

# 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



## Welcome

I hope you have had a good summer, although I have found it overly hot, even up here in Hokkaido. This edition of the JALT Teaching Younger Learners Special Interest Group publication has different contents, as well as a slightly different look.

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## What's inside?

We want to let you know a little more about what we, officers, have been doing. First is a word from our SIG president Erin Noxon. Other contributions are from Paul Nation (Treasurer), Gaby Benthien (co-publications), Martin Sedaghat (Officer at Large), Frances Shiobara, and Masako Morikawa (Programs co-chairs). We also have a very comprehensive article on PBL from Ross Vida Anne Motos.

My role as publications chair is to receive submissions, look them over, and get the wonderful team to help polish them up for publication. If you want to see your name in print, please send me an article! We accept all kinds of articles; from lesson plans to activities, and research articles, all are welcome.

Please don't be shy!

*Kate*

Editor

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## Would you like to join us?

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Hello everyone and thank you always for being a part of TYL SIG. The international conference in November is coming up soon, and we need members who would like to become more involved in the SIG to step into some officer roles! We know that might sound intimidating, so we have set it up so that no new person is joining unsupported! Anyone who joins us this year will join as a co-officer and then they will learn the ropes from the other person and then take over from them in the following year. So you have a person to guide you through the whole process! This year, we are looking for the following officer roles to be filled:

- ◆ **Co-website manager:** you will work with me to learn how we post things on the TYL website and then you can help us publicise everything we do in the SIG. The website is a WordPress site, so it's not that difficult to update!
- ◆ **Co-social media poster:** we'd like to get a lot more interaction on our Facebook and Instagram posts, so you can help the current social media coordinator to hype up our events.
- ◆ **Mechanical/APA Editor** - this person would work directly with the editor and co-editor of The School House journal and be a supporter who just reads and checks to be sure that the APA issues and also just errors have all been caught before publication
- ◆ **JJ co-coordinator** - this person would help to plan the JALT Junior conference in November and would attend only meetings with the current coordinator.
- ◆ **Co-Treasurer** - this person would learn from the current Treasurer who will pass the role on to the new person in November 2025.

If any of these roles sound interesting to you and you would like more information, please let me know and I will let you know more! Just send an email to me at [tyl@jalt.org](mailto:tyl@jalt.org)  
Thanks! Hope to see you soon!

Erin Noxon, JALT TYL SIG President

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## Finances are Secure

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I'm Paul Nanton, treasurer. I'm responsible for all monetary transactions made for our SIG. Currently we are very healthy finance wise. Because of that we've been able to co-sponsor a variety of online and in-person events. We will continue to do so. If you would like for our SIG to co-sponsor an event, please send us your idea.

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## The intersection of language, images and communication

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Apart from my usual work teaching university students, my research focus and interests for 2024 have been veering towards the intersection of images and communication. More specifically, the exploration of intersection(s) between foreign language education and art, communication, global citizenship education, peace education and picture books.

In February I visited an art gallery in Tokyo, with the rather intriguing name of Art for Thought.

On display were the original paintings by Kensuke Miyazaki that are featured in the picture book *Over the Wall*, which was published by Tokyo Shoseki this summer. Some readers may be familiar with the artist and the huge colorful murals he paints around the world as his story features in some English textbooks used in Japan. These murals are painted together with local people, and often showcase stories and images important to those who will see the murals in their daily life. For example, the theme for the mural in a jail in Ecuador is the folktale *The Flight of the Hummingbird*, and in fact the picture book text by Yoichi Kiyota also draws on this story. *Over the Wall* follows a swallow called Sammy as he flies around the world to see the murals and his friends Hiroshi and Winnie from Ishinomaki in Miyagi. This book showcases different cultures and stories, and highlights the importance of peace and the fact that even small actions by individuals can have an effect. I received my copy in late July, and I am looking forward to using it in my pre-service teacher classes.

This spring I was also privileged to meet a student on Zoom who participated in a peace education program in Hiroshima. Students at a local high are paired with atomic bomb survivors,

who then share their memories of the war and its aftermath. The student subsequently creates a painting based on this talk. In this way, the older generation passes their experiences onto the younger generation as a part of the peace education program. The paintings are exhibited annually. However, an acquaintance of mine went one step further. He organized a Zoom event where one of the students explained her interest in art, and the process of creating this painting, to us (three teachers) in English. What an amazing idea!

June saw participation in a TYL Tokyo event titled Finding a Balance Between Tech and Touch in the Young Learner Classroom. The three speakers gave insightful presentations on how technology can be combined with hands-on learning activities and make learning more accessible and inclusive, and the importance of connections and communication. To watch it, click [here](#).

