

Messages from the Coordinator

Joseph Dias

Lifelong Language Learning SIG Coordinator

Report on our LLL-SIG Mini Conference in Okinawa

It was a pleasure presenting in a Lifelong Language Learning stream at the OkiJALT Summer Symposium 2023 in Naha, Okinawa along with Kinsella Valies, Mariana Oana Senda, Dom Jones, and Miwako Dias. The conference, which served as our annual “Mini-conference,” was co-sponsored by the Okinawa Chapter of JALT (OkiJALT) with JALT’s Materials Writers Special Interest Group (MW SIG) and the Lifelong Language Learning Special Interest Group (LLL-SIG) on the weekend of August 11-13 2023 at the Okinawa Prefecture Gender Equality Center, Tiruru.

Before our stream of LLL-SIG talks, on the first day of the conference, Diane Nagatomo gave a rousing plenary talk that covered her storied life as a writer of EFL texts, newspaper columns, and—most recently—a novel.



Diane Nagatomo (far right) along with Julia Kimura (JALT National Membership Chair, far left) and our Co-Membership Chair and conference speaker, Mariana Oana Senda, in the middle.

Each of the LLL-SIG-sponsored talks will be briefly introduced with accompanying photos. The first speaker was Joseph Dias who spoke on the topic “Cultivating empathy through the use of student-created first-person vignettes.” Here is an abstract of that talk:

Teachers and researchers have explored ways of helping individuals feel greater empathy in order to reduce prejudice and to encourage prosocial attitudes. Training programs that aim to foster empathy have been shown to be effective in the education of medical students (Pacala, Boulton, Bland, & O’Brien, 1995), social workers (Erera, 1997), those who interact with rape survivors (Jacobs, 1998), and students of literature (Cohen, 2021). The speaker demonstrated how empathy can be cultivated among university students by having them create vignettes from the perspectives of individuals who are intimately connected to controversial issues they are researching. The ultimate goal of this course on critical literacy is for students to flesh out an imagined NGO that constructively addresses social or environmental problems arising from their selected issue. A useful activity toward this goal was found to be one in which narratives are created by the students based on perspectives they identified as key to understanding the issue. Through these accounts, students gain a deeper emotional connection to such issues as cyberbullying, the aging population, and rising youth suicide rates. How teachers might adapt this activity for a variety of ages, levels of maturity, and teaching settings was explored.



Joseph Dias delivering his presentation on “Cultivating empathy through the use of student-created first-person vignettes.”

The second speaker in the LLL-SIG stream, Miwako Dias, representing Dialogue in the Dark Japan (<https://did.dialogue.or.jp/totonou/en/>), spoke on the topic

“Communicating without borders: Communication with the visually and hearing impaired.” Here is an abstract of that talk:

Since the dawn of communicative language teaching, instructors have been expected to equip students with Communicative Competence (Hymes, 1972), Intercultural Competence (Bennett, 2011; Deardorff, 2006; Gudykunst, 2002), and Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 2020). However, have these successively more nuanced understandings of the context, purpose, and goals of communication allowed teachers to fully prepare students for mutually satisfying interactions with the deaf and visually impaired? The speaker described a program developed by the founder of the social business Dialogue in the Dark, Andreas Heinecke, called Dialogue in Silence, which broadens the communicative repertoire of participants by putting them in situations in which they must communicate with each other, and with deaf facilitators, without words or conventional sign language. Using noise-canceling headphones in an area of complete silence, visitors complete tasks and, along the way, discover how to make better use of facial expressions, body language, and other forms of non-verbal communication. Might this be a model for how language teachers can broaden the communicative options and modalities students use to communicate? The history and mission of the Dialogue Social Enterprise were presented, and the speaker shared what she has learned about communicating with blind and deaf colleagues. An interactive activity involving the collaborative representation of song lyrics was used to enjoyably illustrate points made by the speaker.



Miwako Dias gesturing during her presentation on “Communicating without borders: Communication with the visually and hearing impaired.”

