

LD SIG Grant Awardee Reports

LD SIG 研究助成金受

Empowering Language Learners: Integrating Learner Well-being into Classrooms



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In July 2020, just as I had completed all my grading and was looking forward to my summer break, I experienced my first and most severe panic attack whilst being alone at home. I genuinely believed I was going to lose my life because of my inability to breathe. The trigger for this episode was a phone call from my brother, whom I had met the previous day, informing me that he might have contracted COVID-19. Overwhelmed by the extreme stress and exhaustion accumulated through the semester, my heart began racing, and I struggled to catch my breath. By some stroke of luck, I managed to make my way to a nearby clinic, where the diagnosis confirmed it as a panic attack. From that day forward, I found myself battling a daily onslaught of panic attacks until I obtained suitable medication during the summer. This experience served as a wake-up call reminding me of the utmost importance of self-care in my journey as an educator. So, I began to study and research teacher and learner well-being in education.

As a result of my recent research interest in well-being in education, I have become increasingly curious about how fellow educators address and enhance learner well-being within their classrooms. Therefore, I felt an overwhelming sense of privilege and gratitude when presented with the opportunity to participate in PanSIG 2023. This conference offers a valuable platform for learning and engaging in discussions that revolve around the challenges and possibilities involved in constructing a sustainable future for language education. The selected theme of the conference was exceptionally timely, pertinent, and relevant, given the numerous ecological, social, and economic challenges our world is currently facing. Indeed, it has become increasingly important to address this topic, particularly in light of the ongoing pandemic and the rapid advancements in the field of AI, which are intensifying changes and presenting new obstacles in education. Within such a complex context, the process of reevaluating and participating in discussions concerning the role of language education has been truly rewarding for me.

During PanSIG, I attended several presentations, workshops, and forums to develop my understanding and explore innovative strategies and approaches to create sustainable, equitable, and socially responsible language learning spaces. In particular, this report focuses on exploring how we can enhance learner wellbeing in class through positive psychology intervention, which promotes and enhances the overall well-being of learners.

LEARNER WELL-BEING

One of the most informative, relevant, and inspiring presentations I attended at the conference was by Dominique Vola Ambinintsoa Razafindratsimba and Phillip A. Bennett. Their presentation focused on positive psychology interventions to support EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. They highlighted how these interventions can be effectively implemented in classrooms to cultivate a positive learning and working environment, boost motivation and resilience, and encourage students to embrace learning opportunities. As someone with a keen interest in

student well-being based on Positive Psychology, as well as my prior research on teacher well-being, I was eager to learn practical ideas from this presentation that I could apply to enhance my students' positive mindset and self-efficacy, both within the classroom and in their personal lives. Additionally, I was interested in discovering strategies to facilitate a positive learning environment. As I expected, Razafindratsimba and Bennett facilitated a relaxing and friendly atmosphere in the presentation and shared their ideas based on PERMA which is a concept introduced by Seligman (2011). The acronym PERMA stands for Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments, and these five elements contribute to overall well-being and happiness, and they are interconnected.

After explaining the fundamental purpose of Positive Psychology and its interventions, the presenters introduced five practical strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to enhance learner well-being based on the PERMA model as written below.

Three Good Things (Helgesen, 2016; Seligman et al., 2005; Seligman, 2011)

In this activity, students write down three experiences, thoughts, occurrences, etc, that went well during the day and reasons why they were positive. Then, they share one of them with their partners. By focusing on positive aspects of their lives, this activity can raise positive emotions, encourage engagement, may promote positive relationships among students, and notice meaning of their lives and achievements. Additionally, it may develop metacognitive awareness of affective states (emotional regulation) and linguistic ability to express thoughts in a less superficial way

Confidence Building Diary (Kato & Mynard, 2016)

In this diary, students are asked to record something good and positive they have done in their English study in order to boost their confidence and motivation. This activity helps students notice and appreciate small achievements, may raise positive emotions, encourages engagement in their language learning, and can support students to notice that what they do is meaningful.

