i. Greetings and News Updates
ii. Members' Voices
iii. Stories of Learning and Teaching Practices
iv. Short Reflective Articles
v. Looking Back
vi. Looking Forward
vii. SIG Matters

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# Connecting Motivation, Technology, and Pedagogy: Professional Reflections on PanSIG 2026

I am originally from Indonesia, where I lived until moving to Singapore to pursue my tertiary education. It is common in Southeast Asia for Indonesians to pursue further study in neighboring countries. Parents in the 1990s sent their children overseas in order to pursue better education and find safe countries to pursue university degrees. I happened to be strong at learning languages and I excelled in English during my junior and senior high school years. That is why I always wanted to pursue a degree in English speaking countries. My English teaching career began in Japan, where I worked as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) at Kumamoto Marist Private Junior and Senior High School. I also worked as an after school English teacher, teaching reading, focusing on phonics methods, at Kumamoto YMCA Language School. At the beginning of my teaching career, I only wanted to do it as work. However, after teaching more students, and in different aspects of language teaching, I was intrigued to keep polishing my teaching skills. When I was an ALT in Kumamoto, I attended my first JALT conference which was held at one of the private universities in the city. There I learned from many presentations from other language teachers. After Kumamoto, I moved to Hiroshima, where I continued to attend Hiroshima JALT events. I was asked to volunteer as Hiroshima JALT treasurer. I accepted the officer position and worked together with other officers. We planned to hold events, and find speakers who could present useful topics for language teachers in their professional development.

While continuing my career as an ESL teacher, I have always wanted to further my education and improve my pedagogical skills for higher education. To achieve this, I took the entrance exam and applied for a Master's Degree in Human Culture Sciences at the Prefectural University of Hiroshima. I completed my Master's degree in the Department of Human Culture and Sciences in March 2026.

My Master's program in Human Culture Sciences focused on a combination of English education, anthropology, and psychology. I studied quantitative and qualitative analysis for research design, looking closely at student motivation in learning English as a foreign language. For my Master's thesis, I conducted a comparative study on Indonesian and Japanese learners of English using the Second Language Motivational Self System (L2MSS) framework. Additionally, in my anthropology class, I studied about transnationalism. I also explored heritage language preservation from the first to the third generation of immigrants.

Living in Japan as a transnational parent and language teacher has given me a unique perspective on multilingualism. Having raised my children in the Japanese educational system while observing students from diverse backgrounds, I am particularly interested in individual language development, specifically how students build linguistic skills relative to their heritage languages. This is especially relevant today, as Japan sees a growing number of children with foreign roots navigating the local school system.

As mentioned above, I have previously served as the treasurer of the JALT Hiroshima Chapter and currently serve as a program officer of the Hiroshima chapter. I am a member of the LD, ALL, and

PIE SIGs within JALT. My current research interests include learner motivation, learner engagement, the integration of technology in education, and presentation skills.

Over the weekend of May 23–24, 2026, I participated in the PanSIG Conference for the second time. It is a smaller conference compared to the JALT International Conference, where researchers at an early stage of their careers could connect more easily. I focused on attending sessions dedicated to teaching presentation skills and exploring strategies to enhance learners' motivation and engagement. Additionally, I delivered a presentation on the L2 Motivational Self System among Indonesian and Japanese English learners. I conducted a comparative study on motivation to learn English among undergraduate students in Japan and Indonesia, at two different universities. This was related to my Master's thesis research. My survey research showed that Indonesian students felt their parents viewed learning English as important, in contrast to the results from Japanese students. Furthermore, responses from Indonesian undergraduates indicated a desire to pursue study abroad, making English proficiency a necessary requirement for their university applications. Presenting at PanSIG allowed me to practice presenting in front of language educators working in various sectors of the field, such as language schools and universities. One listener, a professor who teaches English in an economics department, asked about student motivation and why Southeast Asian students tend to have higher motivation to learn English. We discussed how this relates to their desire for better study and career opportunities abroad to improve their future economic prospects. Another educator asked what university English programs could do to boost the L2 selves of Japanese students. Overall, PanSIG provided a great opportunity to engage with intriguing questions from researchers in language acquisition and inspired me to continue delving into language learning research.

I attended a presentation by Nick Boyes called "Building Classroom Engagement with High Frequency Words and Digital Tools", which focused on elevating learners' engagement. Boyes (2026) shared tips on creating AI prompts and generating vocabulary CSV files that can be incorporated into vocabulary games. His presentation reminded me of my students' need to build their vocabulary in order to improve their presentation skills.

Another presentation I attended was "Teaching Presentation Skills with Storytelling Techniques" that was given by Todd Hooper. Hooper (2026) shared his teaching experience in teaching presentation skills to undergraduate students. What he covered in his presentation related to my current work in teaching presentation skills. In teaching presentation skills in English, my primary focus is designing materials that help L2 (English) learners improve their confidence and delivery, particularly since many struggle with public speaking in English. Hooper explained that he allowed students to read their speeches, rather than memorizing them, to reduce stress of presenting. However, in my own approach, I encouraged students to make eye contact with the audience at least two times during the presentation. I wished students to be able to see how their audience reacted to their presentation. The result varied among students. Some followed what I requested, and made eye contact, but there were also students who did not make eye contact throughout the whole presentation. This variation may be attributed to context-based communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1984), as public speaking environments often induce heightened anxiety, leading students to avoid gaze or nonverbal engagement with the audience.

