JALT Teacher Development SIG

Explorations in Teacher Development

Volume 28, Number 1 • Spring 2022
ISSN 2434-589X

Explorations in Teacher Development

Volume 28, Number 1 • Spring 2022 • ISSN 2434-589X
http://td.jalt.org

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Editorial

Nick Kasparek

Eikei University of Hiroshima

It seems uncontroversial to claim that teacher development is often built upon paying attention to what is otherwise taken for granted. Indeed, it is relatively easy to attest to the importance of reexamining business as usual. It is much more difficult, however, first to determine precisely where one should direct one's gaze and then to see these potential areas for development with fresh eyes. Although jolts of dramatic situational change galvanize perceptual shifts in overt ways, as the COVID-19 pandemic has pointedly shown in recent years, there are also myriad subtle opportunities when observing teachers and students, including ourselves. A perspicacious guide is thus invaluable for pointing out such nearly hidden points for potential development. This issue features two extensive research articles that might serve as helpful guides. These articles illuminate specific challenges for teacher development that are often difficult to notice.

First, Miori Shimada investigates through two student narratives the complex role of anxiety in language learning. By attending to the significantly different backgrounds of these students and their experiences with anxiety in language learning, Shimada brings into focus the factors affecting when anxiety arose, how it both helped and hindered learning, and how it could be overcome.

Second, Cecilia Smith Fujishima and Tanja McCandie explore the relationships between demographics and ELT conference attendance. Inspired by work suggesting that attending conferences positively affects teacher development, they use survey data to examine potentially underrepresented identity groups at JALT conferences; in other words, they turn attention to who might be at most risk of missing out on these benefits and what could be done to make JALT conferences more accessible to all.

Both articles, then, invite a fresh look at not only directly resonant features of our own surroundings but also other aspects of educational practice with hidden depths. We hope that the articles in this issue inspire new teacher development.

This issue was made possible by the work of our many dedicated volunteers. In particular, Ryo Mizukura's service as co-editor, Matthew Turner's layout editing, Andrew Hoffman's proofreading, and Ewen MacDonald's website and publicity service were indispensable. This issue also depended on careful reviewing and developmental editing from Bill Snyder, Sam Morris, Yutaka Fujieda, and Deryn Verity.

We also rely on the scholarly efforts of authors who submit research articles, explorations, reflections, book reviews, interviews, perspectives, and columns (please see https://td.jalt.org/index.php/etdjournal/ for the full submission guidelines). We warmly welcome your submissions for Volume 29 to continue exploring teacher development in its many recognized and as-yet-unrecognized aspects!

Exploring the Effect of Anxiety Through Narrative Inquiry

Miori Shimada

Shibaura Institute of Technology

Introduction

The demand to improve Japanese young students' English language has recently been increasing due to the rapid growth of foreign visitors to Japan and the increase in demand for the English language as a tool for international business and communication. This trend has pushed Japanese students to strengthen their English language skills. At the same time, English teachers in Japanese institutions have encountered the fact that many of their students begin to lose confidence in learning English, and their levels may go down as they feel less passionate about studying. One of the salient factors is anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) define anxiety as an emotion such as nervousness, uneasiness, restlessness or irritation when one is in a highly wrought-up state. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) point out, "there is no doubt anxiety affects L2 performance—most of us will have had the experience that in anxiety-provoking climate our L2 performance deteriorates" (p. 176). In other words, anxiety is likely one of the most important emotional issues that face learners, and research is needed to understand its impact. In this paper, I discuss how anxiety affects students' second language (L2) learning based on a double case study of two participants whose language skills and backgrounds were quite different.

Literature review

Anxiety features in a wide range of literature, suggesting that it is a complex issue. For example, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) state that individual differences (IDs) are one of the key factors that influence foreign language learning attitudes in the field of second language acquisition, and within this field, affective factors, which include motivation, anxiety, personality, beliefs, are considered to be a significant and crucial part of our entire lives. Moreover, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) also mention that anxiety manifests in many forms of fear. In other words, students become scared of speaking, making mistakes, causing misunderstandings and being laughed at by others when they study a foreign language. Gkonou recalls in one interview that in her childhood she began to have "physiological symptoms of anxiety," including sweating and a pounding heart every time she had to give answers in front of the class (Morgan, 2016, p. 17). Gkonou (2011) also regards language anxiety as salient compared to other types of anxiety because apprehension emerges due to "negative self-related cognition" (p. 268). These findings suggest that anxiety might be a universal issue for learners and rapidly develops in a stressful atmosphere. In addition, the level of anxiety becomes especially high in an EFL environment where non-native students have to communicate using their non-native language.

Anxiety influences EFL learners around the world in various ways. In Gkonou's (2011) study with Greek EFL students she defines their "self-consciousness and anxiety about EFL speaking" (p. 276) as "a state of ongoing social comparisons among learners" (p. 276) and argues that students suffer from "a fear of negative evaluation" (p. 276) or "loss of face" (p. 276) due to making mistakes or poor achievement. Bashori, Van Hout, Strik and Cucchiarini (2020) introduce several studies focused on speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms in Indonesian institutions. Their work emphasizes the necessity of media/technological support for students to foster their speaking skills. Finally, Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert's (1999) study argues that anxiety varies depending on each student learning a second language although there is a moderate correlation between anxiety and L2 performance. These findings reveal that students' speaking anxiety increases when students receive pressure to present individually within a limited time.

Many studies have attempted to understand language anxiety specifically within Japan. Kitano (2001) found that students' anxiety increased when their ability was lower than that of peers and native speakers. Shachter (2018) reported that the anxiety levels of his Japanese university students significantly decreased after a few weeks of oral lessons. In addition, the data demonstrated that "the number of

negative comments decreased" towards the end of the term (p. 6). Another study conducted by Otsuka and Negishi (2009) saw a decrease in anxiety levels of their college students when speaking English after they took a short-term study abroad program. Mochizuki (2008) discussed L2 anxiety with special reference to Japanese education in in-classroom and outside-the-classroom environments. The results showed that in-classroom anxiety is higher than outside-the-classroom anxiety. Mochizuki (2008) concluded that L2 anxiety remains present within language learners although its components vary as they take new language classes.

The studies here show that anxiety appears to relate to important factors such as the type of task being done, the amount of experience students have, and the location of their English use; however, the studies often lacked detail about the students' backgrounds. A narrative-informed study may be useful in exploring this data in more depth. Thus, the current study adopts a narrative approach with two students of significantly different backgrounds.

Research questions

With these different views taken into consideration, the following three research questions were generated:

RQ1. What factors influenced the participants' anxiety in language learning?

RQ2. Is there a relationship between self-perceived successes/failures and anxiety in language learning?

RQ3. How have the participants overcome anxiety to become successful language learners?

Participants

In order to facilitate comparison and contrast, two participants with significantly different backgrounds were chosen for this study. Participant A was an international student at a Japanese university. I was introduced to her by a colleague who believed she would be a valuable participant for this study. According to this classmate, her attitude towards foreign language learning had always been positive. Her goal was to become a translator using Thai (her native tongue), English and Japanese. Overall, she was chosen because I felt she represented a successful example of a student who has overcome language anxiety. In contrast, Participant B, my son, who was a Japanese university student at the time, had a negative attitude towards foreign language (particularly English) learning. Participant B had experience failing English tests many times during his junior/senior high school years. He considered himself a failure among other English language learners due to this stressful experience. He was chosen because I felt he represented an unsuccessful example of a student who has faced language anxiety.

Participants' language learning histories

Participant A is a 26-year-old female student from Thailand majoring in English at a Japanese private university. She started learning English in kindergarten in Thailand and continued taking regular English classes in both primary and secondary school. She also took some extracurricular English classes during those school years. When she was in Grade 11, she also began learning the Japanese language. When she was in Grade 12, she applied for admission to a Japanese university and was accepted; however, she decided not to go because she did not feel confident about her success. She entered a Thai university instead and studied geology for four years. After her sophomore year, she decided to study abroad for the first time, going to New Zealand for three months of her summer vacation. During her stay, she lived with her host family with two other international students: one from Switzerland, and the other from China. By the time she was a junior in college, she had learned Japanese privately for two years. This experience made her decide to enroll in a Japanese university. At the time of this study, she had been majoring in English and working part-time in Western Japan for one year and nine months.

