REFLECTIONS

Film Studies in Japan (FSIJ) 2025 Conference Reflection

Richard Thomas Ingham
British Council, Japan

The inaugural Film Studies in Japan (FSIJ) conference was held at Nanzan University, Nagoya, on March 1, 2025. The conference explored various approaches to the use of film in English teaching, and featured academic presentations, film screenings, and content-creation workshops. I attended because I am interested in incorporating more audiovisual materials into my classes and developing my ability to create customized audiovisual resources. Since I do not have access to an institutional research budget, the conference's proximity to my home in Nagoya and its free admission were additional incentives to participate. The event was organized across two rooms, with sessions running concurrently. What follows is a thematic reflection on the sessions that I attended organized into three areas: the use of film in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and academic courses; enhancing student engagement through film; and developing technical content-creation skills.

Using Film in CLIL and Academic Courses

The first presentation that I attended was given by Brian Cullen, who shared his initial experiences of teaching film studies in a CLIL course. He began by outlining the benefits of using film in language classrooms, such as increasing engagement and motivation, supporting critical thinking, encouraging lifelong learning, and offering cultural insights into social norms. He had used the textbook *Movie Time: An Introduction to Film Studies* by Adam Miller to scaffold his teaching, and found its chronological structure helped not only his students' understanding of film studies, but also his own. He highlighted the importance of supporting learners' cultural and historical knowledge to raise awareness before viewing films, ensuring they know what to focus on while watching. He also emphasized the advantages of a flipped classroom approach, noting that watching full-length films is not always the best use of class time. Instead, he recommended showing short clips during lessons while encouraging students to watch entire films independently. Although my current teaching context does not allow for a dedicated film studies course, I found his presentation inspiring and hope to incorporate similar approaches in the future.

After that, I observed a talk by Benjamin Filer from Aichi Prefectural University, who discussed his use of the book *Videotelling: Using Short Films for Storytelling* by Jamie Keddie. In his presentation, Filer introduced Keddie's alternative approach to conventional video use in the classroom, requiring students to discuss a video *before* watching it, encouraging critical thinking and active engagement with the content. He demonstrated how this method builds intrigue and engagement by leading conference attendees through a short model lesson. I found this approach particularly innovative, as it adds an element of curiosity and makes the classroom environment more dynamic. I will certainly be looking for a copy of the book to explore how I can apply this technique in my own teaching.

Enhancing Student Engagement through Film

I then attended Abigail B. Capitin-Principe's presentation on using student-created videos as output in English classes. She focused on the role of Project-Based Learning (PBL) where

students actively engage in real-world, meaningful projects. In her classes, students created both individual and group video-based PowerPoint presentations, which were then uploaded to Google Classroom for assessment. While she discussed the benefits of both formats, I was particularly struck by the advantages of group presentations. These benefits include encouraging teamwork, enhancing communication skills, developing time management abilities, and creating shared learning experiences. Although I have previously used individual video presentations for assessment, this session made me consider ways in which I might incorporate group video projects into my teaching in the future.

I next joined a presentation by Justin Mejia from Meijo University who shared his efforts to boost student engagement through video production. He highlighted some key benefits of student-created films, such as allowing multiple takes to refine presentations, supporting creativity with user-friendly apps (e.g. iMovie and CapCut), and reducing anxiety by enabling students to record in a relaxed setting. He then introduced two types of videos that he had used in his classes. Informational videos replaced traditional presentations, with one example featuring students reviewing convenience store products. He had also used narrative videos to serve as an alternative to role-plays, encouraging students to create short scenes and express emotions. Mejia also provided practical advice, emphasizing clear goals, structured stages (storyboarding and scripting), and allowing students sufficient research time for preparation. He also touched on both positive and negative student feedback on video use, compared with more conventional classroom techniques. Videos were seen as more engaging yet time-consuming, while live presentations required less preparation but caused more anxiety. This presentation made me consider how video projects could replace traditional presentations in my own classes, particularly as a culminating activity at the end of a unit or semester.

