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# Pan SIG Journal 2017

*Edited by Anthony Brian Gallagher*

PanSIG is an annual conference held in May, and organized by many of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT).

# Literature in Language Teaching SIG Forum Report

Tara McIlroy

*Meiji University*

Atsushi Iida

*Gunma University*

Quenby Hoffman Aoki

*Sophia University*

Gregg McNabb

*Shizuoka Institute of Science and Technology*

At the 2017 PanSIG conference at Akita International University the Literature in Language Teaching SIG forum focused on recent activities by the SIG and SIG committee. Four speakers presented on their chosen topics for 10-15 minutes each. The topics were (a) publishing in journals related to literature and language teaching, (b) publishing in the SIG journal specifically, (c) examples of classroom activities using poetry and reader response, and (d) the background, current status, and future directions of the LiLT SIG. After the presentations there was an interactive question and answer session in which audience members were invited to comment on and talk with the presenters about their topics. This paper provides short sections by each of the speakers in order to document the forum.

本稿は、Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT) SIG フォーラムにおける 研究発表の報告書である。SIG フォーラムでは、4名の英語教師が登壇し、以下の題目でそれぞれ研究発表を行った。1) 文学・言語教育分野における学術誌への投稿 2) 特に、LiLT SIG ジャーナル発刊に際しての問題点 3) 詩を使った教育実践例と生徒の反応 4) LiLT SIG の背景、現状と今後の方向性。本稿では、これらの内容に焦点を当てながら、LiLT 分野における様々な問題を議論していく。

In this article we report on the talks given by members of the LiLT SIG at the PanSIG forum at Akita University on May 21st, 2017. In the forum, four presenters described a range of topics of direct importance and relevance to the continued activities of the SIG. These were all connected to the issues of teaching and learning using literature. This report aims to guide the SIG through its first year of having full SIG status, while also looking into future possible goals and challenges for the group. First, Atsushi Iida introduced advice for getting published in the field of literature and language teaching from his own research perspective, including a number of journals which specialise in empirical studies using literature.

Continuing the theme of journals, the SIG Journal editor Gregg McNabb talked about procedures involved in processing submissions for the LiLT SIG Journal and some advice for prospective authors. Quenby Hoffman Aoki gave a presentation on the methods she uses to teach texts such as poetry using reader-response theory. Finally, Tara McIlroy

talked about the current state of the SIG and future plans for the group.

We define literature as short stories, poems, novels, prose, or fiction of any kind, including movies. The brief outlines in this short article summarize the contributions by the members of the forum to help document the SIG's progress and activities. All speakers invited comments and contributions from the participants, which due to limitations of space were not possible to summarize in this article. It is hoped that in highlighting the work of the SIG and the current issues and trends related to the SIG's work, the progress can be shown for future use and will help motivate others to contribute to the SIG in the future.

Challenges and Issues of Publishing Second Language  
Poetry Writing Research  
*Atsushi Iida*

There is increasing pressure for scholars to publish English articles in academic journals (Flowerdew, 2008; Lillis & Curry, 2010). The same is true for nonnative English-speaking teachers and researchers at the tertiary level. The fact is that publication is one of the crucial requirements for getting a new (and/or better) position, tenure, or promotion in the university contexts. In this short article, I discuss some challenges and issues of publishing my second language (L2) poetry writing research by reflecting on my past 10-year experience of writing for scholarly publication.

I have published several articles on L2 poetry writing research in national and international journals since I was a doctoral student in the United States. I do not think writing for scholarly publication in this area is easy and less challenging than any other area. Since the study of literature in language teaching (LiLT) in the L2 context is comparatively new and interdisciplinary in nature, I have encountered some problems and difficulties in writing scholarly articles. Particularly, I have found three major issues when publishing my work in academic journals.

The first issue is to choose suitable journals (see Iida, 2016). Each journal has its scope, aim, and target audience. Contributors must incorporate these perspectives in their manuscripts, because writing for scholarly publication is “a disciplinarily situated literacy practice, and our message is for someone else in a particular discourse community” (Iida, 2016, p. 43). In other words, the contributors must become aware of a group of teachers and researchers who share the same goals and scopes in a particular academic community. No manuscript will be published unless it fits into the scope, aim, and target audience of each journal. In this sense, it is crucial to clarify who the article is for, what the purpose is, and what original contributions can be made in each study.

