



In 1986, Kanda University of International Studies invited a professor of English education, Francis. C. Johnson from Hawaii University. He was born in Australia and taught in Papua New Guinea, Hawaii and Hong Kong. At that time, Johnson came to KUIS as a replacement of his colleague for two years. However he stayed for 20 years and as a director of the ELI, developed an unique learning program that became the SALC. Why did Johnson decide to stay in Japan? What is the motivation for him to create the SALC?

My grandfather was a sailor and came to Australia in 1890. Our family name Jonson is Jansson in Swedish. He jumped ship in Sydney and decided to stay in Australia in 1890.

I was born in 1934. My father was a public servant in Australia. He worked for the Sydney city council. And my mother stayed at home. We were average working class people. I have one brother and one sister. My brother is 12 years older than me. My sister is 10 years older than me. I was spoiled by both my brother and sister and my parents. They treated me like a doll as a baby.

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When I was young, I was only interested in sports. I was a surfer and a swimmer and loved athletics and football. I have represented Australia at swimming. I loved reading and was good at doing exams. So I was able to go to university. I was the only one of my family to finish high school and go to university. I obtained a Commonwealth Scholarship from the government to go to Sydney University.



I studied education because I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to talk a lot. It was three years of study for the Bachelor of Arts and a further two years for the Diploma of Education. Then I did a Bachelor of Economics degree as well, because I wasn't sure if I would be a good teacher. After graduation, I had to do National Service in the armed forces. So, I did mine in the Australian air force. I got my pilot's license.

After National Service, I went to Papua New Guinea to be an elementary school teacher, because I didn't want to teach in Australia. So I have chosen to teach English in a foreign country. I was 22 years old. In Papua New Guinea, I trained teachers, too.

In Papua New Guinea there are 750 different languages. My first class that I taught in Papua New Guinea consisted of 35 students who spoke 30 different languages. Now, each language reflects the culture of the people who speak the language. Culture is a way of looking of the world. Each of these students had a different way of looking of the world. English is very different from their languages and culture. It was very very difficult. I had to find ways of getting across to them the English way of thinking.

So what I had to do there was to write the textbooks for them to learn English. I became a textbook writer. And my textbooks were published and used throughout Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands. I trained teachers with the textbooks which I wrote. At classroom teaching I developed my skills there but I did not know the theory on which they are based. I had to go to study. I wanted to expand my skill of teaching English.

So I decided to be a professional to teach English as a foreign language. I went to London University. I did a Postgraduate diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language. And then, I studied at Columbia University, Teacher's College. In 1963, there was only one university in the world where you could do doctoral studies of language teaching. If you wanted to study language teaching then, you had to study linguistics, not language teaching. I wanted to do language teaching. At Columbia University, I did my MA and Doctor of Education degrees in 1965. The University of Papua New Guinea opened in 1966 and I returned there. I had the first Chair of English Language at that university.

The interesting thing about working in Papua New Guinea was to teach important people. One of my students is now Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. Many of my students later became important ministers, ambassadors, and so on. In Australia, I would never teach important people.

I can say that my experience in Papua New Guinea determined my later career. Because I wrote textbooks there, I became a textbook writer. At KUIS, I wrote textbooks when I first came. In Papua New Guinea, my class had 30 different languages, so it's there that I might have started to be interested in the development of learner autonomy and individualizing instruction.

After Papua New Guinea, I went to teach at the University of Hawaii, and after that, I had the Chair of English at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. (1/6)



**I'd never thought to teach in Japan.  
Came for two years and stayed for 20 years.**

In 1985, I was living in Hawaii and teaching in the College of Education at the University of Hawaii. One of my colleagues, Professor Jack Richards came to me and said "Professor Johnson, why don't you go to Japan? "

Jack Richards was also a professor in the College of Education and he was also a professional in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language. He was going to be invited to teach at Kanda University of International Studies, but he couldn't come. So Mr. Kazuo Yamamoto was very upset. Mr. Yamamoto was a member of the Kanda Gaigo Daigaku Establishment Committee. I don't know why but there was some regulation that the new university must have someone who has already been a full professor. Mr. Yamamoto said "That spoils all our plans." So Jack Richards said "OK. I will get the right person for you to take my place." It was me!

