15th NEAR Language Education Conference
"What is the Future of Language Learning?"
Conference Handbook

NIIGATA 新潟 JALT

Nagano JALT

Table of Contents

Contents

Schedule

	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3
9:45-9:50	*Opening remarks*		
10:00-10:40 Session 1	**Martin Sedaghat** Strategic Interactions in the Language Classroom	**Yosuke Ogawa** Say a little more: Increasing turn content in student talk	**Cheryl Kirchhoff** Shift in Focus from Motivation to Engagement
11:00-11:40 Session 2		**Jermaine Gordon-Mizusawa** Playing to Learn: Teaching Language, Culture, and Diversity Using Video Game Narratives	**James Underwood** Using the SDGs as a springboard to developing academic literacy and language skills
11:40-13:00	*Lunch*		
13:00-14:00 Plenary	**May Oo** Advocating for Transformative Change: Addressing Nativespeakerism, Social Justice, Diversity, and Equity in ELT		
14:20-15:00 Session 3	**Mizuka Tsukamoto** Teaching Environment and Professional Lives of EFL Instructors	**Junko Yamamoto** Use of Machine Translation in English Education	**Philip Nguyen** Enhancing Classroom Learning with Microsoft Teams: Exploring the Benefits of an Education LMS
15:00-15:30 Break	*Break*		
15:30-16:10 Session 4	**Jean-Pierre J. Richard** Goal Complexes: The role of mastery goals and autonomous reasons for learning	**Peter Iori Kobayashi** CLIL, EMI or Mandarin+? Taiwan's Path Towards a Bilingual Nation	
16:20-16:30	*Closing remarks*		

Plenary Speaker

May Kyaw Oo

- Plenary title: Advocating for Transformative Change: Addressing Nativespeakerism, Social Justice, Diversity, and Equity in ELT

- Plenary abstract: In this talk, I will address nativespeakerism, social justice, diversity, and equity issues in the ELT landscape of Japan and Southeast Asian countries. My talk will call upon ELT professionals to become advocates for transformative change. Highlighting the consequences of nativespeakerism, I will explore the need for allyship and solidarity within and beyond the classroom. I will also share my journey of activism to challenge discriminatory practices in ELT and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Committee's efforts in making JALT a more equitable association for teachers as incoming chair of the DEI committee. Additionally, I'll touch upon how activism in ELT influenced my role as an art activist for Myanmar, emphasizing the interconnectedness of art and social justice efforts. In line with that, this talk will extend its focus on the importance of integrating social justice themes to foster socially conscious and empowered learners in inclusive ELT classrooms. I will also share practical strategies for promoting allyship and activism with the hope that it will empower educators to act in their institutions and communities and inspire their students and themselves to become citizens with a strong sense of civic agency. By collectively addressing these issues, I hope that this talk will further motivate participants to work towards a more just and equitable world.

Presentations

Listed by presentation times.

Strategic Interactions in the Language Classroom
Martin Sedaghat
Room 1, 10:00-10:40

Abstract

Role-plays and other simulation-style activities are often used in L2 classrooms to give students chances to practice their speaking skills in a variety of situations. However, most role-plays take the form of prewritten scripts and become exercises in reading more than actual communicative language use. There is a need for a different angle on the traditional role-play, to allow students to use language in ways that are authentic and spontaneous. This presentation will introduce the concept of strategic interactions (SIs), which are role-plays created with built-in conflicts based around scenarios, described by Di Pietro (1987) as "a realistic happening involving the unexpected and requiring the use of language to be resolved". In real world settings, language must often be utilized to negotiate and persuade, with approaches adapted to keep the dialogue moving toward a conclusion. SIs mimic this by presenting clear roles and specific conflicts that require communication to reach a solution. They also add the element of dramatic tension and spontaneity, along with opportunities for students to collaborate and co-construct language. Four stages of using SIs will be described: 1) Planning, in which the teacher creates the roles, scenario, and materials for the activity, 2) preparation, in which students work together to think about the scenario and try to predict what kind of language they will need to navigate the situation, 3) performance, in which students make pairs of opposing roles and try to find a resolution, and 4) reflection, in which teachers give feedback and also help students to reflect on their own language usage with transcriptions of their performances. Finally, there will be a discussion of both the successes and challenges observed by the presenter in using these activities with 1st year students at a private medical university. Di Pietro, R.J. (1987). Strategic Interaction. Cambridge University Press.

