

# National Symposium of Japanese Language Education 2022

## Conference Report – Monique Seymour

### Preamble

The 2022 NSJLE was like a <sup>かいてん</sup>回転すし of delectable plates of different flavours and sushi experiences. Alison von Dietze’s session on the Australian Curriculum was the <sup>はん</sup>ご飯 – every meal requires this staple. It underpins everything we do at the table of language education. It was necessary, well-prepared, and satisfying. Kathleen’s session on <sup>しゅわ</sup>手話 was like <sup>いくら</sup>いくら – hundreds of little bursties of shuwa, mnemonics, and genius PowerPoint usage, all brought together by Kathleen’s engaging presentation style! Victoria’s session on differentiating for gifted students was the <sup>みそしる</sup>味噌汁 – an element sometimes overlooked in the <sup>かいてん</sup>回転すし experience, but necessary in ensuring *everyone* can eat at our tables.

Adam’s keynote speech on the Friday morning was the <sup>さけ</sup>お酒, which delivered engaging storytelling, much hearty laughter, but also poignant emotion. Kathryn Macfarlane’s advocacy for transformational change challenged traditional models of second language delivery in schools, like cheese on <sup>ま</sup>のり巻き, asking us to ‘think outside the box’ in building efficacy in our Japanese language programs. And perhaps Claire Maree’s keynote on being brave and creating safe(r) spaces for LGBTQIA+ students in our classrooms by adopting the use of affirming language in classrooms could be likened to a serve of <sup>ばさ</sup>馬刺し, a rare, specialty dish that some in the audience may have felt challenged by... or excited by..., as she shared her research and some of her deeply personal anecdotes. Definitely an important conversation. A number of presenters offered their own creative and delicious <sup>ぐんかんま</sup>軍艦巻き – beautifully presented units of work for different year levels and contexts, showcasing different ingredients: strategies, tools and resources, and beautifully wrapped in their passion for their work: engaging students in Japanese language learning. These diverse and creative examples of classroom practice left us wanting more. The conference was a feast for our brains, eyes, and ears, and I hope I can take these amazing flavours I experienced over two days and recreate them in my own context. I may not get every ingredient right, nor be able to get my <sup>すし</sup>すし looking quite as good, but I’m confident my students will be engaged by the plates I bring them from the <sup>かいてん</sup>回転すし。

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### Report

#### What were your key takeaways from the conference?

1. New ideas about how I can grow my Japanese program from something that \*I\* do in the school, to something that has a school wide commitment. My intention is to look for opportunities to increase the *frequency* students are exposed to Japanese in my context, as well as supporting the staff at my school to grow their own knowledge and understanding of Japanese language and culture in order to embed it within the school identity.
2. The richness, diversity and collective passion and dedication of Japanese language educators – we all have different contexts, and approach these contexts in different ways, but the sharing that happens at an event like this helps develop the capacity of the entire profession for the benefit of our Japanese language students.

#### Which session stood out for you and why?

It was difficult to narrow down on just one or two sessions to include in this section, as I really got so much from every session I attended. However, I have selected two sessions to mention based on the ones I felt would have the most immediate benefit and impact for my classroom practice because of the exciting possibilities and ideas they have inspired.

#### 手話 Supporting Second Language Acquisition in the Japanese Primary Classroom

[Presenter: Kathleen Duquemin]

Kathleen presented examples of junior primary, and middle-upper primary units of work she has developed, both with food themes. Her presentation focus was on how she uses 手話<sup>しゅわ</sup> to give students rich meaning and memory cues for Japanese vocabulary. Her presentation was also peppered with many genius-level mnemonics, such as her “want” tie (a white tie she bought from Daiso with the word WANT written on it, which she uses as a prompt for the “want to” verb suffix, -たい). I’d also love to see a future presentation from her on PowerPoint!

#### Planning for Learning: The Potential in a Picture Book

[Presenter: Natalie Pearce]

Natalie presented a unit of work based around the だるま落とし<sup>お</sup> reader by Alison von Dietze, which was underpinned by three key principles: *illuminate the meaning; engage students at a deeper level; and help students enter the world of the story*. Natalie’s engaging presentation style and imaginative use of Japanese items to illicit engagement and curiosity in her students (and presentation attendees) captivated us. She took us on a journey through her unit of work, describing the vocab and grammar focus, approaches (しゅわ), games (じゃんけんぽん) and learning activities (making ひらがな with modelling clay) which supported student learning.

### How will I use this learning?

With the Japanese program being only two years old at my school, I'd like to apply Natalie's key principles not only to my classroom practice, but also to my approach in engaging the broader school community in the Japanese program at my school. I hope to **illuminate the meaning** of Japanese language and culture with leadership and staff, **engage** the school community at a deeper level, and invite staff and the school community to **enter the world of Japanese** more frequently.

I would love to engage my school's staff in a playful approach to learning Japanese, with my long-term goal being to support them to be more confident with using Japanese so they can model learning a language in their own classrooms. (Hoping to implement mini workshops in staff meetings!)

