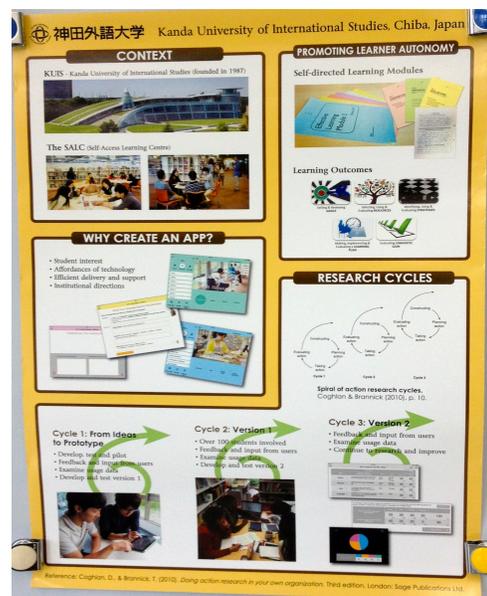


Figure 1. Poster from the LD SIG forum (Mynard, Lammons, & Yamamoto, 2016)

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The Learner Development (LD) SIG is offering one ¥20,000 Project Grant to LD SIG members conducting or leading education-related projects or volunteer activities as individuals or in groups who are willing to write an article (approx. 1500 words / 3000 Japanese characters) about their project for *Learning Learning*. Application may include but are not limited to the following examples (if you are unsure whether our project qualifies or not, please contact the Grants Team):

- Teachers and/or students engaging with and/or helping communities or groups of people outside of their educational context, at either a local, national or international level;
- Encouraging student development through supporting student participation in conferences, LD SIG forums, LD SIG get together, etc.

Recipient/s can use the grant in any way within reason that will support their project. Please indicate in your application how the grant will be used to support the successful completion of the project.

For more information, please contact the Grants Team

[learnerdevelopmentsiggrants@gmail.com](mailto:learnerdevelopmentsiggrants@gmail.com)

**Pan SIG**  
Expand Your Interests



**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Deadline:** Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> 2016

**For more information:** <https://pansig.org>

**Paper submission:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScfezQ1wE9CbWpzmCnd4Kb43ZiT6fSpoyFF1Qdx\\_4F\\_GbDaGA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScfezQ1wE9CbWpzmCnd4Kb43ZiT6fSpoyFF1Qdx_4F_GbDaGA/viewform)

### Pan SIG 2017

The Learner Development SIG programs team is excited to invite you to submit proposals for the LD SIG forum at the 2017 PanSIG Conference taking place at Akita International University in Akita City between May 19 and 21. The theme of the PanSIG conference this year is "Expand your Interests," and in conjunction with this theme we would like to use this opportunity to start the conversation around "Visualizing Learning Development," the theme of the first issue for the upcoming Learner Development Journal. This is a great opportunity to share research on a variety of learner development topics.



**Deadline:** Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**For more information** <http://ld-sig.org>.

**Paper submission:** <http://ld-sig.org/issue-two/>

Editors: Masuko Miyahara, Robert Croker,  
Patrick Kiernan, Chika Hayashi

### The Learner Development Journal, Issue Two

Theme: *Qualitative Research and Learner Development*

As teachers and researchers, we endeavour to understand the complexities of our students' learning processes from their perspectives. Qualitative research offers uniquely powerful ways to do so, and has become popular in studies exploring learner development. The second issue of *The Learner Development Journal*, due out in the spring of 2018, offers our research community a chance to explore and critically question the processes of how we do (and would like to do) qualitative research. You are warmly invited to submit proposals for this issue.

**LEARNING LEARNING**  
a publication of the JALT Learner Development SIG

**Deadline:** Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup> 2017

**Information:** <http://ld-sig.org/information-for-contributors/>

**Submissions:** [learninglearning.editor@gmail.com](mailto:learninglearning.editor@gmail.com)

*Learning Learning* is your space to make the connections that interest you. You are warmly invited and encouraged to contribute to the next issue of *Learning Learning* in either English and/or Japanese. We welcome writing in different formats and different lengths about different issues connected with learner and teacher development. We would like to encourage new writing and new writers and are also very happy to work with you in developing your writing. We would be delighted to hear from you about your ideas, reflections, experiences, and interests to do with learner development, learner autonomy and teacher autonomy.