Description

Role-play activities are commonly used in communicative English classrooms to practice speaking skills in a variety of situations. However, most role-plays are heavily scripted and do not give students a chance to use language in creative and authentic ways. This presentation will introduce the concept of strategic interactions (SIs), which are role-plays created with built-in conflicts based around scenarios, described by Di Pietro (1987) as "a realistic happening involving the unexpected and requiring the use of language to be resolved". In real world settings, language must often be utilized to negotiate and persuade, with approaches adapted to keep the dialogue moving toward a conclusion. SIs mimic this by presenting clear

roles and specific conflicts that require communication to reach a solution. They also add the element of dramatic tension and spontaneity, along with opportunities for students to collaborate and co-construct language. The stages of planning, explaining, and carrying out SIs will be described, along with both the successes and challenges observed by the presenter in using these activities with 1st year students at a private medical university. Additionally, participants will have a chance to try SIs for themselves.

Say a little more: Increasing turn content in student talk
Yosuke Ogawa
Room 2, 10:00-10:40

Abstract

Some teachers may have the experience of students terminating their L2 speech immediately after an allocated speaking task has been completed in minimal fashion and teachers have struggled to increase the amount of student talk beyond these minimized turns. Numerous learning-motivation studies have demonstrated that the factors behind their minimized talk are language anxiety towards syntactic, lexical, or phonological accuracy. However, those studies are based on students' self-evaluation through questionnaires or interviews. In other words, the approach does not focus on how they actually interact in classroom. This presentation will outline ways students can be encouraged to expand their talk. Firstly, the presenter will detail how students manipulate L1/L2 language choice and speech acts in classroom oral activities and how students attend to their limited L2 proficiency. Subsequently, their language use will be categorized based on topic, in-class learning task, interactant(s) and peripheral participants such as overhearer and eavesdropper. The findings suggest that students produce the least voluntary L2 speech when they are working on information-gap task-based activities, and they would not develop their chat once the task has been completed. Furthermore, participant variation does not affect their speech amount. That is, even direct teacher observation does not affect the amount of talk. Additionally, frequency of their embodiment gesture use increases proportional to their L2 speech amount. Finally, some teaching tips to facilitate more expanded turns will be demonstrated based on the findings. In this presentation, the importance that learners should be given certain learning tips and be explicitly trained to manipulate interactional strategies will be broadly discussed. It suggests that awareness of those pragmatic issues can help both students and their teachers orientate themselves to an interactional view of language with concomitant consequences for teaching and learning.

Description

Some teachers may have struggled to increase the amount of student talk beyond these minimized turns. Numerous learning-motivation studies have demonstrated that student language anxiety lessens their L2 speech amount. However, the approach does not focus on how they actually interact in the classroom. This presentation will outline ways students can be encouraged to expand their talk. The presenter will detail how students manipulate L1/L2 language choice and speech acts in oral activities and how students attend to their limited L2 proficiency. The findings suggest that students produce the least voluntary L2 speech when they are working on information-gap task-based activities, and they would not develop their chat once the task has been completed. Furthermore, some teaching tips to facilitate more expanded turns will be demonstrated based on the findings. The importance that learners should be given certain learning tips and be explicitly trained to manipulate interactional strategies will

be broadly discussed. An awareness of those interactional issues can help both students and their teachers orientate themselves to an interactional view of language with concomitant consequences for teaching and learning.

Shift in Focus from Motivation to Engagement
Cheryl Kirchhoff
Room 3, 10:00-10:40

Abstract

Motivation is a major focus in second language education research in which educators search to understand learners' thoughts about action and inaction. However, even students with motivation to learn a second language can easily become distracted, and good intentions do not always turn into action. Language learning pedagogical paradigms such as communicative learning and task-based learning emphasize that meaningful action with language develops learning therefore, intention that leads to action is essential in language learning. The construct of engagement shifts the focus from learners' intent to learn toward learners' active involvement in learning. Interest in engagement research has grown in general education and more recently in language education also. Engagement is active involvement in learning tasks within a learning environment. Engagement is a multidimensional construct that includes behavior and cognitive dimensions along with affective and social dimensions. Engagement is influenced by teachers, peers, and curriculum design. Although engagement may be something many teachers can identify intuitively, learning about it can improve our efforts to intentionally engage learners. This presentation will explain the engagement construct, and show how researchers are seeking to understand, measure and increase language learner engagement. The presenter will share examples of observing increases in learner engagement with a vocabulary learning curriculum. The end of the presentation will offer participants a choice, either learning some engagement practices for communication classes and discussing them, or viewing samples of engagement measurement tools and discussing their application.

