Looking Back | 報告

A Collage of Reflections on the Learner Development (LD) Forum: "TLC from LD: Transformative Learning Communities" JALT 2020, Online Zoom Session, Friday, November 20, 2020 (6:15 PM – 7:45 PM)

Forum Abstract

In this forum, a range of interactive presentations critically explored the theme of transformative learning communities (TLCs), based on theories of transformative learning where learners reach fundamental shifts in their worldviews and actions through reflection. Presenters focused on distinct groups of learners (high school students, university students, teachers, teacher trainees, and practitioner-researchers), with forum participants invited to discuss and share their reflections about TLCs in *Learning Learning*, the Learner Development SIG's newsletter.

What are some key points that you picked up in the LD SIG forum?

Google form is live and current to gauge feedback
-*Teh Pei Ling (Melta)*

Transformation of our learners over a period of time
- *Feroze Malik Amir (Hiroshima Shudo University)*

That using google docs is still quite new in Japan but it was nice to see that it works as a collaborative tool between students and teacher, unlike in my home university. It was nice to see how it works in practice in these situations and enables real & genuine conversation between the teacher and the student. I was one of the presenters so it was really interesting to hear the responses and comments from others - thank you everybody for your views! - *Riitta Kelly (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)*

Research diaries used in developing thesis writing. End of class feedback and reflection used as a means to build community in the classroom. - *Oana Cusen (Kwansei Gakuin University)*

The concept of the "research diary" was something that I found valuable. - *Phillip Alixe Bennett (Kanda University of International Studies)*

collaborative dialogues, reporting research journey - *Yuri Imamura (Kanda University of International Studies)*

life stories of learners -- development over a long period of time; the dynamics of creating community, as a parallel process to the ongoing development of self-directedness, learner autonomy. Apologies for the technical hiccoughs at the start ---- I wish we could have had a longer discussion -- so many interesting points were coming up. The question of the dynamic between participant research-writer/editors and other contributors and how it may change as LDJ5 moves into its later stages is really good to raise. I hope we can sustain the dialogic quality of what we have set out to do together - *Andy Barfield (Chuo University)*

I went to Aya Hayasaki's presentation. Interesting focus on Kagoshima - very different social context to Tokyo. It raises questions for me about class stratification in Japan. Among my students there is a strong belief that Japan doesn't have a class system. But clearly that's not true, and I would imagine that the further away from Tokyo you go, the lower down the scale, and the harder it is to reach elite universities or even imagine that you could. Of course there are class differences in the regions too. Good to hear about the progress and impressions of LDJ5. Inspiring to hear how enjoyable the collaboration has been for all participants. - *Alison Stewart (Gakushuin University)*

Glimpses of other classes, other learners - leaving me to want to know more. As a presenter, this does feel very different from a face-to-face LD Forum - good interaction, but movement is not so easy. - *James Ronald (Hiroshima Shudo University)*

Although there are pros and cons about online lessons, Google docs and Zoom lessons encourage people to write research papers. - *Riho Osaki (Otsuma Women's University)*

Trajectory Equifinality Modeling - an interesting way of comparing similar respondents and qualitative data. The data suggests that regional Japan remains a little parochial in its outlook, especially with foreign language

learning, but for those who do go beyond their prefectural border, there does not seem to be one specific causal factor. Interesting to hear about Narrative Inquiry as I have very little experience with it. The perspective that you have to keep trying to include writers in their own writing highlights how much we think of writing as presenting a finished product for judging - a kind of hangover from school writing classes, I guess. I also liked the idea of quality through inclusion: dialogue with reviewers. - *Dominic Edsall (UCL IOE / Ritsumeikan University)*

Identity is not fixed, and affiliations to communities are also dynamic in response to events inside and outside the classroom. Aya Hamasaki's talk highlighted this kind of change in young adults from Kagoshima. The models she introduced were new to me. The idea in Meizirow that change is preceded by a disrupting event was interesting and made me think about whether autonomy can ever be easily achieved. - *Ellen Head (MIC)*

I got some ideas from Jim on how to generate a positive collaborating atmosphere with a group of students who have yet to meet each other. - *Jackson Lee (Toyo University)*

