
The School House

The Publication of the JALT Teaching Younger Learners SIG

全国語学教育学会若い人たちに教える研究部
会研究部会定款

Volume 30 Issue 3 - Spring 2023

ISSN: 1881-0713



From the Editors

Dear SIG members.

The Sapporo Snow Festival is back, and with it, last weekend we had a face-to-face JALT Hokkaido conference. I wish you all could have been there. Don't we love it when we come away energised and inspired by a session? Well, that was my experience, and I want to share a little of that energy, as I began to feel a fresh wave coming into EFL in Japan.

What inspired me so much was a presentation given by **Kristen Cardona & Claire Lee** titled, '**Free OPEN Resources for Professional Development**' and it was truly a treasure trove of online resources. Do you know that the Office of English Language Programs at the U.S. Department of State provides programs and resources for English language teachers and learners? Their focus is on the teacher, supporting them and offering professional development. I give a brief overview of the session in this edition. I'm confident you will find something to inspire you.

First of all, for this edition, our keynote speaker for JALT International 2022, **Kensaku Yoshida**, has kindly written up his presentation for us titled, '**The Importance of Knowing the Needs of the Students**' that gives us food for thought. He discusses factors that impact students' learning in the classroom.

He explains that students who are taught by teachers using all four skills (five areas) in their teaching are more highly motivated to use and understand English than those who are not. However, these results do not reflect the students' English test scores. In other words, when a student says he/she likes English, it does not necessarily mean that he/she has high scores in English tests. The point to note here is the importance of integrating all four skills and five areas in teaching English because that's what seems to motivate the students most in wanting to learn English.

I'll stop there, and let you enjoy reading Yoshida sensei's article (and note, some of the tables contain URL links to the sources in Japanese), and take a look at some of the resources Kristen & Claire so freely shared with me, and in so doing, with you too.

I hope you have a splendid wrap up to the academic year and a wonderful spring!

Kate

From the SIG Coordinator

Dear SIG Membership,

Hello to everyone wherever in the world these words find you. I'd like to introduce myself to you; I am your new 2022-23 TYL SIG coordinator. Teaching younger learners, I am based in a public high school in Kyoto. I have been a member of JALT for the better part of the past 10 years and I am excited to help the TYL SIG as we come back fully for face-to-face conferences again.

My background is in K-12 education in the US and here in Japan, and I have taught every grade, from K-12. I've taught media skills, technology, biology, integrated science, and English. I've been a full-time teacher, an ALT, and a media specialist. So, with a broad range of experience, I feel like I can relate to a lot of you!

I am excited to be helping the TYLSIG continue to be the dynamic, fantastic SIG that it is. We have so many great events, publications (like this one!) and programs because your officers are working so tirelessly to get everything together. They are a great example of how teamwork makes an organization so much more than just a sum of its parts. Speaking of which, if you are interested in learning more about being a volunteer and helping at some events, please send a message to the SIG by email at: tyl@jalt.org and I'll let you know how you can help and learn how to participate more in the SIG. Of course, as this is your SIG, if you have any ideas, suggestions, complaints, questions, please feel free to send those our way, too! If there is something you need, we'll do our best to make it happen!

I was so happy to meet and see so many of you in Fukuoka at the International Conference in November, and I really hope a lot of you can make it to the PanSIG in May. Especially since it is here in Kyoto, I feel like everyone's coming over to my backyard for a party. I am excited to see all the TYL presentations and to see everyone again, and meet more new faces, too!

Nice to meet you all and see you in May!

Sincerely,

Dr. Erin Noxon

SIG Coordinator

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The Importance of Knowing the Needs of the Students