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Playing to Learn: Teaching Language, Culture, and Diversity Using Video Game Narratives
Jermaine Gordon-Mizusawa
Room 2, 11:00-11:40

Abstract

Traditional textbooks offer a one-way learning experience with unnatural language and dialogue. In comparison, a video game allows more interactive participation and the opportunity to use natural language. The importance of narratives is evidenced by cultures that pass on history, identity, and knowledge through folklore and oral traditions (Boas and Hunt 1902, Grimm and Grimm 2016). Video games are just the natural evolution of storytelling. Narratives give the reader a window into culture, history, and personal experience, both fictional and non-fictional. Modern video games allow the player to engage in these stories like never before; a chance to experience "firsthand" the struggles depicted in the scenarios represented in the text. This method can be used across several educational disciplines in order to engage learning in a new way. Learners are given access to the "world" and, in many cases, the ability to affect the story to explore certain aspects of cultural and historical events more deeply, not only delving into reasons of why or how but also predicting or even influencing the outcomes of past events. The degree of how much the player can change the story depends on the type of game and how it is written, but even with linear storylines, a sense of agency is provided with tools such as dialogue trees. While the overall story may end in the same general way, the player's journey and what they discover about non-player characters or secrets and achievements to acquire may vary significantly, which can be used for evaluation purposes in the classroom. Simulation, open-world, and RPGs give more freedom of choice, while still requiring the player to play within the rules and social structure of the game world (Petridis 2021). This presentation will show how to use video games as narratives for not only teaching language (including second and foreign language acquisition) and social-emotional learning but also literature, social studies, as well as STEM disciplines.

Description

Narrative-based video games offer an opportunity to redefine how students learn; in some cases, they can supplement or even replace textbooks as a medium of instruction. Many games involve communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. With some preparation, many pre-existing games can be used to not only teach and practice language, but also history, social studies, and various other subjects to all ages or levels of education. Students preparing for foreign exchange language study can play a character who is visiting a foreign country with realistic dialogue to practice. Why only describe Iñupiat Alaskan Native culture when you can hear stories told by actual Iñupiat while playing a game based on their folklore? Empowering and giving underrepresented populations their own voice to tell their own stories in a way that is more widely accessible, informative, and entertaining makes their stories more accessible to students. By drawing upon the experiences of educators developing video game-based lessons for various student ages and subjects as well as my own classroom and homeschooling experience, I will show how the use of video games as narratives benefits

not only language (including second and foreign language acquisition) but also literature, social studies, as well as STEM disciplines.

Using the SDGs as a springboard to developing academic literacy and language skills
James Underwood
Room 3, 11:00-11:40

Abstract

In this interactive workshop, the presenter will go through each stage of a seven-week research cycle, and participants will be able to share and discuss how they could adapt the activities to their context. They will also be able to see examples of students' work. This seven-week research cycle takes the students from researching a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) using authentic materials to collating the information in a combined presentation and discussion. During this cycle, students learn research skills at the point of need and develop them as they go through the stages in this framework. They first examine their motivations for choosing an SDG and make connections between the SDG with their life, local community and studies. They brainstorm what they know and use this as a starter to make research questions to gather background information from the United Nations SDG knowledge platform. While researching this SDG, they will learn how to search for relevant information using search engines, evaluate these websites for credibility before taking notes, and correctly reference them using APA style. As they research, they develop note-taking skills and learn key vocabulary learning strategies as they build collocation maps. And they write summaries and critical reflections. Once they have enough information, students interview two people outside the class and gather their views and opinions on the SDG. They will learn how to collate all their information into a summative presentation. In the final stage, they will learn how to develop effective presentation slides and discussion questions to peer-teach the knowledge they have gained on their chosen SDG to an audience of small groups.

Description

This presentation/workshop will demonstrate a framework for a seven-week research cycle where the students go from choosing a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to researching it using authentic materials, collating views and opinions on the SDG through interviewing people outside class, and finally collating their research into a combined presentation and discussion. Over the seven weeks, students learn research skills at the point of need and develop them as they go through the stages in this framework. In the cycle, the students learn to develop note-taking, summarising, vocabulary learning, and referencing skills. They also learn how to research and evaluate websites while summarising and developing their views and opinions on the topic through critical reflection. They then how to learn to go through the interview process. At the end of the cycle, they also develop their presentation skills regarding their performance and slide design. In this interactive workshop, the presenter will go through each stage of the research cycle, and participants will be able to share and discuss how they could adapt the activities to their context. They will also be able to see examples of students' work.