Savoring Positive Experiences (Seligman, 2011)

Savoring is a technique that can be used to amplify both the intensity and duration of positive emotions. Students are encouraged to identify and share three positive aspects or achievements from their class. This practice provides students with opportunities to recognize and appreciate pleasant experiences, extend their enjoyment, and engage in detailed reflection. By incorporating thought-provoking questions that elicit positive emotions, this approach can enhance students' confidence and motivation. Furthermore, it can foster their ability to critically examine challenging aspects when prompted.

Medals (Helgesen, 2016)

After completing a pair or group presentation or project, it is important to allocate some time for students to reflect together on their collaborative effort. Then, either the students themselves or the teacher can create medals using blank paper, and they should write down a quality or positive attribute they observed in each of their partners during the project. This activity promotes reflection, appreciation, and recognition of each student's strengths and contributions within the group. It also helps foster a positive and supportive learning environment while encouraging students to acknowledge and value the efforts of their peers.

Action Logs (Miyake-Warkentin et al. 2020)

An action log in an educational context is a document or record that tracks the actions or tasks performed by students in the classroom. It serves as a tool to monitor and assess student progress and can have various purposes. Here are a few common uses of an action log in a classroom setting: tracking emotional states, goal setting, and communication with the teacher. By using an action log, students can actively engage in self-reflection, monitor their progress, and communicate their needs

or concerns to the teacher. It enhances student agency, promotes self-awareness, and fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Razafindratsimba and Bennett's presentation offered a comprehensive understanding of Positive Psychology and its application in language classrooms. Additionally, it provided numerous practical activities that can be implemented in language classrooms.

Another presentation that aimed to enhance learner well-being was a visually attractive and interactive poster presentation titled "Sustainable Wellness and Accessibility: Finding Your Red Balloon" by Andrew Reimann and Natsuki Suzuki. The poster was filled with adorable illustrations and included a space for participants to write about one of their talents, which could be shared with others on a red balloon-shaped piece of paper. I wrote, "My colorful facial expressions can make people laugh." I have developed instantly changeable facial expressions to communicate more effectively with English learners. Many of my students and friends find my expressive face funny, so I thought this could be represented by my red balloon. Sharing my red balloon and reading others' contributions on the poster was absolutely enjoyable. Explaining my red balloon to the presenters also became a communicative activity that can be incorporated into a language classroom. After participating in this activity, called "Finding your red balloon," Natsuki, one of the presenters, made a real red balloon and gave it to me as a gift. It was a simple yet thoughtful gesture that truly brightened my day. I attached it to my backpack and traveled back home to Tokyo from Kyoto, filled with a playful and positive sentiment.

As a keen advocate for teacher and learner well-being, such activities introduced in the presentations served as a clear reminder that promoting positive perspectives regarding students' skills and capabilities significantly enhances their overall well-being and motivation to thrive as both learners and human beings.

CONCLUSION

Since attending my first PanSIG conference in 2011, this was the first time I participated as an attendee rather than presenting my own research or approach. It provided me with the opportunity to engage in numerous presentations, poster sessions, and forums at a futuristic university with a breathtaking view of Kyoto. Unfortunately, due to my hectic schedule, I could only attend from Saturday and missed out on some of the social events during the conference. However, the diligent efforts of the organizers and student helpers made it one of the most welcoming and accommodating conferences I have attended in the past decade. I was grateful to connect with both familiar and new fellow educators who share a profound concern for the future of language education.

In addition to gaining insights into effective approaches and activities to promote learner well-being, I learned the importance of creating a learning environment that enhances learners' autonomy, respects their agency, and provides resources and information tailored to their needs.

