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And Now a Word from...The Editor

Hello and welcome to the Spring edition of Explorations in Teacher Education (Volume 20, Issue 1), the newsletter of the Teacher Education and Development Special Interest Group (TED SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT).

This issue of the newsletter has five features. There are four articles and another travel feature by Michelle Segger. The first article is about a social networking forum set up to facilitate discussion on the topic of teaching practice and is written by Anthony Robins. This forum was mentioned in an article by Jun Suzuki in the previous issue of *Explorations*. The next, entitled, "Stories of Codification and Standardization," by Judith Runnels, is certainly worth a read and to quote the author, "very few educators are aware of all of the processes that have shaped Englishes of the past." The next article by Andy McInulty is about teaching in the UAE and is somewhat similar to the cautionary tale of teaching in London penned by Tanja McCandie in the last issue. I have often considered teaching in the Middle East, so the article was of particular interest to me. The last article is on that perennial favorite, collaboration, and in this case, the application of technology to engendering it. David Stepanzcuk is the author. This particular article is considerably longer than usual and normally I would have split it over two issues of the newsletter. However, as this will be my last issue as editor, I decided to publish it in its entirety, to leave my successor with a clean slate. I have hiked Shizugatake, as outlined by Michelle Segger in this issue's travel feature and I thoroughly recommend it. If you have the time, why not go and take in some of the beauty and the fresh air, which are quite easy to forget about when trapped in the conurbations of modern Japan.

As I mentioned above, this will be my final issue as the editor. I started in 2004 and so it has been almost eight years of mostly positive experiences as the editor. Now the time has come to move on to something else though, so I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank Anthony Robins for his proofreading efforts over the years and to wish all the members of the TED SIG well.

The TED SIG and the Shizuoka JALT chapter are hosting a mini-conference intended to spark new conversations around the broad theme of EFL Teacher Journeys on June 24th. The conference chair is our very own Peter Hourdequin, so if you get the chance please attend. For more information access http://sites.google.com/site/teacherjourneys/

Hope you enjoy the issue.

Simon Lees
Editor, *Explorations in Teacher Education*

TP Interchange: An Experiment in Social Networking

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Jun Suzuki made references to a social network forum, TP Interchange, in the last issue of 'Explorations'. Initially, it was set up to combine two main purposes: Firstly, to provide an area to exchange views on the important issue of teaching practice (kyouiku jisshu), a subject which has been introduced in previous issues of 'Explorations', (Ryan, 2006; Robins, 2008), and, secondly and interlinked with this, to provide an additional element to the link between my workplace and a partner university in Britain. More widely, it can be seen as a way for participants to enhance what Hockley (2012) describes as 'connection-based literacies' (personal, network and participatory literacies). In this article, I describe the following aspects of the forum: 1: The use of one of the mainstream social networks (SNS). 2: The nature of the participants and their participation. 3: Problems which were raised and how they were dealt with. 4: 'Lessons learned' and the way forward with this kind of activity.

1: The use of a mainstream social network

While there may be much 'hype' about the influence of social networks, there is no doubting their growth and scale. Globally, at the time of its IPO (Initial Public Offering), Facebook had 845 million users globally, of whom 483 million were daily users, according to 'The Guardian' newspaper. While homegrown 'Mixi' has long been dominant in Japan, with an estimated 20 million users versus 3 million for Facebook at the end of 2010, according to Igarashi and Nagai in 'The Asahi Shimbun', it has recently been increasingly challenged by the latter, as well as by another global interloper. In May 2011, Akimoto, in 'The Japan Times', described how Twitter had gained a higher percentage of users in Japan than in the U.S., and how Japanese was second only to English, as the language being used on Twitter.

I myself carried out surveys on the modes that students are currently using for communication and surveyed 190 students from various majors in classes during the second semester of the 2010-11 academic year, and both semesters of the 2011-12 academic year. These surveys showed that in terms of time spent, more communication was occurring through the medium of mobile e-mail or text messaging than through social networks. However, certain majors made greater use of SNSs, and the higher the age (university grade), the greater the involvement. For example, comparing 2nd year Sports majors and 4th year International Culture majors, the average number of SNSs they accessed was 0.9 and 2.5 respectively.