It was inspiring to hear about the dynamic process of editing a journal. - *Phillip Alixe Bennett (Kanda University of International Studies)*

I'm part of one of the response communities for LDJ5, and my experience has been quite similar to what the presenters talked about. I've gotten a lot from sharing my experiences (both related to the subject of our writing as well as the process of writing) with the other contributors. And as this kind of narrative is new for most of us, it's helpful to have people to support each other during the process. I also thought it was interesting to hear from the editors about some of the issues that come up during the editing process (e.g., in terms of power relationships). As one of the co-editors of LDJ6, we purposely kept the basic format of the response communities because they have been positive, and it was good to know of some potential issues that might come up further down the road. - *Isra Wongsarnpigoon (Kanda University of International Studies)*

Jim Ronald's presentation caused me to reflect on the degree that I am (in)sensitive to student needs and moods during this period. I think all of us in our own way have had to find ways to cope, cut corners, compromise with ourselves, students. Thought-provoking is the lack

of camaraderie with colleagues and staff in my institution. I am a loner by nature, but I imagine this pandemic lockdown has wreaked havoc on social relationships. - *Ken Ikeda (Otsuma Women's University)*

I made a presentation in the LD SIG community for the first time. I appreciate all the participation and comments I received! I gained hints for further deepening my understanding of learner development: exploring the roles of different social fields and parents' values in adolescents' language learning experience would be indeed interesting. I am very much interested in joining the response community as well. - *Aya Hayasaki (Waseda University)*

Other comments:

Thanks. Interesting sessions. *Teh Pei Ling (Melta)*

Questions about the feedback and how to make it a collaborative exercise among learners for learners … forming learners' community through google docs collaborative, interactive activities among learners. - *Feroze Malik Amir (Hiroshima Shudo University)*

Thank you to the presenters, this was a very interesting presentation to see! - *Riitta Kelly (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)*

Having a student's perspective in the presentation was excellent. - *Phillip Alixe Bennett (Kanda University of International Studies)*

Very interesting sessions - big thank you to the presenters - *Andy Barfield (Chuo University)*

Receiving the link to the Google Slides was very useful - a good way to catch up on what I joined late - *James Ronald (Hiroshima Shudo University)*

As a presenter, too bad I could only attend one session. - *Ken Ikeda (Otsuma Women's University)*

Thanks again for the great opportunity to connect with amazing people! - *Aya Hayasaki (Waseda University)*

Short Reflections on Creating Community: Learning Together 6

Ian Hurrel, Ken Ikeda & James Underwood

コミュニティの創造:共に学ぶ6
Creating Community
Learning Together 6

Creating Community: Learning Together 6 took place on Sunday, December 20, 2020, through the event space: <https://cclt6.eventzil.la>. The decision to move online came in response to the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although holding it online brought some challenges, it was thanks to the great team of volunteers that we were able to overcome these. The was accessible to all, and people joined from the UK, Mexico, and Japan. Like before, it was also open to student and teacher presenters, and all together, there were 30 presentations. Many thanks to those who presented and took the time and energy to help and support the presenters as well.

The conference started with an engaging opening plenary from Joseph Shaules. In his talk, he explored the psychological resistance that learners may experience about learning and using language. Then encouraged the audience to think about how to motivate their students to counteract this.

Following the plenary, there were four rounds of presentations. After each round, small discussion and reflection circles were held for 10 minutes; in these, both students and teachers could explore the questions or puzzles they had about learner development and their challenges and triumphs with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference finished with a closing session where participants and presenters shared reflections of the conference in small groups in breakout rooms. As they did so they collaboratively designed a slideshow that documented their experiences. The participants were invited to write up these reflections formally, which we include here.

Learning from Students: Applying the spirit of CCLT to a year of online learning

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to have students presenting work that they have done during the year. CCLT is always a wonderful conference that gives students a presence and a voice in the world of English teaching, a field that tends to talk about students in academic terms while at the same excluding them from the dialogue. In contrast, CCLT gives an opportunity for students to be experts, and provides them an opportunity for personal and academic growth. I appreciate the efforts of the conference organizers to persevere with the conference by moving it online to accommodate the restrictive measures for dealing with COVID-19. This not only gave students a rare opportunity to present, but it also opened up the conference to all Japan, and beyond. In a year of remote classes, the 2020 CCLT experience seemed especially poignant as a chance to appreciate the support and camaraderie that has been evident in the online teaching community this year, as well as being a way to celebrate this year's students as a cohort whose resilience and adaptability have been an inspiration.