I then attended a presentation by Richard Hill from Mie University wherein he summarized recent global research on the use of Netflix as a language-learning tool. He began by highlighting Netflix's widespread accessibility with over 300 million users, and reflected on how it is a frequent topic of small talk in his own English classes. Hill shared several key findings from his analysis of research on using Netflix as a tool for L2 learning. First, students should choose content based on interest rather than ease of comprehension since engagement is more important than difficulty level. Second, the use of L2 subtitles can help to support language acquisition. And third, that Netflix can broaden learners' lexicon and expose them to a broader range of dialects; for example, the UK TV show, *Peaky Blinders*, has increased global awareness of the Brummie (Birmingham) dialect. He also referenced research suggesting that watching in the L1 first, then in the L2, aids comprehension. In my university classes, I have noticed that students often rely on English that sounds unnatural or outdated. Research supports this concern: Nakayama (2020) found that prolonged exposure to Japanese EFL textbooks can lead learners to internalize language patterns that differ from real-world English, which is why I encourage the incorporation of authentic materials into students' learning. This session reinforced my belief that consuming streaming content that they genuinely enjoy can significantly enhance learners' language skills

Developing Technical Skills for Content Creation

In the afternoon, I attended a content-creation workshop by Jared Peo from Nanzan University. He provided valuable tips on how to make pictures and videos more professional, especially for beginners. His presentation covered several key aspects, such as managing phone memory, and ensuring consistency (e.g., frame rate) for video projects. He guided us through camera settings on iPhones and explained how to choose the best FPS (frames per second) for different video formats, and how to avoid issues such as motion blur. He also gave practical

advice on using auto exposure and autofocus, which attendees were able to experiment with during the workshop. He introduced the concept of framing, recommending the use of the iPhone's grid overlay to improve composition, and discussed ways in which straight and curved lines can guide the viewer's eye through an image.

The workshop also covered video shot types and their best uses. For instance, wide shots are great for setting the scene or transitions but are often overused by beginners, leading to static or less engaging content. Medium shots (waist up) work well for dialogue, while close-ups are ideal for capturing emotions or reactions. Additional tips included using movement in video, experimenting with different heights (such as tatami-level shots, common in Japanese cinema), and employing tilts like the "Dutch Angle" to create more dynamic visuals. As someone who has just started experimenting with video production, I left with several practical techniques to improve my own classroom video materials and to guide students in creating more professional-looking projects.

The final session that I attended was by Andrew Tidmarsh, a YouTuber who produces videos about his travel experiences, as well as tips to help people travel in Japan. He began by relating how he had become interested in video creation and how he started out making videos. He emphasized the importance of experimentation in his own creative process, urging attendees to "play around and see what happens". He discussed his equipment choices, noting that while smartphones are sufficient for shooting video, mirrorless cameras offer more flexibility due to their interchangeable lenses. He discussed several options for recording audio, such as inexpensive clip-on mics with Bluetooth capability, and stressed the importance of stereo audio for YouTube. He provided recommendations for software that included free options such as Audacity (for audio) and Kden Live (for video editing).

He then went on to outline his process for making a video, from the initial idea to scriptwriting (the most important stage), adding graphics, editing, transitions, adding sound effects and music, and finally rendering the video. He wrapped up his presentation with some helpful tips: label your footage clearly, have a clear vision of the final product, and keep things simple to avoid overstimulation. Overall, this session directly supported my goal of developing customized audiovisual materials for my classes and provided me with some new ideas for student assignments that incorporate these tools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this was an excellent conference for educators interested in using or creating audiovisual content for English classes. The presentations were engaging, and the workshops offered practical, valuable insights. I left with plenty of ideas to implement in my classroom, including video-based student projects, CLIL-style lessons using film, and improved technical skills for producing educational content. Additionally, the conference was free, which was a welcome bonus for someone like me on a tight budget. For a first-time event, it was well-organized, and I hope the organizers are encouraged to host it again in the future. I am sure many others would be eager to attend and learn more about how film can be applied in their own teaching contexts.

References

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About the Author

Richard Thomas Ingham works for the British Council at a private university in Japan. His research interests include extensive listening, podcasting, and learner autonomy. richard.ingham@britishcouncil.or.jp