

Memories from FLEAT: 1981 and 1992

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The first FLEAT was an incredible sharing process between two language organizations—LLA of Japan and NALLD of the U.S. (now IALL)—as well as members of the language profession from around the world. NALLD members learned much about Japan and were the recipients of many gifts, honors, and wonderful experiences. I wish that the organizers of the first FLEAT could all be with us this week to see the continuation of the FLEAT series, especially Sutesaburo Kohmoto, Takashi Kuroda, Kenkichi Watanabe, Sam Burggraaf, Joseph Sheehan, and Charlie Phil Richardson.

While NALLD members were primarily language teachers managing language labs, LLA members were generally ESL professors. According to the "Proceedings," almost 2,000 participants attended the first FLEAT, and at the closing ceremony, Joseph Sheehan presented to Kuroda-san the NALLD Achievement Award. The first FLEAT received generous support from the Ministry of Education in Japan, the Commemorative Association for the Japan World Exposition (1970) and the Hosono-Bunka Foundation.

In Japan, there is a national holiday, called "Adults' Day," which celebrates the coming of age. To celebrate the twentieth year of the Language Association of Japan, NALLD was invited to co-sponsor an international conference. Thus, this conference would celebrate the arrival of adulthood for an academic association and provide an opportunity to reflect upon the past while, with the help of honored guests, considering educational technology solutions that would assist in the teaching of second languages. The goal was both traditional and futuristic—examining foreign language acquisition methodologies that would better equip graduates to work for international cooperation.

Both organizations dealt primarily with members from colleges and universities but realized that the inclusion of teachers

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and specialists from secondary institutions had much to offer, not only in membership numbers but also in opening up new dialogues for sharing mutually beneficial information and experiences. This conference would provide a forum for discussing all phases of foreign/second language education and the promise of technology. The FLEAT conference had three goals: to develop concrete ideas and means to promote international cooperation in education and technology; to examine technology aids; and to explore possibilities for the improvement of methodologies using technology for language learning. Both groups recognized that while funding was available for initial equipment purchases at members' home institutions, funding for support activities, teacher training, and technicians was often lacking.

NALLD was the younger and smaller organization, founded in 1965 to meet the need of media professionals and teachers in the field of language acquisition. The U.S. group at the first FLEAT conference had a few NALLD members and teachers interested in the theme of the Japanese-based conference. Several stops were made before arriving in Tokyo. In Taiwan, Hong Kong, Osaka, and Kyoto, we visited shrines, gardens, museums, factories and schools—especially those with language laboratories. There was ample time for shopping and we arrived in Tokyo heavily laden with homebound treasures. Tokyo offers two sides: the westernized metropolis and its Old World traditions. As first-time visitors we were impressed with the city, its beauty as revealed in small gardens and shrines, the busy temples, the thriving business scene, and the hustle of the Ginza district.

The conference setting was the elegant Okura Hotel. The program was diverse, with speakers from Asia, Europe, the U.S., Canada, and Japan. The presentations offered evaluations of technological approaches, methodological advice, and second language acquisition theories.

There were many others involved in the planning, the details, the program, and I do not mean to exclude anyone from recognition, but those from the Japanese team who were especially memorable to me, from shared activities and late evening discussions, included Michiko Tenma, Masuko Izumi, Takeko Itakura, Yasushi Sato, Shozo Usami and Masaaki Osugi.

My own images of Japan and this wonderful conference are still fresh in my memory, and I have slides to share, if you ever have a few minutes! The NALLD Board met frequently with the LLA Board during the conference to work out details and to organize follow-up sessions. Joseph Sheehan was then

NALLD President, Sam Burggraaf was Executive Director, Victor Aulestia was Vice-President, and I was Secretary. Missing from the trip were Les Bailey, Treasurer, and Dale Lally, then Editor of the *Journal*.

Most everyone had allowed for a couple of tourist days in Tokyo after the conference. I went to Yokohama to spend time with the Ohashi family, with whom I had been corresponding for several years. That stay in a Japanese home was a very special highlight of the trip—a remarkable and cherished memory to end an event filled with good experiences.