At PanSIG 2026, I attended a presentation "Building classroom engagement with high frequency words and digital tools" by Nick Boyes. I learned about the New General Service List (NGSL), a collection of high-frequency English vocabulary resources based on corpus linguistics research (Browne, 2024). Quizlet is among one of the vocabulary resources on the NGSL Project website. While I had already been using Quizlet in my classes, I hadn't previously focused specifically on high-frequency words or TOEIC vocabulary coverage. The ideas and reading materials from this presentation gave me ideas of new classroom activities to improve student engagement. I tried

integrating the NGSL word list into Quizlet activities across two or three of my classes, and the response was positive.

One poster presentation that gave me ideas for other classroom activities was Ivan Lombardi's poster on using AI for translation at the LD SIG Forum. Although it was not directly related to presentation skills, it was highly relevant in today's educational environment, where AI is increasingly used for lesson preparation and reducing teachers' workload. From this presentation, I learned about the differences between traditional machine translation and AI-based translation, as well as how different translation tools perform better with certain language pairs. For example, DeepSeek produces stronger English–Chinese translations because it was developed in China, while Papago performs better with Korean because it was developed in Korea. Ivan Lombardi's students were multilingual learners from various countries, and they acted as first-language evaluators of the translations produced by both machine translation and AI translation tools. This activity demonstrated how students' multilingual backgrounds can be effectively incorporated into language learning while also encouraging critical evaluation of AI-generated translations. I recently checked on translation quality using google translate and DeepL. I found that DeepL (machine translation) translates Indonesian to English and English to Indonesian very well compared to the translation done by AI. This highlights why we should choose specific translation tools for different languages instead of always using general AI. Doing these comparisons in class helps students learn to use technology more thoughtfully.

Overall, PanSIG 2026 provided actionable insights across public speaking, vocabulary acquisition, and educational technology. Todd Hooper's session on storytelling offered strategies to mitigate presentation anxiety, contrasting with my focus on eye contact to build L2 confidence. Implementing the New General Service List (NGSL) allowed me to ground my Quizlet activities in corpus-based vocabulary. Meanwhile, Ivan Lombardi's poster highlighted using students' multilingual backgrounds to evaluate AI translation accuracy, prompting my own testing of DeepL's strong performance in Indonesian-to-English, English-to-Indonesian translation. In summary, these sessions enhanced my classroom instruction while offering new methodological angles for my research on L2 learner motivation and technology integration.

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# Support or Dependence? Rethinking Learner Autonomy Through PanSIG

I teach Practical English, mainly focusing on speaking and listening at Japanese universities, where many of my students are hesitant to speak English and do not always feel confident about language learning. My concerns about generative AI first emerged in a small corporate training class I previously taught. All the learners in that class used AI for an assignment and submitted perfectly written English sentences containing vocabulary well beyond what they usually used in class. I wondered whether they were relying too heavily on AI rather than engaging with the learning process, and I worried that this might discourage them from developing their own language skills. Around the same time, I began trying tools such as ChatGPT myself and became increasingly aware of both their convenience and their potential risks. I found ChatGPT and other AI tools useful for giving me hints when I could not come up with ideas, exploring alternative possibilities, and checking my language use. At the same time, I became aware of how easily AI can provide a finished answer. This made me concerned that both my students and I might bypass the process of thinking, struggling, and working things out for ourselves.

After PanSIG, I realized that I had unconsciously chosen sessions related to AI in language classrooms. I was excited to learn how teachers were using AI to support language learning and engagement. Avoiding AI is not the answer. Students need to learn to use it effectively and responsibly. At the same time, I had not been able to use AI actively in my university classes. I kept wondering whether it would really help my students, or whether they would simply come to rely on it. Before PanSIG, I thought of an autonomous student as someone who tried to work through a task independently. In my classes, for example, this meant a student who first came up with their own answer and then asked me to check it, rather than simply copying a classmate's answer. With this understanding of autonomy, I brought the following question to the conference: How can AI support learner autonomy without creating learner dependence?

In Richard Sparrow's presentation, *Practical Uses of AI for Teachers and Students: An Extended Study*, he introduced several practical ways of using ChatGPT as a tutor. Students could ask ChatGPT to summarize a text, simplify difficult language, explain content in Japanese, test their understanding, and correct their mistakes. In another activity, students first completed a task without AI and then used it to identify errors and notice possible improvements. I found this sequence especially interesting because it did not allow AI to replace the learner's initial effort. Instead, AI was used after students had already tried to understand or produce something on their own.

