Volume 14, Issue 1, 2025 ISSN: 2187-722X

The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching

Conference Report

Literature in Language Teaching Forum, PanSIG 2025: Agency and Autonomy in Language Education

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Introduction

In this forum report, five authors provide summaries of their presentations in the 2025 Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT) SIG forum as part of the PanSIG Conference on 16th-17th of May. The PanSIG conference was held at Kanda University of International Studies, a university renowned for its self-access center and research into language learner autonomy. The conference theme was therefore reflective of the institutional aims and was *Agency and Autonomy in Language Education*. Some time has passed since the origins of the term learner autonomy, defined as an "ability to take charge of one's own learning" (from Henri Holec's book *Autonomy and foreign language learning*, 1981), yet the importance of learner autonomy is still highly relevant today. Importantly for those involved in language course planning, learner autonomy is not assumed in any educational context. Instead, it must be cultivated and developed by the learning environment, the teaching, and the learners themselves. In keeping with the theme of the conference, each presentation in the LiLT SIG forum had a strong learner-autonomy focus. Creativity, interaction, and humanistic approaches to literature-based topics and the learning process are key to the success of learning with literature autonomously.

With a long and varied history of uses for second language (L2) and additional language (L+) learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, literature has in general been aligned with learner-centered and autonomous learning approaches. Review papers (Carter, 2007; Paran, 2008) suggest that trends related to literature in language learning continue to evolve, constantly changing to improve the approaches, teaching methods and text selection for use in taught language programs using literature as content. Sometimes associated with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), language teachers working with literature may use dual language and content-related learning aims (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010). This can be done in combination with descriptors from the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020) or other recent frameworks (Alter & Ratheiser, 2019). Previous work by members of the LiLT SIG include innovative ideas of how to use literature in the fields of writing poetry (Kamata, 2016; Iida, 2017) and uses of careful text selection for effective language learning (Maloney, 2020). Innovation is therefore a natural way for a field of study to respond to the ever-changing situation of language teaching. The LiLT SIG forum is a space for such new ideas to be presented. The authors of this forum report are all working in the tertiary educational context of Japan, with some of the approaches presented here easily adapted for learners of any level.

The summaries in this report are presented in the order in which they were delivered on the day of the forum. The forum was a 60-minute session, which

allowed for only a limited discussion in the forum itself. In previous years at the PanSIG the Q&A time was a valuable opportunity for further discussion of the topics. It is hoped that the conference planners may consider returning to the 90-minute for future events.

Creating Autonomy in the Creative Writing Classroom through Video-based Projects
Camilo Villanueva

The creative writing classroom is known to be historically teacher-centered (Salesses, 2021). To shift away from this problem, a promising approach is the integration of video creation within a project-based learning model. Project-based learning is known to improve writing skills (Andargie et al., 2025). Moreover, student-led digital production aligns with the goals outlined in Digcomp, or the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (Vuorikari et al., 2022), which emphasizes the importance of fostering digital literacy among learners (Gießfler & Summer, 2025). Furthermore, such video projects are a form of digital storytelling, a narrative-based pedagogy that facilitates expressive engagement and reflective learning, as described by Lambert (2013). Digital storytelling allows students an avenue of expression through narratives. Such projects not only stimulate creativity but also support learner autonomy.

In this practice-based study, 25 third-year Japanese university EFL students in a creative writing class created video projects for short stories they had written in class. All students were English majors and had approximate CEFR levels of B1-B2 based on TOEFL scores. Students were tasked with creating an original short story and received feedback from their peers as part of the writer's workshop. They then edited their stories for final submission and subsequently created videos using MS PowerPoint, Zoom, and other tools. Some students utilized AI video creation tools such as Dall-E, OpenAI's image generation model.

One such video presented during the session was created by a student referred to as Maya, a pseudonym. It depicts a narrative set on Christmas Eve in Ireland. The story explores themes of love and internal conflict, centering on the protagonist's dilemma between spending the evening with his wife, Sophie, or joining Patrick at the local pub. The audience responded positively to Maya's video, highlighting the emotional resonance of the piece.

