GET-TOGETHERS

Tokyo Get-together Report: Making Plans Together for 2017
2017　東京 get-together 報告：2017 年度の計画

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We began 2017 with a lively meeting of 14 people in January where we made plans for 2017. The January get-together started with an introduction round to welcome new participants, Peter Joun and Keiko Yuyama. We then discussed the new venue for the Tokyo get-togethers from April 2017, and dates for the monthly meetings, which from April are going to be held at Rikkyo University in Ikebukuro (for more details see http://ld-sig.org/tokyo-get-togethers/).

Our next area of discussion was creating continuity and development from one get-together to the next, with a positive sense of moving forward together. As a "participant-centred" SIG, the get-togethers are entirely reliant on those attending co-creating the format and content of each meeting by bringing along their own pedagogic interests, puzzles and challenges, and/or research interests and concerns, to do with "learner development." People expressed the need/desire for some kind of structure, some degree of continuity–of themes, of people to talk with. Yet, we also want to balance any structure with the "open, inviting culture" of LD, keeping the looseness and spontaneity that allow us to create whatever happens each time with whoever turns up.

We discussed several different options for the 2017 get-togethers:

1. Participants bring to each get-together samples of student work and related teacher puzzles/challenges, to share ideas and explore practical pedagogic issues that they face with their learners, so the get-togethers involve "teacher support group" discussions and sharing. This was done at different times in the past and worked best when people prepared copies of student artifacts/work for such discussions.

2. Another option is at the start of the get-together participants share their learner development themes/topics/areas of focuses, and then people split into "like-minded focus groups" to discuss and learn about a theme or research focus of interest. At subsequent get-togethers people continue to meet with the same theme group to develop and explore ideas more deeply. From experience, it is good if people have the option to change groups, so some flexibility is needed with this option. Past theme-based discussion groups led to some members later presenting together at the national JALT conference and writing up their learning and research together for the conference proceedings. Another group's discussions formed the basis of a book project on collaborative learning. Many of the research team members have since become active in the LD SIG.

3. Some people said they had very much enjoyed the short workshops on doing research that individual members had presented in the first part of get-togethers last year (e.g., Exploratory Practice, interview-based research, narrative research, and diary research). Suggestions for continuing with this in 2017 led to the idea of having workshop ideas come from get-together participants so that sometimes people could volunteer to give an exploratory presentation on a learner development theme that interests them.

4. Another possibility that some people would like to try includes people giving practice presentations to get feedback and critique before presenting

at bigger conferences. People felt this might be a particularly good focus for the October get-together where individuals could run through their presentations for JALT2017 and/or ideas for CCLT4. Such presentation-based workshops might be 20-30 minutes long with plenty of time for feedback and Q&A.

5. Another option is to designate loose time-slots for mingling and sharing learner development interests, questions, and puzzles, with a 60- to 90-minute workshop/ teacher puzzles/ "free-talk" with student samples/short workshop presentations from the participants/working on research themes in small groups. Of course, these time-slots would be negotiated by whoever attends on the day.

We also talked about conveying some kind of minimal structure of the get-togethers on the Learner Development website and in the messages that go out via *Mailchimp* for each month's session. People who have been to a get-together are familiar with what they involve, but for those who have not yet taken part, it would be helpful to have a basic outline such as:

- 14.00-14.15 Mingling and meeting in pairs
- 14.15-14.30 Sharing of people's learner development interests and deciding pairs/groups and areas of focus
- 14.30-15.15 Pair and small-group discussions
- 15.15-15.30 Short break
- 15.30-16.30 Pair and small-group discussions, and next steps
- 16.30-17.00 Sharing with the whole group, announcements, the next get-together

As part of the rolling discussions around structuring the get-togethers and aiming for **Creating Community Learning Together 4** in December 2017, various suggestions were made about reaching out and linking up in an informal way with members of other teacher groups and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) in the greater Tokyo area. It might be possible, for example, to make some connections with a Reflective Practice group that has started up at Rikkyo University. We could also invite CALL SIG members to participate in the get-togethers and explore learner development dimensions of working with different forms of technology. Another link-up would be to encourage teachers with global issues interests to come and take part in the get-togethers. There is also the Framework and Language Portfolio SIG that is interested in a joint event with LD in 2017. Many ideas were mentioned, and we agreed that we want to keep arrangements informal so that CCLT4 keeps its accessible, student- and teacher-friendly, interactive character.

We also discussed how the get-togethers can lead into reflective writing for *Learning Learning*. Some participants from CCLT3 last year are writing reflections and short reflective articles about the conference. The idea is for each short reflective article to be followed by two reader responses from SIG members. Several people at the January get-together expressed an interest in writing a reader response and signed up to do so. It is quite possible that other writing will emerge from the discussions at the get-togethers this year, leading later into different publishing opportunities.

Finally, we talked about a good, sustainable way to keep a record of each get-together that can be shared publicly. In the past we have done collective write-ups, but this has been somewhat of a burden at times to do and put together. For 2017 we agreed that a different person each time would take the responsibility of writing up a get-together. The recorder would be responsible for creating a Google doc and writing a summary of the get-together that will then be posted on the main LD website. For January Jenny kindly offered to do this, followed by Lee Arnold in February. See http://ld-sig.org/2017-tokyo-get-togethers/ for more details.