November will be busy with preparation for a festival at my university and the JALT 2024 International Conference and Educational Materials Exhibition. I have held a craft workshop at the university for the past 10 years or so, and each year I am reminded of the effective combination of art and communication. The idea behind this workshop is simple: For people of all ages to enjoy creating something while communicating in English. Small children and adults alike usually forget their anxiety or embarrassment and are happy to listen to instructions or chat or convey their own ideas in English, CLIL in action! Since 2023, my workshop has had a reuse, recycle, remake theme, which means I have been collecting materials over the year, and I hope that can encourage participants to think about the environment. My second workshop at the festival involves using a set kit to create picture books in local languages to send to schools in South-East Asia. In the future, I hope to start up a similar program at my university.

The following week will see me travelling to Shizuoka for JALT Junior and my own presentation Fostering Social Awareness Through Picture Books. I hope to see many TYL members at our SIG events!

Between these events, I was also of course working with the TYL SIG team and the Tokyo JALT TYL team to give our members informative publications and great events. Please consider joining us!

Gaby Benthien

Publications Co-chair

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## Officer at what?

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Hello! My name is Martin Sedaghat, and I'm one of the Officers at Large for the TYL SIG. What does that actually mean? I used to be the Program Chair, but I felt it was time to let some other members give it a try. However, I still wanted to be an active member and help the other SIG officers, so becoming a Member at Large was a good way to do this. In this position, I support the SIG in different ways that I can with my experience from the past few years. One main thing I try to do is connect TYL with other SIGs, groups, and communities (both in and outside of JALT), so that we can all collaborate and learn from each other. For example, TYL helped to sponsor the Student Peer Interaction Network's (SPIN) student research symposium, in which current students get a valuable opportunity to present about their studies and research with feedback from other members.

Also, JALT Junior is planning to organize an interactive arts and crafts space with the ART SIG at the 2024 International Conference, so please stop by and check it out! The TYL SIG has always been a large group, and with such a wide range of contexts and ages that we teach, this is the perfect situation for working together with teachers and groups from all kinds of classrooms and backgrounds. If you have any ideas or suggestions for events and collaborations that you'd like to see, please let us know!

Martin Sedaghat

Officer at Large

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## Okinawa/TYL 21st Century Language Teaching Conference

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There will be another exciting 21st Century Language Teaching Conference this year sponsored by Okinawa JALT and Teaching Younger Learners SIG in Naha, Okinawa on October

26-27. Although call for presentations is over, there is still an opportunity to attend as the deadline for non-presenters is 18th October 2024. If you would still like a final bit of summer sun, and to join a relaxed conference of language educators, researchers, and professionals from around the world sharing their insights, experiences, and research findings in the field of language teaching and learning, please join us. There will be a variety of short oral presentations, workshops and poster presentations in a relaxed atmosphere. It's a great opportunity to enjoy a little bit of rest and relaxation as well as networking with other teachers. All details can be found on the Okinawa JALT website <http://www.okijalt.org/>

Frances Shiobara

Programs co-chair



## TYL Workshops for English Teachers

I have been organizing various types of workshops for English teachers of young learners for more than 2 years now. This year my focus is to bring Positive Discipline to English teachers. Positive Discipline is a SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) curriculum for educators in various areas, and I find it inspiring and empowering not only for me but also for my students. We have three Positive Discipline workshops planned this year, and our first workshop in June was very successful. All three workshops will focus on different aspects of Positive Discipline, and all kinds of educators are welcome to join in just one of them, or all of them!

Masako Moriwaki

Programs co-chair



## **Project-Based Learning in ESL Settings: Enhancing Language Education through Real-World Application for Younger Learners of English.**

Ross Vida Anne Motos

ESL Instructor at LCA Kokusai Shogakko & University of the Philippines Open University

Anne Motos is an experienced ESL educator originally from the Philippines. She is currently teaching at a school in Kanagawa, Japan, where the focus is on a Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach. Since beginning her career in ESL education in 2016, Anne has been committed to enhancing language acquisition through innovative, student-centered methodologies. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she is pursuing a Master of Arts in Language and Literacy Education to further deepen her expertise in this field.



In the ever-evolving landscape of English as a Second Language (ESL) education, educators are continually exploring innovative methods to engage students and foster deeper language acquisition. Among the myriad of approaches available, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as a particularly effective strategy, offering a dynamic way to enhance language skills through real-world application even for younger learners of English (Aksela, 2019).

### **Understanding Project-Based Learning (PBL)**

Project-Based Learning is an instructional approach where students engage in a project over an extended period, working on a question or problem. This learning approach aims to veer away from the traditional classroom setting where the use of textbooks is the primary resource. Unlike traditional methods that often focus on rote memorization and passive learning, PBL emphasizes 21st century skills: active engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration. Students apply their language skills to solve real-world problems, creating tangible outcomes that demonstrate their understanding and proficiency.

