

The LLL SIG Newsletter

LLL in the Limelight at PanSIG 2014

By Joseph Dias

A record NINE presentations at JALT PanSIG 2014, including three that made up the LLL-SIG Forum, had lifelong language learning as their theme. We are still feeling some of the momentum and renewed interest in LLL that was created at JALT 2013 in Kobe, with its theme of "Learning is a Lifelong Voyage." Our successful and highly interactive LLL-SIG forum in Miyazaki, focusing on LLL in the workplace, was made up of Curtis Kelly (Japan's adult education boom), Paul Arenson (Life-long teaching: Critical pedagogy and the corporate classroom), and Regan Tydall (Voices of workers sent abroad about pre-departure language training), with Joseph Dias serving as chair.

An unanticipated thread running through all of the presentations by the forum participants was the need to be "subversive." Curtis Kelly pointed out the great gap in Japan between the high demand for adult education and the shrinking share of seats at Japanese colleges and universities filled by adult learners. It was also noted that whereas the offerings for adults at the more than 15,000 "kominkan" (or cultural centers) were made up of gardening, tea ceremony, or the study of classics; the underrepresented subjects in the greatest demand included the learning of foreign languages. It was suggested that coming up with ways to change the status quo may require some "subversive" thinking to challenge perceptions of what is appropriate for more mature individuals and what they are capable of. Why shouldn't grandma start studying German and her 28-year-old grandson begin attending a university?

In the course of his talk, Curtis Kelly referred to a white paper on Workforce 2020 that was prepared by the networking company Cisco Systems. We can access the paper in its entirety here:

http://www.cisco.com/web/learning/employer_resources/pdfs/Workforce_2020_White_Paper.pdf

One of the three disruptions to the workforce mentioned in the white paper, "Generation U" (unretired individuals), refers to the increasing tendency for people to work to older ages. This article, which appeared in the Yomiuri recently, shows that it is happening here in Japan as well, with government support:

<http://www.the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001268510> .

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Curtis Kelly



The second speaker in the forum, Paul Arenson, spoke about his efforts at subversion in the corporate world where standardized tests such as the TOEIC are frequently used as a meaningless benchmark tied to promotions and salary raises. Although there may not be an easy way around “teaching to the test” in such circumstances, minor subversion can be carried out by having students question the “preferred” answers, analyzing them from the perspective of pragmatics: Is "Mind your own business?" in response to "Could you please

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hand me that newspaper?" really wrong compared to "Yes, here you are"?

Paul Arenson



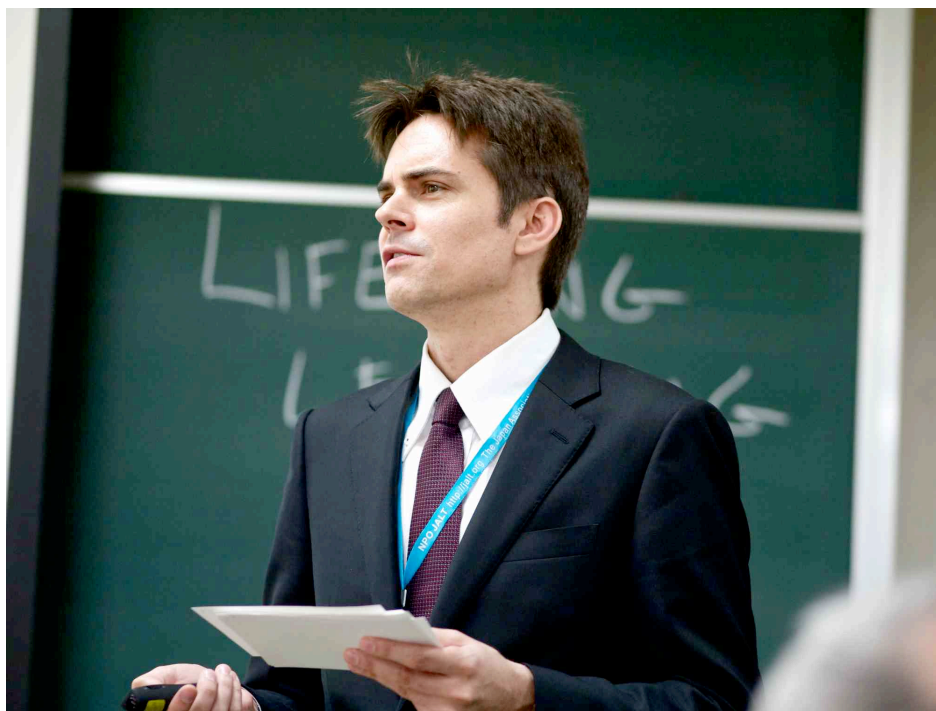
Finally, Regan Tyndall, spoke of the inefficiencies in the language programs intended to prepare Japanese professionals to work and live overseas for their companies. This boot camp style training would often leave workers ill-prepared for their assignments, leading the speaker to suggest the “subversive” idea that actually studying abroad in the culture where they will be assigned might be the more sensible and cheaper option, perhaps with more impressive outcomes.

Regan Tyndall

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Other talks at the PanSIG that touched upon lifelong language learning included:

- * Creative activities to beat the “blahs” (Bradford-Watts)
- * Classroom teaching and sustainability: bridging the gap (McAulay)
- * What does independent learning look like? (Carson)
- * Teacher autonomy: navigating the workplace minefield (Arenson)
- * 日本人英語教師による英会話の教え方 (Ishida)

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* Whose learning? By who? For whom? And for what purpose? (Hunke and Schmidt)

The LLL-SIG invites those teaching languages to young, middle-aged, and older adults to share information through our newsletter, at various SIG conferences and events (including the Pan-SIG), and at the JALT National Conference, where an annual LLL-SIG forum is held. Our Facebook page can be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/jaltLLL> . As of this writing, we have nearly 210 likes and we always welcome more. If you “like” us, you will be able to find out about not only our SIG’s events, but you can also get tips about lifelong language learning and teaching, and find out about opportunities and events in the community that stretch your capabilities and broaden your horizons, including volunteering possibilities.