

# **Conference Report: PanSIG 2019, Konan Cube, Nishinomiya (May 30-31, 2019)**

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## **Overview of the JALT PanSIG Conference**

The 2019 PanSIG Conference was held at Konan University’s “Cube” building in Nishinomiya, 30-31 May. Nishinomiya City is conveniently equidistant between Osaka and Kobe in the Kansai area of western Japan. Konan’s Cube building was built only in the last few years, with direct input to architects from senior teaching staff, and impresses with its student-focused design, wealth of natural light, and multiple open learning spaces.

The venue served its purpose very well. In passing, it is worth noting the issues that need to be considered when choosing host venues for major events, to perhaps help readers who see themselves as future organisers to anticipate and plan effectively. Proximity to a train station is essential, and Konan Cube is directly outside a major train station with express connection to both Kobe and Osaka. Attendees need to be able to readily find food and drink, within the venue and outside. Almost next to the venue is a major shopping mall, that offers a wide range of eateries. Inexpensive food and drink was available within the venue too. Elevators are often an issue and previous JALT venues have suffered on this account on occasion, causing some past attendee griping — too many people needing to go up and down between several floors throughout the day constantly, with insufficient means to do so. Here there were many rooms of sufficient size to use on each floor, and enough elevators to manage this heavy traffic flow.

The PanSIG conference is the second largest conference organised by JALT NPO after the main international conference held in November each year. The event is organised by and for the many Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that exist within JALT and their members. The Literature in Language Teaching SIG was founded in 2011, and is one of 27 SIGs, of which most or all participate at the annual PanSIG event.

The Literature in Language Teaching SIG hosts a forum at both major events each year. LiLT SIG has varied the Forum format over the last few years, with varying numbers of presenters in longer or shorter time slots. The officers’ aim has been to balance what we might view as member supply and demand — the desire for academic professionals to present and share their

ideas, duly noting the professional requirements to do so (building CVs for jobs, promotions...), while providing attendees with helpful and thought-provoking product / approaches to take back to their own classrooms. In short, well-conceived ideas to help them to do their jobs better.

## The PanSIG 2019 LiLT SIG Forum

**Simon Bibby**

*Kobe Shoin Women's University*

**Paul Hullah**

*Meiji Gakuin University*

**Iain Maloney**

*Nagoya University of Foreign Studies*

**Vicky Richings**

*Kobe Shoin Women's University*

**Akira Watanabe**

*University of Yamanashi*

This year, five speakers were invited to present at the conference, on Sunday, 19th May. The LiLT SIG forum was set for 90 minutes, with multiple speakers followed by an open discussion. The theme was driven by perhaps the most oft-asked question of officers, which is “What texts can we use in language classes?” The title for our forum thus became “Texts that work,” and SIG members were invited to submit proposals on this theme, featuring discussion not just of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) but also of Spanish and Japanese as foreign languages here in Japan.

In the forum, Simon Bibby outlined the day’s proceedings and opened the discussion addressing typical reasons why teachers may choose to use literary texts in their language classrooms. He then introduced *Animal Farm* as a single-text course and other various texts he used over the years in iterations of a “Dystopian Literature and Cinema” course, providing ample examples of texts that work. Next, Paul Hullah explained how he uses British lyric poetry such as Medieval, Shakespearean, Romantic, Victorian, Modern, and/or contemporary song words in elective modules to demonstrate literary language’s special emotively-affective agency and to instil and elevate rhetorical confidence and competence in Japanese L2 learners. Iain Maloney talked about three texts he has used — *The Beach* by Alex Garland, *Wrong About Japan* by Peter Carey and *Moshi bokura no kotoba ga uisuki de attanara* [If Our Words Were Whisky] by Murakami Haruki — to explore different approaches to writing introductory paragraphs in travel writing. He also discussed the potential effect of using contrasting texts on student self-confidence. Vicky

Richings outlined a series of activities for use with literature in a Japanese as a Foreign Language setting. Her presentation featured a canonical text, *Botchan* by Natsume Soseki, where she discussed how using even old literary texts can have a positive outcome on students' interest in reading Japanese literature while enhancing both linguistic and cultural awareness skills. Akira Watanabe finished off the forum by introducing some easy-to-read short stories of Gabriel García Márquez, the Spanish version of *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, and also the Spanish version of *Yours Sincerely, Giraffe* by Megumi Iwasa he has used to get the students acquainted with Latin American or Hispanic culture and society. Towards the end of the allocated time for the forum there was a small amount of time remaining, as planned, and so it was possible to invite the audience for comments about the talks and the topics. Overall, this year's LiLT SIG forum provided a very refreshing array of differing approaches to the central theme of "Texts that work" and our hearty and sincere SIG thanks to all the Forum presenters — "Well done, and thank you!"

## SIG thanks

Our SIG thanks go out to the presenters for presentations that were varied and almost certainly of direct help to attendees in selecting suitable texts, planning courses, and in designing suitable class learning activities. LiLT SIG thanks Site Chair Michael Hollenback and his dedicated and friendly team of staff and students at Konan Cube for their tireless work and good humored help. In addition, as participants and attendees we thank the many central JALT staff and officers from the many SIGs who volunteer in the lead up to the event, and who work as staff across the whole weekend to help the event to run smoothly.

We very much look forward to the next PanSIG forum in May 2020 in Niigata. But before then, please attend JALT International in Nagoya, 1-4 November.

More information about the PanSIG conference can be found at <PanSIG.org>, JALT events are all listed at <<https://jalt.org/>> and LiLT SIG can be found at our website <<https://liltsig.org/>> and on Facebook. Join us, follow us, and come and present and write with us! Contact: [liltsig@gmail.com](mailto:liltsig@gmail.com).