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When Richards asked me to go to Japan, I said yes. I'd never been to Japan and never thought to teach in Japan. But I accepted his offer. I was just curious! I said I would only come for two years. The two things I don't like to eat are fish and rice! So I thought it was difficult to live in Japan for a long time. I knew that by coming to Japan I wouldn't last very long, but in fact I stayed 20 years. Came for two years and stayed for 20 years! And I am still coming to Japan.

Soon after I came to Japan, I lived in Wakamatsudai, near Tsuga. And one of the people said to me, "I'm going to take you to eat real Japanese food." And he took me to have "shirauo". You know that? Fish, alive. I don't even like cooked fish!



I came to Japan in 1986, just one year before the opening of KUIS. My job was to write the entrance exam and to develop the English proficiency curriculum.

As for writing the first entrance examination, I have a memory. I wrote it and gave 40% of the marks to Listening. And many people opposed my plan and said "This is very strange. Even 'Todai' and places like that only had 10% of the questions for Listening. We are a new university, we shouldn't do this". But my argument was that we were going to emphasize the spoken language in our curriculum, so we wanted to get students who have studied and developed listening skills.

There was a meeting of the Kanda Gaigo Daigaku Establishment Committee. There was some feeling about too much emphasis on Listening. And at that meeting, Mr. Ryuji Sano, Chief Executive of the Sano Foundation at that time, stood up. He said "This university is going to be a different kind of university, so we need a different entrance examination." And he supported this idea. It was his view that we were going to change things in university education. And it has been this support that has kept this university going as a different kind of university.

I remember also Mrs. Sano, the mother of Mr. Ryuji Sano. She was a very good teacher. She always had questions about the classroom. She was interested in what was going on in a classroom and asked me very intelligent questions about teaching.

One more thing about her. At that time, a bonus was given in cash. It was in Kanda, KIFL. We foreigners, of course, are not used to having any cash, on carrying cash around. So I just made it to the first bank to put the bonus from Mrs. Sano in the bank. (2/6)



**Students of KUIS must understand and use English in a whole variety of forms, not only American English.**

When I came to Japan in 1986, English language teaching in Japan was very poor. Professor Ogawa, the first president of KUIS, took me to the best universities in Tokyo. But there the students were sitting in language laboratories, repeating words and sentences like automatons, or robots. Mr. Ogawa asked me "Can you do better than that? " I said "Yes, that's easy."

I was a professor of English in the Department of English at the beginning of KUIS. After two years of establishment, Mr. Ryuji Sano, who had become of Chairman of the Sano Foundation, asked me to start the ELI, the English Language Institute. I said "YES!" to his offer. It was a great opportunity for me. When I was studying at Columbia University, I became interested in Learner Autonomy and have been researching the concept since then. I thought that the ELI, an independent institution, would give me an opportunity to write a curriculum based on learner autonomy in language education. Mr. Sano also wanted to put the theory into practice to make KUIS different. Mr. Sano said "Stay in Japan. We are the same age. You stay while I am here." So the project of the ELI started in 1989 and I stayed at KUIS.



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At first, I started to hire teachers of the ELI. I wanted to find young and good teachers from around the world. ELI teachers had to be people who had just graduated with in an MA in Applied Linguistics. Some of these were 23 years old and some of our students were up to 22 years old. They were almost same age, so they can communicate with the subjects of arts, music, sports and social events. I don't know Rock Stars and am not very interested in them. But the ELI then was based upon the need for these young teachers to meet and communicate with young students. They would do that better than I could.

People who had just graduated with in an MA were all very keen to come and to start their professional career. I went to New York, London, South Africa, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand... We advertised every year all over the world, and we went to interview the good applicants. We always went personally to see those people we want to employ. We wanted to be sure they would teach our students well.



I had a reason my travel around the world getting teachers for the ELI. Many schools and universities in Japan say "I want to have American English teachers." But students of KUIS must understand and use English in a whole variety of forms, not only American English, but British English, Australian English, Canadian English, and Singaporean English, and many other Englishes. I joke that we always employ some Scots to prove to our students how difficult they are to understand! We native English speakers can't understand them, either. So that was part of the ELI's job to make communication, across differing forms of English understandable.