### Learner Transformation as Personal Maturation

JALT 2016 LD Forum

Saturday Room 2012 4:30-6:00

The changes that learners undergo in the process of language acquisition often involve the emergence of autonomous identities as users of language that may stem as much from personal maturation as from learning achievement. The impact of such change is profound, and may shift the instructor's role beyond facilitation and fostering of language towards aiding in the cultivation of whole persons. This year's Learner Development forum theme at JALT 2016 focuses on such change and growth, and seeks presentations and dialog on learner language development as an aspect of maturation. Presentations highlighting learners' own voices in such maturation are especially encouraged.

.....

We have a lively and active forum for JALT 2016 in Nagoya! Here is a summary of the individual presentations.

#### *Implementing ePortfolios to foster self-directed language learners*

Mayumi Abe will share her findings on the implementation of ePortfolios to foster self-directed language learning. She will point out how technological developments in ePortfolios need to be strengthened with pedagogical considerations, and will discuss effective ways to integrate ePortfolios by drawing on existing studies, investigating a case in which university students created and developed their ePortfolios by way of in-class scaffolding and analysis on how it helped the students mature as self-directed learners.

#### *A learner's diary: Learning, growth, and change in consciousness on a homestay sojourn*

Lee Arnold's presentation about the experience of a Japanese homestay learner in Australia and the learner's diary entries emphasizes the learning, growth, and changes the learner underwent in a one-month sojourn. He finds that even a short sojourn produced affirmative changes in consciousness in the learner and validates the integrity of diary studies as a still-viable means of tracking growth and development in language acquisition, along with a maturing of the whole person.

#### *Learning together about development and difference*

Andy Barfield will report on the experiences of three second-year university students visiting different organisations and individuals in a developing country for two weeks in the summer and interviewing, in English and Japanese, people working on social justice issues. He explores the students' development, particularly in terms of the changes in how they see their own lives and others', and different conditions and factors that constrain or support individual and social development.

#### *Aiding EFL students in the cultivation of whole persons*

Hideo Kojima shares his work in aiding EFL students in their cultivation as whole persons, as he explores the need for teachers to have new perspectives on EFL education where a variety of competencies need to be fostered, taking into account 21st century skills or key competencies in OECD countries. He will introduce some EFL teacher-learners' comments on aiding the cultivation of learners as whole persons, with the goal of learner empowerment over a range of competencies to face the complex challenges of our time.

#### *The efficacy of digital storytelling in developing a learner-centric environment*

Fumiko Kurosawa will present on the efficacy of digital storytelling in developing a learner-centric environment. She discusses her experiences as a conversation school owner and teacher and how the majority of her students approach their

learning from different directions as business people with wide ranges of proficiency in IT skills that are influenced by their corporate specialties and respective strengths and interests. She demonstrates how she tapped into their skills and specialities by way of digital storytelling to foster greater learner proactivity both in-and-outside the classroom.

第二言語話者としての「自分らしい私」の構築□ 韓国人留学生の語りからみる学習者オートノミーと社会的文脈による制約□  
(*Constructing "me like myself" as an L2 user: Learner autonomy and restrictions by social context observed in a narrative of a Korean student*)

Yoshio Nakai will discuss in Japanese his study of the evolution of a Korean student from a learner to a user of L2 Japanese by way of fostering of learner autonomy. He will show, based on a series of interviews with the student, that the transformation the learner underwent was a process of realization evincing personal maturation as an aspect of learner autonomy.

*Learner transformation in seminar*

Hugh Nicoll's presentation explores the themes of transformation and maturation in the work of three members of an American Studies Seminar through an analysis of video recordings and written learner reflections. In his study, he will focus on issues of identity and agency in two related contexts: First, as themes in the works of Maya Angelou, Ralph Ellison, John Okada, and Hisaye Yamamoto; and, second, in terms of how learners' understandings of critical pedagogy as a framework for literary studies helped them build bridges between their seminar work and their identities as citizens and life-long learners.