Ten years later, in 1992, FLEAT II was held on the Chubu University campus. It seemed far more like the typical language conference we all know. Computers and video presentations were more abundant in the presentations, as we had all grown more familiar with the emerging media. The presenters were younger, and the pace faster. NALLD had changed its name to IALL, the International Association of Learning Laboratories, and more IALL members were participants at this joint meeting with LLA. LeeAnn Stone was President at that time, with Trisha Dvorak, Robin Lawrason, Robert Henderson, and Dick Kuettner rounding out the Executive Board.

The opening session was held at the impressive Nagoya International Center with a special welcome by Yoshinobu Niwa, LLA President. While we as language professionals are still examining the potential of technology in language acquisition, we as teachers and support staff are much more comfortable with a wider variety of technological applications. Masatoshi Sugiura, Shuji Ozeki, David Herren, Sue Otto, Otmar Foelsche, Gilberte Furstenberg, Saeko Komori, and Harold Hendricks demonstrated some of the technology highlights that caught our attention. The technology showcase sessions were popular places to experiment with state-of-the-art applications. One immediate difference in the Japanese computer labs we saw was the provision of slippers for users, as shoes were left in bookcases outside the lab. Classrooms were well-equipped with technology aids in this fairly new women's college. Sony, Panasonic and Victor/JVC had language laboratory equipment set up for demonstrations.

Most of us stayed in a business hotel in Nagoya and took the train into the Chubu campus each day. This gave us an opportunity to explore another Japanese city as well as to become proficient at subway riding. We found shopping areas with ease, and enjoyed early morning strolls in narrow streets, recognizing with pleasure a few characters in advertisements and signs. Two special and memorable entertainment events

were organized by our LLA hosts: a cormorant fishing tour, with dinner on a boat at Inuyama Castle, and a tea ceremony performed at the Kuho-an Tea House, a replica of a 16th century Rikyu Tea Arbor. Some images from those two nights will always provide smiles and “you just had to be there” comments from the participants.

A few from FLEAT I were visible, notably Niwa-sensei, Masuko Izumi, Hiroshi Kita, Jim White, Masayoshi Watanabe, Hideo Tsukiyama, and Yasushi Sato. Professor Niwa, as LLA President and Chubu University professor, was a wonderful host—and not just because his wife sent home-made cookies to us! He presented FLEAT participants with a lovely tapestry piece and a nifty bright blue FLEAT II t-shirt. (Just try saying that quickly!)

After the conference, LeeAnn Stone, Robin Lawrason, David Herren and I spent two days in the Temple University House in Tokyo. We spent the time wisely, visiting museums, shopping, visiting gardens, shopping, visiting the technical district, shopping. You get the idea. We found a delightful used kimono shop where treasures were quite affordable, as well as the Oriental Bazaar, another treasure chest of all the possible souvenirs that one could wish to take home. We filled the little bits of space left in our bags with delicate paper products, calligraphy supplies, chopsticks, paintings on silk, and other oriental trinkets for all those who waited for our return. It was a unique experience. Both FLEATs offered an opportunity to meet with colleagues from around the world, to find a common base with which to support language learning. And even more important: to make new friends. ■

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First International FLEAT Conference. (Photo courtesy Language Laboratory Association of Japan.)



Presentation of the NALLD Achievement Award to the LLA. Left to right: Joseph H. Sheehan, President and Samuel Burggraaf, Executive Secretary, NALLD; Sutesaburo Khomoto, FLEAT Chair (deceased); Takashi Kuroda, President, LLA (deceased). (Photo courtesy of Joseph H. Sheehan.)



Official Recognition Ceremony. Left to right: Takashi Kuroda, President, LLA (deceased); His Excellency Tatsuo Tanaka, Minister of Education, Science and Culture; Joseph H. Sheehan, President, NALLD; Sutesaburo Khomoto, FLEAT Chair (deceased). (Photo courtesy of Joseph H. Sheehan.)



Mary Sanseverino, Language Centre, University of Victoria, hard at work on conference planning!