The members of the ELI, the teachers, had a different kind of contract. They have a teaching component in their contract and then they have a research component. And the research component is to develop the curriculum of ELI English Proficiency classes. To bring different nationalities, different ways of speaking English, different backgrounds. Our teachers come from different educational backgrounds, and have different ideas about how to teach, and we bring them together, and then negotiate to work out a common curriculum. At this university, the curriculum of the ELI is always changing — it will never be finished.



Mr. Sano supports research development in the ELI. If you go to a conference like JALT, more papers have been given by KUIS teachers than any other university in Japan. Why? It is because of our research. Because Mr. Sano supports our research and enables teachers to go overseas to present our research at conferences overseas. If they are presenting on what they do at Kanda, this advertises Kanda overseas. Mr. Sano knows supporting teachers' research was an investment.

As KUIS got good reputation in the world, we got applications from many important institutions from people who had just graduated in the MA programs. When the ELI started, I just asked a few of my friends. Now there are 65 ELI teachers. We now have two hundred or three hundred applicants each year for jobs coming into the ELI from all over the world.

Every time I went to see Mr. Sano, it seemed that I was asking for more money for the ELI. But he said to me "That's OK. You are not asking for yourself. You are asking for our students." (3/6)



**We are the last time students are going to have a teacher.**

**Our mission is to make students responsible for their own learning.**

In the ELI of KUIS, we have been developing a unique learning system, called the "Kanda approach". "Kanda approach" is based on four 'i's, — independence, interdependence, interaction and individualization in language learning.

Independence is the first thing. Independence means the ability to plan my own learning program. Secondly, interdependence, students in a classroom depending on each other to be able to progress — working cooperatively. The third 'i' is interaction. Students must interact with each other. The fourth 'i' is individualization. It means that the curriculum is designed for individuals to progress at their own rate. This is where the SALC fits in the Kanda approach. So our classrooms, in the Kanda approach have a great deal of interaction between students. Students become very active in their learning.

This Kanda approach, which is of four 'i's, makes our students responsible for their own learning. We are the last time they are going to have a teacher. We teach our students to be able to learn how they can learn and improve their English. It is our mission in the Kanda approach is to have a curriculum that develops of learner independence, or learner autonomy.

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Before I came to Japan, I wrote a number of articles and a number of books on individualizing language instruction. This is one aspect of learner autonomy. My first book on this subject was published 1970. I've never had the opportunity to put it into practice. Why? Because, teaching is usually a teacher standing in front of thirty people talking. In Hong Kong, my students said to me, "You are the teacher, we pay you a high salary to tell us the answers." However the Kanda approach based of the idea of learner autonomy is different. Its way of learning is to have our students acting and talking with each other and with their teachers. When I explained this way to Japanese teachers, they said to us "You can't get Japanese students to do that. They are very quiet and good and well behaved, but they don't want to talk." If you come to one of our ELI classes, you will see that we can't stop them from talking. I don't know what we do, but they are very communicative.



In the Kanda approach, we are working with students to help them learn, not telling them what the answer is, but teaching them how to find answers, how to ask questions and find out things. Teachers are friends to help their learning. The teachers of the ELI are people who had just graduated with in an MA. So they are not experienced teachers. They are anxious to experience new ways. So I think we have been very lucky in the ELI to have people who want this new experience.

It is sometimes difficult to get Japanese teachers to change. In Japan, most universities regard the study of English as text. But my idea and Kanda approach is different. From the end of 80's to early 90's, I worked for the revising the curriculum of KIFL. They had a union there which was very strong. They opposed to introduction of the new way of instruction. They said "What's wrong with what I do? Are you saying I'm not a good teacher?" They took it we were being critical of their teaching. Not true. Teachers are very conservative. Not only in Japan, but all over the world. (4/6)



**We see learning going from the classroom out into the SALC and back into the classroom. This is a way of English learning of KUIS.**

Mr. Ryuji Sano supported the Kanda approach that the ELI developed. He saw this method as an important thing that would make Kanda different. We are different and people will want to come to KUIS. So he thinks that we must attract students. It was something new. And he liked that.