The first presentation I watched was from presenters in Mexico. It struck me how being online had reduced barriers to entry and had broadened the scope of the conference. There were presentations from Gifu, Hiroshima, Miyazaki, Sapporo among others; this year's conference was a chance to hear about how people in a variety of places and teaching environments had adapted to the changed circumstances of this year.

A further theme that ran through the conference was the ability to create opportunity from adversity. Ellen Head's students in Miyazaki who presented at the conference, expected to be on a study abroad year. In their presentations we gained insight into how they had adapted to the circumstances by using technology to communicate with people overseas. Jenny Morgan used the COVID-19 situation to create an opportunity for students to record oral histories about the ways in which the pandemic had affected life this year.

Four second-year students taking my Japanese History class also presented at CCLT6: Rino Yoshida, Ayaka Muraishi, Remi Hayasaka, and Nagisa Sato. They too adapted to the difficulties and turned it into a learning opportunity. In their presentation, they talked about the difficulties they faced at the beginning of online learning: the lack of internet connection, the unfamiliarity of the technology, the lack of access to teachers and the inability to connect with classmates to ask for help. As English majors taking the International Society and Culture course, each of them had more than 10 online classes per week where they were expected to interact with other students. This gave them ample opportunity to become breakout room experts and it also made them a valuable source of information for teachers as we tried to improve the online learning environment. In a debrief with the students after they finished their presentation, their strongest impression of their CCLT presentation was that they realized how much they have grown up this year, thanks to online learning. From their point of view, despite the difficulties, they could thrive in 2020.

Watching them present, I realized that the social dimension of online learning underpinned their academic achievement and this was integral to their feeling of success. In their presentation, they gave advice on how to communicate effectively in breakout rooms, particularly when in groups with senpai, kouhai and unfamiliar people. Advice included establishing an understanding that cameras should be on, smile and use gestures, and start each session with greetings and self introductions in English. In addition, they emphasised coming to class well prepared so that they could focus on understanding the task, sharing the screen to show their answers as a way to scaffold students with lower English comprehension, asking groupmates questions, particularly "why" and improving their own homework by adding ideas that they learned during class from their group mates. Through break-out sessions, they developed confidence to be the person to start in

English, initiate discussion, ask questions, summarise ideas, and present information to the whole class when breakouts had finished. Exit cards gave them an opportunity for focused reflection as well as communication with teachers, including their frustrations and complaints. When teachers responded with advice and modifications to the class, it further motivated the students to keep experimenting with strategies for effective communication in breakout sessions.

Secure in their social environment, their learning flourished. They, and their classmates, understood that with good preparation they could exchange ideas effectively about the class contents, for example the way Japan remembers (or doesn't remember) history and how history should be taught in Japan. They advised that to make good breakout room discussion, all answers, no matter how misguided, should be accepted. In the thorny subject of Japanese history and regional relations, the student's idea to accept all answers is quite sensitive. From their point of view though, a student who musters the courage to express their ideas will have chances in the future to adjust their point of view but if their opinion is denied, they may lose the willingness or courage to speak out again. From a teacher's point of view, it became an opportunity to introduce lateral reading as a way to help students discern the reliability of information. The process of exchanging ideas between students and teachers facilitated an environment of mutual learning.

Their presentation provided me with an opportunity to reflect on what went well in the year and what needs to take place to have more successful learning environments for students. It has motivated one of my colleagues and me to try and learn more about what made for successful online learning by making a survey about their online learning experiences. Stay tuned!

Thank you again to all the organizers and participants for an exceptional conference. It was stimulating and provided fruitful opportunity to reflect on a challenging year.