Self-positioning as a researcher is the second key issue in the publication practice. Because of its interdisciplinarity, teachers and researchers of English may have ample opportunities to submit their work in various academic journals, but at the same time, it makes their situation more complicated. For instance, my research on L2 poetry writing involves the following five areas of study: composition, stylistics, TESOL, literature, and psychology.

In each of the five areas, research interests of a group of scholars vary from the others. Likewise, the research methodology employed in each field is different. Of particular importance in this publication practice is to recognize where they position themselves in academia and to properly present their studies in a disciplinarily accepted manner.

The third issue involves a lack of existing empirical studies into the use of literature in L2 contexts (Hanauer, 2010; Iida, 2011, 2012; Paran, 2008). This situation makes it difficult for teachers and researchers to develop theoretical underpinnings and design empirical research in this field. Many teachers know that studying and composing literature and poetry promotes L2 learning (Iida, 2010), but they know very little about the potential outcome of writing poetry in the target language. Lack of previous studies and insufficient data further challenges them in justifying existing theoretical arguments.

In this article, I have discussed three major issues of scholarly publication in the field of literature in L2 education. It may be highly competitive when publishing our articles, but teachers of English still have a chance to do so by carefully looking at the target journal, understanding their positioning as a researcher, and critically reviewing previous studies published in this field. While many international, refereed journals (e.g., *Scientific Study of Literature*) tend to accept the submission of research-based, empirical papers, our own SIG Journal, *the Journal of Literature in Language Teaching (JLiLT)* accepts practical papers in addition to featured articles. I believe that submitting work to the *JLiLT* is a good start and it will provide teachers and researchers of English with an opportunity to expand knowledge about their studies by receiving constructive feedback through the peer-review process. Publishing each of our case studies or practical reports in the L2 classroom can be a great contribution to the field of literature in language teaching.

### Publishing in the Journal of Literature in Language Teaching

**Gregg McNabb**

In the past 2 years, *The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching* has somehow become known to researchers outside

Japan (e.g., Turkey, Singapore, Iran, the U.S.A., and others). As a result, compared to previous years, competition to be published has increased. As the editor of the journal since 2015, I have outlined ways for LiLT members to improve their chances of having their publications accepted.

In a general sense, perhaps the best way for contributors to approach writing an article for *The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching*, or any other journal for that matter, is to assume that their next job offer will depend on the quality of that article. Thus researchers should probably have a multimonth, multistage plan that allows several months for research, ample time for the first drafts, some time for trusted critical readers to offer constructive feedback, and finally several months for the editing process if their submission has been accepted. Regarding specifics, contributors should carefully proofread submissions to avoid various typing errors, spelling errors, formatting errors, and referencing problems (e.g., a source is cited in the body of the paper but not included in the references section) and to ensure that everything conforms to APA conventions. For example, after a city name, the state abbreviation is now required in upper case. For consistency, British writers must use American conventions and place the period before final quotation marks. Unfortunately, some submissions do not attend to these points of etiquette. As to content, statements should be well supported. One of the most common problems noted in the double-blind review process is that writers' ideas are not as fully supported as they could be.

Because we can reasonably assume that readers of the journal are educated and also have an interest in using or understanding literature in language teaching, it is not necessary to provide a lot of background or an extensive literature review. Writers should provide a concise background or introduction and then present the body of their article. Ideal articles maintain a judicious balance between research/theory and practical classroom applications, keeping in mind that the journal is also read outside of Japan. The journal does not accept submissions that are essentially extended lesson plans or which are longer versions of JALT's *The Language Teacher* "My Share" column.

As is the case for many aspects of life, good timing does matter. If in the previous issue someone wrote about *tanka* and you have a submission dealing with *haiku*, there is a fair chance that it will be rejected. There is no harm whatsoever in sending a brief message to editors of various journals to confirm whether your topic is timely.

