

LOOKING BACK | 報告**Reflections
on Creating
Community:
Learning
Together 4**

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Creating Community:
Learning Together 4 took place on Sunday December 16, 2018 with over 31 poster presentations/digital displays by both students and teachers. This small-scale, informal afternoon conference offered opportunities for students and teachers to learn together from each other about different experiences, questions and issues to do with learner development. As the final Tokyo get-together of the year, we aimed to keep presentation formats informal and interactive. There were three rounds of poster presentations and digital displays, with each round followed by small discussion and reflection circles for 10 minutes in pairs and small groups in each presentation room. The conference finished with a plenary session where participants and presenters had a chance to share reflections and questions about creating community and learning together, while designing a poster that documented their experiences. The participants were then invited to formally write up these reflections and we include here

three of these.

Our thanks go to everybody who helped out and participated in the conference, as well as to Aki Kubota & Dexter Da Silva, Haruka Shintani & Nick Kasperek, Jim Ronald & Robert Moreau who contributed their reflections.

Reflections on CCLT4 from Aki Kubota and Dexter Da Silva**Aki Kubota, 3rd year student, Faculty of Law, Chuo University**

I participated in the Creating Community: Learning Together 4 (CCLT4) and gave my presentation about Burmese youth integration in Canada. Overall, I had a great experience through talking and discussing about specific cases in Canada to do with refugees with people I met for the first time at the conference. For example, how different is the situation of Burmese youth refugees in rural and urban areas? What difficulties have Burmese youth faced at school, in the workplace, and at home, with friends, family, neighbors and people with whom they work? Also, I talked about why I was interested in the issue as well as my experience of researching and learning about development issues in the spring semester and then doing fieldwork interviews about multilingual education for ethnic minority children for two and a half weeks last summer in Myanmar. In this reflection, I would like to report what I learned at CCLT4 and improvements and changes that I can make for next time.

While I saw how other teachers and students presented, what I learned most was

that engaging people in your presentation and seeing carefully someone who joins in the middle of your presentation are very important and challenging to actually carry out. I found many great models about how to do this in the first and second rounds so that, when it came to my own presentation, I tried my hand at looking at my audience carefully. However, things did not work out completely as planned. In fact, while I was giving my presentation, I could not do well in letting many other students and teachers join the discussions and be interested in my research issue. In the end, I was unable to give any comments about what the audience discussed.

In terms of improvement and changes, I should have learned more about how to make the investigation area narrow. I got feedback about my research and presentation after the third round. A teacher told me that my topic, Burmese youth integration in Canada, was great and important to discuss with people, but I should have examined specific cases such as Burmese youth in Canada who live in a village or a remote part of Toronto. I was grateful to get this important feedback and that would be of help in improving my research and presentation skills in the future. At CCLT4 I learned a lot from people I did not know before. I also learnt how to make connections with people through presentations, discussions and reviews. I believe that there is a reason why I could not handle it. I did not feel very knowledgeable and ready to discuss with people and give a strong opinion although I had researched about Burmese youth integration in Canada and gave the presentation about it. Although I have still many bad points, I believe that taking part in this conference was a great learning chance to

find out what is necessary to be improved in future presentations and discussions and I would like to join CCLT in 2020 and take part again.

Dexter Da Silva, Keisen University

This was my third time participating in CCLT and my second time presenting. I presented on the topic of Self-Directed Learning, which is the focus of the class in which I teach Keisen students who also presented at CCLT. A couple of people came to my poster presentation because they were also interested in that topic, so I had two short discussions on it. However, I learnt much more from the wide variety of poster presentations I saw and listened to, especially the student presentations. I could really feel inspired by the display of learning that is going on at universities in Japan.