On Wednesday afternoon, I gave a brief Conference Report at staff meeting where I shared some of the themes of the conference and key take-aways that I thought were also relevant to the teachers' own classroom practice, such as the importance of Intercultural Understanding and how they can achieve this in their own classrooms and creating inclusive classrooms for gender diverse young people through increased awareness of gendered language.

## NSJLE 2022 Report for JLTASA Grant

I feel extremely honoured to be one of the recipients of the 2022 JLTASA grants to attend the NSJLE in Melbourne, November 4 & 5, 2022. The title of the conference was “*Be inspired, be inspiring*” and I can honestly say I came away from the two days filled with energy, ideas and yes, inspiration, to bring back to my classroom, my school and the wider Japanese teaching community in SA.

The themes, or take-aways, that spoke to me throughout the Symposium and seemed to be common throughlines in all the workshops and Keynotes I attended were, “*Story, Purpose and Planning*”.

Everyone loves a good story! And wow, did we all love Adam Voigt and his stories! His Keynote highlighted the importance of this. If we want to engage our students, our staff, our leadership and our community, we need to catch their attention with a story and then work to create a new one together. The school I teach at is unique in its commitment to languages. Currently we offer eight languages and with this comes complexities on many levels, so Adam’s message resonated.

Continuing with this theme of story, Miyako Matsui’s session on Japanese-Australian families, spoke directly to my family’s story. It was so interesting hearing the language journeys of these intercultural families and made me reflect on the journey of my own family, my son and the choices we have made to try to bring him up as not only bilingual, but connected and proud of both his nationalities. It also prompted me to consider the stories of my students who come from Japanese-Australian intermarriage families.

‘*Purpose and planning*’ were the next two themes and they do go hand-in-hand, because finding purpose takes time, research and planning. Without purpose, teaching becomes a very uninspiring profession. I have always felt that one of the purposes of my job as a language teacher is to open my students’ eyes to the world beyond their immediate lives, encourage them to question, think deeply and build their empathy and understanding.

Junko Nichols workshop “*Exploring Social Issues Through Language Learning*” spoke directly to this. Her examples of how to bring the world into our classroom and build empathy in our students were truly inspiring. I will be planning for and working some of these ideas into year 7 & 8 units on ‘Food’ and ‘Identity’ in 2023, including participating in Ongiri Action!

Katherine Brownlee’s session “*Using Japanese in the Classroom and the Impact on Motivation and Retention*” took the theme of ‘purpose’ in another direction. The concept-based approach to planning Katherine used, is not dissimilar to my own, so it was interesting to see how she had used this approach to completely rebuild her school’s Languages scope and sequence over a number of years. The key take-away being that a language program needs to be relevant and meaningful to students and that students need to feel they are making progress and there is a purpose to what they are learning. Central to this, was the idea that students need to feel that they are able to truly communicate or ‘say something’ in the target language, thus meaningful interactions using the target language are paramount.

Tom Dawson's session "*Using speaking Tables and the Work of Gianfranco Conti to Increase Speaking Proficiency*" was the perfect continuation of this theme. We learn to talk before we can read and write, so being able to communicate meaningfully in the target spoken language, builds confidence and motivation. Post Tom's session, I quickly implemented some Conti-style Speaking tables and am focusing more on speaking in my classroom, with great response. Just through this simple shift in approach, I have upped the spoken Japanese used in my classroom considerably!

There is so much focus on learning to read and write in Japanese, but I have often felt that the complexity of the Japanese writing system, especially for students who have had no experience of or background in a script-based language, disengages some students, making it harder for them to experience success and progress. Both Katherine and Tom's session highlighted the importance of building confidence and engagement through meaningful oral interactions, as well as written language.

It was exciting to realise by the end of the two days, that these common themes of '*Story, Purpose and Planning*' were also throughlines of the session "*Intercultural Understanding and Japanese Language Learning: Using Key Concepts and Questions to Deepen Students Capability in the Language Classroom*", which Ilana Nicolle and I presented. I hope we were also able to inspire our participants to reflect on their approaches to teaching and experiences for their students, in the same way that I have been inspired.

In conclusion, I can truly say my thinking was challenged, I was motivated and inspired by the ideas and approaches I engaged with over the two days of the conference. I am ready to plan, take action and build the story of my school and my school community well into 2023 and beyond! JLTASA、本当にありがとうございました。

Kate Satomura

Teacher of Japanese Language and Culture  
Adelaide High School

Mel Watt – Warradale PS

On the back of a wonderful SA Conference I was excited to attend my first NSJLE. Gathering together with other language teachers is always inspiring to me and this conference took it up about 10 notches.

