

Message From the Coordinator: A Successful JALT PanSIG Conference at the University of Nagano and LLL-SIG Forum

Joseph Dias
Aoyama Gakuin University

This piece summarizes the speakers' contributions to the LLL SIG-sponsored forum "From Burnout to Burning Rubber" that was presented at the JALT PanSIG Conference held at the University of Nagano at the beginning of July 2022.



Setting the Stage

This year's PanSIG Conference, held on the Miwa Campus of the University of Nagano, saw a refreshing return to a predominantly F2F mode, with some presentations streamed or made available over Zoom in a hyflex manner. On the whole, although the number of attendees was somewhat down from pre-pandemic levels, there was a sizable and highly spirited turnout.

We welcomed participants to the Lifelong Language Learning SIG's Forum on Sat, Jul 9, 10:00-11:30. You may refer to the

session's details at the official conference website at <https://pansig2022.edzil.la/session/2657>. The speakers represented a wide range of teaching settings, from elementary, junior and senior high schools, to language schools and universities. Half of the presenters focused on psycho-social issues that arose from the pandemic and its aftermath while the other half concentrated on how teachers could continue to make use of the pedagogical and, particularly, technological expertise they developed in order to cope with the altered landscape of learning that the pandemic foisted upon us.

The LLL-SIG Forum Title was “From Burnout to Burning Rubber Overall.” Here is its overall description:

The pandemic introduced numerous challenges to the personal and professional lives of teachers. We may have felt an adrenaline rush in the early days as we had to rally all our experiences and collective resources in transitioning to online teaching. However, as the pandemic dragged on, many of us felt the fatigue of having to pivot from F2F to hybrid to fully online teaching at the drop of a dime. The extra energy needed to help students cope with learning through different modes also drained our internal resources. This forum will focus on the strategies that teachers at various levels of education—from K12 to university and language schools and beyond—have replenished their stores of energy and enthusiasm.

Bringing Together the Various Strands of the Forum

Individual contributions to the LLL-SIG Forum at PanSIG 2022 include the following (fuller write ups of selected presentations will appear in this issue and in future issues of our LLL-SIG publication):

Paul Nanton

Title: Surviving the Pandemic!

Affiliation: Hongo Junior and Senior High School

Synopsis: The pandemic has put a heavy toll on teachers both mentally and physically. This part of the forum discussed how teachers of young learners—specifically junior and senior high school

teachers—have coped. The coping strategies identified were based on the responses to a survey distributed to members of the Teachers of Younger Learners SIG as well as the presenter’s personal experiences.

Bio:

Paul Nanton has been teaching at a variety of junior and senior high schools in Saitama and Tokyo. He is currently teaching at a private boys school in Tokyo. His main interests are teaching young learners and bilingualism.



David LaHeist

Title: F2F, Hybrid, Hyflex and the Road Ahead

Affiliation: Jikei University of Medicine

Synopsis: Over the last two years, teachers have had to navigate through a bewildering variety of institutional demands that have taken them in and out of F2F, hybrid, and hyflex environments. Although many of us had little control over the mode of teaching demanded of us, from here on out institutions may allow teachers more autonomy and flexibility regarding the mode of course delivery. A future that we might feel positive about could involve the judicious incorporation of online activities into our lessons. Although some teachers and students may hope to never endure Zoom again, the online genie is out of the lamp. Might it answer to our beck and call? This presentation presented a potentially bright, but not unrealistically rosy, future.

Bio:

David LaHeist, with his unique background as a performer (juggling, stilt-walking, etc.) since high school, has a passion for making learning more engaging.



Chiyuki Yanase

Title: Enhancing Language Teacher Wellbeing

Affiliation: Chuo University

Synopsis: Being a devoted or passionate educator can be a self-sacrificing job. However, being a dedicated language educator should not come at the expense of one's own wellbeing. The pandemic has been a stressful circumstance for many of us and educators should take time to reconsider how to maintain or boost their physical and mental wellbeing. In this part of the forum, some emotion-focused coping strategies were shared and discussed in order to address language teachers' overall health issues.

Bio:

Chiyuki Yanase is a lecturer at Chuo University. She holds an MSc in TESOL from Aston University. Her current research interests focus on teacher wellbeing. She has presented at numerous international conferences and published several articles on team-teaching, learner autonomy, and collaborative learning.



Nena Nikolic-Hosonaka

Title: Personalizing Online Classes

Affiliation: Kanda University of International Studies

Synopsis: The speaker and her students found personalization to be the key to success in her online classes. Through anonymous replies to post-course surveys, students reported gains in self-confidence, ample opportunities to explore new perspectives through discussion with classmates and, above all, the chance to develop a well-balanced variety of language skills. All of this was accomplished in an atmosphere of fun.