Participant B is a 23-year-old Japanese male student majoring in international business and economics in a Japanese private university in the Tokyo metropolitan area. He was exposed to English language from around the age of three. Because of his mother's job as an English teacher for young learners, he was put in a children's English class once per week (depending on his mood) until the age of eight. After that, he learned English in primary school classes four or five times a year. In his primary/secondary school years, he made some short trips to Australia (once, 6 years old), the United

States (twice, 11 & 14 years old) and Canada (once, 13 years old) with his family during summer vacations. His English studies continued in junior and senior high school and at university. In his junior year in high school, he stayed in Australia for two weeks on a farm stay program. In his university, he also studied the German language for one year.

Table 1 summarizes the background of each participant and their language learning history. The table enables readers to compare both participants and see the contrasts more clearly.

Data collection and analysis

Using narrative inquiry, a process of gathering information for the purpose of research through storytelling (Chataika, 2005, p. 2), as a primary data collection tool, I asked each participant to write their language learning history (LLH). Because LLHs "can reveal valuable insights about our learners' needs, motivations, beliefs, goals and strategies" (Mercer, 2013, p. 164), using them enables the researcher to produce insights and assumptions regarding constructs and phenomena. Gkonou, who has paid a great deal of attention to language learner anxiety (LA) using learner diaries, emphasizes that they can offer "inside knowledge about the students" (Morgan, 2016, p. 18). In sum, LLHs are a very useful tool for understanding individual differences.

As Participant A's English proficiency was higher and her original language was Thai, which would not be understood by the author, she was asked to write her LLH in English (see Appendix A for the LLH instructions the author gave to each participant). She wrote approximately 1,000 words for English language learning and 800 words for Japanese language learning (see Appendix B). On the other hand, Participant B had a lower English proficiency level; therefore, he was asked to write his LLH in Japanese. He wrote approximately 1,700 Japanese characters for English language learning and 800 Japanese characters for German language learning (see Appendix C). As Holliday (2016) suggests, qualitative research (using qualitatively collected data such as students' writing samples) often involves a research-then-theory approach. In other words, the variables are not usually decided on the basis of some theory but rather *emerge* as the research progresses. The author created questions based on the LLHs of both participants, conducted interviews with both in November 2018, and then asked further questions through email exchanges from mid-November to the end of November 2018

Criteria	**Participant A**	**Participant B**
Nationality	Thai	Japanese
Age	26	23
Gender	Female	Male
University major	Geology (for 4 years in Thailand), English (for 2 years in Japan)	Business/Economics (for 4 years in Japan)
Language background	English: approx. 20 years (as a school subject from kindergarten to present) Japanese: approx. 4 years (privately and at university)	English: approx. 20 years (10 years before junior high in elementary schools/mother's class, and 10 years as a school subject from junior high to present) German: 1 year (in university)
Overseas experience	3-months homestay in New Zealand (in a Thai university), 2 years in Japan (up to present)	Family trips before junior high (USA once, Australia once), in junior high (USA once, Canada once), in senior high (Australia once)
Career goal	Translator	Not decided

Table 1. Participants' Personal Histories and L2 Learning

in order to get more detailed information. As Participant B is my son, the interview with him was conducted from a neutral perspective (e.g., using formal language, providing an interview space and so on). The strength of this feature was likely that Participant B was able to speak in a relaxed atmosphere, so he could speak more openly without hiding his true feelings. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, excluding hesitations, repetitions, non-lexical tokens and pauses.

A thematic analysis was then conducted descriptively using Saldaña's (2015) *eclectic coding*, involving "'first-impression' phrases from an open-ended process" (p. 40). Eclectic coding is considered to be appropriate for less experienced qualitative researchers to examine different types of data including interview transcripts, field notes, journals, documents, diaries, corresponded, artifacts and video, and to acquire the way to code data (Saldaña, 2015).

Findings and discussion

In response to RQ1, several anxiety factors became apparent at particular times according to the responses from both participants. In Participant A's childhood, she hid native-like pronunciation in her elementary school in Thailand and pretended to be like a non-native speaker because she believed she would have been teased if she had sounded like a foreigner. Her anxiety mostly appeared in the latter part of her life when she began to study overseas. For example, when she entered the university in Kyoto, she encountered a totally new environment and did not understand some lectures because they were not conducted in her native language. This gave her strong anxiety, as she wrote in Japanese to my follow-up question, "mochiron sutoresu ga arimasu" [Of course, I feel stress]. In her language school, which Participant A entered before starting classes at her Japanese university, she experienced no stress because the classes were rather relaxing with an easy teacher. However, she was upset at being placed in the beginner class. As she wrote in Japanese to my follow-up question, "I had studied Japanese for almost two years before this, and my parents knew that. It was a waste of money. I regretted it. I felt like apologizing to my parents." She was also depressed by the words from a senior colleague at her part-time workplace. Answering a follow-up question, she responded, "My senpai [senior] at my job kept telling me that my Japanese was not good enough and that I was not trying hard enough.… I felt like, 'Yeah, that's true,'" and she resolved to try even harder.

Once Participant B started learning English in junior high school, he felt uneasy or puzzled. Unlike the way he was exposed to English in elementary school, junior high school English was to memorize vocabulary or learn grammar rules, not to enjoy learning the target language through games or songs. The English textbook also changed from something interesting to him into a more Japanese-type textbook, which he characterizes as "conservative." It looked unexciting, and he became bored. The only material and activity he enjoyed was singing western songs such as We Are the Champions and Dancing Queen and translating their lyrics. He wrote in his language learning history in Japanese: "When song lyrics appeared in the test, I felt happy and answered these questions with joy." To him song lyrics include simple and direct expressions, and they are completely different from the English sentences he saw in the regular tests in high school or entrance examinations. He did not have apprehension about answering lyrics questions, but rather felt refreshed because he was solving the questions while understanding and confirming the meaning. Later, the English textbooks he used in university were the same as the ones used in English-speaking countries. Therefore, he felt more relaxed just like he was studying together with American friends.

Another interesting thing he mentioned is that he feels more stress when speaking Japanese rather than English when he stutters. According to him, Japanese is more diverse in terms of contexts, Chinese characters, pronunciation and expressions. When he speaks in Japanese with Japanese friends, he becomes tense because they care about the details of the words and expressions he uses and the way he speaks. In reality, he is often given suggestions and criticized about his utterances. On the other hand, when he speaks English with non-Japanese friends, even with a limited vocabulary, they focus more on the *content*, not the way he speaks.

As we see in the answers of both participants, when students are put into a completely new environment and do not know what is happening, or are asked something beyond their understanding,

they feel anxiety. Therefore, the first anxiety factor that was seen in the data was *comprehension*, the ability to understand something they see or hear. The second factor that emerged from the participants' answers is *interest*. In the case of Participant B, as the class type and textbook stimulated his interest at university, so his learning attitudes became completely opposite of his in junior and senior high school. In the case of Participant A, she did not feel frustrated when communicating with people in English, because she is very fond of this communication. The third and the fourth factors, namely, *cultural aspects* and *more opportunities to speak in the L2*, also appeared in Participant A's and B's comments to my follow-up question. For example, Participant A said, "*Eigo no baai ha mou naretekita karatte itte mo ii kamoshiremasen*" [I can probably say that in the case of English, I've gotten used to it]. Additionally, she explained in her interview, "…I feel the difference in between like the foreign people and like social in Thai. We didn't speak straight…." Participant B shared a similar experience. When he spoke English with non-Japanese friends, even with limited vocabulary and his imperfect English, he was able to communicate with them without pressure, as his non-Japanese friends focused more on content than on the way he spoke. Throughout high school, he was disappointed with the fact that he had very few opportunities to learn English from a native-speaker teacher, although his high school had announced that they had begun to promote "internationalization" more strongly. These comments suggest that teachers try to provide more opportunities to speak the target language as well as to facilitate discussions on cultural aspects involved when speaking in one's L2.

In relation to RQ2, comments from both participants suggest that there is a relationship between self-perceived successes/failures and anxiety in language learning. According to Participant B, his university offered him an opportunity to learn different types of English from those with a much broader perspective. The hurdle to speak English was lower for him because he could make himself understood using very basic grammar and vocabulary. At the same time, he began to worry that he would not truly master English only by using these basic communication strategies. Therefore, the university EFL environment gave him a stimulus, and he was motivated more to learn English. In addition, materials including textbooks and song lyrics eliminated his learning anxiety and made him feel like a successful learner with more confidence.

