

The LLL SIG Newsletter

Program Chair's Message

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The end of the year is nigh and the holiday season beckons us with the promise of renewal of body and soul. With the dawn of the New Year, despite the coldest days ahead, the fragrance of spring seems close at hand. All the best holiday cheer to JALT LLL-SIG members and their families. May 2013 bring you happiness, the continued ability to savor the gift of lifelong learning, and the enthusiasm to pass it on to our students.

Thank you for the support of your membership in the LLL-SIG and many thanks to those who presented and participated in the lively program of events that were held in 2012, particularly the LLL-SIG forum on the nurturance of lifelong readers at the national conference in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka, and our Mini Conference, held in association with English Teachers of Japan (ETJ) and JALT's West Tokyo Chapter and the marvelously active Speech, Drama, & Debate SIG. This newsletter will report on presentations that were given in both events.

The well-attended LLL-SIG Forum was divided into four parts. The first speaker, Melvin Andrade gave participants a global perspective on adult literacy and social justice by sharing his views on what the developing world can teach Japan about life transformative reading. The second speakers (Gregory Strong, Joseph Dias, and Todd Rucynski) discussed a faculty development project that involved collaboration on a teacher-produced video showcasing the varied ways that reading can be taught. The third speaker, Atsuko Kosaka, showed how a "reading workshop" approach to reading classes can encourage students to grow as readers through mini-lessons, conferences, and by sharing time. The final presenter, Adam Murray, showcased some Internet reading texts (i.e., authentic texts or ones adapted for EFL learners) that can be a source of motivation for reluctant readers.

The subsequent Mini Conference, held in November, less than one month after the national conference, was one of our most successful and enthusiastically attended events ever, with a varied line up of speakers who covered different approaches to the instruction of speech, debate, and drama at all levels...frequently from a lifelong learning point of view.

Tatsuya Sudo not only spoke a bit about the history of the art of Rakugo, a traditional spoken art which started about 300 years ago in Japan, but he also gave captivating performances of Rakugo. Sudo Sensei showed us that through English Rakugo, our students could learn not only English but also their own culture. He saw the learning of English Rakugo as providing a great incentive for Japanese English learners who are interested in conveying the complexities of Japanese culture in English to others.

Another speaker, Aya Kawakami, with over 20 years of experience in music and theater, demonstrated some drama techniques that aid in the creation of a safe environment where participants felt free to explore and develop ideas as a group and as individuals. She showed how drama activities--such as hot seating, people poems, character development and line omissions--are vital tools which can provide useful intermediate steps, particularly in creative writing, debate, discussion, and 'free' conversation; areas where students traditionally encounter difficulty. Participants were shown how they could modify such drama activities, with the goal of challenging students to, step by step, come closer to autonomy.

In the most popular of all the presentations, Nena Nikolic-Hosonaka, a lecturer at KUIS (Kanda University of International Studies), a J-Shine examiner, and radio and TV personality, demonstrated how dramatic play can be beneficial to both the personal and academic development of a child. After introducing some techniques used in elementary school classrooms, a short play was performed by the teacher and some of her spirited trainees.

In her presentation "Creating and Staging Personal Narratives as a Solo Art Form," Aoyama Gakuin University professor, Michiyo Okawa, described a pedagogy for encouraging students to construct personal narratives as a solo art form in the EFL classroom and showed touching and deeply affecting

sample performances, which focused on such issues as the loss of loved ones and self-destructive behaviors.

In Paul Howl's passionate presentation, offering much audience participation, it was explained how increasingly sophisticated speaking skills could be attained through role-play.

David Kluge offered mesmerizing workshops on debate and oral interpretation. In the first one, he showed that debate was something everyone could do to exercise their brain and body. After giving a definition of debate and explaining some basic principles, participants prepared brief debates and then carried them out. His second presentation, "Oral Interpretation for Lifelong Learning," described Oral Interpretation as a simple, inexpensive, and creative way to do drama in a relatively short period of time. Participants worked on a short piece, and then performed it for the rest of the group.

On the final day of the Mini Conference, Dawn Kobayashi, a lecturer at Onomichi City University in Hiroshima, presented a set of rules to aid student actors improvise a scene and keep a conversation going spontaneously. This practical presentation introduced some effective rules for transforming even the shyest of students. In fact, they worked to make even the most reserved of this enjoyable workshop's participants transform themselves into major "hams."