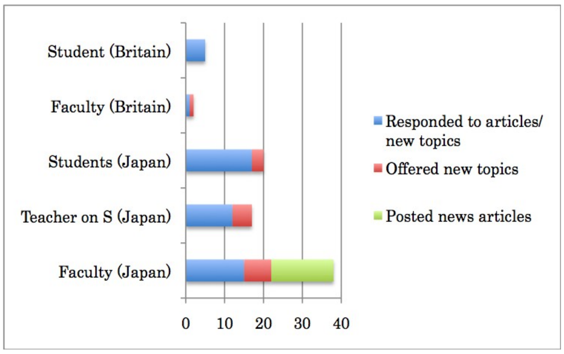
Writers are divided in their opinions as to the educational effects that social networking can have. In his survey of 612 students described in his paper 'Screw Blackboard°K do it on Facebook!': an investigation of students' educational use of Facebook, Neil Selwyn (London Institute of Education) found that among those who allowed their Facebook profiles to be accessed and who produced 68619 wall postings, only "4 percent were related to their studies and/or academic aspects of the university experience." However, writers such as Blattner and Fiori (2009) and Kelley (2010) point to the benefits connected with integrativeness, through enhancing student: student and student: teacher relationships. However, from a language learning point of view, a survey of students studying abroad at the partner university in Britain in 2010-11 which I carried out found that when answering the question, "Do you think that using 'Facebook' has benefited your English in these areas: Reading, Writing and Vocabulary?", answers on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) only averaged 2, 2.4, and 2.2 for these three areas.

While there are more clearly educationally oriented platforms, such as 'Wikispaces', which I had previously used with students, and there are valid issues about privacy, particularly from US-based educators, as I have discovered at recent CALL-related conferences, I decided to use Facebook mainly for two reasons. Firstly, that it was familiar to students and thus would not mean a whole new learning curve or an additional mode which might be seen as time-consuming. It was increasingly being used by many students at the Japan end, as indicated both in the results of my survey and in the media, referred to above; similarly, it was already in established use by many students at the British end. Secondly, as will be indicated below, it can easily link to related newspaper articles.

2: The nature of the participants and their participation

The forum remains open, but this article mainly refers to its operation from its commencement in September 2011 to the end of December 2011, so description is related in the past tense. During this period, there were thirteen participants, six of whom joined in September, four in October and three in November, exemplifying its fluid and ongoing nature. As indicated earlier, a purpose was to add another strand to the relationship with an overseas partner university, but only two of the thirteen members were located in the UK, reasons for which will be discussed later. Of those, one was an undergraduate student and one was a faculty member. Of the eleven based in Japan, two were faculty members from overseas, three were undergraduate students doing teaching practice in Autumn 2011, of whom two had recently studied at the partner university and were thus familiar with it, two were graduate students doing teaching practice in the same period, two were undergraduate participants who had done teaching practice in the past and one who would be doing it in the future. The final participant was Jun Suzuki, the writer of the article in the previous issue of 'Explorations' which referred to this forum, a high school teacher with almost ten years of experience who was on a half year sabbatical. Although his involvement was not anticipated at the time the project was under consideration, he played a key role, as is indicated below in Table 1, and as will be described later.

Table 1: Balance of Contributions (items posted)



As can be seen above, one way of inviting opinions was to post links to stimulating articles. I had already done this quite regularly on my own Facebook wall, where it provided perhaps the most educational aspect of my SNS use, aside from the aspect of integrativeness, pointed to by writers referred to earlier, through the chance to interact electronically with students in a different way to previous means, mainly through e-mail. During the period under discussion, seven links or references on the topics indicated below were posted by just two participants (see Table 1) from the following website sources. The numbers of comments in response are in parentheses:
The BBC (one): school building design (1)
The Daily Telegraph (one): specialization or generalization for elementary school teachers* (2)
The Guardian (one): to smile or not to smile in class! * (2)
The Japan Times (four): low spending on education in Japan (0), teachers fined for misuse of time (1), teachers' mental pressure (7), the timing and organization of teacher training courses (2),

Aside from the level of interest provided by the topics, the main reasons to choose these sources were, their having a linking function to the SNS and not being too long or complex, including requiring a large amount of background knowledge, as well as not overwhelming the reader with huge numbers of existing comments which might go off at complicated tangents. To allow use of topics where the latter problem was considered an issue, in the case of two of those above, indicated by *, the article was just briefly quoted from, rather than being linked to. As can be seen, these topics resulted in an average of 2.14 responses.

The main other way to prompt responses was for participants to raise issues by offering new topics. As Table 1 shows, four of the five categories of participants did, in reality meaning that five of the 13 participants did so. Here, I would like to focus particularly on the 'veteran' teacher participant (Jun Suzuki), indicated by 'Teacher on S' (teacher on sabbatical). By referring to his experiences, he could encourage the younger participants to take a longer, perhaps more realistic, view of the issues ahead of them. He raised five issues: dealing with truancy, being a mentor during teaching practice, classroom layout, teachers' working hours, and gender balance among teachers. These resulted in an average of 2.2 responses.

