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## Conference Reviews

# Two Perspectives on the 48th Annual 2022 JALT Conference

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JALT 2022, the 48th Annual Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Exhibition was held at the Fukuoka International Congress Center on November 11-14, 2022. The venue was conveniently located in the scenic city port area, approximately two kilometers from Hakata Station. It was the first in-person/online (hybrid) conference and the first opportunity for face-to-face interaction at an annual JALT conference since the onset of the global pandemic. The conference provided an excellent opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new acquaintances in person. The city had a vibrant nightlife and an endless array of restaurants that boasted delicious cuisines, such as *mentaiko* (spicy cod roe), *tonkotsu* ramen, and *motsunabe*. In addition, Fukuoka's famous Christmas illuminations along the Naka River provided attendees with a variety of splendid activities and experiences to enjoy between events.

At the conference all online and hybrid sessions were handled on the CVENT web-based platform, which showcased presentations about bridging the gap between research and teaching practices. Consequently, both attendees (and presenters), William and Anthony were eager to attend and learn how other educators might feel about this possible divide and how they would approach the challenge.

Participants could pre-register online, and as usual, the registration staff members were helpful and friendly. The conference venue consisted of two adjacent buildings, the main five-story hall and the "S" annex, which offered dozens of rooms hosting numerous presenters. Most rooms were spacious, yet

small enough to allow for active Q & A exchanges. The central lobby areas on each floor of the main building were also ideal for social interaction among colleagues and meeting fellow conference attendees.

The conference kicked off on Friday with primarily technology in teaching (TnT) workshops. Louise Ohashi presented on machine translation, exploring the importance of setting usage guidelines to reduce academic misconduct and maximize learning opportunities. William found her suggestions helpful, in considering ways to control students use of translation software in his own essay writing courses. Jerry Talandis and Theron Muller also presented on how to facilitate student autonomy and self-evaluation using Etherpad and Vocaroo, two free online tools. Both Anthony and William particularly enjoyed how Etherpad could simultaneously be used to collaboratively edit text documents and see all changes in real-time by displaying each author's text in separate colors.

On Saturday, the plenary speaker, Jim McKinley, presented on the nexus between language research and teaching practices. He had been a practitioner before moving on to a full-time research career in London, so Anthony found his perspective on the growing divide between teachers and researchers insightful and helpful to reflect on his own attempts at classroom-based research. This was followed by Ryoko Tsuneyoshi's presentation on the Japanese education system's problem of having internationalization based around English language. Tsuneyoshi's argument about how English as an international language is often aimed at having our students converse with native speakers abroad, yet often instructed by non-native speakers, reminded William of how Japan has a long way to go in terms of accepting English as a lingua franca.

Both William and Anthony attended Paul Leeming's presentation on fostering motivation through task-based learning using self-determination theory as a framework to understand how task-based language teaching enhances learner motivation. Anthony found it interesting how Leeming demonstrated the differences between the presentation-production-practice approach and task-based instruction, and how tasks are able to promote more meaningful classroom interactions. William also enjoyed John Creswell's afternoon online plenary about mixed methods research approaches. Since William is currently

conducting research for his PhD project, he found Creswell's 10-step approach useful in evaluating qualitative and quantitative aspects of data collection and in choosing which mixed-method designs may be most appropriate for him.

On Saturday afternoon, William conducted a 25-minute workshop on teaching students how to use MS Excel and MS Word with project-based learning. William provided practical guidance on how to develop lessons plans and student scaffolding to create model company ledgers and annual business reports which can also be applied as a practical writing exercise.

On Sunday, Anthony attended Kensaku Yoshida's plenary on MEXT's new course of study. Based on feedback from students, Yoshida was able to show attendees how instruction at primary and secondary schools is slowly becoming more influenced by research-based SLA approaches. This is promising, as it shows a shift towards more interactive, student-focused language education. In her plenary, Karen Hill Anton highlighted her worldwide travels and how they became a journey of self-discovery. Elsewhere, Chia Suan Chong presented on how to help students become more effective international communicators. This interactive workshop featured practical lesson ideas on how to stimulate reflection and speaking practice through critical thinking activities, storytelling, and drama. Anthony found this interesting as he often incorporates critical thinking exercises into his own curriculum from time to time. On Sunday afternoon, Anthony gave a presentation on the effectiveness of synchronous online communication modes, specifically text chat and voice chat, to promote uptake in the EFL classroom. The results of his study showed how communicative environments affect learning gains and how certain task types are more conducive to certain communication modes than others.

Overall, both Willima and Anthony felt the 2022 JALT conference was a great success. Navigating the venue was not too difficult, and finding the way to each presentation on time was quite easy. However, in hindsight, they think it would have been better if they had planned out their days more carefully beforehand to avoid taking so much time in corridors and pondering about which presentation to attend next. Having a busy schedule as most instructors do often hinders prior planning due to travel and preparation for personal presentations,

and this being the first in-person conference in a couple years proved to be a reminder that preparation is imperative. Nevertheless, all of the presenters that they observed were very professional and eager to share their experiences and research findings in front of a live audience again. William and Anthony highly recommend future JALT conferences to anyone who is passionate about their teaching, second language acquisition, research, and connecting with like-minded people.

## **Authors' Bios:**

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