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PanSIG 2023: Discovering Community, Reaffirming Teacher Values



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Curiosity and growth. These are the values that have guided me as a secondary teacher working in Japan for the past 17 years and what have inspired me to explore how to better create autonomy in my classes at an all-girls secondary school in Kanagawa. Starting my career in eastern Gunma, straight out of university, I worked at four public high schools where I experimented and developed as a teacher. At that time, I was interested in how to make English class a fun and exciting experience for my students. Through the use of games, interactive activities, and music, my goal was to inspire my students to become invested in how exciting learning another language can be. Born and raised in Wisconsin, USA, I found my freedom through learning my L2. Majoring in Asian Languages and Literature with a concentration in Japanese at the University of Minnesota, I discovered a whole new world through learning another language. Naturally, as a teacher, I want to share this joyous experience with my students. After the Great Japan Earthquake, I moved West and worked as an elementary school teacher in Osaka, a city that intrigued me for its comedy and unique dialect, Kansai-ben. While living there for six years, I taught at three elementary schools in southern Osaka and reveled in the joys of primary school teaching. Differing from the secondary level, I found the receptive and eager nature of the students invigorating and extremely rewarding. After a gap year away to backpack around Asia while making some cash on the side as an instructor for an online Chinese teaching platform called VIPKid, I returned to Japan and have since then worked as a teacher at two private schools in Kanagawa. During this time, I attended night classes at Temple University in Tokyo and last year, after receiving my M.S.Ed., naturally I began to contemplate the next step in my career. After some soul-searching, I decided I wanted to become a university professor and in order to pursue this goal, I joined JALT.

When signing up to become a JALT member, I looked through the organization's various SIGs and the LD SIG stood out to me. On the SIG website, LD describes itself as "supporting autonomous learning and teaching" and my teaching philosophy and values firmly align with this as "increasing intrinsic interest, self-confidence and student autonomy are techniques that can motivate our students" (Dörnyei, 2001, pp. 28-29). Just as I am forever curious, I want to foster learning strategies that support curious L2 learners, and currently, I am exploring translanguaging and how its use can promote active student participation in my classes for *Learner Development Journal 8 (LDJ8)*. Translanguaging utilizes learners' full arsenal by allowing students to switch between either L1 and L2 to promote comprehension in active and passive language processing (Garcia & Wei, 2013). As my students often struggle to find the words in their L2 to discuss questions posed to them in class, I have found translanguaging to be an effective strategy to increase student motivation and self-efficacy as it allows students to use their background knowledge to ease the verification of information and creates a safe and comfortable environment in which they can do so.

In order to support my writing for *LDJ8*, I felt naturally the next step was to attend my first JALT conference. As I do not receive support from my institution to attend professional conferences, it was hard to justify the shinkansen ticket and hotel price to travel to Kyoto on my own dime, but I didn't want to wait until JALT 2023 which is being held a little closer to home in Ibaraki. Thankfully, the LD SIG sent out an email announcing the grant opportunity. I applied and was elated to have my grant proposal accepted. The grant not only helped ensure my focus would be on the

presentations and not my bankbook, but also gave me the confidence to attend my first JALT conference with hundreds of mostly university instructors, only one of whom was a friend. My reasons for wanting to attend PanSIG 2023 were plentiful but mostly, I was just hungry for ideas.

I am currently conducting classroom based research using Exploratory Practice and the term “puzzle” is preferred and used throughout the EP literature. The reasoning behind this is that “problem” can come across as a negative, teacher-centric term and “puzzle” is used to promote collaboration and inclusion with students in a more positive light. Throughout my grant report, I am looking at the presentations I viewed at the PanSIG conference through an EP lens.

As an instructor, I try to improve my classes each year by understanding a puzzle I encounter in my classes. For example, last year there was no curriculum provided and I was asked to design a curriculum for English conversation classes that supported JHS and SHS English courses taught by my Japanese colleagues. The school’s hope was that I could reinforce the language from their textbooks in my English conversation classes and give students a chance to practice and use this language in various activities. Mostly, I was instructed to help inspire students to enjoy the process of learning English while helping them increase their EIKEN test scores. At Kamakura Women’s University JHS/SHS, a school with two tracks, international and progressive, students have three opportunities a year to take EIKEN. The international track with higher English ability aims at higher EIKEN scores, passing pre-2 by year 3 in JHS and level 2 by HS. Students in the progressive course are required to pass Level 3 by year 3 in JHS and Level pre-2 before graduating from HS. Naturally, the puzzle I explored was how can I keep English interesting and engaging for my students while helping them to pass the EIKEN level required for them?