The topics indicated above show how the forum broadened from its initial planned focus on the teaching practice experience itself to wider issues in teaching, as well as indicating that the levels of responses were not perhaps as high as might have been hoped. One key reason for both was that the students actually doing teaching practice had little time or even the means to connect while actually in the process of doing teaching practice. Although, before they started, I had encouraged them to post their reflections every few days, the reality was way below this. Of the five participants referred to above who were actually doing teaching practice in Autumn 2011, only two joined in time to take part during the teaching practice period, and of those, only one posted, at a frequency of approximately every week. Her postings included: what to focus on during the observation stage, issues of mixed abilities in classes, clearly explaining activities, and uses of English and Japanese in classes. There were an average of four responses.

3: Problems which were raised and dealing with those

The first problem was instigating initial involvement, for two reasons. While I did not generally want to dragoon people into joining what is, after all, a commercial operation, and thus would not consider it suitable for classwide activities, I did want two graduate students to join, as I was supervising them for their teaching practice. Concerns about unfamiliarity and privacy did cause some delay in their joining. With regard to the latter, one student was concerned about keeping both school and student information private. Her understanding was that in relation to the university, "We must not talk about teaching practice as a teacher in a public area, including the Internet". I tried to stress that it was not strictly 'a public area', through communicating with her, that the forum, "is members only," but to, "still be careful to avoid infringing privacy, specially of school students. For example, don't mention any school students by name." In fact, participants' comments were largely general rather than specific, avoiding this kind of infringement, and, in my role as the forum's coordinator, reasonably frequent viewing gave the possibility of deleting any posting which seemed problematic from this point of view. Actually, I never considered that this needed to be done during the time period being described.

A second contrasting problem was seen from the British end, where potential participants, who either did or did not ultimately join, were concerned about access to their existing 'walls' and the relationship with communication with their existing 'friends'. Although I may be mistaken, and would welcome any feedback to the contrary, it does seem that you have to first become a 'friend', before being invited to join a Facebook group. Therefore, it appears that to avoid interaction with an existing 'wall' and 'friends', the alternative is to have a separate Facebook wall, for interaction related to the group. In addition, the faculty member involved at the British end was initially somewhat skeptical, perhaps aware of research such as Selwyn's (see above). He initially wrote, "I am slightly concerned that the students' prior experience of Facebook will impact on the balance between social networking and critical reflection but I am happy to see what happens," but later added, "I had an interesting experience over the summer with a pre-course forum I had set up. I intended to share a few journal articles and gently prepare students for the academic side of the course but, although some did engage at an impressive level with the material, most of the posts were social networking. There was a positive impact on the way the students interacted in the first few days and particularly on their confidence. (e-mail communications on 18th September 2011).

The third problem has already been indicated previously. It is the basic issue of getting participants to post comments regularly. This had been expected to be an issue, based on my earlier surveys of students' communication modes, which found that looking at social networks was a markedly more frequent activity than either writing on their own pages or on their friends' pages. While, as indicated earlier, it was realized that participants actually doing teaching practice had little time to become involved, leading to other participants and topics away from teaching practice taking a greater role, the main way to enhance involvement were, firstly, e-mail or Facebook message 'reminders', secondly, given that there was the opportunity for regular face to face contact with at least some of the Japan-based participants, 'a word in the ear' to 'remind' them to contribute. Finally, there was the invaluable presence of an experienced teacher to lend his views, as described above.

4: 'Lessons learned' and the way forward with this kind of activity.

The chief 'lesson learned' is that there has to be a balance between 'structure' and 'freedom'. As I indicated, while the initial focus for this social networking forum was teaching practice, it soon seemed more positive to widen it to encompass many issues related to teaching. While the scale and frequency of involvement may have been somewhat disappointing, I feel that greater freedom is provided by a lack of pressure to contribute with any kind of specific frequency. In fact, I avoided joining this very social network initially because somehow I thought that there would be some kind of pressure to post messages more frequently than I had time for. Now, however, I feel no such pressure, and engage in it when I feel like doing it.

Nevertheless, to boost the success of this kind of forum, I would still suggest direct reminders to students who are involved when there is the chance and perhaps a 'target' for contributions for students who you have a particular level of involvement with, such as 'zemi' (tutorial) students.

Furthermore, more time than I spent to lay the foundations by explaining the nature and purpose of the forum would be positive.