Kensaku Yoshida
Eiken Foundation of Japan
Sophia University

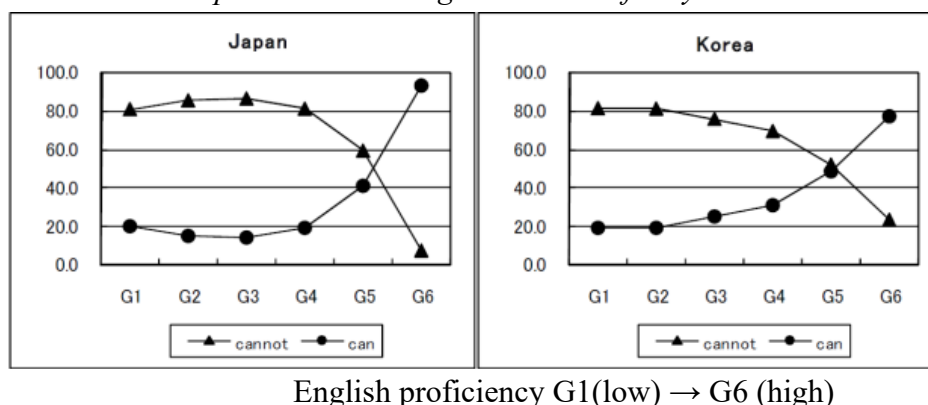
Introduction

All too often teachers assume that their assessment of their students' English proficiency—most often based on the results of English tests—is objective and reliable. However, is this really true? The results of MEXT's annual survey on the students' English proficiency and the factors which are considered relevant in producing students with high English proficiency are interesting, but whether or not they reflect the students' perceptions of their own proficiencies is oftentimes questionable. There are many studies which look at students' attainment of English proficiency from the teachers' perspective or from the perspective of researchers, but not from the students' perspective.

More than a decade ago we conducted a survey of Japanese and Korean high school students (Naganuma & Yoshida, 2007) and found that approximately 50% of those who had very high scores (G5) on the Global Test of English Communication (GTEC) answered negatively to the Can-do statement, "I can speak to native English teachers freely," and only those with the highest scores (G6) answered "Yes" to this statement.

Figure 1

Can-do statement: I can speak to native English teachers freely



Note. Adapted from Naganuma & Yoshida (2007)

https://www.arcle.jp/research/books/data/html/data/pdf/vol4_3-1.pdf

However, when we visited an elementary school where English had just begun to be taught and asked a sixth-grade student who had just come out of her English class, "Can you speak with native English teachers freely?" she answered, "Yes, I can." Obviously, the elementary school student had very low proficiency in English as measured by English proficiency tests, but she seemed to have enjoyed her class taught by a native English speaking ALT, and she was able to

understand what the teacher was saying and could respond accordingly. Thus, she felt confident about being able to speak with native English speakers.

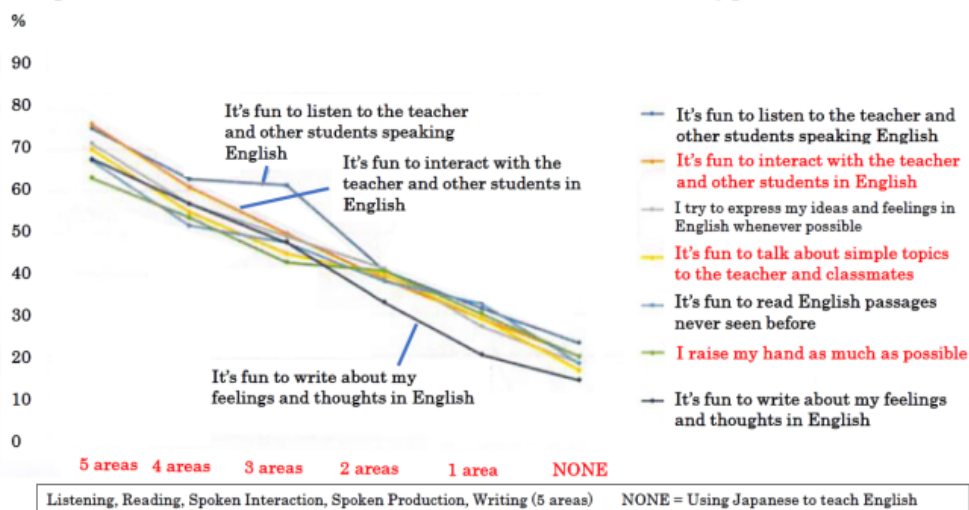
How the students feel about their classes

In 2018 Benesse conducted a survey administered to approximately 1000 junior high school students to see how they perceived the English classes they were taking. The survey results show that students, who are taught by teachers using all four skills (five areas—Speaking is divided into 2 areas, ‘Spoken Interaction’ and ‘Spoken Production’ in their everyday teaching show higher motivation than those taught by teachers who utilize fewer number of skills in their teaching.

Figure 2

Perceptions of English classes

Relationship between students’ interests, will to learn and type of activities in class



Note. Adapted from Benesse (2018) (Translated by the author).

https://www.arcle.jp/report/2018/pdf/0207_02s.pdf

For example, to the item ‘It’s fun to interact with the teacher and other students in English’ approximately 80% of the students being taught by a teacher using all four skills (five areas) answered positively as opposed to approximately 40% of those taught by a teacher using just 2 skills, and 20% of those taught by a teacher using none (using Japanese to teach English). The same tendency can be seen in all of the statements in the graph above, showing that students who are taught by teachers using all four skills (five 5 areas) in their teaching are more highly motivated to use and understand English than those who are not. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that these results do not reflect the students’ English test scores. They might not even reflect the perceptions teachers have of each student. In fact, when asked if they like English, there are many students who answer “yes” and yet when asked if they like their English class, answer “no”. In other words, when a student says he/she likes English, it does not necessarily mean that he/she has high scores in English tests.