Also, I was searching for ideas on how to improve the club I oversee and am an advisor of, English Speaking Society (ESS). In previous positions I have worked at, ESS was a casual club for students to come and play games in English. I co-advised with several other teachers and though I cared deeply for the students in the club, it always felt a bit underdeveloped. At Kamakura Women’s University JHS/SHS, my colleague and supervisor, Mr. Takao, and I, as first-time sole advisors, wanted to develop the club into more than just a casual English game club. We hoped to provide opportunities for students to improve their English skills in meaningful ways through school events, speech contests, cultural lessons, etc. This year, we implemented several new strategies to support this goal. Perhaps the most significant, we introduced an English first rule. We encourage our students to speak English first and to try to express themselves without resorting to Japanese. Initially, it was challenging for them but slowly over the past four months, they have started to communicate using only English, no small feat for sure! Currently, a puzzle we are exploring is how can we support students in becoming autonomous learners who actively are using English? Specifically, what systems could we implement to support students between activities or when there is downtime? Often, the high school students finish an activity more quickly than JHS students, and this waiting time is sometimes spent reverting to Japanese. When HS students are organizing the logistics of the school festival club display, JHS students may be sitting without something to do. How could we better support them to put English first?

My desire to foster learning strategies that support curious L2 learners led me to the first presentation I attended at PanSIG 2023 which was conducted by LD SIG member, Tim Cleminson. His case study investigated one of the principles of exploratory practice: *quality of classroom life* (Allwright, 2003; Allwright & Hanks, 2009). During his session, Cleminson compared and examined the experiences of both teachers and students engaging in exploratory practice (EP) for the first time and then analyzed these narratives to facilitate overcoming challenges that teachers face in the classroom. His presentation stood out to me as I am also currently using EP to analyze my classes with *quality of classroom life* at center stage for my research for LDJ8. By listening to

Cleminson's presentation, I was able to solidify my knowledge of EP, what it means in different teaching contexts, and think more deeply about how to further use it in my teaching situation.

In regard to my puzzle concerning ESS, I was drawn to Steven Lim's presentation "Do Compulsory Self-Access Learning Center Visits Facilitate Autonomy?" In his study, Lim surveyed first and second-year university students' use of his university's self-access learning center and the kinds of activities students engaged in. I found the use of discussion cards particularly of interest and it is an element I would like to add to our club room guiding students to have a more autonomous relationship with English. Some examples that Lim gave were situational English interactions such as ordering from a menu or checking in at the airport as well as more conversational prompts such as how to express your opinion on a new fad or ways to connect with others in English. From next semester, I plan to mirror Lim's efforts and make some original conversational prompt cards for ESS and instruct the students on how to use them to facilitate conversation.

The final event of the day was the LD SIG Forum. A bit nervous to enter being the newbie I was, I walked up to one of the poster presenters and was welcomed by an instructor with a calm yet passionate demeanor, Jenny Morgan. I was really impressed by my interaction with Jenny because right off the bat, I could tell we both had one thing in common: a passion for empowering our students. Jenny told me about a project she was doing at her university in which she was "expanding upon the typical travel English roleplays to bring an awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)." Morgan believes that instead of just presenting cookie-cutter dialogues that can be found in textbooks concerning travel, we can push our students to go deeper and discuss ethical travel. We brainstormed together about how we could present students with the language needed to volunteer abroad or discuss environmentally friendly travel. We also discussed how to visit countries that are off the beaten path for most Japanese tourists and how to promote DEI travel to all corners of the globe. As an avid backpacker myself, it was exciting to discuss these topics that are not often presented in the standard MEXT textbooks. Morgan was receptive to the fact that even though I'm in secondary education, there are parallels and the presentation left me feeling hopeful about expanding more upon dialogues that I encounter in my student's textbooks. Connecting with another instructor who was working at the tertiary level was exhilarating and helped fuel the fire that I too could enter university academia. Though I do currently share my travel stories with students, I started to see that my experiences outside of the classroom could be highlighted even more in my current and future classes. A recent trip I took to Sri Lanka for ayurvedic treatment could turn into a lesson introducing students to holistic medicine and stress management techniques that could support their learning. Meditation and yoga poses could be a warm-up activity before a challenging task. The possibilities are endless.