The third speaker in the LLL-SIG stream was Dom Jones of Sendai Seiyō Gakuin College, who spoke on the fascinating topic “Fostering

student well-being, safety, and English skills through martial science games.” Here is an abstract of his talk:

James Asher’s Total Physical Response (TPR) has often been used to teach simple grammar points and vocabulary items with a focus on young learners. Its potential to teach learners of all ages more challenging target language has rarely been explored. In the Ryukyu Islands, the birthplace of a variety of martial arts, the speaker introduced various TPR martial science games and showed how selections from the target language could be incorporated into simple martial art drills. These fun games are easily performed by learners of all ages, including those of limited strength and mobility. Game participants are asked to respond to either verbal or visual cues to perform set movements. As well as being a fun way to learn language, other benefits of these exercises include enhanced personal safety, reductions in stress, greater productivity, and an improvement in mental health.



Two participants at Dom Jones’ workshop trying out a warm-up to the martial science games which were later introduced.

The fourth speaker in the stream, Mariana O. SENDA, representing Meiji University and Obirin University, spoke about “The role play revolution: Redefining paths for lifelong language learning.” Here is an abstract of that talk:

"The Role Play Revolution: Redefining Paths for Lifelong Language Learning" was a captivating 60-minute workshop delving into role play's transformative influence in language learning. The workshop demonstrated how role play fosters meaningful communication, elevates learner motivation, and nurtures essential lifelong language learning skills. Initially, the speaker explored the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence supporting role play's effectiveness in language learning, grounding the

discussion in situated learning and communicative language teaching theories. Subsequently, the workshop shifted to illustrating practical role play activities, from basic dialogues to intricate problem-solving scenarios. Attendees were asked to participate in these activities, which enabled them to gain firsthand experience of their value. The final section emphasized the link between role play and lifelong language learning, highlighting role play's contribution to developing key lifelong learning skills like autonomy, critical thinking, and learner engagement. The speaker also provided strategies to encourage students to pursue language learning beyond the classroom confines.



Mariana Oana Senda shortly before her talk on "The role play revolution: Redefining paths for lifelong language learning."

The fifth and final speaker in the LLL-SIG stream of talks was Kinsella Valies (Jissen Women's University and Aoyama Gakuin University), whose presentation included a talk on the theoretical aspects of using role playing games in language learning, followed by a workshop that vividly illustrated the concepts. Here is an abstract of the initial talk, "Mission Possible: Leveling up in English at home and beyond."

According to Schneider (2023), table-top roleplaying games (TTRPGs) simulate meaningful encounters of human behavior and interaction that allows learners to try out different social and communicative strategies without facing any real-world penalties. The main objective of this presentation was to examine how the integration of TTRPGs in informal, adult EFL can lead to significant positive outcomes for learners. The theoretical framework is phenomenologic, based on dialogues, interviews and, reflections between the researcher and their five participants. Participants are lifelong English learners and native speakers from varied backgrounds with the common denominator of having more than 10 years of TTRPG

experience. This talk will feature on one hand, personal learning stories of L2 English learners and NNS English educators using TTRPG to improve their speaking. On the other, the experiences of game leaders guiding L2 players through problem-solving scenarios and making them aware of culturally appropriate knowledge will showcase upskilling beyond language. By exploring the impact of table-top RPGs through phenomenology, the researcher aimed to provide recommendations for learners seeking to enhance their motivation, autonomy, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and fluency. This 20-minute talk provided rich insights into the potential of RPGs as valuable, transformative educational tools.

The workshop portion of Kinsella Valies' presentation was titled "Mission Possible II: Table Try Out." Here is a description of the workshop:

In this 60-minute workshop, part two of the table-top RPG presentations, the speaker transformed into the game leader, "who provided the players with situations that must be solved by them (Schneider, 2023)". The participants took on the roles of L2 adventurers on a journey that included: speaking up when it was our turn, asking for clarification, using verbs and description creatively, competitive problem solving and critical thinking in English. Sharing peer advice was encouraged. Premade characters were made available for selection and dice were provided. All participants except the game leader controlled a character with different skills to help them figure out how to tackle the problems placed in front of them (Hitchens and Drachen, 2009). After a short introduction to simplified rules of the game, the adventure began. We used teamwork, effective time-keeping and communication to defeat the risen evil in an attempt to bring peace to our local town. There was a debriefing after the adventure during which player-participants were asked to discuss their experiences.