The point to note here is the importance of integrating all the macro skills when teaching English because that's what seems to motivate the students most in terms of wanting to learn English.

Importance of Content

The results of MEXT's annual survey on how the Course of Study is being implemented in the actual schools, and shows that students who are taught by teachers who allot 50% or more the class time to student activities using English, and teachers who conduct more than 50% of the class in English achieve statistically higher proficiency in English than those whose teachers allot less class time to student activities, and who conduct their classes using less time in English (MEXT, 2021). Although this survey is based on the answers to questionnaires provided by MEXT and compiled by the respective prefectural and municipal boards of education, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of individual teachers or students, they seem to support the results Benesse survey mentioned above. In other words, the more the teachers use English to conduct their classes and the more time they allot to student activities, the higher the students' proficiency in English will become and the more motivated the students will become.

However, does this mean that, therefore, teachers should use English to conduct their classes as much as possible? In a survey conducted in which approximately 270 junior and senior high school English teachers participated (Yoshida et al., 2017), it was found that although teachers agree that 'teaching English in English' is important (26.9%), more important was 'conducting classes integrating all four skills' (66.1%). In other words, simply using English to teach English is not enough. Teachers believe that the more all four skills are integrated in their teaching the better. This corroborates the results of the Benesse survey where it was found that the more integrated the four skills in the teaching the more motivated the students became.

Table 1

The four skills and student motivation

順位	項目	%
1	【項目 114】 Getting students do activities integrating all four skills	66.1
2	【項目 111】 Getting students to read and understand the writer's intentions	61.6
3	【項目 110】 Getting students to talk about their own ideas	61.3
4	【項目 109】 Getting students to listen and understand the speaker's intentions	58.7
5	【項目 112】 Getting students to write about their own ideas	58.7
6	【項目 113】 Getting students to organize their ideas logically and talk and write about them	55.0
7	【項目 115】 Conduct classes basically in English	26.9

Note. Translated by the author

Why do the teachers consider the factors noted in table to be important? To the question why the items they chose were important, the researchers looked at the second most important factor in the table above, and found that the main reason was 'because the students show interest' (29%) as opposed to the next highest reason 'the students have enough proficiency to understand the English used' (14%).

Table 2*Reasons for getting students to do certain activities*

表 125. 【項目 117】 Reasons for why teachers do the activities on the previous slide		
行っている理由	回答件数	全体に占める割合
Because students have enough English proficiency to understand	76 件	14.7%
Because students show interest	150 件	29.0%
Because it does not put too much extra burden on the teacher	32 件	6.2%
Because it is most important to realize the goals set in the Course of Study	27 件	5.2%
Because it is relatively easy to relate the content with the content in the textbook	76 件	14.7%
Because I have confidence in my own English ability	27 件	5.2%
Because I have studied about relevant teaching methods and approaches	65 件	12.5%
Because it is important for entrance examinations	46 件	8.9%
Others	19 件	3.7%

Note. Translated by the author

In other words, it is not just using English in the classroom that is important but providing students with content they are interested in that is more important. MEXT notes that the use of materials from other subjects and the student's experiences should be considered as content for English classes. There are activity ideas for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) provided by the Japan CLIL Pedagogy Association which are being used as an approach from elementary school to university, in which English is acquired in the process of acquiring knowledge of some other content area, for example, studying crafts and art in English, science in English, social studies in English, international relations in English.

Conclusion and Reflection

The results of these surveys show that the students are interested in using English in the classroom, and that the more they are exposed to English provided in integrated activities, the more positive their motivation to learn English becomes. Furthermore, providing students with interesting content is even more important than simply using English in the classroom.

The state of English education in Japan has reached a stage where what is written in the Course of Study is coming closer to the needs and motivation of the students to study English. As the results of the surveys imply, teachers who are aware of the needs and motivation of the students will integrate all four skills (five areas), and they will also put more emphasis on content which is of interest to the students. Knowing what motivates the students to study English is the most important factor in improving the way teachers teach. Although no evidence is given concerning the cause-effect relationship between the contents of the new Courses of Study and the students' needs and motivation, there does seem to be some correlation. The changes introduced in the new Courses of Study which are based on communicative principles have come at a very opportune time.