According to Masako Moriwaki, the Vice Principal of a bilingual elementary school in Kanagawa who also introduced PBL approach to the school, the primary objective for PBL

language educators is to create opportunities for students to simultaneously practice various skills and apply knowledge, mirroring the way problems are addressed in real-life situations. It is essential for educators to cultivate an environment that fosters intrinsic motivation and encourage students to take risks in their learning. Additionally, instructors should ensure that students have a clear understanding of problem-solving and how these skills can be utilized in their personal learning journeys.

### **Benefits of PBL in ESL Education for Younger Learners**

I have been teaching PBL in elementary education for nearly three years. I firmly believe that PBL provides significant advantages in ESL instruction for younger learners. By integrating real-world tasks and fostering collaborative work, PBL not only enhances language acquisition, but it also supports the development of a broad spectrum of skills beyond language proficiency.

Here's a detailed look at the key benefits of PBL in ESL education which have proven beneficial in designing curricula with a PBL approach for my classroom:

**Contextualized Learning:** PBL provides a meaningful context for language use. By working on projects that have real-world relevance, students use English in practical situations, which helps them see the value of their learning. This contextualized approach makes language acquisition more relevant and engaging.

**Enhanced Communication Skills:** PBL encourages students to communicate effectively in both written and spoken forms. Whether they're presenting their findings, collaborating with peers, or producing written reports, students practice using English in various contexts, which helps improve their fluency and confidence.

**Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Engaging in projects requires younger learners to think critically and solve problems. This cognitive engagement promotes higher-order thinking skills, which are essential for language development. As students analyze problems, research solutions, and discuss their findings, they develop a deeper understanding of the language and how it functions in different contexts.

**Increased Motivation and Engagement:** In traditional ESL classrooms there is sometimes a struggle with children's motivation, especially when students perceive language learning as a series of isolated tasks. PBL, with its focus on meaningful outcomes and real-world relevance, often leads



to higher levels of motivation and engagement. Students are more likely to be invested in their learning when they see the direct impact of their efforts.

**Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** PBL projects can be designed to incorporate and celebrate cultural diversity. By working on projects that explore different cultures, global issues, or community needs, students can share their own backgrounds while learning about others, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

### Implementing PBL in ESL Classrooms

Several projects undertaken by my students thus far include developing experimental products for a science fair, participating in a local park tree preservation initiative, organizing an Earth Day concert, creating video journals, publishing a digital magazine, mobile app development, and producing video, radio, and poster advertisements. Currently, they are looking forward to developing school committees aimed at enhancing the broadcasting system and promoting increased reading among students. Once an educator understands the principles behind PBL approach well enough to designing projects, the possibilities are endless.



*Figures 1 and 2: PBL Science Fair Entrance and Experiment Display Board*

To effectively integrate PBL into an ESL curriculum, educators should consider the following steps:

**Identify Clear Objectives:** Begin by defining the language learning objectives you aim to achieve through the project. These might include specific vocabulary, grammar structures, or communication skills. Ensure that the project aligns with these objectives while offering ample opportunities for language practice.

I have been incorporating both Instructional and Expressive objectives in designing project descriptions. Eisner (1969) explains the concept of instructional objectives, which focus on the acquisition of established skills, while expressive objectives aim to elaborate on and modify existing knowledge. After establishing the objectives, I communicate them to both the class and the students' parents.

***Choose Relevant Projects:*** Select projects that are meaningful and engaging for your students.

Introduce students to a thought-provoking subject, which could range from creating a community guide, developing a marketing plan for a local business, or organizing a cultural exchange event. The key is to choose projects that will capture students' interests and provide a context for using English.

***Ask Driving Questions:*** When designing a project, crafting a compelling driving question is crucial. The driving question should be open-ended, thought-provoking, and directly related to the project's theme, guiding children through their exploration and learning process. These are the example driving questions that have guided us in creating our projects:

- Why are science and engineering important and how can they work together to help save people?
- How can we have a fun experience supporting a cause that will make a difference in the world?
- How can we get involved with real people about real-world issues in our community?
- How can we organize an event that is both enjoyable and meaningful?
- How can we design and promote an app that helps prevent or stop bullying in schools?

***Provide Support and Scaffolding:*** While PBL encourages independent learning, students may need support and guidance throughout the project. Create a strategy that outlines precise steps. Provide clear instructions, resources, and support to help students navigate the project. Consider breaking the project into manageable tasks and providing formative feedback to help students stay on track.