Kinsella Valies enthusiastically speaks about the research she conducted on language learners with many years of TTRPG experience during her talk "Mission Possible: Leveling up in English at home and beyond."

Announcing our 2024 LLL-SIG Mini Conference

The tentative plan for next year's (2024) LLL-SIG Mini Conference is for us to team up with ETJ (English Teachers of Japan) at their Tokyo Expo on the weekend of February 3rd and 4th at Otsuma Women's University in Kudanshita. We held our Mini Conference with ETJ there in the past and found that the facilities were excellent and large enthusiastic audiences could be assembled.

The call for presenters for this conference will likely be sent out in October or November.

Report on Second Executive Board Meeting of 2023

As the LLL-SIG Coordinator, I represented our SIG by attending this year's second Executive Board Meeting (EBM) in Okayama on the weekend of June 24th/25th 2023. It was a lively, hybrid event with 75 individuals (56 voting members and 19 non-voting) joining. Those in attendance included JALT president (currently the indomitable Clare Kaneko), all the other national officers, the JALT Chapter Presidents, the SIG Coordinators, along with non-voting members who may just be attending out of personal interest or because they are members of committees (such as the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Committee [DEI] or the Environmental Committee) which may have motions on the agenda that concern them.

Another one of our SIG officers, Program Chair and Treasurer Natsuki Suzuki, attended the meeting in person as a non-voting member. She was able to join in the discussions about the motions and she had the opportunity to know how other SIGs might collaborate with us on upcoming events. If other LLL-SIG officers wish to attend EBMs in the future, we (as a SIG) can pay for your transportation and accommodation. It is a good way for you to better understand what is, usually, the behind-the-scenes work in making an extremely complicated organization run smoothly. Joining the meeting might inspire you to run for national office and/or play an even bigger administrative and leadership role.

The motions (i.e., formal proposals for the adoption of particular measures or changes to SIG/ Chapter constitutions, etc.) that led to the most discussion at the EBM concerned issues related to inclusion and a more nuanced and expanded recognition of considerations of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression when 1) creating programs; and 2) dealing with potential “code of conduct” violations. More on that below, but first I would like to mention a successful, and very welcome, motion that may affect members of our SIG. It was:

Motion 2023-2-09: Extend senior membership rate to overseas members

(Proposed by Julie Kimura, Director of Membership and Emily Choong, Membership Liaison)

It was moved to extend the senior membership rate, which is currently only available to domestic members, to overseas senior members. The senior membership rate is currently ¥7,000. Members who are overseas will not have printed publications sent to them, but they will have access to electronic copies of publications. As we have had senior overseas members in our SIG, we see this as a positive development.

The majority of motions put forward at EBMs are not controversial and are passed by unanimous consent, which means that, as long as there are no dissenters, the motion will pass without being voted upon. A few motions that fell into this category involved changes to the constitutions or names of SIGs (CALL and CUE) and a Chapter (name change from “Fukui” to “Hokuriku”). Changes to the SIG constitutions were motivated by efforts to bring pronoun usage in line with current gender-neutral norms, to correct errors, and to create a clearer delineation between core officers and appointed officers. The Motion to “Extend the senior membership rate to overseas members” was also passed by unanimous consent.

A relatively contentious motion, to create presenter policies for chapters, SIGs, and other JALT entities, was not passed because,

although all agreed with the spirit of the motion, a consensus could not be reached about the specific wording. It was ultimately “tabled,” which means that it will be further discussed at an upcoming EBM. Break out groups had constructive discussions about the motion and helpful revisions to its wording were proposed. For your reference, here is the motion in its entirety and the changes to it which were proposed:

Motion 2023-2-10: Motion to establish presenter policies for chapters, SIGs, and other groups within JALT (Proposed by Samantha Kawakami, Director of Records, on behalf of Gregory Paul Glasgow, Chair of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Committee)

Moved that presenter policies for chapters, SIGs, and other groups within JALT be established as follows:

These presenter policies should be applied to both large events and smaller events.