On the other hand, Participant A had anxiety when she realized her Japanese language level was not good enough according to her senior colleague. However, she turned this into positive action and felt more motivated to achieve success in the future. For Participant A, frequent use of L2, which she describes as "to go out from my safe zone," and a change in her studying environment pushed her language learning attitude upward.

The comments from both Participant A and Participant B explain a reverse situation in which anxiety *works positively*. This implies "facilitating anxiety," a positive force in the field of education generating a positive effect (Williams, 2008, p. 1). When Participant A's senior colleague made her realize that her Japanese language level was still insufficient, she took this pressure as a positive signal and tried harder to succeed in the future. In the case of Participant B, although he enjoyed his way of communicating using limited English with his non-Japanese friends in university, he also began to worry that he might not be able to reach a satisfactory level of English proficiency. Therefore, this apprehension triggered his learning attitude in a positive way. According to Scovel (1978), "Facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to 'fight' the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approval behavior" (p. 139). These findings illustrate that there are different types of anxiety, and anxiety's relationship to internal and external factors is complex.

Finally with regard to RQ3, in her university classes, Participant A sometimes felt scared when the professor pointed at her and she could not answer. This suggests that students need to be ready to answer professors' questions in order to earn points and better grades. This may decrease the apprehension of students, or conversely, increase their confidence. In other words, based on Participant A's responses, it seems that students can facilitate and motivate their learning attitudes by themselves. Her experience also relates to the findings of Iimura's (2016) study, which showed that an oral presentation contest reduced the anxiety levels of Japanese university students due to the opportunity to do enough preparation to gain

confidence. In Participant A's part-time workplace, she got used to using English, so she lost her fear of making mistakes. On the other hand, she is still anxious when meeting Japanese customers. Compared to her feelings about English, she feels more ashamed and less confident using Japanese.

Another key seems to be increasing opportunities for students to interact with native speakers or people with different cultural backgrounds. It seems vital to be exposed to more varied use of the L2. As Participant B's comments indicated, he was disappointed when he had fewer opportunities to learn English from native-speaker teachers in high school. He also mentioned in the interview that he sometimes felt nervous when talking in English with Japanese students because they often pointed out the small mistakes he made. Whereas, with foreign students he had less stress, as they listened to him more and focused on the content of his speech. Participant A also responded in her interview, "But foreign people, US, like you, you speak straight. Yeah, so it's the first time that I like feel about the change between the culture. And I feel like now I can speak English, I like…the experience in New Zealand make me to not fear to speak to foreigner." These comments support Aida's (1994) insistence that active interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds will reduce anxiety when using the target language.

Another solution to overcome anxiety is that both teachers and students should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the students. In the case of Participant B, he no longer felt anxiety although there were more group discussions and presentations at university. He said the joy of learning English returned, and he was proud of the pronunciation he acquired with his exposure to the English language in his childhood. Teachers should try to perceive students' socio-cultural backgrounds as well. According to Matsumoto (1991), compared with Western students such as Americans, Japanese tend to hide their emotionality. However, it may be difficult for teachers who do not share the same first language to recognize the emotional states (e.g., anxiety) of Japanese English language learners (Shachter, 2018). The implications of this finding are that we, as teachers, need to make sure students understand what they are doing and being asked to do, and that we should try to raise their motivation by discovering their strengths through various assessments.

Conclusion

This case study focusing on two English language learners with different backgrounds studying in Japanese universities revealed several new results. The key factors to reduce anxiety levels in SLA that appeared in this study are*: adequate comprehension, interesting topics and materials, enough preparation and frequent interaction with different people.* It was also discovered that anxiety can work positively for learners depending on the situation. Finally, self-recognition can help learners overcome anxiety, and teachers can promote this self-understanding by increasing understanding of the students' weaknesses and strengths through efficient lesson plans.

Many researchers have begun to test various types of practical activities for students to overcome their foreign language anxiety. For example, Bashori et al. (2020) have recently incorporated web-based speaking practice. The results indicate that the Indonesian high school students in this study "felt less anxious when speaking to the machines" (p. 13) than when speaking to people; therefore, *web-based language learning* could be another way to overcome anxiety. Moreover, their findings suggest that *how* materials are introduced as well as *who* delivers the materials could also be a key to success. Manning (personal communication, February 21, 2021), recalling a student in his previous class, believes that *task-based language teaching* (TBLT*)* produces effective results for some anxious students. He observed that when he switched the regular tasks to more "input-heavy tasks" such as rearrangement or reconstruction for one extremely shy student, the student gradually built her confidence and overcame her constant apprehension. The student also began to realize that "English was not something to be anxious about." Finally, Anandari (2015) examined the effectiveness of *self-reflection* activities. Her findings suggest that such activities contribute to reducing anxiety among students and that students can learn how to make anxiety work positively for themselves. These studies make us realize that students' anxiety signals offer hints for teachers to produce ways to transform less confident students' learning attitudes from negative to positive.

As Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) explain, foreign language anxiety is "a distinct complex of

self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert (1999) also point out that students' anxiety levels differ and that their perceptions of anxiety vary in their L2 studies. Teachers should keep these findings in mind whenever they encounter apprehensive students in their future teaching. Although some important results were obtained from this research, more studies should be done with different types of students to discover other factors affecting anxiety.

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Author bio
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Appendix A:
Language learning history（語学学習歴）

Please write the story of your foreign language learning experiences, from when you first started to learn a foreign language to today. Keep these questions in mind while writing:

自分自身の外国語(英語)学習歴について、始めた時から今日までについて記述して下さい。その時、以下の項目を思い浮かべながら書いて下さい。

- When and why did you start learning each language?
- How did you learn, including in school and out of school?
- How did you feel about learning each language?
- When and how do you think your learning was successful or unsuccessful?

- **外国語(英語)学習をどの時点でなぜ始めたのか。**
- **(英語を)どのように学習したのか、学内・学外を含めて。**
- **外国語(英語)を学習した時の気持ちはどのようなものだったのか。**
- **外国語(英語)学習が成功または失敗したのはいつの時点で、どのような状況だったのか。**

Below are some examples of language learning histories. They are long, and you don't have to read everything, but perhaps you can get some ideas of what to write about.

以下に書き方の例を掲載してあります。長い文章ですが、全て読む必要はありません。ただ、読むことによって何を書けばよいかアイディアがわくと思います。

Appendix B:
Language learning history (Participant A)

When I write this document I did not read other paper yet, because I do not want to be convinced by other student experiences. So, I decided to write my real own experience here.

I started to study English alphabet since I was 2-3 years old at school, then started the real English class at 1 grade at school. During that time I also took special English class on Saturday and Sunday. I was like a normal student, no passion in English.

Anyway, my special English class had a vocabulary test everyday and students who get 10 points or did good job in class would get the 'wonderful card'. The card we collected could be changed to a 'present' such as, a pencil case, a cute pencil, or a cute little doll. I loved them, so it might be the really first time that I concentrated in English Subject. However, because I had no goal in learning English so I just studied what school had for me.

Thai schools usually teach about grammar, vocabulary, but have less communication. Even we had some foreigner English teachers in school, but we did not talk too much. I was also one of those shy students. In Thailand English learner usually was judged about accent and level. Example if you try to speak like foreigner you might be made fun about your accent by your friend or people around you. So, I just kept normal level or under normal level in any term of English.

At first, I could remember easy vocabulary and grammar, but when it went more complex I usually failed. So my confidence and my passion kept going down.

When I was in grade 12, I made a big mistake and it turned to be one of my turning point. I forgot to pay the fee for the university general test which students must use scores from this exam to apply to the university. So, I had to find another way to entrance the university without using that score. That was the first time I thought about going abroad.

I found that Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University was still available. But the applicant was asked to write the long essay, and we had to take a test, and an interview as well. My friend who had be an exchange student in US helped me to write essay, but for the exam I had to help myself.

I passed the exam and got a 50% tuition, but I feared to go there because I had no confidence in my English. So I decided to go to Thai university instead.

After finished the second year in university, I had 6 months for summer holidays because Thai education system condition. So, after finish final exam and fieldwork in the first three months I decided to go to New Zealand to study English. It was my first time to go aboard.

In New Zealand I stayed with host family who already took care of another 2 students from Switzerland and China. At that time, I was still a shy girl and did not talk a lot. But I had a chance to talk to Chinese housemate who had experienced in New Zealand for 3 months before I went there. I asked him about the way he became fluently in speaking. He said “Just speak out. Speak what you want.” His answer might be an inspiration for me to go out from my safe zone. Because after that I started to talk with classmate and got more confidence.