After listening to a few other poster presentations, I was lucky enough to be acknowledged with my co-recipient and allowed to say a few words of thanks. Overall, attending PanSIG 2023 was such a humbling and rewarding experience and one which I will never forget. I look forward to getting more involved with the LD SIG and contributing more in the future. I was moved and humbled by the welcome I received and highly recommend joining the LD SIG.

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Life and Research Trajectories as a Lens for Understanding Learner Development: Aya Hayasaki 2021 LD Research Grant Awardee



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James Underwood writes: *Aya Hayasaki was awarded a Research Grant in 2021 and has been active in the Learner Development Journal Issue 7 “Challenging the conventions in learner development research, which she has been co-editing with Ellen Head and Ryo Moriya. What follows are prompts that are the start of a dialogic interview.*

1. *How or why did you become interested in learner development, and decide to become a member of the LD-SIG?*

I finished my master’s program in 2017, joined JALT in 2018, and chose to join the LD-SIG because it seemed the most active of all the SIGs. When I started my PhD program in 2020, I started to interact more actively with the members of the SIG. Everything suddenly went online, and I had to make drastic changes to my PhD proposal because of the pandemic. I was desperately looking for opportunities to connect with people I could exchange research ideas with. I met Ryo, a senior at the same university, and that’s when I learned about the Learner Development Journal (hereafter LDJ) and found it very appealing to be able to write papers while interacting directly with experienced researchers/teachers.

2. *Who or what has been particularly important for you in developing your (learner development) practices and/or your understanding of learner development?*

Looking back, I feel there were several turning points in my life as a learner/teacher/researcher. The most significant was a two-week homestay in Salinas, California, my hometown’s sister city, when I was 15 years old. I was born and raised in a rural area of Kagoshima (the southern part of Kyushu, Japan) and began studying English as a school subject for the first time in junior high school. So, the first thing that was new for me was to realise that there were actually people who do use English in their daily lives—that English was a real language that people speak living in the real world, something that exists beyond those thin textbooks I used to use. My host sister, who

was two years older than I, told me that she had come to my hometown in Japan through the same program and that her dream was to become an ALT in Japan (which came true after several years). It was also a big shock to me when I visited a local school and learned that individual students set and decide their own timetables (to me then, it was a symbol of learner autonomy!). As I had no concrete dream before, it was a great stimulus for me to be exposed to people's lives in a foreign language. I felt that English education in Japan, where most students seemed to study English only for tests, was such a *mottainai* thing— a real waste of time —and that English classes should be more meaningful to each student.

Later, in my second year of senior high school, I convinced my parents to allow me to spend one year as an exchange student at a public high school in the same host family's community in California. I studied English hard in high school, which I loved, but in university, I wanted to learn “in” English, so I majored in international liberal arts at an English-medium university. I also studied at a university in Brno, Czech Republic, for a year to experience firsthand the situation of English language education in another country where English is learned as a foreign language. Interestingly, contrary to my expectations at the time, English was often not spoken in the city where I studied. I realised the privileged position I had unconsciously assumed English to hold. So, I shifted my focus to studying the Czech language and interacting with Czech friends, which allowed me to experience the richness of learning languages and cultures other than English. At the same time, I made friends with international students from other parts of the world, which gave me opportunities to use English as a lingua franca. It was around this time that my fear of making grammatical and pragmatic mistakes began to diminish and I began to feel more like a user of English rather than a mere learner.