### Revisiting Literature as Authentic Content and Encouraging Reader Response in Japanese University Students

*Quenby Hoffman Aoki*

An often-repeated phrase used by Japanese university students when discussing the meaning of a literary work is "what the author wants to tell." They also tend to focus on searching for the "message" or "hidden meaning" of a particular story or poem. According to students, this is on the entrance examinations. Emphasized by high school teachers, it becomes habitual. Furthermore, students are often reluctant to make a strong statement of response, because they are afraid to be wrong. The teacher is supposed to know the correct interpretation, and if she does not tell them the answer they become uncomfortable, even annoyed, and may simply give up. In this short forum talk I outlined some ways to overcome this limitation.

A TESOL-trained instructor may find this to be a top-down, hierarchical approach, which goes against basic principles of active learning or communicative language teaching (CLT). To focus on what a writer wanted to say assumes that a text has a message or hidden meaning and therefore a correct answer, putting accuracy before communication. In short, one is not taking responsibility for one's own reading process.

Teachers who majored in education, TESOL, or applied linguistics (including myself) may not have studied literary theory, but here is a situation where it becomes helpful, particularly reader response criticism, defined succinctly as a set of theories which view texts as "interaction between author and reader," and reading as "an act of creation, no less than writing" (Gardner, 2013, p. 198). In this approach, any attempt to state an author's intention is impossible to know, and because it is decades or centuries

after a work was written, may not matter that much, at least not in relation to students' language development. Any work of literature was written at a certain time and place, but is being read now in a very different setting by an individual who comes from a different background. The reader has to make sense of texts using his or her own cognitive, social, and cultural tools. Furthermore, the other readers in the classroom will probably respond in their own ways. Although knowing the historical context and the author's background may be useful and interesting, once the words are on the page they ultimately belong to the reader. Even the author is not always aware of a clear intention when writing. Human beings are complicated!

As a start, students can be encouraged to look at the text with a minimum of background information and share their responses to it. Poetry is particularly effective for this, because to really understand a poem requires discussion, negotiation, and analysis. One poem that has worked well in this context is "We Real Cool," a short, vivid, and rhythmical snapshot of life in an urban neighborhood just as the Civil Rights Movement was beginning, written by Gwendolyn Brooks, the first African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize. The poem is based on a true story. Brooks was walking near her home in Chicago during school hours and saw a group of young men playing pool. In a rare case of clearly stated authorial intention, Brooks said that "instead of asking why they weren't in school, I asked myself, 'I wonder how they feel about themselves'" (*Academy of American Poets*, audio clip at <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/we-real-cool> ).

Poems can be seen as stories, having a setting and characters as fiction does. An effective exercise using the poem above is asking students to imagine themselves inside the poem with discussion or writing questions like the following:

- Imagine you are one of the pool players. What would you say if someone asked you about your life and thoughts? Imagine your life 10 or 20 years later; what have you done since that day in the pool hall?
- Imagine one of the pool players is someone you know and care about. What would you say to him?

- This poem describes a Black neighborhood in a city in the U.S. Consider how your reactions to the poem are influenced by racial and cultural stereotypes.
- This poem was written in the late 1950s as the Civil Rights movement was beginning. Would the situation be different now?
- How would you react if you saw a similar group of boys in your neighborhood?

Such questions encourage students to read actively and to value and express their own responses to literature. Furthermore, simply changing the words used to talk about literature can, in fact, create a major shift in perception. For example, instead of "Author A wants to tell us..." students can say "This poem describes...." Instead of "Author C's message is..." they can phrase it as "The theme of this story is...." These are simple but effective ways to use literature for communication, critical thinking, and active learning.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that reader response does not mean that historical, cultural, and biographical information is unhelpful or irrelevant. It does mean that, regardless, readers are bringing their own experiences and beliefs to the conversation. Placing meaning and learning with the reader helps students develop active reading and thinking skills that can be used in other classes across the curriculum and in the real world after graduation.