The poster presentation I was most interested in was Aki Kubota's on Burmese youth integration in Canada. I wanted to know more about the situation and the problems because I know nothing about it but am very interested in Burma / Myanmar and Burmese emigration. I could see and understand the difficulties that Aki wrote about that she had, because a couple of other people were also very interested in the topic and had strong opinions about Canada and immigration issues. So it developed into a very lively discussion. However, I perceive this as a positive result of the topic and content of the poster presentation which stimulated the discussion. Aki's reflection shows, I believe, the unpredictable directions that learning together can take. This is part of the excitement of events like CCLT.

Rejuvenated Learning and “Active Learning”: Reflections on CCLT4 from Haruka Shintaku and Nick Kasperek

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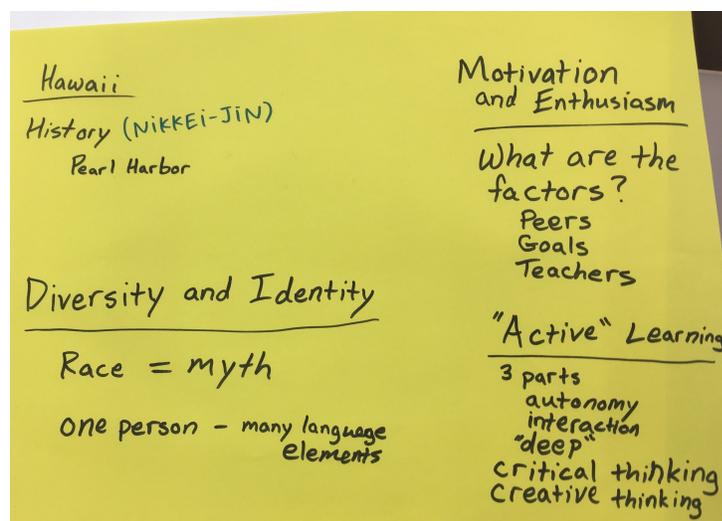
Before I joined this event, I was only thinking about the achievement of my presentation. But as I listened to and watched more and more presentations, and talked with a lot of people, I got interested in many things, especially diversity, identity, and the connections between Japan and Hawaii.

My theme is "My English Journey". I like English since I was a child. But after entering university, I had many things which I want to do; volunteer work, study English, study anything ...etc. But I don't have time for doing everything. I had many things to do then. So I thought "I give up things I want to do, because I can't do." And I didn't study English so much, and also other subjects too. But I noticed it was wrong. I just escaped. I have different thought which I will not escape. I will do anything hard. And I decided to continue "My English Journey".

At CCLT4 I was most interested in "Identity". Identity is involved in many things in complex ways, such as people's life histories, the languages that they use, and the different groups they belong to. One presentation was about the people who grew up with different languages. From listening to

this presentation, I started to want to know about how such people's identities develop. Persons having parents from different countries would seem to have two cultures, while persons having parents from the same country would seem to have one culture. I don't know how we could determine which countries, nationalities, or ethnic group such persons belong to. But the presenter said, "Actually, there is no race in the world." This means that people should choose and decide who they are by themselves. This is what is meant by "building identities." I also want to build my own identity.

I found myself wanting to learn a lot more things, both in university and beyond. I also decided to learn seriously for the rest of my university life. I noticed that I haven't learned many things for about two years. I thus plan to restart my university life.



Nick Kasperek, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Like Haruka, I got a lot out of the interactions both about my own presentation and others' presentations. It was especially interesting to see different perspectives and data on learner motivation, note-taking, and reflection. Many presentations reinforced for

me that learning is an internal process that teachers can try to encourage, but can never hope to completely control. In this sense, then, all learning is “active learning.” My presentation described part of the discovery process of what we mean when we call something “active learning,” particularly in the context of an English language course for teacher trainees with institutionally required “active learning” assignments. I drew upon ideas that emerged through classroom discussions with my students as inquiry partners to come to new understandings of the term by juxtaposing our perspectives, through experimentation with learning tasks that evolved as we tried them out, and through my own reflections in dialogue with the academic literature. This dialogue was further enriched at the conference, as I learned from another participant that in the official Japanese context (directed by MEXT), “active learning” involves three main components: autonomy, interaction, and deep learning. While each of these terms would also need to be unpacked, these components accord well with what my students told me in discussion and with the active learning assignment that my students and I experimented with: using course concepts to conduct challenging and relatively autonomous collaborative education research as teacher trainees, designing a poster together, and presenting it at CCLT4. In short, the assignments seemed to become a form of collaborative project-based learning.