For listening, my ear started to improve because the invitation from Switzerland housemate who asked me to watch ‘American pie’ together, and usually encourage me to watch television by handed me a remote. He recommended me to watch TV series to improve English and after that night I was alway at the living room.

Life in New Zealand forced me to use English. Because the environment that had no mother language and I who decided to not be in Thai student group made me had to communicated only in English.

After I turned back to Thailand I felt I had more confident in speaking, listening, reading and writing English. Anyway, I still made a mistake but I did not care about it anymore. In that time I felt like just be able to communicate is enough.

However, when I came to Japan and start to learn Japanese, it affected too much to my English. The word did not come out when I spoke or wrote. I noticed that situation after 1 year had passed in Japan. So I had thought about the way to improve my English, and decided to study English in here.

The first semester I took class which leaded by foreigner teacher for giving myself a chance to communicate in English, and change the part-time job. I chose to be an interpreter staff at rental Kimono shop, where I can practice English and Japanese in the same time.

But during summer, after I started to read Asahi Weekly and found out that it helpful, I decided to decrease the class in the second semester. I use the free time to read English novel and English newspaper especially Asahi Weekly for practicing English.

I am not a person who like to remember vocabulary by writing or remember it word by word. So I still have a problem about vocabulary, but I think I found the interesting way to solve that problem after I took TOEIC class. In that class, students was required to take the quiz every week, and I was asked to write Japanese meaning same as other students. I found out that to remember the meaning of word in 2 languages is quite funny and helpful to me.

And most of all, now I have goal for my study. I want to get a job related to trading or shipping. After set a goal seem like everything went fluently because I know what I am doing for.

<u>Language learning history (Japanese)</u>

When I write this document I did not read other paper yet, because I do not want to be

convinced by other student experiences. So, I decided to write my real own experience here.

I started to study Japanese when I was in grade 11. It was like a special subject so I was not interested anymore. But after the new teacher who just came back from Japan took over the class, my feeling was changed. He got a scholarship and had a chance to study in Japan for 1 or 2 year. The way he achieved inspired me.

That time I had passion in Japanese but I hated to remember vocabulary. It's quite boring thing for me. So I just took the class and kept reading a book, but nothing left in my mind.

When I was in grade 12, I made a big mistake and it turned to be one of my turning point. I forgot to pay the fee for the university general test which students must use scores from this exam to apply to the university. So, I had to find another way to entrance the university without using that score. I found that Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, an international university in Japan, was still available.

I passed the exam and got a 50% tuition, but I feared to go there because I had no confidence in my English. So I decided to go to Thai university instead.

However a fear also decreased my confidence in studying Japanese. So I chose to take German class. But the environment in the university, and the fear to choose what I really want made me decide to quit the university.

I re-entrance in the year after, but I still feared to choose what I want. Finally, I ended up with geology department. 4 years in the university was really worse. I hated study, kept skipping the class, slept in the class, and cheated on exams.

I noticed that I cannot go well in what I had been studying, and after graduate it might be difficult for me to get a job. So, I decided to do something. I chose to turn back to Japanese, and took a personal class twice a week since I was in the 3rd year.

But because it was a personal class, I had no one to compare with, so I felt like I already succeeded even I did nothing useful for my Japanese. Anyway, I wanted to gain more skill so I decided to go abroad, because I had a good experience when I went to New Zealand. And just the first day that I arrived, I already knew that 2 years after taking personal Japanese class what level I am, BEGINNER ONE.

In the previous, I just enjoyed to finish textbooks. I did homework by using dictionary app in my phone, did not remember any vocabulary or Kanji, did not revise after class, I did nothing.

To start in the beginner class again was really embarrassed for me, so I forced myself to try hard in Japanese. I always prepared myself before class, and revised after class. I wrote down the word to force myself to remember Kanji.

Study Japanese is like the final chance for me, if I fail again I will be a completely looser, and has nothing for my future, no jobs, no money, just nothing. So I cannot give up, only keep going on and do my best.

Anyway, when the time had passed, I was tired.

I'm kind of cannot keep continuing something for long time. So that why I hate to remember word, Kanji, and grammar. I stopped preparing and revising, and did only what teacher asked.

However, after I started my first part-time job, the situation at there forced me to try hard on my study. My senior who help me a lot at work made me think that it will be really ashamed if I made him upset with my improvement. So I just keep trying again and again. Then, when the result came out, the smile on his face and the congratulation message from my mom made me felt like I won a prize.

After I decided to go to the university in Japan, mylife and the way to study was changed. The class was hold in Japanese which I could not understand clearly so I had to take a lot of time for preparing and revising.

I found out that after face the same word many times, I can remember it naturally. So I started to read a Japanese book I like and watched TV show I love. I think it like a condition between time and activity. The result cannot come out suddenly, but if we keep continuing to do something the result will come out someday.

I cannot say that I already succeed in Japanese. But if I was asked to compare between me after 2 years in Japan, and me after 2 years of taking personal Japanese class, I think I gained a lot.

Appendix C:

Language learning history (Participant B)

私が最初に英語に触れたきっかけは、母親の影響でした。両親と海外に行った時、母がネイティブスピーカーのように英語を話していたことに驚き、初めて生の英語に触れたような気がしました。また、

母が幼稚園で英語を教え始めたのをきっかけに、私も英語に興味を持ち、一緒にクラスに参加しました。そのクラスでは、それぞれの単語を何度も繰り返し、丁寧に教えてもらったように記憶しています。その影響で、児童英検などのテストも受け、英語への関心をより深めました。

その後、小学校で「総合学習の時間」に様々な国から来たALTの先生の英語に触れたことで、英語にも発音やイントネーションの違いがあることがわかりました。そして、英語を話すこと、聞くことの面白さを学びました。

しかし中学生になった途端、英語の授業が退屈になってしまいました。１つ目の理由は、授業が読み書き中心になったことです。また、中学校ではネイティブの先生に英語を教わることも少なくなりました。学習内容も、文法やリーディングが中心になっていったので、自分の中で、英語は「触れ合うもの」から「学習するもの」へと印象が変わっていきました。２つ目の理由は、長文読解が多くなり、今までにない量と専門的な内容の英文を理解しなくてはならなくなったことです。小学校までの英語は、自分にとって「コミュニケーションをとるためのもの」だったのに対し、中学校の英語は「受験に合格するためのもの」になり、英語を習っている事をより窮屈に感じるようになりました。唯一楽しめたのは、授業の中で洋楽に合わせて歌い、歌詞を訳したことです。テストに歌詞の問題が出題された時は、嬉しい気持ちになり、楽しく問題を解きました。

高校に入学し、英語の内容は、より複雑になり、高度になりました。高校英語は、更に「書くため・読むため」の要素が多くなり、「コミュニケーションをとるため」の英語を学ぶ機会は完全になくなりました。また、自分のコースにネイティブの先生が一人もいなくなったので、生きた英語の面白さを味わえる機会もなくなりました。高校で唯一生の英語に触れる事ができたのは、２年生最後に行ったオーストラリアのファームステイです。ファームで耳にした英語は、それまで高校の授業で習っていた複雑なものではなく、むしろ中学レベルの簡単なもののように感じました。また、英語で現地の人たちと触れ合うことにより、英語は本来もっと自由で楽しいものであったということを思い出しました。

大学に入学して英語の授業を受けた時、新鮮に感じたことがあります。それは、ネイティブスピーカー講師や、留学経験豊富な日本人講師が多くいるということです。また、使われているテキストも、英語圏で実際に使われているものだったので、より現地の空気を感じながら学習できました。

高校英語と大学英語の決定的な違いは、英語の「自由度」が大きくなったということです。そのため、大学の授業では、グループディスカッションや発表をする機会が増え、英語を話す面白さを少し取り戻すことができました。私の周りには、リーディングはできてもスピーキングが苦手な友人が何人かいます。彼らは、大学の授業で英文を読むことは容易であるが、先生や留学生と英語でコミュニケーションをとることが上手くいかないと嘆いていました。私自身は、大学で学んでいるスピーキング中心の英語を楽しんでおり、将来役に立つと感じています。

