

James Underwood  
LD SIG Coordinator

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## Coordinator's Introduction

The JALT Learner Development SIG's 30th anniversary conference was held at Gakushuin University, Tokyo, on October 21st and 22nd 2023. It resulted from collaboration with the JALT Global Issues in Language Education and the Teacher Development SIGs. Before I explain the theme, I would like to remember those LD SIG members who passed since the 20th anniversary conference, LD20.

In the 10 years since LD20, we sadly lost two dear friends of the LD SIG, Richard Silver and Naoko Aoki, both in 2018. Richard Silver was heavily involved in the LD SIG committee. He helped organize the Realizing Autonomy conference and later the 20th anniversary conference, and was SIG co-coordinator with Andy Barfield from 2011 to 2013. Through LD20 I had the pleasure of meeting Richard — I was on the website team, and he was one of the conference co-chairs. From the contact we had during the run-up to the conference, he was supportive and quick to offer solutions to problems that came up, but it was not until after the conference that we really got a chance to speak face-to-face. It was great to meet Richard; I still remember the videos he shared that his students made as part of their projects. I only later found out about his illness, and thus, his passing came as a total shock.

In the same year as Richard's passing, the LD SIG also lost Naoko Aoki, one of the founding members of the LD SIG (alongside Richard Smith). Although we did not have much contact, I remember her plenary at LD20, "Stories to take home," which challenged us to share "true" stories about our teaching that went beyond the cover stories that we sometimes use to portray ourselves as "certain, expert professionals" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.15). She encouraged us to share our stories of practice with someone near to us, with the intention that we would further develop the stories we told into written form.

To find out more about both Richard Silver and Naoko Aoki, please see these dedications, "In Memory of Richard Silver": <https://ld-sig.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Dedication.pdf>, and "Remembering Naoko Aoki Together": [https://ld-sig.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Dedication\\_Naoko.pdf](https://ld-sig.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Dedication_Naoko.pdf).

When I took on the coordinator role at the AGM in 2022, I soon realized that the LD SIG would again reach another milestone. To develop a theme, I met with Andy Barfield to brainstorm ideas. As we shared ideas, reflected on the events in the world that had happened since 2013, and how these had influenced our teaching in the classroom, we both agreed that the theme for LD30 should acknowledge how we had, in a sense, re-focused our work with our students from purely language learning to learning with a purpose. Like many other teachers we knew, we encouraged our learners to gain knowledge and understanding about themselves or the world around them so that they could more effectively deal with the challenges they would face in the coming years. This led to the conference theme, "Learning for Change and Action, Making a Difference for the Future." For LD30, the LD SIG welcomed back Phil Benson, Honorary Professor in Applied Linguistics in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney, as a plenary speaker, who enthusiastically spoke about "Turns, Terms and Reconceptualization in Language Teaching and Learning Research" as well as held an informative workshop on "Language Learning Beyond the Classroom." We also invited two long-time members of the LD SIG, Stacey Vye and Chiyuki Yanase, to give a joint dialogic

plenary on “Fostering Learner Wellbeing Through Autonomy: The Role of Learning Communities.” Stacey Vye also held a workshop on “Autonomy, Creativity and Innovation for Learners and Teachers Alike.” Not forgetting, of course, Taichi Ichikawa, who was invited from outside the LD community to share how young leaders worldwide are working hard to realize the Sustainable Development Goals in their local communities. In addition to these plenary sessions, the conference featured 22 concurrent sessions by teachers and 15 concurrent sessions by students over the two days.

The success of LD30 would not have been possible without the hard work of the conference team, the presenters themselves (and those who supported them), and everyone who came to participate. Many thanks also to the International Social Sciences Faculty of Gakushuin University, especially our site chair Kay Irie, who also managed the registration desk, and Ted O’Neill, who joined the conference team at just the right moment and was on hand to help with any technical problems during the conference. I would also like to thank Jennie Roloff Rothman of the GILE SIG who did a great job managing the registration desk and liaising with Phil Benson. And, of course, a big thank you to Jon Thomas, Ross Sampson, and Jason Hobman of the TD SIG who also contributed at various points in organizing the conference.

*James Underwood*

LD30 Conference Chair, on behalf of the LD30 Committee: *Andy Barfield, Ken Ikeda, Nicholas Emerson, Patrick Kiernan, Robert Moreau & Tim Ashwell.*

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