*Learning together across borders: Correspondence between Hungarian and Japanese learners of English*

Agnes Patko will introduce the merits of correspondence between Japanese and Hungarian learners of English in her presentation. She asked participants in her study to hand-write their letters

instead of using computers that automatically correct or highlight mistakes, in both English and Japanese. Through a post-project survey, her students reported benefits such as the opportunity to use English with their foreign peers; the experience of feeling like native speakers, which increased their confidence; an improvement in their understanding of Japanese culture and ability to discuss it, and greater interest in other cultures through interaction with their Hungarian counterparts. She concludes that hand-writing letters made learners more willing to revise their drafts and helped them improve their spelling and organizational skills.

*When learners become teachers: Pragmatics instruction by students*

Jim Ronald describes a project involving third-year students in an English department becoming teachers with each other. He asked students to become teachers of basic aspects of L2 English pragmatics, allowing them to choose their topics and working out how best to teach the activities from the topics, collecting student feedback and reflecting on their teaching. Through this experience, they stopped being students and instead became autonomous, reflective teachers. He discusses the nature of this transformation in how it takes place, how it may be improved, and the role of the teacher throughout.

*Evolution of learners through collaborative learning (CL)*

Hiromi Tsuda will present on the evolution of learners through collaborative learning (CL). She introduced CL into a required intermediate English class with human life and environmental sciences majors to lessen potential anxiety with such content. After reading passages in the textbook, students carried out presentations about topics of the units, engaging each other in Q&A sessions. In their reflections, they wrote that they enjoyed these sessions, and deepened and developed understanding and interest in scientific topics, demonstrating that CL played a crucial role in enhancing greater student confidence and self-efficacy.



## **K2W: KANSAI TO THE WORLD**

<http://ld-sig.org/get-togethers/kansai-get-togethers/>

Get-togethers are open to language instructors to share together ideas and enjoy discussing current topics and trends happening in education in Japan.

FACEBOOK : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/126518854184011/>

**Where:** Hito Machi Koryukan Community Centre (Kyoto)  
京都市下京区西木屋町通上ノ口上る梅湊町 83-1  
(河原町通五条下る東側)  
[www.hitomachi-kyoto.jp](http://www.hitomachi-kyoto.jp)

**When:** December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016  
(Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month)  
10:30 a.m. – 12:30

## **CREATING COMMUNITY LEARNING TOGETHER**

“Creating Community: Learning Together 3” is an informal, relaxing afternoon Learner Development SIG conference taking place on Sunday December 18 12:00-17:00 at [Otsuma Women’s University, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo](http://www.otsuma-wu.ac.jp).

「コミュニティの創造:共に学ぶ3」は、12月18日(日)12:00-17:00に[大妻女子大学\(東京,市ヶ谷\)](http://www.otsuma-wu.ac.jp)で開催される午後のインフォーマルで和やかな学習者ディベロプメントSIGの学会です。

 The poster features a large, stylized letter 'C' in the center, composed of two overlapping curved shapes in dark green and maroon. To the right of the 'C', the text "コミュニティの創造:共に学ぶ3" is written in black, followed by "Creating Community Learning Together 3" in a larger, bold, black font. Below this, the event details are listed: "Sunday December 18 12:00-17:00", "Otsuma Women’s University, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo", and "12月18日(日) 12:00-17:00に大妻女子大学(東京,千代田区)". The background of the poster shows a blurred image of a snowy landscape with evergreen trees.
 

**コミュニティの創造:共に学ぶ3**  
**Creating Community Learning Together 3**

**Sunday December 18 12:00-17:00**  
**Otsuma Women’s University, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo**  
12月18日(日) 12:00-17:00に大妻女子大学(東京,千代田区)

**An informal and interactive event**  
インタラクティブな懇談会

**Three 40-minute rounds of poster presentations**  
by students & teachers

**Discussion circles after each round**

**Interactive plenary sessions to create community and learn together**

教師と学生による40分間のポスター発表が3回  
各ラウンドの後ではディスカッション  
インタラクティブな全体会で、皆さんと共に学びながら  
コミュニティーを作ります

<http://ld-sig.org/creating-community-learning-together/>