今振り返ってみると、自分自身の英語学習の大半は「読み・書き」中心でしたが、私が本来求めていたのは「話す・聞く」中心の英語でした。言語学習は、もっと自由で様々な形があっていいと思います。特に、中・高の英語の授業では「話す」英語をより多く取り入れるべきだと思います。また、テキストも英語圏で使われているものを導入した方がいいのではないでしょうか。ネイティブスピーカーの先生の数ももっと増やすべきだと思います。

今後は、外国人の多い社交場にも積極的に出向き、彼らと英語でコミュニケーションをとり、ネットワークを広げていきたいと思っています。また、国際色豊かな職場で仕事ができるよう頑張ります。

<u>私のドイツ語学習歴</u>

私がドイツ語を学ぼうと思ったきっかけは、大学で出会ったO先生でした。もう一つの理由として、私の大学では英語以外にも別の外国語のクラスを取ることが義務付けられていました。ドイツ語は、読み方がほぼローマ字読みである以外文法などは英語に近く、日本人には少しハードルが高いイメージがありました。加えて、私には全く馴染みのない言語でした。ただ、O先生によると、授業は会話重視で、テキストも日常会話の範囲内の非常に易しい教材ということでした。

初回の授業では、基本的な発音や文法を学んだ他、簡単な自己紹介アクティビティーもやりました。また、このアクティビティーは、毎回授業に導入されました。自己紹介アクティビティーは、ドイツ語を話す楽しさを味わうことや、クラスメートとのコミュニティー形成を可能にしました。また、

そのアクティビティーを通して、私たちはコミュニケーションを活発にし、授業での連帯感を強めたので、クラスの雰囲気も活気づきました。

　O氏の授業では、独文の文型を容易に理解することができました。例えば、１つの例文に対し、主語を入れ替えて言い直す、または様々なシチュエーションに合わせた表現を自分たちで考え、発表しました。そして、それらの文は、大半が日常生活で使用できる表現だったので、その状況を頭の中で容易にイメージできました。結果、私のドイツ語の語彙も増え、それが授業に参加する喜びにもつながりました。

　授業では毎回小テストがありましたが、中・高で受けた英語の小テストと比べると印象が違いました。ドイツ語の授業の小テストは、日常生活に出てくるシンプルな表現や例文であったため、以前のような嫌悪感は感じませんでした。

　今後またドイツ語を習得にあたり、検定試験などにも挑戦し、ドイツに関連する行事や交流の場にも参加していきたいです。

Attendance at JALT Conferences: An Exploratory Survey

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Borg (2016) found that attendance at ELT conferences improves teaching practice, provides opportunities for networking, and improves teacher confidence. This research project contends that in line with JALT's mission "to promote excellence in language learning, teaching, and research by providing opportunities for those involved in language education to meet, share, and collaborate," JALT conferences should be accessible to its members. This paper will discuss the results of an online survey conducted in 2018 which primarily examined the demographics of who goes to JALT conferences and who does not. This survey was undertaken in response to previous research findings that some membership demographics are highly underrepresented at JALT chapter meetings (McCandie, 2018). Demographic data on conference attendance is a necessary step in extending the scope and ascertaining representation at conferences. Demographics in the survey include sex, first language, age, job status, and membership status. The analysis provides insight to suggest ways JALT can adapt and develop to become a more diverse and inclusive association.

Introduction

Conference attendance improves teaching practice, provides opportunities for networking, and improves teacher confidence (Borg, 2016). It also provides tremendous career development opportunities (Mata et al., 2010). The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) mission statement declares that JALT's goal is "to promote excellence in language learning, teaching, and research by providing opportunities for those involved in language education to meet, share, and collaborate" (JALT, n.d). To achieve this stated goal, JALT should foster opportunities for all members to attend conferences. Furthermore, conferences are also beneficial for the organization itself. They have the potential to raise the profile of the organization, foster networks within and beyond the organization, provide academic legitimacy, and generate operating revenue.

This research, conducted in 2018, used an exploratory survey (see Appendix A) to gather information about who does and does not attend JALT conferences with the aim of identifying issues regarding conference attendance and accessibility. The objective of the survey was thus to identify needs and gaps in conference attendance, knowledge of which could be useful for honing JALT's relevance and outreach. This survey may also provide information to help more teachers access conferences. Generating data from which to make decisions about increasing conference attendance is more reliable than relying on simple intuition about underrepresented groups. The results give insight into correlations between conference attendance and sex, first language, job status, funding, and JALT membership, and they provide a foundation for making recommendations to improve conference participation.

Since the survey was conducted, COVID-19 has turned the world of conferences upside down. In 2020 and 2021, both the annual JALT International Conference and JALT PanSIG Conference were held online. Online conferences have, perhaps temporarily, replaced in-person conferences. Whether or not the conference model will change permanently to adapt to changed expectations and newly accessible technology remains to be seen. For many, online conferences have meant better access to professional development (Remmel, 2021), more so for those previously unable to attend (Woolston, 2020) due to the financial burden and other difficulties such as childcare and visa-related issues (Olena, 2020).

We embarked on this project expecting certain groups, particularly women, Japanese, and non-full-time teachers, would be underrepresented at conferences; however, in previous research, there were no data to substantiate this assumption. This study thus aimed to quantify the extent to which this hypothesis was borne out. At the least, this survey is a snapshot of what JALT conferences were like

pre-COVID. Despite the changes brought by COVID, these findings still provide insight into improvements needed to address accessibility to professional development, networking, teacher collaboration, and research opportunities for all JALT members.

Overview of 2018 Membership Demographics

The survey was conducted in 2018 and utilized membership data from the same year, which were provided by the JALT Head Office. JALT's data were reviewed to understand the demographic makeup of JALT at the time the survey was conducted. The data also provide a guide to ascertain the extent to which the demographics of the survey respondents mirrored the actual demographics of JALT. According to the 2018 data (see Table 1), almost 70% of JALT members are non-Japanese, and 30% are Japanese. The makeup of non-Japanese is unclear as JALT data do not differentiate nationality or first language within this group. A majority of JALT members, approximately 59%, are men, while 41% are women. For at least the past decade, based on Head Office membership figures, non-Japanese men and Japanese women have been the two largest groups within the organization. Based on 2014 data, for example, non-Japanese men made up 47%, Japanese women comprised 24%, Japanese men 11%, and non-Japanese women 18% (Appleby, 2014). While the percentage of Japanese and non-Japanese women is now almost balanced, membership rates for Japanese, for both women and men, are declining at a higher rate than the membership rates of non-Japanese.

2018	**Total (2483)**	**Percentage of Members**
Non-Japanese men	1219	49%
Non-Japanese women	493	20%
Japanese men	243	10%
Japanese women	528	21%

Table 1. 2018 Membership Demographics

Method

Research to establish who does and does not attend JALT conferences was conducted in May of 2018 using a bilingual Google Forms survey. A survey was chosen as the appropriate methodology as it collected data that did not previously exist. The data can inform decision-making about increasing conference attendance. Participants for the research primarily accessed the survey via English-teaching websites. A link to the survey was posted on numerous JALT SIG and Chapter Facebook pages and was shared on personal Facebook and Twitter accounts by both JALT and non-JALT members. This resulted in snowballing as participants shared the survey link beyond the researchers' networks. Because the research question interrogated both who does and who does not attend conferences, social media was more suitable than a survey conducted at a conference because it is able to reach those who do not attend. Although attendance at JALT conferences is the subject of the research, the survey was not restricted to JALT members. The rationale for this is that we also wanted to include people who may be interested in becoming JALT members, those who have been JALT members in the past, as well as teachers who could be JALT members but have made a conscious decision not to join. The survey was anonymous, although participants were given the option of including their email address if they were interested in participating in future research.

Respondents were screened with questions to ensure that they were English teachers in Japan. The first section asked for demographic information: age, sex, first language/s, job status, teaching environment, level of research budget if any, and whether the respondent was a JALT member. The second section divided respondents into four mutually exclusive groups: JALT conference attendees, former JALT conference attendees, aspiring JALT conference attendees, and JALT conference non-attendees. In the third section, respondents were given different questions based on their answer in part two and were asked why they did or did not attend JALT conferences. This paper focuses on parts one and two, examining the demographics of those who do and do not attend.