Our CCLT6 Conference Reflection

Shiori Kishihara, Yuki Murakami, Chika Matsumoto, & Kristina Reyes with Lorna Asami
Keisen University

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our classes went online so we did not need to spend time commuting. As a result, we had more time to think about ourselves and

how to overcome our difficulties. One of our classes was called SDL, which stands for self-directed learning. In this class, we chose one skill from a *Readiness to Learn* list of skills (University of Waterloo, n.d.) that we wanted to improve to become better learners.

In our SDL class, we regard "metacognition" as an important idea. Metacognition is thinking about oneself. Our ideas about metacognition were expressed in our

SMART goal. This smart goal should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-based (Doran, 1981).

Yuki selected "study skills" as she wants to study more efficiently. She will do four things to improve her study skills, which are to decide on her tasks, organize and analyze them, gather information about them which will help her, and write notes along the way. Shiori decided to improve her "note taking skills" by using her i-phone to take memos of URLs. Smartphones are one of the normal things in our life. Shiori has evaluated and re-evaluated her note-taking style and keeps improving herself. Chika selected "coping skills" then analyzed her lifestyle and her stress, and her stress was divided into three types. She made a To-Do-List to be stress free. After learning how to better cope with her stress, she has been able to concentrate on her work more than before. Kristina described her planning skills which uses PDCA goals where **P** is plan, **D** is do, **C** is check, **A** is act. She now uses a PDCA chart to help her deal with her many university assignments, part-time job, study of other languages, and club activities. She feels that her PDCA chart has helped her to be more organized and find free time for herself.

We divided our roles and helped each other to make this presentation. We worked hard to finish by the deadline and thought about how to make it more interesting. Each of us made an effort even though we had a lot of work and also had our part-time jobs. We felt we did not have enough time but we had good teamwork and were able to prepare and practice our presentation slides.

As for other sessions, we listened to "An Inter-university Line Study/Share Group for 2020" by Takefumi Ariga, and we learned from Lee Arnold how to use Flipgrid more smoothly. While we were there, we heard a speaker mention acronyms like our SMART goals. Ms. Anita Aden introduced SMILE which her students used during their class time together. She creates a good mood while students study in English with the acronym SMILE. **S** means start with a question, **M** is Make mistakes, **I** means increase interest in people around you, **L** is Listen and repeat and, **E** is Enjoy your life. It was an interesting and fresh thing for us. We think it makes students feel better and enjoy studying and using English.

Throughout this coronavirus pandemic, everyone has been thinking about how to improve our learning environment. When we go to school, we can see our friends and greet them, and then the class starts. We took these simple things for granted as part of the normal life at university and what should be in the university. We realize now that our ordinary lifestyle before the pandemic was actually extraordinary, and there are real risks in that once ordinary lifestyle. When we meet friends, we always hug or talk and laugh out loud. Hugging and laughing have been part of our normal lifestyle until now. However, these things have been shown to be the cause of infection clusters. To overcome the difficulties in this pandemic, many people must think of ways to improve this situation. If we could improve this situation we would be able to significantly improve the place we learn.

We felt not only Keisen university students, but also other university students and teachers experienced difficulty in online classes during the coronavirus pandemic, and most of us tried new ways to study English or study without feeling lonely. As we listened to the CCLT6 presentations, we heard and thought that everyone felt similar feelings and tried to overcome difficulties, so we were stimulated by other ways of studying and we will work even harder from now. We joined sessions where most of the speakers or listeners are teachers at university. We thought teachers had a difficult year and tried some ways to communicate with students by using emails, reaction papers, and questionnaires. We thought reactions or reflections are important ways to communicate with our teachers because teachers could find out how much students understand, how students feel about class, or if students are having any trouble. We think it is important for students and teachers to keep communicating with each other to solve problems.

In this conference, we gave our presentation and also heard other presentations. We will keep studying each skill in our list of *Readiness to Learn* skills and continue to improve our skills and competencies. Even if online classes continue next year, we will find ways to communicate with our teachers and friends and continue with our studies.