*Figure 3: Poster designed for raising awareness on how to help save the Earth*



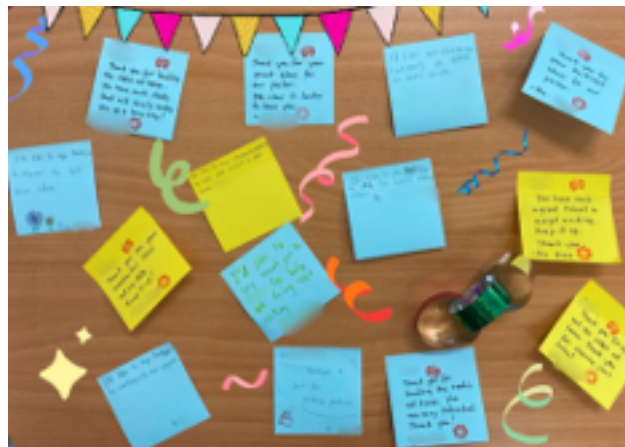
*Figure 4: Mobile Application Developed by Students to Address Bullying Issues*

**Encourage Collaboration:** Foster a collaborative environment where students can work together, share ideas, and provide feedback to one another. Collaboration not only enhances language skills but also helps students develop teamwork and interpersonal skills. It is important that the teachers build an environment where students are intrinsically motivated to learn, and where they feel safe taking risks.

**Creating a Final Product:** Having an opportunity for younger learners to showcase their learning and demonstrate their understanding of the project's theme and objectives is vital. The final product should effectively encapsulate the research, critical thinking, and language skills students have developed throughout the project.

**Assess and Reflect:** Design assessments that evaluate both the process and the final product. Consider using rubrics that assess language use, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

Additionally, incorporate reflection activities where students can evaluate their own learning and the effectiveness of the project. It is essential that the students touch base at the beginning, during, and after a project. This way they are not just identifying their own strengths and areas for growth, but also learn how to find opportunities to use their skills in a way that is meaningful to them. Furthermore, this presents a valuable opportunity for students to recognize and appreciate one another's dedication and efforts.



*Figure 5: PBL Class Message Board*

## **Conclusion**

PBL represents a powerful pedagogical approach for ESL settings, offering younger learners a chance to engage deeply with the language through practical, real-world tasks. By integrating PBL into ESL instruction, educators can enhance language acquisition, boost student motivation, and create a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment. PBL for younger learners of English is an opportunity for the students to take ownership of their own learning as well as use the target language in many meaningful ways. As the field of ESL continues to evolve, PBL stands out as a promising strategy to prepare children for effective communication and problem-solving in a globalized world.

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## Submission Guidelines

All submissions are subject to review by the publications team. We currently accept submissions from both JALT members and non-members.

### **Publication:**

The School House is published three times a year (winter, spring, and summer/autumn).

### **Deadlines:**

Submissions for The School House are accepted on an ongoing basis.

### **Types of articles:**

§ Feature research-based articles (3,000 – 5,000 words) § Short articles (maximum 1,500 words)

§ Interviews (1,000 – 3,000 words)

§ Classroom ideas (maximum 1,000 words)

§ Book reviews (700–2,000 words) 700 – 2,000 words)

§ Conference/ presentation reviews (700 – 2,000 words)

§ Text Reviews (700 – 2,000 words and based on a text you actually used in class.

§ Language program reviews (600 – 1500 words)

### **Quick Formatting Guidelines:**

Style: The School House basically follows the APA 7 style for English manuscripts, in particular for research-based articles.

Font: Times New Roman size 12 for the entire manuscript

Line spacing: 1.5

New pages for: Appendixes and references/bibliography Title, author's name(s), and affiliation:

Centre

Text: Left aligned. Paragraphs are indented Headings/subheadings: no numbers.

§ Level 1: Centre bold font Title Case Heading (text begins with an indent)

§ Level 2: Flush left, Bold, Title Case Heading

§ Level 3: Flush left, Bold, Italic, Title Case Heading

\*Articles other than feature research-based articles may be formatted alternatively.

**Submission procedure**

1. Submit a cover sheet with the name(s) and institution(s) of the author(s). Biography(-ies) and photographs of the author(s)' are also welcome.
2. Please remove all identifiable references to author(s) and location(s) in the text of the manuscript.
3. We encourage illustrations, photos, and examples of students' work to help readers visualize your content.
4. Please email your (APA formatted) manuscript and cover sheet, in Word (.doc and .docx) format to [theschoolhouse.tylsig@gmail.com](mailto:theschoolhouse.tylsig@gmail.com) (remember to remove the []).

**Please ensure to:**

§ Indicate the type of article you are submitting in the body of the email. § Include your name as you want it to appear in the journal.

§ Include your affiliation (the name of where you work).

§ Three, or four key words for your article (if applicable).

Publication of research articles is subject to a double-blind peer review. The evaluation process for research-based articles typically takes about four weeks, after which time the author will be informed of the peer reviewers' decision.

Non-research articles are proof-read to ensure consistency for publishing.

Thank you very much.

*Kate & Gaby*