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Free OPEN Resources for Professional Development: Report from JALT Hokkaido

Kate Sato
Hokkaido University of Science

Claire Lee and Kristen Cardona are both on the English Language Fellow program (never heard of it? Me neither, but you can find out more here: <https://elprograms.org/fellow-program/>) representing the English Language Programs which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. (By the way, the Fellow Application is currently open). And if that doesn't mean much to you, which it didn't to me, get ready to start delving into the treasure trove of information and resources!

The mind-blowing presentation started with information on the American English Website, where teachers can find resources for teaching (ahem) American English language and culture (yes, I'm British, but we are living in a global world, right?). <https://americanenglish.state.gov/>

On that website you can click through to the resources and programs page, where the resources are divided by categories: teaching the four skills, teachers corner, U.S. culture songs & games and webinars, plus 'other resources' including books of activities (<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources-and-programs>).

Alternatively click to the Webinars page where you will find a host of videos including titles like: '[interactive activities to build student motivation and engagement in your classroom](#)'. Click on a title and discover the resources including a pdf of the slides. Click on the video and it takes you to the video, in this case, it's on YouTube and I've linked this title so you can check it out if you like.

Back to 'distance learning programs' and you'll find these are hosted on MOOCs (massive open online courses). These include topics such as TESOL Methodology, and yes, '*Teaching English To Young Learners*'! *As it says on the webpage: 'Participants who complete these MOOCs with a 70% passing rate or higher are eligible to receive a digital badge and e-certificate from the U.S. Department of State.'* Something that will look impressive in any school or office.

Finally, there is the fourth link: [Teacher Training Workshops](#), where once again there are more resources. Keep clicking and you'll find websites such as the [U.S. Mint Coin Classroom](#) for teaching kids about 'the life of a coin' for example!

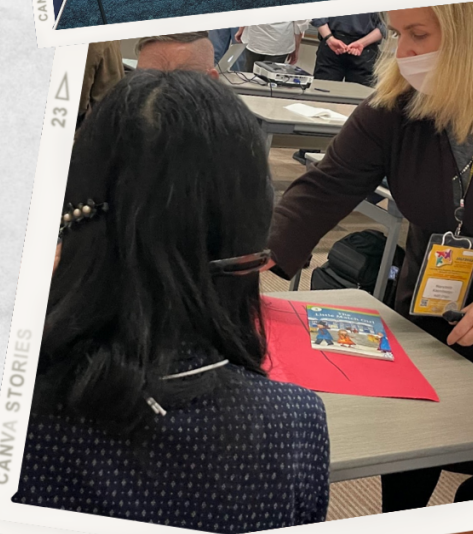
Claire and Kristen shared their favourite resources and also gave participants a copy of the 'English Teaching Forum' which is a printed magazine for teachers with articles by teachers from across the globe. Finally, they shared some precious handouts with QR codes, which I will share in our LINE OC group. (For more information about the LINE OC group see below.)

If you get a chance to see one of their presentations (hopefully at the PANSIG, JALT National, and/or JALT Okinawa in October), I highly recommend attending. I'm sure you'll find it as inspiring as I did. If you check out the resources there, and have a recommendation, why not tell us about it on our SIG LINE OC group chat? In the meantime, happy digging!



MEMORIES OF JALT JUNIOR 2022

in Fukuoka



Poster presentations



Erin, our wonderful new SIG Coordinator!



The lovely Marybeth

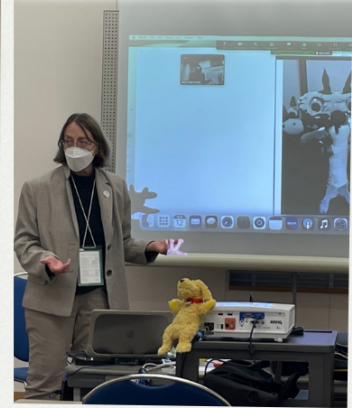


Thought-provoking sessions...

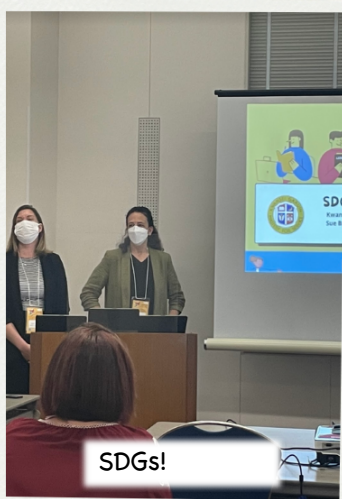


Martin Sedaghat, your program chair.