After graduating from university, I worked for three years as an English teacher at a public high school in southern Kagoshima. This was something I had long dreamed of. Soon, however, I faced a gap between my ideals and the realities of the classroom. Many of the students were really hard-working and we did enjoy many things together in and outside the classroom, but according to their questionnaire responses, not many of them had reasons to learn English beyond ‘because I need it for the university entrance exam’. While I do not think that is a bad thing in itself, I once said in one of my classes: “Right now it's very important to face the exams in front of you. But after you are free from these exams, I want you to have as many experiences as you can have because you have learnt English.” I showed them pictures of my experiences abroad, studying, backpacking and volunteering. One of the students – smiling broadly – responded, “Teacher, I really enjoyed looking at the photos! You were really rich, weren't you?” In the next lesson, I explained that there are more and more opportunities for anyone to study abroad, regardless of academic or financial ability, as long as they have something they want to do and can demonstrate a plan and passion. They looked confused. I felt that even though there are more and more programmes offering support for young people to study abroad, making these opportunities personally relevant to those from diverse backgrounds is probably a very different thing. This led me to my current research theme, which I will introduce later.

3. *Where do you work now, and what kind of learners do you work with, and what puzzles or questions do you have about them related to learner development?*

I currently work at Waseda as a research associate while also working on the fourth year of my PhD studies there. I also teach a course called Self-Directed Learning (SDL) at Gakushuin University. My puzzles and questions in both practice and research are mostly around the role of social context in language learning; specifically, I am interested in how to make language learning more personally relevant, meaningful, and empowering.

4. *What area of learner development are you particularly interested in, why? And have you conducted any research related to it, if so how? And what were your findings?*

Here, I would like to focus on my PhD project, part of which I wrote about in my application to the LD Research Grant. I have been exploring the role of English language learning experiences on the life and career trajectories of women from rural Japan, focusing on both opportunities and challenges for empowerment. While today's research in foreign language education underscores the significance of considering learners' social contexts, a noticeable gap exists in Japanese research in that insufficient attention has been paid to regional and gender disparities—and this includes an incentive divide (Kariya, 2012), as well as gaps in motivation or aspiration to learn.

As for data collection, I have been conducting life story interviews with women from Kagoshima Prefecture, which is known for having the lowest four-year university enrolment rate in the country. I also integrate my personal experiences as a female learner and teacher of English, as well as a researcher, from the same region, through autoethnography. For data analysis, I utilise Trajectory Equifinality Modelling (TEM), a methodology originally developed in the field of cultural psychology. TEM has been applied in studies of language learner and teacher psychology, particularly in Japanese contexts (e.g., Moriya & Ishizuka, 2019). It offers insight into how differing initial conditions can lead to similar outcomes, aiding in the visualisation of changes in values and actions. I also try to employ Auto-TEM (autoethnography through TEM; Tsuchimoto & Sato, 2022) to reflect on how my researcher reflexivity has evolved throughout this study. In doing so, I am also hoping to address the ethical dimensions of foreign language education research.

I wrote up the first phase of my PhD project as a paper published in the 6th volume of the *Learner Development Journal (LDJ6)* (Hayasaki, 2022). In this study, I focused on the stories of three women in their third year of university who self-reported that they experienced a positive change in their career aspirations through their English language learning experience. They had participated in the project-based learning programme in English as part of their senior high school curriculum. The findings revealed how they overcame various social constraints by meeting near-peer role models and other supportive people. Cultivating their possible L2 selves seemed to have helped them form clearer future visions and eventually succeed in enrolling in the universities they aspired to go to. At the same time, more questions emerged than answers to my original research questions. For example, these three women eventually chose more academically challenging universities outside Kagoshima than they had originally imagined, but that is only one of many examples of the positive impacts that language learning can have on different people's lives. This led me to pose the following questions: Is pursuing more challenging educational and professional opportunities always the best option? What other forms of positive changes could language learning bring about?