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CCLT6 Reflections:
From face-to-face to Armchair

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After the exhilarating experience of participating in CCLT5 where my students gave poster presentations using posters created during my academic presentation course, I was keen to participate again this year. The event not only provided an opportunity to give a real presentation in a supportive atmosphere but also to share ideas and communicate with students from other universities. I was even able to have students from two different universities I teach at meet up. However, I was somewhat anxious about how this would play out in an online context for CCLT6 and indeed whether my students would wish to participate. I need not have worried, however, as, although not all the students were able to present at the conference, those that did were keen to do so and positive about their experience afterwards.

This year four graduate students from Ochanomizu University, researching in a variety of different areas, presented at the conference. In this case, the research fields on which they presented were English Education (Kimika and Miho) Semantics (Saki), and Human Biology (Trinh). Worrywart that I am, I was also concerned that

developing presentations that would fit in with the conference theme may prove problematic but again, though initially expressing concerns about the topic seeming far from their chosen research themes, they all found ways to adapt their interests to the theme of the conference as indeed did all the other presenters that I saw at the conference. Moreover, they even tweaked things from the final "dress rehearsal" that we had in class on Friday for the big day. On the day, Kimika and Saki attended the event from the opening plenary to the final reflections and participated in sessions throughout the rest of the day. In this reflection, I'll do my best to share both my own personal experience and something of the feedback I received from my students after the event.

The plenary is as good a place as any to start because it really was an excellent start to the day. Professor Joseph Shaules talk on "The Psychology of Resistance to Language Learning" was not only a topic that got close to the heart of the SIG's concerns with motivation and learner autonomy but was one that I am sure chimed with the experiences or both students and teachers attending the event. Professor Shaules also did an excellent job of building a rapport with his audience both through his comments about the SIG and the way he picked up comments from the chat such as Ellen's "the devil and chocolate"(?) bringing some humor and lightheartedness to his serious and important message, based on a wealth of research about how motivation is always a challenge. We had talked in class about knowing your audience and building rapport and Professor Shaules' talk served as a nice example of this.

Some of the presenters I found most informative and interesting would probably not have been part of the conference had it been offline. Two talks about CLIL "Experiences of CLIL and Study Abroad Online in Japan" and "Resiliance in Mexico's SALC and students in Pandemic" included talks from teachers in Miyazaki and Mexico respectively who introduced an online language exchange project called Teletandem. It was interesting to hear both teacher and student perspectives on this experience. It was also a reminder of how really meaningful language learning takes place in communicative contexts outside the classroom.

I enjoyed some other presentations throughout the day including my students session at the end, but it was noticeable that whereas the previous year's conference audiences had been carefully managed, it is just too easy for students to tune out for other sessions. That said,

the student who came to listen to the Ocha-dai students was clearly genuinely interested and it proved an opportunity for some real sharing.

In the breakout rooms during the closing session, I talked with Ken and a charming American gentleman whose name now escapes me but whose main point that he noticed many students were simply reading their presentations and that this was completely unacceptable remains fully engraved in my memory. As Hugh Nicoll has pointed out in his kind comments on this reflection, reading aloud can have its place in presentations, particularly when introducing a text about which comment is being made. Nevertheless, the underlying concern was presumably that students had not prepared fully and so were focused on reading their notes rather than focusing on communicating their message to the audience. This negative evaluation of reading aloud may in part also be a result of differing cultural notions of what a presentation entails: reading aloud, a tradition that is still prominent in Japan, shows that the content is prepared and intentional, whereas presentations, particularly in the US have evolved into theatrical events (think Steve Job's product announcements though not his famous Stanford Commencement which was read aloud) where full communicative engagement with the audience is paramount (as espoused by presentation experts such as Garr Reynolds). Language teachers brought up in a communicative tradition naturally tend to sympathise with the more communicative realisations of a presentation and so feel that students who read their presentation are hiding behind their script and cutting themselves off from the audience because the bodily modalities of voice tone, eye contact, posture and gesture tend to be inert. These are all issues that my students had discussed extensively in class in relation to extracts from Garr Reynolds' book Presentation Zen. As the students in this class already had a good general fluency in English that would have allowed them to explain their topics without any script (something they did in class) and they had already given several in-class presentations on their topic including an in-class dress rehearsal of their conference talk, I partly wanted to object that my students had gone to considerable efforts to avoid just reading from their script. I wished he could have seen them talk! Even so, I recognise the problem as a central concern when asking students to prepare presentations which may also otherwise include material found online and read as is, potentially without