After the survey, adjustments were made to the question about job status to provide more accurate and complete answers. The survey asked respondents to identify their primary job status from the categories of full-time permanent, full-time contract, part-time, or casual. During the analysis stage, it became apparent that these categories do

not adequately account for school owners. Twenty-two people who answered "full-time" also identified themselves as school owners, a large enough group to be its own category. In addition, because a number of school owners identified as full-time teachers, it combined the full-time self-employed with full-time employed and resulted in patterns being obscured in the data, particularly with regard to conference attendance and access to funding. Full-time teachers employed by an institution generally have employer support to attend conferences, whereas school owners are more likely to fund their own conference attendance and may also be paying for someone to cover their classes. As a result, we decided to re-categorize the work status of "school owner" participants. All respondents who identified as school owners had their job status re-classified from these categories to a newly created category of "school owner."

A further point to note about the survey is that, unlike JALT, this survey used sex, not gender, as means of self-identification.

Participants

When the survey was closed, there were 302 confirmed participants. Similar to the demographics of JALT shown in Table 1, 43% of survey participants were non-Japanese males, and 17% were Japanese females. However, only 3% of survey respondents were Japanese males, and 37% identified as non-Japanese females. In other words, fewer Japanese men and more foreign women answered the survey relative to the JALT membership data. The disproportionate percentages raise questions about how to distribute surveys so as to ensure representative coverage of the target groups.

	Total (302)	Percentage of Participants
Japanese male	8	3%
Japanese female	50	17%
Japanese non-binary	0	0%
Non-Japanese male	129	43%
Non-Japanese female	112	37%
Non-Japanese non-binary	3	1%

Table 2. Survey Participants

Results: Conference Attendance

Sixty-eight percent of people who responded to the survey have attended a JALT conference; this includes 20% who responded that they no longer attend. More than 30% have not attended JALT conferences, including 10% who do not want to.

	I attend	I want to attend but haven't	Used to attend	I haven't been and don't want to go
Total (302)	48%	22%	20%	10%

Table 3. Do You Attend JALT Conferences?

Results: Sex

Conference attendance patterns varied by sex. More women answered the survey, but proportionally, fewer attend conferences. Only 39% of female respondents attend conferences, twenty percentage points fewer than their male counterparts. There was also a wide gap between men and women who answered that they would like to attend a conference but have not yet done so. One-third of women who responded want to attend conferences but haven't; this compared to 10% of men. In contrast, there was little difference between the responses of men and women to the options of "I used to attend JALT conferences but no longer do" and "I have not attended JALT conferences and don't want to." There were three respondents who identified their sex as "other." One replied that they used to attend JALT conferences but no longer do. Another has not been and doesn't want to go, and the third had not been but would like to go. The three respondents have been omitted from Table 4 because each was less than 1% in their category.

	I attend	I want to attend but haven't	Used to attend	I haven't been and don't want to go
Female (162)	39%	33%	19%	9%
Male (137)	60%	10%	21%	9%

Table 4. Sex

Results: Language

Respondents were asked to identify as "Japanese first language, "English first language," or "neither English nor Japanese first language." Respondents could select more than one, although none did. In line with JALT's 2018 data, respondents were not asked to identify their nationality.

Japanese first language speakers are underrepresented in the survey. Only 19% of respondents are Japanese. This is a lower proportion than the 2018 JALT membership, which is 31%. In addition, 20 respondents had a first language which was neither English nor Japanese. Because the JALT 2018 data do not differentiate groups within "non-Japanese," it is not possible to know the extent to which the survey data reflect the language composition of all JALT members. The survey data show substantial differences in conference attendance by first language. Almost three-quarters of English first language respondents have been to JALT conferences. This compares with just over half of Japanese first language respondents and 45% of "neither English nor Japanese first language" speakers. Representing 21% of their respective totals, English and Japanese first language speakers were equally likely to have stopped attending conferences, while only 5% of those who identify as "neither English nor Japanese first language speakers" reported that they had stopped attending.

Among those who have not been to conferences, there was also a difference by language background. The survey showed that few English first language speakers, only 16%, wanted to go to a conference but had not been. In contrast, the percentage of Japanese and people whose first language is neither English nor Japanese was much higher, at 40% and 45%, respectively. There was minimal difference between language backgrounds for those who do not want to go to JALT conferences.

	I attend	I want to attend but haven't	Used to attend	I haven't been and don't want to go
English first language (224)	53%	16%	21%	10%
Japanese first language (58)	32%	40%	21%	7%
Neither E/J first language (20)	40%	45%	5%	10%

Table 5. First Language

Results: Job Status

Difference in job status revealed differences in conference attendance patterns. The group with the highest proportion of conference attendees, at 59%, are employed in full-time, permanent positions. This group also had the smallest proportion of people, 11%, who want to go to a JALT conference but have not been. Although there may be an anecdotal perception that people stop attending JALT conferences once they get a tenured position, the survey results did not show this. The relative proportion of people in permanent employment no longer attending JALT conferences was lower than that of those on limited contracts. As expected, there were many non-permanent teachers who want to go to conferences but have not been: limited contract (24%), part-time (23%), and casual (33%). It should be noted that the survey did not ask whether or not teachers' contracts had renewal limits. Although relatively few in number, school owners were notable for the fact that almost all either go to conferences or want to go to conferences.

	I attend JALT conferences	I haven't attended any JALT conferences and don't want to	I used to attend conferences but don't now	I want to attend but haven't
Casual (6)	33%	17%	17%	33%
FT Perm/tenure (105)	59%	7%	23%	11%
Limited contract (111)	47%	13%	16%	24%
PT (57)	37%	12%	28%	23%
School owner (22)	32%	5%	5%	59%

Table 6. Job Status

Results: Funding

There is a strong correlation between funding and conference attendance. Sixty-eight percent of respondents who receive funding attend JALT conferences. In contrast, only 29% of those who receive no funding attend. The percentage of people attending conferences increases with each bracket of funding. At the upper level of funding, 300,000 yen or more, almost three-quarters of people attend.

The probable influence of funding on conference attendance is also evident when comparing those who want to attend but have not yet done so. Thirty-four percent of those with no funding would like to attend conferences. In contrast, among respondents with a research budget of 200,000 yen or more, only 5% responded that they have not been but would like to go. At the same time, however, these relatively well-funded respondents were also more likely to answer that they used to go to JALT conferences but no longer do. Lack of interest in attending a JALT conference was greatest among those who receive no funding.

	I attend	I want to attend but haven't	Used to attend	I haven't been and don't want to go
Receive no funding (134)	29%	34%	22%	14%
Receive some funding (148)	68%	9%	18%	5%
Funding (22) ¥1-99,9999	64%	23%	9%	5%
Funding (26) ¥100,000-199,999	65%	23%	8%	4%
Funding (38) ¥200,000-299,999	65%	5%	21%	5%
Funding (62) ¥300,000+	71%	0	23%	6%
Unsure (19)	31%	47%	11%	11%

Table 7. Funding Demographics

Results: Organization Memberships

Respondents were asked whether they were a member of any of three Japan-based English teachers' associations: JALT, JACET, and ETJ. Respondents could check all that applied. Almost two-thirds of survey respondents were JALT members, and more than half of them also belong to JACET or ETJ. The purpose of the question was to see if there was a correlation between being a member of JALT and attending JALT conferences. As shown in Table 7, there was a very high correlation between membership and attendance. However, conference attendance was not affected by whether a person belonged to another English teaching organization. Another notable point is that JALT members are interested in conferences; only 3% of JALT members replied that they have not been to and are not interested in attending JALT conferences.

	I attend	**I want to attend but haven't**	**Used to attend**	**I haven't been and don't want to go**
Member of JALT only (82)	74%	5%	17%	4%
Member of JALT and another organizatio n (99)	74%	6%	18%	1%
Not a JALT member (120)	9%	48%	23%	20%

Table 8. Organization Memberships

Discussion

The survey results have provided demographic information about who does and does not go to JALT conferences and contain comparisons with JALT's limited demographic data. As expected, women, Japanese first language speakers, and people who are not full-time teachers are underrepresented at conferences. These results raise questions about JALT itself as an organization and about how to develop vibrant inclusive conferences within a thriving organization. Conference attendance is not the only way to participate in an academic organization; however, it is one of the main benefits of membership. In addition to learning from watching presentations, participants who give presentations also benefit from employment gains due to publication opportunities in conference proceedings. Moreover, conferences provide opportunities to develop transferable skills, become involved in networking, and meet possible research partners. The discussion below is premised on the belief that conference attendance is good for the organization, for its members, and for teachers in general; as such, increasing conference attendance should be a priority of the organization. The following paragraphs outline areas for discussion to achieve this end.