1) For a single large event or panel, ~~this the~~ balance ~~discussed below~~ should be considered for the single event.

2) For a group holding smaller events, ~~this the~~ balance ~~discussed below~~ should be considered over the course of a ~~calendar~~ year.

When choosing presenters, the organizers should strive for the event(s) to ideally feature the following:

1) Speakers with a balance of first languages. In addition to speakers whose first language is English, at least one Japanese speaker or a speaker whose first language is not English should be included. Events should include speakers from a mixture of countries, considering a balance of countries where English is a first language and countries where English is not a first language.

2) A balance of speakers that not only considers the traditional binary categories of women and men, but is also inclusive of other marginalized genders, sexualities, and gender presentations.

3) Speakers from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

4) A balance of both established and up-and-coming speakers to ensure that all members of the community can share their experiences and newer speakers can develop their expertise.

This policy is not to be used to penalize groups who do not reach these goals.

As the Coordinator of the LLL-SIG, who worked as its Program Chair for more than a decade, I welcome these policies since they can help us more consciously consider the full range of diversity when putting together programs for our PanSIG, JALT National, and Mini Conference forums and panels. Over the years, our SIG has sponsored diverse slates of presenters at our events...especially diverse in terms of gender, teaching setting, nationality, and first language; but, perhaps less so in regard to age, level of experience, or range of gender identities/expression. So, in the spirit of widening the pool of individuals we reach out to when creating programs, the proposed policy changes are more than welcome. I repeat that the motion was only tabled due to discomfort with aspects of the wording and possible enforcement mechanisms, but it is highly likely that it will be approved, in some form, when re-introduced at an EBM in February 2024.

An additional development at the EBM was announced by the JALT Auditor, Robert Chartrand. From this point forward, the JALT Auditor, on behalf of the JALT Board of Directors, will act as a “confidential liaison” in dealing with inquiries lodged with the Code of Conduct (CoC) Committee.

Please read the JALT Code of Conduct / JALT 行動規範
English: <https://jalt.org/main/jalt-code-conduct> / 日本
語: <https://jalt.org/node/4949>

Hopefully, you will never need to submit a complaint or inquiry to the Code of Conduct Committee (much less be the focus of one), but it is important that you are aware of the procedures involved, so,

we are including the entire clarification that the Auditor, Robert Chartrand, announced at the EBM:

Joint Statement on Board of Directors and Code of Conduct Committee

The BoD and the CoC Committee would like to release a joint statement about our mutual accountability and our intent to cooperate constructively in the future on behalf of the JALT membership.

To encourage transparency, the JALT Auditor, on behalf of the BoD, will act as a confidential liaison to be in regular contact with the CoC Committee for updates on ongoing inquiries.

Toward that end, we would like to begin by clarifying the following process.

1. When a new inquiry is brought to the attention of the CoC Committee, the Auditor shall be notified within 48 hours with the following information:
 1. In a shared Google Sheet include the following:
 - i. the inquiry number (Complainant and Respondent shall be informed)
 - ii. the nature of the inquiry
 - iii. the date the inquiry was received
 - iv. expected timeline
 - v. status of the inquiry every two weeks
 2. Once all of the information regarding the inquiry has been gathered, the CoC Committee shall inform the Auditor with the necessary information within a week:
 - i. A detailed summary of the inquiry that can be shared with the BoD
 - ii. The BoD has the right to request the names if required
 - iii. Any recommendations from the CoC Committee shall be taken into account for a resolution to be decided by the BoD
 - iv. The CoC Committee shall keep a record of all inquiries

- in an archive for a maximum of 5 years. After this time, the inquiries shall be deleted from the record permanently
3. The BoD shall discuss the inquiry in detail with the Auditor and if needed, a resolution shall be decided:
 1. The possible resolutions will follow the Standing Rules.
 2. If the Respondent does not agree with the resolutions, they have a right to appeal to the BoD and may present their case to the EBM
 2. Concerns regarding the CoC Committee shall be submitted to the Auditor and considered by the BoD.
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We hope that this information may bring you an increased appreciation for what goes on “under the hood” of JALT’s vehicle for creating community, sharing knowledge, and developing professionalism.