GFD TALK SERIES:
THE FRONTIER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The University of Tokyo
Global Faculty Development



PRETENDING TO BE A *PHONETICIST* BY EXPLORING ECOLOGICALLY RICH AND RELEVANT DATA WITH *PLEW*

ABSTRACT

Much of what makes communication human resists measurement. It unfolds in games, meetings, and everyday conversation, where voices overlap, intentions shift, and meaning is constantly negotiated.

As a chemist-turned-writing instructor and investigator of AI-literate pedagogies, this session follows my unlikely path to ISAPh2026 in Hiroshima without formal phonetic training, through collaboration.

I will first briefly describe how the development of PLeW, a more explorable and adaptable visualization tool motivated by a growing need for data transparency through explorability, led to cross-disciplinary collaboration, and how shared interests in ecologically valid communication and language learning shaped it.

I will then walk through a compact version of our talk, "For an ecological account of Parkinsonian speech", explaining the project's spontaneous origins and opportunity to showcase new possibilities for discipline-agnostic data exploration.

Lastly, a brief demonstration of PLeW will show applications beyond this single case, since the tool aims to be, and already has been, useful outside any one topic or dataset. Attendees will gain a view of how unfamiliar disciplinary venues can inform faculty development, alongside a new tool to toy around with in their own teaching or research practice.

WHO AM I?

Leonard Sprague is a Project Assistant Professor at the University of Tokyo, where he teaches academic research and communication, alongside critical exploration of AI tools' possibilities and pitfalls.

Originally trained as a chemist, Len now prioritizes pedagogical and human-centered works, hence his arrival at the intersection of education and AI.

Current research projects span student and faculty interventions and identity renegotiations in the (Gen)AI classroom, to the design and demonstration of PLeW, a tool for more accessible and interactive explorations of complex data (e.g. human communication).

When not immersed in teaching and research, Len has also given invited talks at Keio University, Kyoto University, and with the MIT Club of Japan about topics such as AI-literate policy and activity design, and institutional change in the "Age of AI."

NOV 19(THU) 12:15-13:00 (ONLINE)

Speaker: Leonard Sprague

Language: English

ZOOM QR CODE

Inquiries: gfd.managementteam@gmail.com