The results of the survey show that there is potential for increasing the number and diversity of attendees at JALT conferences. Even though all respondents are teaching in English or teaching English, fewer than half attend JALT conferences. Among those who do not attend, approximately one-fifth used to go but no longer do, and about the same number have not been but would like to go. This indicates strongly that there is untapped potential for increasing the number of people attending JALT conferences. In addition to gathering conference data from attendees, which has become a practice within JALT, learning more about the people who do not attend may help increase attendance.

In addition, the responses show a wide gap between male and female conference attendance. Sixty percent of men who responded to the survey answered that they attend JALT conferences. In contrast, 39% of the women who responded report attending. This gap is also evident in the responses to whether a respondent would like to attend a JALT conference but have not. There is a twenty percentage point gap between men and women. This gap merits further investigation to determine correlating factors such as job status, JALT membership, and access to research funds. In addition, further analysis is needed to determine whether men and women have different reasons for attending or not attending conferences.

Much has been written about the struggles of balancing motherhood and academia (Aiston & Jung, 2015; Goncalves, 2019), including in the Japanese context (McCandie, 2021; Yoshida & Uchida, 2020). Issues such as lack of childcare at conferences have been widely discussed by JALT's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and Executive Board Members. Follow-up qualitative research would help to develop a more nuanced understanding of the reasons for attendance or non-attendance. Why is the gap between men's and women's participation so great? Are there measures JALT can take to address this gender disparity at conferences and the seemingly passive membership of women?

The survey results also show that Japanese people are underrepresented at JALT conferences. Forty percent of Japanese respondents said they have not been to a conference but would like to go. In addition to this finding, research points to broader questions about the participation of Japanese in JALT. The 2014 membership data for JALT showed that 34% of the membership is Japanese. By 2018, this proportion had fallen to 31%. According to JALT's website, the organization has a policy of being "open to all teachers, professionals, and students interested in language education no matter what their nationality, where they were teaching, working, or studying, or what language they were teaching" (JALT, n.d.). To demonstrate commitment to this, JALT should give more attention to its Japanese membership. It seems an area ripe for research. Is JALT interested in increasing Japanese membership, and if yes, what strategies can be developed? Why do relatively few Japanese people attend JALT conferences?

In addition to the relatively few Japanese JALT members and low rates of Japanese people attending JALT conferences, there is a further issue in the survey regarding the lack of Japanese respondents. Even though the survey was bilingual, only 19% of respondents were Japanese. However, the survey results do not indicate whether the reason there were fewer responses from Japanese people was that fewer saw the survey or that fewer of those who saw the survey responded. In addition, the lack of Japanese respondents raises questions about the study's methodology, specifically whether distributing a survey on JALT-related social media is an adequate way to reach Japanese English teachers.

Although JALT has access to members' email addresses whereas researchers do not, social media platforms are one of the main ways that JALT distributes information about events and conferences. As such, lack of engagement with the survey may be a problem that goes beyond this survey. If the low rate of responses is because Japanese people didn't see the postings, the effectiveness of communicating with Japanese members and potential members via social media may need to be reconsidered in favour of more effective methods.

JALT is making efforts, for example in post-conference surveys, to gain more information about the ways in which people access information. Nonetheless, the low number of Japanese members remains a concern since the organization values inclusivity and has a mission to provide opportunities to members. Japanese are over-represented in the group that want to go to conferences but have not been. How do members usually get information about JALT events, including conferences? What else can be done to ensure that members and potential members have appropriate information about events?

Unsurprisingly, the results show that access to funding correlates with attending conferences. The higher the funding bracket, the more likely a person is to attend a conference. Only 29% of people with no funding attend JALT conferences. This compares to 68% of those who do have access to funding. Furthermore, gender is an issue regarding access to funding; women who answered the survey are much less likely to have funding to attend conferences. Fifty-five percent of the women who responded to the conference do not receive conference funding compared with 39% of men. Notably, 16 of the 19 people who were unsure whether they had funding were women. A possible reason for this is that women may lack workplace networks that would make this information more accessible.

JALT provides some grant opportunities for attending conferences to those who do not have funding. For example, many chapters and SIGs, such as the TD, LD and CUE SIGS, have their own grants to help with conference attendance. Despite this, there are still people who want to go to conferences but have not been. The reasons for this disparity

need further exploration.

In Japan, as in the rest of the world, there is a growing gap in the education sector based on job status. This gap is reflected in the survey, with job status strongly correlated with conference attendance. The survey showed that full-time teachers are more likely to have attended conferences. Almost a quarter of part-time and limited-contract teachers had not been to a JALT conference, even though they wanted to. This compares with just 11% of full-time teachers. Only three full-time university teachers responded that they wanted to attend JALT conferences but had not. Teachers employed in tenured positions have job stability and are not on a periodic cycle of having to apply for new jobs. Even though job status strongly correlates with conference attendance, it should be noted that the survey findings cannot be interpreted to mean that full-time status enables attendance at conferences. Survey respondents who were full-time were also older than other groups of teachers, and being further advanced in their career might make it more likely that they have already been to conferences. Furthermore, attending conferences was likely to have been a factor in full-time teachers gaining full-time employment. To what extent is JALT aware of the job status inequity with regard to conference attendance? Are there any steps being taken to mitigate the effects of this inequity? Can more be done?

A striking point of the survey results is the high proportion of people who are not JALT members but want to go to a JALT conference. This suggests there is an untapped pool of potential members who would like to participate in conferences. This should be a point of reflection for JALT. One issue may be the cost of membership vis-a-vis the benefits of being a member. In addition, because this survey shows a correlation between membership and conference attendance, it raises the possibility that increasing membership may also increase conference attendance. What is the relationship between conference attendance and JALT membership? Why do non-members want to attend JALT conferences? To what extent does JALT target non-members for conference attendance?

The survey also raises questions about the demographic categories that JALT uses. This survey asked about first language/s, giving three language options: English, Japanese, and neither English nor Japanese. The answers were not mutually exclusive though no respondents gave more than one answer. Even though this survey has focused on teachers teaching English, JALT is an organization for all language teachers in Japan. Providing an opportunity for people who are not Japanese or English language first language speakers to identify themselves helps to get a broader sense of language teaching in Japan. It also provides a rudimentary opportunity to create awareness and support for teachers who are not English or Japanese first language speakers.

A single category for non-Japanese renders the non-Japanese, non-English first language members invisible in the organization. Research shows that first-language speakers of languages other than Japanese or English have more barriers to advancing their career (Holliday, 2013; Rivers, 2013; Matikainnen, 2019). In addition, this survey did not include nationality or racial demographics. Omitting these categories also resulted in a survey that overlooks the challenges faced by teachers from both outer and expanding circles (Kachru, 1992) and teachers who are racial minorities. Racial minorities face even more marginalization (Gerald, 2020; Kobayashi, 2014; Kobayashi, 2011; Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013; Mahboob et al., 2004). Collecting more demographic data is a starting point, but within JALT, how can the organization better include and serve the needs of members who are ethnic or language minorities in the organization?

Raising these discussion points provides an opportunity to reflect on JALT and JALT conference attendance. In addition to furthering the discussion about increasing conference attendance, this consideration might help to increase the inclusiveness and vibrancy of the English teaching community in Japan. Below, we outline our recommendations to address the issues outlined in this section.

Recommendations

It is easy to find fault and concerns within any large organization regarding the need for equity and social justice. JALT is attempting measures to achieve equity. It offers research grants to JALT members and assistance with writing abstracts via workshops and its writers' peer support group. It recently started mentoring programs and professional development support through Zoom.

There are, however, areas that could be improved. Listed below are changes that could be made within the organization to help provide better support and address the needs of underrepresented groups.

1. Try to increase conference attendance, both inside and outside the membership. Of the 128 respondents who are not JALT members, 48% expressed interest in attending conferences but had not. From this survey, there are significant numbers of teachers who are not members of JALT but are interested in the professional development or networking offered by JALT conferences. Attracting non-members to conferences also has the added benefit of potentially increasing the membership.

2. Provide a centralized, easy-to-access part of the JALT website where all JALT conferences are listed. A hyperlinked table with dates, call for papers, early-bird rates, and whether or not there are subsidies or grants available, and if so, for whom and under what conditions, would help create awareness about events and may increase attendance. Steps have already been made towards this objective.