Bio:

Nena Nikolic-Hosonaka teaches content courses for undergraduates and TESOL courses at the graduate school of the Kanda University of International Studies. Holding a PhD in language sciences and an MA in teaching Japanese as a foreign language, her main interests include young learners and cross-cultural communication. Originally from Serbia, she is a mother of 4 and enjoys classical guitar, tai chi, surfing, and studying Chinese. She runs Mama Nena's English School.



Mitsue Allen-Tamai

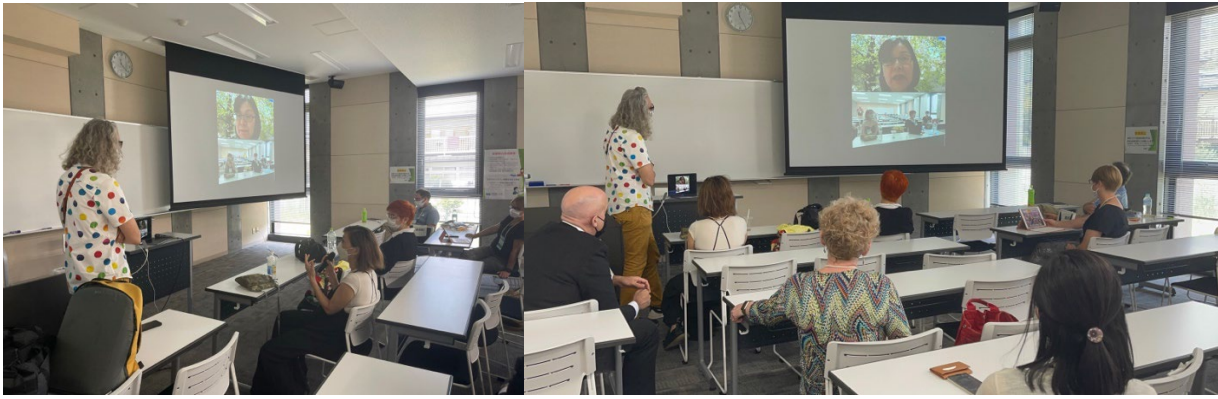
Title: Hard Working Teachers: How to Help Each Other

Affiliation: Aoyama Gakuin University

Synopsis: The third Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2018) is an international survey that investigates working conditions for teachers and principals and the learning environments of schools. According to its results, Japanese elementary and junior-high school teachers spend the longest time at school in the world. The survey shows that they are most frustrated at carrying out general administrative duties. However, overall, they are satisfied with their schools and appreciate their colleagues. They also practice team-teaching more than the average for other countries. As one clue for surviving and functioning as a “good teacher,” the speaker introduced co-teaching systems created for homeroom teachers and Japanese Teachers of English in one district in Tokyo. When two teachers share the same class, they learn from each other and that nurtures the learning of students.

Bio:

Mitsue Allen-Tamai is a professor in the English Department of Aoyama Gakuin University. She earned her EdD from Temple University. Her research interests are in the areas of teaching English to young learners, focusing on their literacy development. She has been training college students to become English teachers of young children at both the undergraduate and graduate school levels at universities.



Catherine Takasugi

Title: Flip the Script

Affiliation: Aoyama Gakuin University

Synopsis: The pandemic shook up old teaching practices and forced teachers to question values, beliefs, and pedagogical strategies. By flipping the script in our minds, from one that feared and resisted the changes to one of exploring possibilities, some significant growth and creativity can emerge. The uneasiness and grief that came about from the pandemic cannot be overstated, however, once some sense of stability was restored, many teachers were able to tap into the advantages and beauty of alternative teaching styles and approaches. The speaker shared her ideas on how to maintain some of these positive changes as we drift closer to pre-pandemic rules and standards.

Bio:

Catherine Takasugi lectures in the English Department at Aoyama Gakuin University. Her research interests center around school refusal and sense of belonging at school. Holding an M.Ed. and currently preparing for EdD candidacy, she teaches standard English courses as well as a seminar based on experiential learning, reflection, and identity exploration. Hailing from Canada, she is an avid lifelong learner who is currently seeking pickleball partners.



Joseph Dias

Title: Plants and Community Building: Why Not Go Out on a Limb

Affiliation: Aoyama Gakuin University

Synopsis: Research in both business and academic settings have shown that the presence of plants can reduce stress, lead to better coping mechanisms, and improve concentration (Ulrich et al., 1991; Lohr and Pearson-Mims, 2000; Taylor et al., 2001). An excellent controlled study (Doxey, et al., 2009) involving nearly 400 university students, showed that the presence of plants did not lead to higher grades among students but led them to feel that they learned more and they were more enthusiastic about the subject. They even rated the teacher as being more organized and effective. The presenter briefly explained the role that plants have played in his private and professional life, and advocated for their increased presence in offices and classrooms.

Bio:

Joseph V. Dias coordinates the Integrated English Program in the English Department of Aoyama Gakuin University. His research interests include the assessment of international virtual exchanges and autonomy in language learning. Currently a reviewer for the JALTCALL Journal, he is also the coordinator of the Lifelong Language Learning SIG.