The implementation of this project-based approach appeared to promote learner agency. The reason for this was that students were given a clear objective but given considerable freedom in how to achieve it, leading students to explore various tools and methods independently. In addition, students spent a considerable amount of time revising their work. Although this study did not measure if students spent more time editing their work than usual, observations and student engagement suggested that students did so since they were presenting their work in video form, thus producing a public and multimodal product. Students were also able to utilize various digital tools and use multimodality in the delivery of their story. This allowed them to gain experience and develop expertise in tools they would not normally use.

One of the limitations of this study is the absence of a systematic investigation into student perceptions. A future study could look at qualitative or mixed-method approaches to explore learners' attitudes toward creating digital narratives. Additionally, quantitative studies could examine whether such multimodal projects contribute to increased time and effort spent on editing and revision compared to traditional formats.

Tabletop Role-playing Experiences as a Source for Creative Writing
Todd Hooper

Creative writing provides students an avenue for expressing themselves imaginatively in the languages they are learning. However, creating entire stories can be a heavy cognitive load for students to carry, which may leave little energy for examining specific aspects of creative writing. One approach to overcoming this issue is to use tabletop role-playing games. Tabletop role-playing games (TPRGs) are a form of collaborative storytelling (Bowman, 2010). In TRPGs, one player serves as the gamemaster (GM), the person responsible for describing the scenes in the game, playing the non-player characters (NPCs), and providing opportunities for players to make choices in the story. While GMs may use a campaign, a pre-planned story, the choices that players make may alter the story. In this way, the GM and the players collaborate to create a narrative that can be quite different from other groups of players using the same pre-planned story.

The author utilized tabletop role-playing games in a university course on popular culture in the Faculty of International Studies at a four-year private university in Japan. The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the popular culture of English-speaking countries.

Since this is a rather broad subject area, the author focused the course on fantasy fiction. Fantasy was chosen since students are likely to have some background knowledge of this genre based on their experiences with Disney movies or popular fantasy series such as Harry Potter. This course is planned for students at the CEFR B1 level, but as an elective with no requirements, students at lower levels sometimes join the class. This course focuses on the participatory culture aspect of fandom with a special emphasis on creative writing. Participatory culture refers to fans' shift from passive consumption of the objects of their fandom to active production, which also includes a shift in their fandom literacy from the individual level to the community level (Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins, et al., 2009). In other words, rather than just reading or watching works of popular fiction, students were asked to create works based on them. In the second half of this course, over a period of seven weeks, students participated in a creative writing project focusing on the fantasy genre. This project was graded for characterization, theme, and dialogue punctuation; aspects of creative writing that they learned and practiced in the fan fiction writing project they worked on in the first half of this course. The TRPG system used in this course was Quest, which is freely available from the publisher's website <https://www.adventure.game>. In preparation for the creative writing project, students spent two weeks on an introduction to the fantasy genre. They then spent two weeks learning the rules of the game using short scenarios and created original characters. As a part of the character creation process, they wrote backstories. The aim of this was to get students to think about how their characters would act and respond in certain situations, which would improve the characterization in their stories. Next, students spent two weeks playing a game of Quest. They played in groups of four to six, with one student taking the role of GM using a campaign provided by the teacher. Before playing, they were taught how to keep a role-playing journal. The journals served as the source for the creative writing project. In the final week, students wrote a one-page story based on one scene in the game.

In the presentation on which this article was based, special attention was paid to the characterization that students were able to achieve in their stories. For example, one student wrote:

> "Finally, we're here!" Jasmine jumped with her arms wide open. Her white skin and Chinese dress waved in the cold wind, making her look like she was floating.

Here, the writer was successful in characterization in a few ways. First, using an exclamation point gives the character's voice power, which differentiates her from other characters. Second, the character's action of jumping with her arms wide open gives her a sense of childlike energy, which contrasts with the more serious nature of the other characters. Finally, the character's appearance is described in a way that makes her "look like she was floating," which differed from the more grounded descriptions of the other characters. Another interesting point related to the description of characters was the description of places. All student games were based on the campaign provided by the teacher, so the plot of the stories was very similar. However, the way that they imagined the scenes were quite different as can be seen in the examples below:

> Description from the campaign guide provided by the teacher:
> The [cave] entrance is narrow, and there are markings around the cave entrance.
>
> Description from Student A's story:
> The entrance was narrow, with strange patterns and letters carved around it.
>
> Description from Student B's story:
> In front of them was the mouth of a narrow and eerie cave. There were sharp claw marks around the cave, suggesting that something was waiting inside.