### The Literature in Language Teaching SIG's Current Position and Future Directions

*Tara McIlroy*

The LiLT SIG is special amongst the SIGs in JALT as being the only place for teachers interested in poetry, prose, film, and other types of creative texts such as songs to discuss their topic. Although literature in many language learning contexts is a marginalized source of material, interest in literature remains steady and is perhaps enjoying something of a revival. The LiLT SIG has been growing steadily since its creation in 2011 and in 2017 became a full SIG, meaning that the membership of the SIG was steadily above 50 for the past 12 months. The main reason for the creation of the SIG was that there was no existing research or presentation space for teachers of poetry, content-based literature programs using

literature to teach language, or for presentations that were directly related. Over the past 6 years the SIG has been able to produce a range of events which suit the size of the SIG and the availability of the SIG members to be able to participate. In this short talk about the SIG's background, current status, and future possible directions, I considered the SIG's guiding principles and ongoing development, concluding with an invitation to forum participants to discuss the latter aspect, that of future directions.

The first type of activity the SIG has been involved in is organising events. The SIG has had two conferences devoted entirely to literature both entitled *The Heart of the Matter*. The first of these was held in Aichi in 2014 and this location was chosen for its proximity to a number of committee members. There were concurrent sessions and a sponsored speaker for this event. In the second conference, in 2016, the main speakers were members of the SIG and the event was held in Kyoto. As well as special days with invited and concurrent sessions, we have been involved in several other activities also. These have included events at JALT International such as coordinating presentations at a forum and inviting a sponsored speaker to the event. In 2015 Jane Spiro was an invited speaker from the U.K., conducting several talks at the conference on the topics of creative writing and poetry in the language classroom. The SIG has invited a guest speaker to the JALT International conference again in 2017, in collaboration with the C-Group run by Alan Maley. This year's speaker will be Malu Sciamarelli from Brazil, and she will talk at Tsukuba as well as participating in the Four Corners tour. Presenting and organising events is part of an ongoing discussion amongst the committee and we welcome suggestions about how to manage events and other activities for the SIG.

As well as events such as conferences, the SIG has started to consider other ways to be active and serve the community of SIG members. One of these has been through increased promotion and publicity. Despite having a small committee, we are a dedicated group who are interested in promoting the SIG positively through our activities. We share local and international news related to literature in language teaching through our Facebook group and page. We have everything related to the SIG on the official webpage,

which also hosts the archived newsletters (*The Word*) with content written by the SIG committee. Next we are looking at ways to support attendance of conferences by setting up a grant system to support a member of the SIG to visit the JALT International conference for the first time. Although we are not receiving more interest globally, we remain a local group with our main interests related to the members of the SIG in Japan.

As for the future of the SIG and future goals, these are still being considered at the time of writing. The talk at the forum briefly introduced some suggestions for the SIG, including the possible increase of international support for visitors to Japan, making connections internationally with other groups connected to the goals of the LiLT SIG, and trying to continue connecting our interests with those of other SIGs in Japan also. Through these things we hope to continue to expand our interests.

Finally, as we consider the future plans of the SIG in the next few years, we welcome new members and those who may have time to offer the committee. While the SIG continues to grow and develop, we hope to have many opportunities to welcome new challenges and broaden our horizons in the world of the JALT SIGs and the field of literature.

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### Author Biographies

**Tara McIlroy** is a Co-coordinator of the Literature in Language Teaching SIG and an associate professor in the School of Global Japanese Studies, Meiji University, Tokyo. Her interests include literary reading, investigating uses of creative texts, and uses of world literature in the language classroom. [tara.mcilroy@gmail.com](mailto:tara.mcilroy@gmail.com)

**Quenby Hoffman Aoki** teaches in the English Literature Department, Sophia University, including literature, global issues, and fluency practice in her classes whenever possible. Her research interests include literature in the language classroom and global issues (especially gender, race, and environmental problems). She is a Member-at-Large for LiLT SIG.  
[quenby@yahoo.com](mailto:quenby@yahoo.com)

**Atsushi Iida** is associate professor of English in the University Education Center, Gunma University. He was awarded his PhD in English (Composition and TESOL) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include second language (L2) writing, poetry writing, and writing for scholarly publication. [a.iida@gunma-u.ac.jp](mailto:a.iida@gunma-u.ac.jp).

**Gregg McNabb** is an associate professor of English in the Faculty of Informatics at Shizuoka Institute of Science and Technology. His main educational interests are writing and publishing reading textbooks and the support role of e-learning platforms. He dabbles in poetry and short story writing. [greggmcnabb@gmail.com](mailto:greggmcnabb@gmail.com)





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