Teaching Environment and Professional Lives of EFL Instructors
Mizuka Tsukamoto
Room 1, 14:20-15:00

Abstract

The academic backgrounds of EFL instructors in Japanese higher education institutions (HEI) are diverse, unlike those in earlier formal educational institutions. In addition, not all Japanese HEI instructors have started their English teaching careers because of their interests or aspirations. This session will explore the professional lives of three Japanese EFL instructors (including the presenter) who became involved in English language teaching (ELT) without a TESOL qualification, such as a graduate degree or the completion of a relevant certificate programme, or some form of training in English language teaching. In so doing, I will first introduce two concepts that shape this study: "Apprenticeship of Observation" (Lortie, 1975, 2002) and "Community of Practice" (Wenger, 1998). This will then be followed by the narratives shared by the participants, collected through in-person semi-structured interviews. The three participants not only differ in the ways and reasons for how they chose or "ended up" in ELT but also in the path they took after their involvement. The focus will extend beyond the participants' personal journeys to their practices in the classrooms, experiences within the programme that they teach, their expectations, and the challenges they encountered. The discussion will also extend to how the difficulties they faced could be mitigated not just for them but could also apply to a wider population of EFL instructors, such as those with little experience teaching in institutional ELT programmes, albeit with relevant qualifications or training. This exploration will provide insights into the overall improvement in ELT in Japanese HEIs.

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10

relevant qualifications or training. This exploration will provide insights into the overall improvement in ELT in Japanese HEIs.

Use of Machine Translation in English Education
Junko Yamamoto
Room 2, 14:29-15:00

Abstract

We will explore the role that machine translation (MT) can play in helping English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to improve their writing skills. While some teachers view MT use by students negatively, it can be a valuable tool if used appropriately. For example, teachers can have students translate a short passage from their native language into English using MT, and then have them rewrite it in their own words to make it sound more natural and fluent. Using such functions of MT, Yamamoto (2023) investigated if the English writing skills of a class of EFL students would improve with the instructor's MT guidance in place. It was found that there was a possibility that lower-level students were more likely to benefit from the use of MT than higher-level students. We will present the results of more statistically rigorous experiments with a larger number of subjects with various levels of English proficiency (judged by TOEIC score). This study involved students writing a passage in English, then using MT to revise their composition. The students then wrote on the same topic one week later without MT. This was then repeated by the same students with a different writing topic and a dictionary rather than MT as a control. The pre and post revision writings using MT and a dictionary were blinded, randomized, and then evaluated by two external expert raters. Additionally, we will present a summary of survey results from participants regarding their preferences, usage of MT and dictionaries, and the perceived impact of MT on their writing skills.

Description

This study explores the potential impact of machine translation (MT) on improving EFL students' writing abilities. Despite some teachers' reservations about MT usage, it can be a beneficial tool when employed appropriately. Yamamoto (2023) investigated whether EFL students' writing skills improved with the guidance of MT provided by their instructor. Findings suggested that lower-level students might benefit more from MT than higher-level students. This research aims to present results from more robust experiments involving a larger sample size with varying English proficiency levels. The study involved students initially writing a composition in English, revising it using MT, and then producing another piece on the same topic without MT after a week. The process was repeated with a different topic using a dictionary instead of MT as a control. Two external expert raters evaluated the blinded and randomized pre- and post-revision writings. Additionally, survey results from participants will be summarized, including their preferences, usage of MT and dictionaries, and the perceived impact of MT on their writing skills.

Enhancing Classroom Learning with Microsoft Teams: Exploring the Benefits of an Education LMS
Philip Nguyen
Room 3, 14:20-15:00

Abstract

There is a growing trend among educators and students to use various online tools and learning management systems (LMS) such as Google Workspace, Moodle, Canvas, and Blackboard. While many of them are popular and in use today, an LMS designed by Microsoft should not be overlooked. This presentation suggests that Microsoft Teams is helpful and simple for instructors to sign up for and deploy in the classroom without the need for additional assistance. Unlike other LMS platforms, Microsoft Teams will work "out-of-the-box", no additional plug-ins or modifications are required. Moreover, some of the popular software applications used include the Microsoft Office suite, which most companies use today; students can obtain real-time experience both in and outside the classroom. This presentation not only assists in understanding the digital learning platforms used in higher education that use Microsoft Teams as an LMS, but it also leads to necessary recommendations and suggestions for enhancing the usage of Microsoft Teams for Education for a better learning experience for both classroom and in the workplace.