Joselito Bisenio's presentation, *Iterative AI Feedback in PEEL Writing: EFL Learner Reflections*, focused on AI-supported writing. Students learned the Point–Evidence–Explanation–Link (PEEL) structure, wrote an initial draft, received peer feedback, and then used AI feedback before revising their work. The presentation emphasized the importance of teaching students how to write prompts, evaluate AI output critically, and keep the first stage of idea generation independent. These examples helped me see that learner dependence is not caused by AI alone. It may also depend on how teachers design the task and decide when AI should enter the learning process. For beginner-level

learners in my own classes, I think AI may be most useful when it supports comprehension or revision after students have first tried the task themselves, rather than when it produces a complete answer from the beginning.

Although the AI sessions inspired me in many ways, Ralph Artugue's presentation, *Fostering Classroom Community Through Exploratory Practice*, deepened my thinking about my original question. It was the final session I attended at PanSIG, and Artugue introduced me to Exploratory Practice, an approach associated with the work of Dick Allwright and Judith Hanks. The approach encourages teachers and learners to explore classroom puzzles together rather than focusing only on solving problems. This perspective immediately caught my attention because it challenged the way I had been thinking throughout the conference.

Artugue shared findings from a reflective diary study in a six-week university course. One student kept saying that the tasks were *muzukashii*, meaning "difficult" in English, but she turned out to have a very high level of speaking proficiency. Several students also described feeling inferior when comparing themselves to returnees or highly proficient English users. In other words, anxiety did not always correspond to actual ability. Until then, I had mainly been thinking about how AI could support learner autonomy without creating learner dependence. However, the Exploratory Practice presentation made me realize that there might be an even more fundamental question: what do learners actually experience, and why do they seek support in the first place?

The example of the student who repeatedly described the tasks as *muzukashii* reminded me of some of my own students. Every year, a few students tell me that they have never been good at English and that English has always been difficult for them, even when they seem to understand what we are doing in class. Until then, I had tended to interpret these comments as a sign of low confidence or limited motivation. However, the Exploratory Practice presentation made me realize that the meaning of "difficult" may be different for each learner. Without understanding their individual experiences, I cannot assume that I know what they really mean when they describe English as "difficult."

Another finding that surprised me was that even advanced learners still valued structured support during speaking activities. Before attending the presentation, I had assumed that learners with higher proficiency would prefer to communicate more freely and therefore need less teacher support. However, the presentation suggested that even highly proficient learners may benefit from appropriate support.

Artugue also reported that these advanced students used their L1 strategically, not because they lacked ability, but as a way to manage difficult content and help each other. In my own classes, where proficiency levels are lower, I have often felt uneasy when students switch to Japanese. It was a relief to learn that L1 use can be a resource rather than a failure, even among highly proficient learners.

Before attending PanSIG, I had been concerned that some forms of support, particularly AI, might unintentionally encourage learner dependence. However, the Exploratory Practice presentation suggested that the issue may not be whether support is provided, but how it is designed and experienced by learners. Looking back, I realized that the AI activities that had impressed me had also been carefully designed to support learners without replacing their own efforts. What mattered was not whether AI was used, but at which point it entered the learning process. What I had not considered, however, was that this timing cannot be decided by the teacher alone. It depends on where each learner is struggling and what kind of support they actually need.

With this in mind, although I have not yet integrated AI systematically into my classes, I do not plan to prohibit my students from using it. They will likely need to use it in their future work, so my classroom can be a place where they learn effective ways of working with it. As I consider how to integrate AI into my classes, I also need to understand what makes English feel difficult for my students.

This is where my question has deepened: what kind of support best encourages learner autonomy, and what role can AI play within that support? Keeping a reflective diary, as the Exploratory Practice presenter did, may help me look for an answer. Rather than sticking to my original lesson plan, I want to pay closer attention to the puzzles emerging from my students' experiences and adjust the flow of the class accordingly. Artugue described how the focus of his diary had shifted over time, from his own growth as a teacher to understanding his students and the quality of classroom life. Something similar happened to me during PanSIG. I came to PanSIG thinking about how I should use AI in my classes. I left with a stronger interest in what my students are actually experiencing.

I do not yet have a complete answer to my original question. Rather than treating AI as either a solution or a threat to learner autonomy, I want to explore how it can become one form of support among many. The challenge, for me, is not simply to increase engagement through AI, but to help students reflect on when AI supports their learning and when they may benefit more from working independently or with other people.

Perhaps my answer is this: support risks becoming dependence when it replaces learners' own efforts and stops them from exploring further. It encourages autonomy when it stimulates their curiosity and motivates them to take the next step. In Artugue's presentation, the advanced students used Japanese to work through challenging content and help one another, which I now see as an example of support that enables learning rather than prevents it.

Thinking back to the assignment that first raised my concerns about AI use, I would now take a different approach in my university classes. I would design assignments that incorporate AI use as part of the task, and then invite the whole class to reflect on their experiences. I would ask, "What did you find most helpful about using AI for this task?" Their answers might help me understand what kind of support they need, and that is where I would like to start.

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Further information about PanSIG 2026 is available at https://pansig.org/ja/node/184.