From these descriptions, students interpreted the markings around the cave in different ways. The story that would result from a cave with carved patterns and letters around it will be different from a cave marked with the scratching of wild beasts. This shows the students' ability to be creative even when working within a campaign.

In the examples shown here, students were able to put effort into making rich character and location descriptions in their stories. By using a TRPG as a source for creative writing, students could rely on the plot of the campaign while focusing on other aspects of creative writing such as characterization, as

described in this article, and theme and dialogue punctuation, not covered in this article. A potential future application of using TRPGs would be to have students play a game at the beginning of a course and then use their notes from that game to cover a wider variety of creative writing skills throughout the rest of the course based on their TRPG notes.

AI, literature and language learning: Ethical and Practical Considerations

Tara McIlroy

Literature, as content for language classes, offers opportunities for the development of critical thinking skills, greater language awareness, and cultural knowledge (Geisler et. al, 2007). The growing accessibility of Large Language Models (LLMs) and other Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools may help support those aims. However, use of AI in literature and language courses brings with it justifiable concerns around content ownership, the accuracy of LLM-generated responses, and broader ethical issues. In addition to these concerns is the issue of fairness in relation to students themselves and the quality of the education they receive in the age of AI. To illustrate this, McIlroy introduced the topic of ethics by describing the AI-generated content at a ripoff *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* event in Glasgow in 2024 as a cautionary tale. The low-quality AI scripts and garbled content caused outrage amongst parents and children alike.

This short talk reported on the beginning stages of a project entitled *FLER Research Project on AI Utilization and Reconstruction of Evaluation Standards in University English Education (2025-2028)* at the Center for Foreign Language Education and Research (FLER) at Rikkyo University in Tokyo. Within that broad theme, the sub-topic to be investigated individually by the author is *AI, literature and language learning.* In the 2025 academic year, the main aim is to conduct a review of international AI policy documents as they could potentially apply to literature and language teaching contexts. Using ideas from the *Modern Language Association`s Joint Task Force on Writing and AI Working Paper*s (MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI, 2024) and other policy documents as a starting point, this short talk explores how teachers may begin to consider AI for language and literature learning, although in the time given and with consideration of the early stages of the project, only tentative suggestions are presented at the current time. The following three steps were outlined in the brief forum talk.

Step 1: Understanding Institutional Perspectives

The starting point for reviewing policy documents related to this project has been the university's own guiding principles for the use of AI in academic settings. Key phrases such as "appropriately utilize AI," "critically examine its effects and impacts," and "practice ethical AI use" (Rikkyo University, 2023) serve as a foundation for the discussion. In relation to policy, additional insight into the university's guiding position can be found on the website of FLER (The philosophy of FLER, 2025), which outlines the center's core principles: (1) promoting interaction between different disciplines, (2) fostering interaction between different languages, and (3) encouraging the integration of theory and practice. Importantly, the third principle aligns closely with current explorations of AI, research, and literature in the field of language education.

One further way to look for information on research trends from the institution itself has been to review research from the Rikkyo Graduate School of Artificial Intelligence and Science website (2025). Here it is possible to find research articles, policy suggestions and project information on relevant topics. One example of a recent piece of language-related research is Ishikawa and Yoshino (2025) looking at emotional expressions from LLMs. Comparable approaches may be adopted by researchers, instructors, and curriculum developers at other institutions, enabling them to assess the extent to which AI-related policies are being formulated and communicated publicly through institutional webpages and stated policy aims.