Mary Virgil-Uchida
Jalt Jr Conference chair.



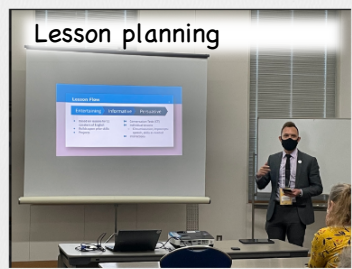
Hands on!



SDGs!



Kensaku Yoshida
Plenary Speaker



Lesson planning



Fancy a workshop?! Hearing about a phonics case study? Or some other inspiring session?



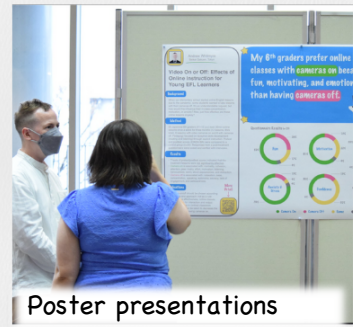
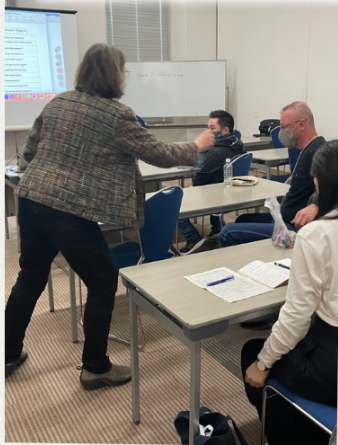
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- 2. Background
- 3. Phonics in
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- 5. Steps to Ti
- 6. Demons
- 7. Feedback
- 8. Impact
- 9. Future Go



Practical Implications

- 1. Students need explicit support to make English phonemes and grapheme connections
- 2. National curriculum needs more detail grade by grade

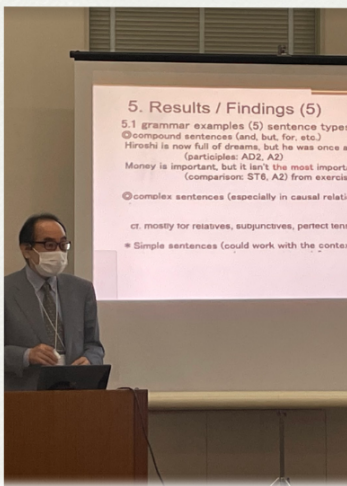
From classroom activities, to focus on grammar



Poster presentations



From the plenary to presentations...



Amy, Kensaku, Mary



Kate Sato: publications

Something for YOU at the JALT International Conference



We hope to see you there this November!?



Skill-up time!

Announcements

We have started an LINE Open Chat (LINE OC) group for SIG members. The concept is you can quickly text anyone in the SIG whenever you need to for basically anything younger learner related, or JALT related (e.g. how to get to a conference, a URL for the website, etc). Jobs will also be posted on the

To join the LINE OC, please look out for an email from Amy, your membership chair. This is only for TYL SIG current members, so please keep it to yourself.

The PanSIG Conference.

Please come and join us in Kyoto this year for the PanSIG Conference. The JALT PanSIG 2023 Conference will take place from May 12th to 14th 2023 at Kyoto Sangyo University (京都産業大学) in Kyoto. It will be a face-to-face event with live broadcast sessions and pre-recorded video presentations.

The theme for PanSIG 2023 is "Looking forward" to sustainable futures in language education. Based on what we have learned through the experiences of recent years, we feel it is time to look forward and focus on what lies ahead, both in terms of expectations and planning. The goal of the conference is to establish and foster connections between people.

Our SIG will have a 90-minute forum where we will talk about current and relevant issues in teaching young learners. There will also be several TYL related presentations for your professional development. Your officers also hope to meet with members to discuss the future of TYL events and direction.

The PanSIG conference is a slightly smaller conference than the JALT International Conference in November and thereby this conference is perhaps more manageable over the course of a weekend. It is also possible to attend only one day and gain a lot of ideas to bring to your classrooms. Please come and help us foster connections with each other. We look forward to seeing you there.



Submission Guidelines

Detailed submission guidelines can be found at: <https://jalt-tyl.net/submission-guidelines/>

Please make sure to follow APA 7 guidelines for referencing.

Thank you very much!

Kate & Gaby