fully understanding it. The temptation to read is a particularly insipid and tricky point when presenting online through Zoom but no less forgivable for it. The script can be put on the screen or out of sight of the camera so that it is invisible to the audience. Signs of reading tend to be detected according to the tone of voice, something speakers may not be aware of. The fact that my breakout room colleague shared his views on reading aloud when we returned from our breakout rooms also made an impact on Kimika and Saki as he put it a lot more unambiguously than I might have done. Moreover, it is always good to have important points expressed by others! It also gave us a focus for further discussion of this topic in class after the conference.

All in all, then another exhilarating conference, this time from the comfort of my own home and online or offline, I am already looking forward with excitement to CCLT7!

Reflections on *Dis/Connect*: virtual art exhibition

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"We learn geology the morning after the earthquake…" (Emerson, 1860)

This was my first time to take part in CCLT, either as a presenter or part of the audience. Together with Eric Luong from Kyoto University of the Arts (KUA), and Miyazaki International College (MIC) students Aya Fukunaga, Masataka Ochiai, and Serina Yano, we presented on *Dis/Connect*: virtual art exhibition. The exhibition, organised during the summer, involved students from Miyazaki, Kyoto, Italy, and Sweden, who showed their artworks on the theme of distance, isolation, and all things pandemic. It was a chance to share our own experiences, while learning about those of others, and try to process, on some level, these unprecedented times as they were unfolding. A wide range of media was submitted, including photography, illustration, graphic design, and video, and the artworks are displayed on these Tumblr and Instagram platforms:

Tumblr: <https://miyazakikyoto.tumblr.com/>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dis.connect2020/>

One important aspect of CCLT for me was the voices of students. Many of the presentations involved students sharing their ideas and reflections, most in their first public conference, such as MIC students discussing their experience of "Studying Abroad Online in Japan." These voices, free from the filter of teaching theory, offer us a level of direct insight into the learning experience that is difficult to attain from the usual teacher-focused conference. For students of the Dis/Connect project, CCLT was an opportunity to introduce the details of the exhibition and why they decided to join, as well as a chance to think a little deeper about their own artworks. As an organiser of the exhibition, it was moving to hear students reflect on the ideas behind their creative process with such depth and consideration. Several of the artworks were very personal and resonated deeply with participants, such as Aya Fukunaga's "Family", an intimate portrait of her grandfather in hospital. Hearing students describe their images added an extra layer to the works. It is often said that art helps us express what we cannot with words. Certainly, as a mode of expression, art is unique in the way it lets us externalise some of the more nuanced subtleties of our thoughts and feelings. But more than just conveying a message, art can help us in the messy task of making sense of our inner world. It is a process of self-discovery and realisation: a complex, deeply personal dialogue with ourselves.

2020 was a difficult year for us all. As teachers we struggled to get to grips with unfamiliar technology and run our classes from behind a screen. Online teaching has, so far, proved to be a mixed bag. Yet it is students who have been the most affected. In Japan, the first wave of the pandemic coincided with the start of the academic year and an entire cohort's university experience was dramatically disrupted. The damage from the past year will reveal itself in years to come, and it will take time for us to fully understand what happened, how we reacted, and how successful our coping methods were. By providing a platform for students and teachers to share experiences, CCLT6 was an important step in that process of understanding.

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Reflection on CCLT6: Learners (and Teachers) in the Virtual Moment

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To begin with, kudos to the organizers of CCLT6 given the logistical difficulties of online coordination through Zoom. As we had never before embarked on this, I know fully the fear and trepidation, yet sense of grit and determination, to pull off the endeavor of a synchronous virtual conference. It mirrors the sense of apprehension many of us have felt over this year at our institutions. We have struggled to deal with the reality of online instruction while striving to learn what it can make possible, and there has been a commensurate level of that same fear of the new and determination to make it work for our instruction and our learners.