Step 2: Review of International AI Policy

Only a summary of ideas can be reported ahead of a more comprehensive review. However, it is already clear that the number and variety of policy documents is large and continues to increase. These are being produced by stakeholders (see for example University of Cambridge, 2025; University of Oxford, 2025), international institutions (EU, 2024; UNESCO, 2024) and by educational associations such as the Modern Languages Association (MLA, 2023; MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI, 2024). Of these, some already seem to be becoming quite quickly out-of-date due to the high pace of change in the field. Nevertheless, useful articles about the ways in which students can be supported in the age of AI are appearing on university websites around the world (University of Cambridge, 2025; University of Oxford,

2025) and could be useful for educators in the Japanese context. While teachers and course planners may not be able to keep up with the pace of change and the variety of policies around the world, it should be possible to distil these ideas down to look at trends. From there it may be possible to apply them to specific fields of teaching such as literature and language learning. The decision of whether (or not) to make use of AI in literature teaching contexts can then be informed by robust review of international and interdisciplinary approaches.

Step 3: Consider directions for literature, language learning and AI

The MLA's task force writings and white papers (2024) provides a platform for discussion, including with it the views of those who are resisting the rush to AI in literature and literacy teaching. Key policy documents at the time of writing this summary introduce ideas related to critique and response, as well as considering the thorny issue of ethical uses of AI in writing courses and with literature in particular. Students and teachers who are interested in engaging and critical uses of AI in language courses can already find examples of applications and may in some contexts be trying them out, with caution. The scraping of copyrighted works is likely to continue to be a red line for many educators, some of whom have already lost control of their own academic work to companies creating LLMs with digital published works. Less controversial may be the use of Shakespeare's work or other writing out of copyright, just as these types of texts have been used for corpus analysis. McIlroy concluded this short talk by recommending that teachers and course planners read carefully about ethical issues and retain control over their own decisions in language courses before committing to uses of AI.

Exploring the Potential of Shared Reading for English Language Learning

Kyoko Kuze

This forum talk analysed the benefits of shared reading (SR) from the perspectives of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) learning, and explored its application in English language teaching in Japan. It focused on the SR project run by The Reader (https://www.thereader.org.uk), a UK-based national charity organisation that highlights the power of literature to connect individuals and rebuild lost social bonds. Among its various aims, language learning is one potential area; however, previous research on SR has primarily concentrated on early childhood language development (e.g. Batini & Toti, 2024).

To investigate the potential of SR in ESL/EFL learning, Kuze drew on three data sources: a 2023 survey conducted by The Reader; an interview with a reading group member named Patricia; and the author's own journal entries, which documented her experiences as a member of various reading groups over several months. In the survey, responses to statements regarding attitudes towards SR were compared between ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) learners and native speakers of English. The aggregated data suggested that ESOL participants felt more confident engaging in English-speaking contexts and reported increased exposure to written English as a result of taking part in SR. In the interview, Patricia, who was originally from Chile and a member of Frances's ESOL group with Kuze for five months, commented: *'This activity is very good for my vocabulary and expression', 'Now I speak with much more confidence',* and *'Frances' pronunciation is very good for me. I do not understand all the words, but I can feel the rhythm inside here'* (The Reader, 2025). Lastly, Kuze analysed her journal entries using an autoethnographic approach. She participated in three different reading groups over a seven-month period. In the ESOL group, she found that SR enhanced her confidence in speaking and listening, although much of the discussion time was spent on understanding vocabulary and literal meanings, and consequently, there was less opportunity to express opinions or offer interpretations. In a special three-session group that read *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens, 1843/1993), she observed how the group leader effectively facilitated engagement with the long and challenging novel by alternating between intensive and extensive reading approaches. The final group was a regular SR group, where she enjoyed reading short stories and poems, although she often struggled with knowing when to contribute to discussions presumably due to the large size of the group.

The presentation concluded that SR holds significant potential for supporting English language learning, particularly in enhancing learners' confidence in speaking. It may also be effective for learning vocabulary and expression, and for improving reading fluency as suggested by Beglar, Hunt, & Kite (2012). Moreover, SR could foster a genuine enjoyment of reading. Kuze further suggested that SR can be integrated into the EFL curriculum, although modifications to traditional SR practices, such as the

inclusion of pre- and post-reading tasks and the assessment of learners, may be necessary.