5. *How did you use the research grant?*

The questions above brought me to the idea of the second phase of the project, in which I am currently interviewing my friends from senior high school in Kagoshima. I used the research grant to pay rewards to the interviewees for participating in the interview, as well as the cost of a transcription service. We (my high school friends and I) come from an even more rural part of Kagoshima, and few of us went to a 4-year university—and there are different kinds of stories in the lives of these women that I knew about. While being aware of the ethical dimensions of conducting acquaintance interviews, I wanted their voices, as well as my own, to be heard and included in research in this field. Foreign language learning has educational significance not only in terms of the instrumental benefits derived from the acquisition of the target language itself but also in that it allows learners to deepen their understanding of their own values and those of

others through contact with different languages and cultures. My primary goal is to understand this aspect of language learning more deeply. By conducting this research, I hope to provide both adolescent and adult learners the ability to proactively understand the pedagogical implications of their L2 learning experience with their career development and overall well-being beyond the compulsory language classroom. This is still a work in progress, and I hope I can continue to report on my further progress to the LD community, which has provided me with such incredibly immense support over the years.

6. *Where did the idea for the theme for Learner Development 7 come from? Why did you choose to become an editor for this issue? And what have you found interesting, puzzling or rewarding about the writing or editing process?*

The questions I discovered working on my *LDJ6* project helped me reflect on the assumptions, values, and beliefs that I had unconsciously accumulated through my experiences as a learner, teacher, and researcher. I decided it was time for me to challenge them. I also thought people in other contexts might have different kinds of conventions to challenge. Particularly for the readers of *LL*, these questions might be interesting to think about: What is practitioner research? What is research for practitioners? What is it not? ... Is it really not? How? These questions emerged through discussions among the editors and contributors in *LDJ7*. I have, as a result, started to understand how different approaches may contribute to practitioner research.

7. *When have you thought your learners (past or present) have been “truly autonomous rather than just going through the motions to please you”, and what convinced you that they were?*

I believe that one of the moments that a learner becomes truly autonomous is when they are confronted with their own vulnerability or negativity. In my own experience, as an L2 user of English and as an early-career researcher, I have spent a great deal of time feeling unsure of myself. As a teacher, I have also met many students like me. However, you never know what may become a catalyst for learning, for growing interests in new things, or for experiencing success. Just as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation naturally fluctuate, wanting to score well on a test or to please a teacher or parent can become the starting point for authentic learning opportunities. In the passage of time and with the accumulation of experience, learners move back and forth between different feelings and identities. This may involve confusion and pain, but that often becomes the reason to try to move forward. They may not be able to understand themselves well enough when they are in the middle of such changes, but they may look back later and find themselves having made positive changes in different ways. Positive psychology is often applied to language teaching, but in my research, I want to shed more light on the seemingly negative aspects of learning from new angles. To this end, I would like to continue working with different ways of reflection and retrospective interviews. What I would like to emphasise is that when faced with difficult situations, it is important to be given a place of psychological safety and a role with some degree of tension in order to face those challenges. LD-SIG is a community that has given me just such a place and has supported me in taking on those challenging new roles. Thank you very much!

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LD SIG Grants

Every year, the Learner Development (LD) SIG provides grants to support members' professional development, research and educational- and volunteer-related activities and projects in the broad area of learner development. To get a better idea of the kind of work we've supported over the years, please see our [Past Recipients](#) page, with links to reflections, reports, and publications that resulted from grant-supported projects and conference presentations.

Types of grant available

Members may apply for the following grant categories:

1. Conference participation (PanSIG, International JALT Conferences)
2. Research
3. Projects

All applications will be judged on merit according to the same grant selection criteria (see below). Research and project grants can be submitted by individuals or groups (including local LD SIG Get Together groups); in the case of group submissions all group members must be current SIG members.

Selection criteria

All applications will be judged on merit according to the selection criteria below:

1. Clarity of the applicant's purpose for applying for the grant
2. Connection between the applicant's purpose and the LD SIG's aims**
3. Necessity of receiving the grant & Appropriateness of proposed budget allocations

**To understand what LD SIG aims for, reading past issues of *Learning Learning* is also recommended.

Inquiries

Any questions regarding the grants or any feedback should be sent to [the grants team](#).