

## **Why JALT an NPO**

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*Coordinator*

A group of interested English teachers, not particularly one individual as the leader, started JALT in Odawara City, Kanagawa Prefecture in 1975. JALT had been a private organization, neither controlled nor protected by law since its inception as a TESOL group in 1975. The important change occurred in 1999 when I joined the National Board of JALT as vice president.

At that time I was tackling the challenge to change the organization into a corporation under the new NPO (non-profit organization) law. Under the supervision of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, JALT is now controlled by Japanese law, which requires it to call a general assembly, file a report on it with the government and be audited.

This has enhanced our credibility among English teachers and publishers that support us in conferences at home and abroad. Also now that the Ministry of Education is lending its name as our supporter, it has become easier for teachers working at Japanese schools to get permission from their principals, for example, to take time off and attend a conference at home and abroad as a JALT member. We are not thinking about seeking financial support from the ministry, but we want their name as our backer.

Initially there was some resistance from the Executive Board members, who are mostly Americans, to the idea of being controlled by Japanese law. JALT had been going by the Robert's Rules of Order (<http://www.robertsrules.com>), a guideline on parliamentary procedure popular among Americans. Later, though, it turned out to be good news for my colleagues from other countries, too, who are considered rootless in Japanese society. It's particularly good for people on the board.

Now that the JALT is incorporated and registered with the Ministry of Justice, it has become easier for those JALT members working at universities to get a promotion or a raise by brandishing the registration paper. They are seen as more than just individual teachers. We are now considered public”in Japan.

JALT is an umbrella organization. Its branches and special interest groups (SIG) are semi-autonomous. These groups are forming JALT as organisms. The LLL SIG is no exception. It's not a corporation with a top-down management style. We are a volunteer group. We can do anything as long as it is about English education and doesn't violate the NPO law.