The keynote by Adam Voight got us thinking about the importance of connection and had participants all eager to participate in the full day of workshops. I attended an inspiring session by Junko Nicholls about imbedding social issues within our teaching and have already planned ways to incorporate this into my teaching. Kathleen Duquemin's session had us all using Shuwa (Japanese sign language) with great enthusiasm, armed with an array of ideas to incorporate into our teaching. I have been using a bit of shuwa in my classes over the last couple of years but this session has given me so many useful ideas to really imbed it to its fullest potential. Such a game-changer for helping our students memorise vocab and employ gross motor skills. As we know, learning with our whole bodies can be powerful! I loved that there were opportunities within some sessions to generate discussion about things we were doing in our classrooms that were engaging students and things we struggled with. The collegiality and togetherness was uplifting.

Day 2 introduced me to more wonderful teachers and I got some great ideas on more tactile ways to engage my Junior Primary students and ideas for setting up my classroom next year - my first Japanese classroom. I also had the opportunity to present a session at the very end - an experience I recommend to all teachers. An unexpected highlight came at the closing of the Conference when a voice from behind said "Merissa san?" I discovered it was my Japanese Professor from my studies at the University of Tasmania. It was very emotional meeting him 20 years later and speaking together in Japanese.

I am so grateful for the JLTASA grant that enabled me to attend the Conference which lived up to its name "Be Inspired, Be Inspiring."

Simon Carey – Banksia Park Intl HS

I decided to attend the 2022 NSJLE because I needed some ideas and inspiration for teaching year 7s, and because I felt like I was losing motivation for my Japanese teaching practice, relying on old tasks and resources to get me through. I now have a bunch of engaging and practical resources which I can use with not only my 7s but other year levels as well and feel rejuvenated and motivated to continue to improve my practice. Right from the start, the Symposium was inspirational, with speakers and presenters sharing touching and meaningful stories, and high-quality examples of best practice. The attendees were so warm, welcoming and supportive, and I made many connections and friendships with teachers from all over the country. Overall, a fantastic experience.

NSJLE 2022 grant report – Ilana Nicolle

Thank you to JLTASA for supporting me to attend the 2022 NSJLE, Be inspired, be inspiring. I was indeed inspired and I'm looking forward to paying it forward with my team, students and the wider Japanese Language community. For me there were three big themes to my learning from the symposium. These included: connecting to purpose, student motivation and the importance of speaking in Japanese, all of which are interconnected.

Purpose was a theme of the keynotes of the symposium. The founder of Real Schools, Mr Adam Voigt who talked about the importance of adding to our students stories of themselves and their worlds, reminded me of the power of story to motivate and inspire, as well as the importance of opening our students' perspectives and world view through an intercultural understanding language learning approach. Mat Bowtell, the dinner speaker, told us about how his experience as an exchange student to Japan changed his life and helped him to connect to his purpose after being made redundant when Toyota Australia closed. He now runs a charity, making and providing free 3D printed hands for children who need them. He credited his year 9 Japanese teacher who believed in him and his host family in Japan who changed his life and perspective of the world. These have reminded me of the power of purpose and the important role we play as a teacher in young people's lives.

Interconnected to this was the second theme, student motivation. In the aptly named workshop, 'Are students inspired by what teachers think is inspiring?' this question was explored using results from research conducted with tertiary students and teachers of Japanese Language. My takeaway from the detailed research was that students who continue with further study of Japanese language had more intrinsic motivation than extrinsic. Meaning that their motivation extended from their self-image of themselves as capable Japanese language learners or users and a personal connection to Japanese culture or community, rather than for reasons related to career or pressure from family. This was resonated with me in a later workshop by Katherine Brownlee who talked about how at her school they've increased motivation and retention through rewriting their courses over a number of years to enable students to use more Japanese in the classroom. This was sparked feedback from students and the research that connected the idea of motivation with students seeing themselves as Japanese users and learners. From these presentations I've decided to review my teaching and learning sequences with this motivational lens.

My third takeaway from the symposium was the importance of speaking to inspiring students, with many workshop touching on this theme. Katherine Brownlee stated that the majority of students see language acquisition as being able to speak or interact in language. They expect to be fluent at the end of 100hours of instruction. How do we manage those expectations and help them to gain confidence in communicating in Japanese? Several workshops touch on approaches, from using visible thinking routines to question students what do they see in Japanese (simple one word answers) to ones aligned to the Conti speaking tables, to others related to comprehensible input, there were many inspiring ideas. What stood out for me was the importance of knowing your students' motivation, setting up learning that will allow them to interact and use the words and phrases they know rather than a translator and evidence based approaches. I was already dabbling in the comprehensible input pool and I've been surprised how engaged students have been and



their pride at understanding spoken Japanese. My next challenge is guiding them to build their confidence to interact in Japanese more in class. Hopefully helping them to build their self-image as Japanese learners and users.

My post symposium reading/ viewing list includes:

Exploring psychology in language learning and teaching – Williams, Mercer and Ryan

Hafu – documentary

Richard Webb 80/20 Japanese

Dialogic Language Assessment – MEXT

Nearpod – online interactive platform

Real Schools – restoring Teaching, Adam Voigt

Conti – Language learning

Comprehensible input research