Mr. Sano wants to get more students because they get more fees. I couldn't be successful in our approach unless we had success in getting students. I put all my energy into the ELI and Mr. Sano supported the ELI. Yes, we both have the same goal for different reasons.

The education of the ELI was developing year by year. We had two classrooms in building No.4. We knocked walls down, and made an Independent Learning Center which became in the end, the SALC, the Self-Access Learning Center.

In 2003, the SACLA building was completed. We have a whole new building, the SALC building with classrooms joining into the SALC. So we see learning going from the classroom out into the SALC and back into the classroom. This is the way of English learning of KUIS. The classroom doesn't become a set of four walls, but is part of a larger learning unit.

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The Sano Foundation has been able to promote the Kanda approach to other universities, like Sojo University in Kumamoto and Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University. Students in Kumamoto don't have the high interest of English that our students have. They are engineers or pharmacists. We make them interested in English by our approach by interacting and communicating. Their language improves by their becoming involved in learning English.

There is one thing we have argued about the SALC, since the very beginning. We've always said students must make up their own mind to come to the SALC. It's up to them to go. Now many of us believe that what happens in the SALC is too important to leave it to the students to decide whether or not they want it. They should be forced to go and do courses in learning how to learn, because this is a central platform of the Kanda approach. So, some of us say we should make SALC courses compulsory. But some say we must encourage the students to use the SALC and it's up to them whether they use it. This is the dilemma and we don't know how to solve it.

KUIS can still be more flexible. What we have not yet done is make the curriculum completely individualized. We still have classes, and we still have classes of thirty who all come together at a particular time. Do we need this? Even before they come to Kanda, we should be able to offer the entrance exam at any time that students want to take it, when they are ready to come to KUIS. We need more flexibility in the education system and the curriculum. We are still considering that.

We are hampered by, we are restricted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. For example, I think the ministry only subsidises KUIS for a teacher standing in front of thirty students. We have to have classes like that to be able to get a subsidy. That must change. So change must come from the Ministry of Education. So flexibility... That's the big thing. That's the next step making more flexibility. (5/6)



**ELI's curriculum is one that is continually changing. It will be never finished.**

I believe that we are very privileged to be working in the Sano Foundation. I think that the Sano Foundation provides opportunities for us to become better teachers. We are given research money which enables us to conduct research and we should as teachers seize that opportunity to improve ourselves through our research.

I think teachers need to change their emphasis from teaching to learning. It's what the learner does the matters, not what the teacher does. And good teaching is not a person standing in front a room and using a good voice, speaking slowly and clearly and so on. That's not good teaching. Good teaching is measured by how much is learned by the learner. I think if we can spend our time thinking about that instead of improving our teaching techniques then I think we will make a great contribution.

The message to students is to seize the opportunity to learn how to learn. This is your last chance for English teaching to learn how to learn English. And you can do that by going to the SALC. The SALC will help you to learn independently. You can improve your English without having a teacher.



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In 1986, I came to KUIS as replacement of Professor Richards. He may have been much better than me. But for me it was very good. For the first time, I have been able to practice what I have preached. So, I thought I wouldn't stay two years, but I stayed 20 years. Mr. Sano enabled me to put this into practice, so I'm eternally grateful to him for being able to do that. I hope that in return I would be able to help him with making Kanda a different university. I think the ELI has made KUIS a different university. Now, many other universities are starting to get an ELI like us, but this gives us great pride. I think it gives Mr. Sano great pride to say we started this a long time ago.



Our work is still not finished yet. As I emphasized at the beginning, our curriculum is one that you continually changing. It will never be finished. It will keep changing and improving based on our research. (6/6)

#### **Francis C. Johnson**

Francis. C. Johnson was born in Sydney, Australia in 1934, received Diploma of Education and Bachelor of Economics from Sydney University, Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language from London University, MA and Doctor of Education degree from Columbia University, Teacher's College. He has been teaching at University of Papua New Guinea, University of Hawaii and Chinese University of Hong Kong. In 1986, came to Japan. From the beginning of Kanda University of International Studies, as a professor of English department and a director of the ELI, he developed Learner Autonomy System, SALC. In 2006, he was named Professor Emeritus. After his retirement, He lived in Australia but came to Japan three times a year to support the ELI as a consultant. He died in December 2013 at age 79.