One major challenge I have had this year is in maintaining the motivation for exploring issues in learner development given the new and differing demands of remote instruction and learning. The most immediate issue has involved the technical difficulties that arise with the video-based platforms we have had to deliver our instruction in. In that sense, and without casting aspersions on the event, some technical difficulties with the conference reprised the technical difficulties that we have experienced with online instruction this year. In my case, my presentation was delayed by around an hour due to a connection issue in the room I was assigned to. Yet again, the organizers were gracious enough to allow me to present anyway with the awareness that these problems could arise. Their patience with the situation enabled me to present with great response from the attendees, and their reception has gotten me thinking about how to attend to the needs of learners online in any (possible) subsequent online interaction.

Given that issue, I was unable, unfortunately, to see very many of the other presentations. But what I was able to catch glimpses of were the various tribulations, and success stories, of working with our learners in the virtual moment we have found ourselves in. One thing I was intrigued by was the learner response to the online reality and how well learners could cope. In my own

case, my presentation dealt just with this issue, and I could see from the titles of the other presentations that this loomed in the minds of a number of the other presenters as well. It reminded me all the more how special to me LD has been in the concern and care of learner quality of learning and how it can best take place. The online reality, in that sense, has been a blessing – it has levelled our positions vis-à-vis the learners, in that in some respects, we have had to learn with the learners on how to cope within this environment. Consequently, that can only contribute to a greater empathy with our learners, as well as allowing some of the pressure many of us tend to place on ourselves to ease – it is by way of understanding, not perfection, that can do more to relieve the anxieties of our learners while allowing ourselves as teachers to see technology in more level-headed terms.

Given this virtual moment, many of us have had to become better acquainted, and some of us completely acquainted, not only with video-based instruction but also with learning management systems. In my situation, this has had the effect of constricting research exploration given the amount of time required in LMS work. Yet the successful realization of the conference was due in no small part to the determination of the participants to continue to explore, gather, and reflect through the technological challenges. It is therefore all the more remarkable how successful the conference was, perhaps from the crash course in virtual instruction and learning we have been put through over this year.

Acknowledging the tiredness and appreciating the struggles

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I found myself reflecting on the photograph *Family 2020* that Aya Fukunaga shared in the Arts Project presentation by Will Hall, Eric Luong, and students Masataka Ochiai, Serina Yano, and Aya Fukunaga. The photo shows Aya's hand gently holding her grandfather's as she said goodbye to him in August. This was the last time she saw him. He had senile dementia, Aya explained. He died in October, and the photograph cherishing this moment and representing much more had been displayed in the funeral hall.

Aya's artwork and experience were profoundly moving and thought-provoking. I am grateful to Aya, Masataka (*Lonely Fireworks*), and Serina (*Not Cheerful Aoshima*) for what they each shared about their arts projects as part of a virtual arts exhibition between students at Miyazaki International College and Kyoto University of the Arts. This re-confirmed for me the value of project-based learning in enabling learners to create, collaborate, and become more autonomous and reflexively critical about issues that they are interested in and that they freely choose to focus on.

Unexpectedly it also led to waves of memories coming back to me of saying goodbye in different situations. The enormous emotional force of such moments seemed to surge through me as I listened later —screen off—to a couple of presentations, but didn't speak. … *Walking across the dayroom in the old people's home with my 8-year-old son after saying goodbye to my mother … She was sitting in a high-backed armchair … At the door, stopping, turning, and giving her a wave, knowing this might be the last time I would see Mum. (It was.) Over 10 years later, that moment suddenly present again, inexorably vivid …* I needed a quiet reflective time for myself as these visceral memories came up, and as I looked back over 2020 too. How had I responded to different students? Had I been able to sense their own vulnerabilities and been there for them? How could I have responded differently? How might I attend better to others in my personal and professional life? And what, in the end, have been the enduring traces and impacts of online learning, teaching, and meetings pretty much non-stop for the last nine months? Exhilarating in many ways, exhausting in others, the academic year was still a blurred image, and it felt too early to grasp more deeply what it might yet mean for the future.

At CCLT6 it was good to start to let go, quietly acknowledge the tiredness, appreciate the struggles … and smile … then switch off the computer—at least for a few hours, perhaps even for a few days, but not for that long … Onlineness was now more than ever part of the everyday texture of our lives.