"Fiction can touch the heart, and facts can inform the mind": Looking at Social Issues Through the Lens of the Picturebook: Introducing A Four-Stage Pedagogical Framework
Alison K. Hasegawa

In this presentation, Hasegawa introduced a four-stage pedagogical cycle she uses in her undergraduate English Medium Instruction (EMI) elective course, Exploring Children's Literature, for an annual project to raise student awareness of social issues. The cycle—Explore, Investigate, Discuss, and Respond—integrates critical picturebook analysis with factual inquiry and creative production. It draws on Ellis and Gruenbaum's (2023) model for exploring social issues, Ghosn's (2002) advocacy for literature as a "change agent," and Bland's (2023) Deep Reading Framework.

During the initial *Explore* phase, students critically analyse one of ten picturebooks that address sensitive topics such as homelessness or food insecurity. Working collaboratively in small groups, they examine peritextual features (e.g., cover, endpapers, typography) and reflect on the picturebook's emotional impact. As one student noted, "At first, I was overwhelmed by the grey and cold world, but as the girl planted seeds, the illustrations brightened. That visual transformation moved me emotionally."

In the Investigate phase, students independently research a real-world context, examining how support for homelessness or food insecurity is implemented in Japan or internationally. This phase fosters individual critical inquiry by contrasting fictional depictions with researched realities and emphasises learner autonomy.

The Discuss phase centres on collaborative dialogue, through which students identify intertextual connections across the ten picturebooks. One participant observed, "Alone, each book says something important, but together they show how issues like poverty, bullying, and family hardship are connected." In addition, students also exchange their research findings, facilitating deeper insight into the highlighted themes. For instance, one student wrote, "When my friend shared real-life examples, like free school meals in Ikebukuro, I saw how these issues happen not just in books, but also near us in places. Talking in a group helped me understand more deeply that social problems are around us daily, and books help us notice and care more."

In the final Respond phase, students independently develop a creative or practical response to the social issues explored and then share these in class to consolidate learning. Creative submissions include artwork, posters, poems, music, diary entries, letters, and alternative endings. Practical outputs include homemade pamphlets or websites introducing nonprofit organisations or personal action plans. Pre- and post-project surveys revealed measurable shifts in student perspectives. The most dramatic increase was in the enhancement of understanding of picturebooks as tools for social engagement, while stronger motivation to take action was also shown. In response to the question, "Has this project heightened your awareness of social issues around you?", 88% of students either agreed or strongly agreed, and when asked, "Can texts deepen our understanding of issues like poverty and homelessness by blending fiction with factual content?", 90% responded affirmatively. Reasons included fiction's capacity to simplify complex issues and make them more accessible and its power to foster empathy and stimulate curiosity in the reader, young or old.

Overall, this four-stage framework facilitated sustained, reflective engagement with literature and real-world issues during the project. It illustrates the potential of picturebooks to cultivate social awareness, increase agency and inspire action.

Conclusions and future directions

The talks at this year's LiLT SIG forum explored new ways of teaching with literature in different learning contexts. Ranging in topics from creative writing (Villanueva) and tabletop games (Hooper), use of social topics (Hasegawa) and shared reading (Kuze) to looking at policy in the age of AI (McIlroy), what was clear from the presentations was the sense of innovation and adaptation. These discussions reflect the shared goal of creating meaningful learning environments through literature. Learner-centered teaching approaches and fostering of different creative and exploratory responses and perspectives helps support learner agency and autonomy, both more useful than ever in today's changing world.

Teachers using literature for language learning purposes are likely to agree that making new lessons and working with new ideas is a key part of lesson and course design with literature. Students who choose to take courses at university using literature for their language learning goals do so with an openness to new

experiences too. The potential for new talks and ongoing research into the uses of literature in language learning underscores the versatility of literature as a pedagogical tool. Although there were no talks at this forum from teachers of primary or secondary contexts in 2025, many of the suggested activities could be adapted for any level of learner. Teachers and course planners are likely to continue working hard to offer authentic interactions with literary texts, supporting language learning along the way. In the new age of AI and a desire to keep standards high for learners, continuing to work hard to provide a space for discussion and presentation is an important element of professional learning. For those interested in presenting at the next LiLT SIG forum, we welcome contributions that explore the diverse and dynamic uses of literature across all educational contexts.

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