3. Collect the demographic information of the membership and conference participants. In particular, gender/sex, job status, first language (English, Japanese, other, and an option to fill in other languages). In the sex section, three respondents answered "other," but JALT data does not always include a non-binary option. It should. JALT also does not include first language and race, areas that affect career advancement in ELT. Since completing this survey and presenting the results at the JALT International and PanSIG conferences, as well as speaking to senior figures in JALT, it is apparent that greater effort is being made to collect demographic information on the membership. Knowing who the members are is necessary for catering for their needs. For example, it is important to investigate the effectiveness of the ways in which information to the membership is being disseminated, particularly to Japanese members. A question as part of JALT membership renewal on the preferred medium of correspondence may give information about the most effective methods.

4. Conduct research, or facilitate research, into Japanese first language speakers' attitudes and experiences of professional development and JALT. By doing so, JALT can better understand why the proportion of Japanese members who have stopped attending conferences is disproportionately high and why Japanese membership numbers are decreasing faster than non-Japanese.

5. Since the proportion of women who want to attend conferences but have not is relatively high, there should be more research specifically into women's participation in conferences and the factors that may make it easier for them to attend. One step is to provide childcare, which the organization has already made some efforts to do. How effective is this? Are there other measures that would help increase the participation of women?

6. Promote funding opportunities. Lack of knowledge about access to funding was a surprising finding of the survey. Currently, some SIGs and chapters offer financial support to members for conferences by way of grants, but JALT itself only supports research grants. Consideration could be given to providing grants for participating in conferences. While the Grant Committee continues to promote their research grants, more thought should be given to creating awareness among members that there is financial support available to those in need.

7. Encourage senior member participation. Although conference attendance is highest among full-time teachers, full-time teachers also tend to stop attending conferences. Encouraging a narrative of "paying back into JALT" among experienced teachers, particularly through mentorship, is likely to build the organization and conference attendance. In addition to facilitating opportunities for mentees, peer support among mentors may also foster a "pay back

into JALT mindset.

8. Innovate. JALT has experimented with giving discounted or free rates to local teachers for conferences, such as PANSIG 2018. There is scope for other initiatives:
    a. issuing presenters with invitation cards that would give conference discounts to friends or colleagues;
    b. providing SIGs and Chapters with discount vouchers for conference fees or expenses that have some limitations such as only for first-time attendees or people with no or limited research budgets; and
    c. offering a discount on first-time JALT membership for non-member volunteers at conferences.

9. Continue related survey research. For the benefit of researchers conducting similar research in the future, we recommend noting the following points to assist with survey design:
    a. divide JALT's "non-Japanese" category to gain a better understanding of first language(s) and non-Japanese, non-English first language teachers;
    b. consider including race and nationality as categories in recognition of that fact that non-white, non-Japanese teachers may face additional employment obstacles in Japan, including accessing conferences;
    c. distinguish between contracted teachers with and without limits on contract renewals; and
    d. create a discrete category for school owners in job status because "full-time" does not adequately describe their situation.

Conclusion

Attending JALT conferences affords attendees many benefits such as professional development, networking, and career opportunities. These opportunities, however, are not accessible to all JALT members due to various factors that have been addressed. JALT is an organization built on the backs of volunteers, and appreciation should be shown to those who help organize and run these conferences and the organization as a whole. For improvement, there is more that could be done, or done differently, to ensure greater equity and access to all the benefits a JALT membership provides, including conferences. We have provided information about the demographics of JALT conferences and highlighted issues about the lack of demographic information being collected and utilized by JALT. We have discussed the needs and reasons for change, and finally, suggestions were made with regard to these needs. It is our hope that this article not only increases awareness about inequity in conference attendance, but also provides concrete ideas for action and change within the organization. We hope that these recommendations will help JALT to live up to its mission statement of promoting "excellence in language learning, teaching, and research by providing opportunities for those involved in language education to meet, share, and collaborate" (JALT, n.d). We also hope that it can spark innovation about how to achieve this worthy goal.

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Appendix

Conference attendance of English teachers.
英語教師 の会議への参加について *

1. Required
We are collecting information from teachers who currently teach English or in English in Japan. From this survey we want to understand why people do or do not attend academic conferences. We also want to learn about why people present at academic conferences and whether there are factors that discourage people from presenting. All information is confidential and anonymous. Do you agree to complete this survey?
この調査は 現在日本で英語を教えている方、また は英語で教えている方を対象に情報収集をしております。この調査で人々が学術　会議に参加する／しない理由を知るとともに、学術会議でプレゼンテーションを　する理由・プレゼンテーションするを妨げる要因があるのかを調べております。　すべての情報は極秘で匿名です。この調査に回答することに同意しますか？

Yes/はい No/いいえ

2. Are you involved in English education in Japan?
現在あなたは、日本での英語教 育の関係者ですか

Yes/はい No/いいえ

3. Do you teach English or teach in English?
日本で英語を教えていますか、または、　英語で教えますか

Yes/はい No/いいえ

4. What is your sex? 性別を教えてください。

Male/男性

Female/女性

Other/その他

5. How old are you? 年齢を教えてください。

< 26
26-29
30-34
35-39
40-44
45-49
50-54
55-59
60+

6. What best describes your language background? あなたの言語環境についてど れが最も当てはまりますか？*Tick all that apply.

I am an English native speaker/英語が母語である

I am a Japanese native speaker/日本語が母語である

I am neither an English nor a Japanese native speaker 母語は英語でも日本語でもない

7. Are you a member of any of the following Japan based language organizations? 日本を拠点とした次のいずれかの語学団体に 所属していますか？当てはまるものすべてを選んでください。* Tick all that apply.

JALT/全国語学教育学会

JACET/大学英語教育学会

ETJ(English Teachers in Japan)
I am not a member of any of the organizations mentioned above./上記のどの団体にも所 属していない

8. Which environment do you teach in? どの環境で教えてい ますか？当てはまるものすべてを選んでください。 *Tick all that apply.

Elementary school/JHS 小学校 /中学校

HS/高校

Senmon gakko/ Tandai/専門学校／短期大学

University/大学

Own your own school/
自分の学校を持っている

Language school/語学学校

Juku (cram school)/塾 Other/ 他

9. Which best describes your employment status ? あなたの教員としての雇用形 態を教えてください。1つの答えを選んでください。

Casual/臨時

Part-time/非常勤

Limited-term contract/任期付き契約

Full-time permanent (Tenured)/
終身在職権あ りの常勤

10. How long have you have you held your current employment status? どのくら いの期間現在の雇用形態で働いていますか？

less than one year/1年未満

1-5 years/1〜5年

6-10 years/6〜10年

10+ years/10年以上 11.

11. Which best describes your current research funding from your employer/s per year.雇用主から受け取る年間の研究費の助成金について最も当てはまるものを選 んでください。

¥0
¥1-100,000
¥100,0001 - 200,000
¥200,001 - 300,000
¥300,000+
I don’t know/わからない

12. Which best describes you 最も当てはまるものを選んでください。

I attend JALT conferences.
JALTの大会に参加している

I want to attend JALT conferences but I haven’t. JALTの大会に参加したいがしてい ない

I used to attend JALT conferences but no longer do. 以前は年次JALTの大会・学会 に参加していたが、現在はしていない

I haven’t been to JALT and don’t want to go.
JALTの大会参加したことはなく、行き たいと思わない

There may be follow up interviews. Please check if you are willing to be interviewed. 追加でインタビューがある場合、ご協力いただける方はチェックを 入れてください。 In order to contact you for the above, we need your email address. My email address メールアドレス If you have any other comments about this research / survey please comment below. この研究や調査に関して他にコメントがあればこちらにお書きください。

JALT TD SIG

About the JALT TD SIG

The JALT Teacher Development SIG is a network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively. Active since 1993, our members teach at primary and secondary schools, universities, language schools, and in various other contexts. New members are always welcome to join our conversation and share their experiences with other teachers. (Please note that the name was officially changed from Teacher Education & Development SIG in early 2016.)

Become a TD SIG Member

Joining:

TD is a special interest group (SIG) of the Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT). To join TD, you must be a JALT member. Information on joining JALT is available on the JALT web site (jalt.org). If you are already a JALT member, you can also add a TD SIG membership to your existing JALT membership. Please see the JALT membership page for information on joining in the TD conversation.

Benefits:

Joining TD connects you to a network of teacher colleagues who are interested in growing professionally. Members receive the most current issue of TD's Explorations in Teacher Development (ETD) Journal by email, and can participate in our mailing list. TD also sponsors and co-sponsors events throughout the year to help teachers gain experience in mentoring and presenting.

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