While MEXT’s three official components seemed present in our course’s active learning assignments, what my students and I seemed to value most about the project—and what made it “really active,” or “meccha active,” for them—was how it involved them in doing

real research, that is, actually doing and thinking about what an educator-scholar actually does. Building on the official components, especially the “deep learning” aspect, I therefore suggest that teachers in Japan also find inspiration in complementary ideas from the broader literature on curriculum design (Bean, 2011; Fink, 2013; van Lier, 1996). Retaining the focus on autonomy and interaction, “deep learning” could then be helpfully understood as involving direct experiences with relevant inquiry and focused reflection on learning. As Bean (2011) argues, active learning is especially likely to occur in small groups critically discussing pertinent puzzles that help students become “autonomous thinkers who can join the conversation of the discipline” (p. 200). Similarly, Fink (2013) stresses that taken holistically, active learning involves “real action in an authentic setting” (p. 120), finding for oneself and using relevant information and ideas, and reflecting on changes in understanding. Meanwhile, van Lier (1996) emphasizes that the authentic use of language, autonomy such as that involved in conducting collaborative research on group-chosen puzzles, and heightened awareness of learning, such as through shared reflection, are each key elements of not only active learning generally but especially of language learning. Involving students in relevant collaborative inquiry and guiding focused reflection emerge as common key elements of active learning in this literature, and these elements provide a helpful framework for group research projects as assignments that fulfill “active learning” requirements in a more meaningful way, particularly in English language education courses.

Through CCLT4, I gained further confidence that the time is ripe for discussion about what we as teachers and learners want from “active learning” tasks, whether or not these are mandated from above. The way that my students and I—along with various conference attendees—seemed to find enriched shared understandings of “active learning” gives me hope that other teachers can similarly work toward their own better understandings through dialogue. My hope is that by continuing to attend to the meaning of active learning and to suggest frameworks for its actual practice, I can help to extend this discussion.

References

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- Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences, revised and updated an integrated approach to designing college courses* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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Reflections from Jim Ronald and Robert Moreau

From Jim Ronald

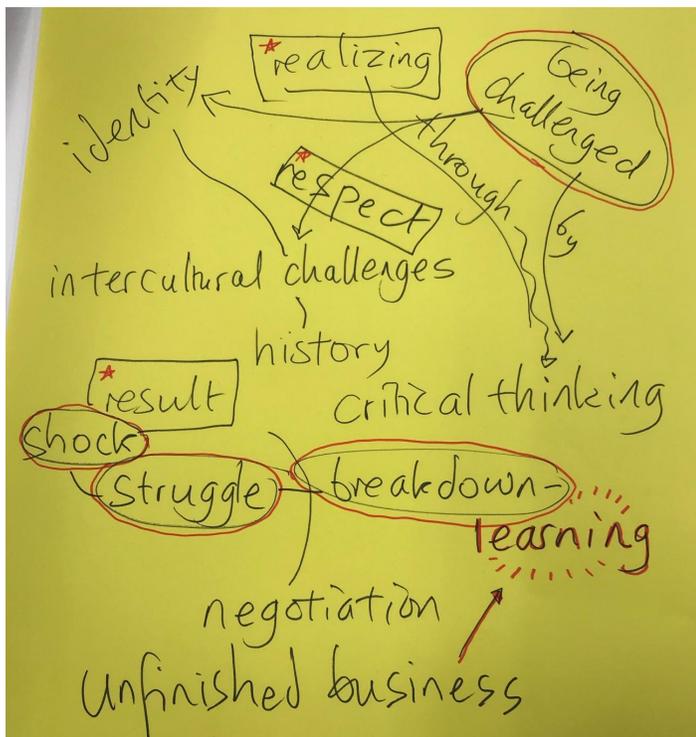
In the final shared reflection with Robert, words such as *shock* and *struggle*, *realizing being challenged* and even *breakdown* reflected the impressions we were left with of many of the learners' presentations that we joined. These “discomforts” or “disturbances”