Description

This presentation suggests that Microsoft Teams for Education is helpful and simple for instructors to sign up for and deploy in the classroom without the need for additional assistance. Moreover, some of the popular software applications used include the Microsoft Office suite, which most companies use today; students can obtain real-time experience both in and outside the classroom. A quick glance at setting up an educational account will be presented.

Session 4 – 15:30-16:10

Goal Complexes: The role of mastery goals and autonomous reasons for learning
Jean-Pierre J. Richard
Room 1, 15:30-16:10

Abstract

Goal complexes (Sommet & Elliot, 2017) are a relatively new area of research in educational psychology, and are almost unheard of in SLA research and practice. Goal complexes combine achievement goals (Elliot et al., 2011) with reasons for achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Goal complexes are important because of their relationship with variables connected to successful L2 learning, such as motivation, grit, self-regulation, and growth mindsets. In short, goals are the what of classroom learning. That is, what goals do learners have, such as approaching or avoiding a (un)desired outcome. These goals might refer to mastery orientations, including task orientations (e.g., get many questions right, or avoid getting many questions wrong) and self orientations (e.g., do better compared to the past, or avoid doing worse than

in the past), or performance orientations (e.g., outperform peers, or avoid being outperformed by peers). Reasons for achievement may refer to autonomous reasons (e.g., because the goal is highly stimulating) or controlled reasons (e.g., feel guilt). Finally, a goal complex combines the what and the why of classroom achievement (e.g., My goal is to answer a lot of questions correctly on the test in this class because I find this a personally valuable goal.) This research-oriented presentation will be divided into three parts. First, I will first describe goal complexes, including their relationship with other, more familiar variables in SLA. Second, I will report on a study (N = 164) which partially replicated Sommet and Elliot, showing how mastery-oriented goals, autonomous reasons, and their related goal complexes predicted TOEIC L&R scores. Finally, I will conclude this presentation by describing the importance of helping our learners identify mastery-oriented goals and then shifting our learners' to growth mindsets.

Description

Goal complexes (Sommet & Elliot, 2017) combine achievement goals (Elliot et al., 2011) with reasons for achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and are important because of their relationship with others variables connected to successful L2 learning, such as motivation, grit, self-regulation, and growth mindsets. In short, goals are the what of classroom learning. Achievement goals might refer to mastery or performance orientations. Reasons for achievement may refer to autonomous or controlled reasons. Finally, goal complexes combine these goals and reasons for classroom achievement. An example of a goal complex is "My goal is to answer a lot of questions correctly on the test in this class because I find this a personally valuable goal". This research-oriented presentation is divided into three parts: a description of goal complexes, including their relationship with more familiar SLA-related variables; a report on a study (N = 164) partially replicating Sommet and Elliot which showed that mastery goals, autonomous reasons, and their related goal complexes predicted TOEIC L&R scores; and a call for shifting our learners' to mastery-orientations and growth mindsets.

CLIL, EMI or Mandarin+? Taiwan's Path Towards a Bilingual Nation
Peter Iori Kobayashi
Room 2, 15:30-16:10

Abstract

Educational institutions in Taiwan, from tertiary to pre-school, are currently under immense pressure to reform their English programs in response to the government's "Bilingual Nation 2030" policy. Based on the survey of policy documents as well as voices and practices on the ground, this presentation argues that for a multilingual nation like Taiwan to consider turning itself "bilingual," the stakeholders must consider it pseudo-monolingual in the first place in spite of the government's celebration of its diverse linguistic heritage. This presentation then posits that this may be related to the fact that all officially mandated linguae francae through Taiwan's history have been external languages, and that English is no different in this respect. It goes on to point out that the discrepancies in the implementation of the policy: the main approaches include: Supplanting Mandarin with English as the medium of instruction (EMI); incorporating English language teaching into the content-based classes (CLIL); and maintaining the status quo except some low-stake interactions conducted in English as an auxiliary language

(Mandarin+). The future direction of the policy will depend on the ebb and flow of the politics of Taiwan identity.

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