in people's lives were often the spark that led to the investigations they reported, or part of the learning journey they described. This was true in many of the students' presentations, regarding various types of culture shock, or challenges to preconceptions.

For me, similar feelings also applied to the experience of joining CCLT for the first time. The existence of the conference was not a shock, and neither did I feel any struggle or challenge in its name; after all, it's not unusual for conference titles to use big words. At least that was until I was actually there and realizing that the conference was deliberately planned and realized with the objectives of creating community and learning together. And that, within the limits of what is possible in one afternoon and early evening, it did seem to be very successful in doing what it set out to do. One reason for joining the conference was to help me prepare to be program chair for Hiroshima JALT, and to see how we can do things differently.

Having said that, joining the conference alone, as a teacher and an adult, may have been very different from that of the university students joining the conference with perhaps half a dozen of their classmates, or at least from the same university. Did they talk to other people, people they didn't know? Did they, individually or together, decide a policy of only English, only “other” people? Were they encouraged to? And where were male students?! More questions, more challenges!

Looking back, has joining this conference, and reflecting on it, changed me? Just recently, joining a similarly different conference, excitELT, was one direct outcome - and that in turn has me realizing the value of struggles and challenges in our development.



From Robert Moreau

As always, it was a pleasure to be able to attend the latest CCLT conference. One of the special things for me about this event is the student presentations, and this year was no exception. In several of the student presentations there was an interesting mix of research projects that dealt with issues involving foreign countries, and the impact this research had in developing the views of the researchers while doing these projects. For example, Haruka Hibi's research on temporary housing settlements in various countries, or Cecilia Fujishima, Zhu Wangyi, Miu Yoshino, and Maika Seki's presentation on Japanese history and the awareness of multiple points of subject amongst different cultures that had resulted from it. Both of these presentations were very insightful, and demonstrated the time and effort that the students had put into thinking critically about their topics.

At the end of the conference there was a session set aside for reflecting on the

presentations we had experienced, during which time Jim Ronald and I had the chance to sit down together and share our impressions, while jotting down some keywords on a small poster.

Looking at our poster, the three words that first jump out at me are; identity, intercultural, and history. As mentioned above, the presentation by Fujishima et al. was closely related to this theme. In their talk, called "Developing an Awareness of Others through Japanese History", the students discussed their learning about Japanese and Korean historical figures. They touched on cross-cultural perceptions, national identity and also the role of education in these areas. One reason this hit home for me is that, while doing a research project about the Second World War, one of my own students commented on the gap between what she had learned in High School about the atomic bombs used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki versus the insights she gained doing research from multiple sources, including those from foreign countries, in the university project. The Shirayuri university students reiterated this notion of the need to rise to the challenge of exploring and understanding issues from multiple, and international perspectives, and not just accept without question what one learns from a single textbook. It was great to see this kind of critical thinking in practice in a well-constructed and thoughtful student presentation.

I wish that I could have taken in more of the presentations at CCLT, but being able to reflect with other people at the end of the conference was a good opportunity to share ideas and find out about some of the presentations I had missed out on. These

reflections have also helped to provide me with insights into the potential of critical thinking that our students are capable of, and its connection to developing a wider awareness and understanding of the issues that students encounter while doing research projects. This is definitely something I will keep in mind when students are working on projects in my own classes.