As I complete this article, the forum continues, with a total of 62 contributions in the following three months (1st January to 31st March). New contributors will be encouraged, including the members of a graduate course on issues in using media in language teaching and learning, as well as students engaged in the next round of teaching practice in May and June 2012. Interested readers are also invited to participate by contacting me at <anthonycrobins(at)yahoo.com>.

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Stories of Codification and Standardization

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There are very few languages in the world that have as complicated a history as that of the English language. Over the last thousand years, political, social and cultural factors have all contributed to its development. In modern times, development has occurred largely through the addition of new vocabulary from the industrial revolution, through British colonialism and continuing more recently with advancing technology and the internet (see Baugh & Cable, 2002; Robinson, 1992; Blake, 1996; Bragg, 2004; for reviews of the history of English). This has resulted in the language that is spoken regularly by more than 300 million people as a first language and between an estimated 200 and 1.4 billion people as a second language (Lewis, 2009). Estimates of the number of English language learners come in at over 1 billion, which naturally has resulted in huge numbers of both native and non-native speaking English educators (Graddol, 2000). Nonetheless, very few educators are aware of all of the processes that have shaped Englishes of the past, or of today's Englishes (Walberg, 2006). Greater awareness of such processes would increase understanding of the language of their instruction and ideally, eliminate stigmas associated with using certain varieties of the language over others, ultimately enriching lessons for students (Norton, 1997).

Two of the processes which have caused turbulence and controversy in the development and evolution of English are codification and standardization. Codification refers to the process of developing a writing system. This entails setting up accepted rules for the different aspects of grammar, orthography, pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary (Holmes, 2001). Standardization refers to a language or a language variety that is given official legal status over other social or regional variants (Christian, 1988). While it is typically subsequent to codification, it is no less important. Together, standardization and codification have allowed for successful study, propagation, development and usage of a language.

Historically, numerous criteria have been used to codify a language. A significant part of the codification process has involved the adoption of words into dictionaries or grammar books. In the past, criteria for inclusion were typically determined by the author or the editor and the ultimate spread of material depended on numerous factors, such as the social popularity of the author or the publishing house (Partridge, 1969). Well-established modern day dictionaries, on the other hand, each have their own criteria for inclusion. The Oxford English Dictionary, for example, selects its new inclusions based on substantial usage across media, location, publications and over time (Diamond, 2009). However, the nature of dictionary sales is not the same as it once was - inclusion is hardly a satisfactory measure of codification as new words or new meanings to words can be widely used by populations far before they are published in dictionaries (Roy, 1995). The creation of new words has increased at faster rates in the last twenty years than ever before given that new information can reach audiences of millions in short periods of time via the internet (Lavazzi, 2001). New words can become entrenched in the language quickly or new words are entrenched but then dropped as trendier equivalents emerge (Diamond, 2009). Nonetheless, a well-defined threshold number of occurrences required for inclusion in a publication does not exist, which means that ongoing records of codification are inconsistent with each other.

Authority has also been well-documented as a primary source for language codification via the spread of the language through constituted bodies and governments who promote and require the teaching of the standardized version in schools (Cobarrubias, 1983; Gemie, 2002; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Nonetheless, successful codification depends on acceptance and usage of the word or language structure by the population of language users; it can occur independently of governing or authoritative bodies. The development of new inventions (Nahir, 2003), changing social values (Cooper, 1989), war (Russell & Porter, 1979), the influence of popular culture (as in TV, movies or music: Williams, 2006; Heron, 1987; Khiun, 2003, respectively) or other languages (Cannon, 1981; Algeo, 1960) are all instances of media by which language codification has occurred.

Subsequently, determining which of these codified versions is considered Standard English remains the subject of ongoing discussions. With the continual development of different varieties of the language (Schneider, 2003), the number of English as a Second Language speakers in the world already outnumbers those who speak it natively (Lewis, 2009). Combining this with the changing nature of language, previously used criteria for standardization become irrelevant. Words that are established and codified in one variety are sometimes meaningless and incomprehensible in others (Roy, 1995). Words of one population can be irrelevant for others and vice versa (Roy, 1995). Naturally, this applies to accents and varieties as well. For example, attempting to teach Received Pronunciation to populations outside of Eton and Oxford (see Mugglestone, 1997) has not only been demonstrated to be unsuccessful but is just as ludicrous as trying to teach British English to North American populations that have been using the General American variety of English for centuries (Dillard, 1985). Despite this, recent attempts have been made to teach North American minorities, what is said to be ‘good’ English and this too, has been relatively unsuccessful (Schneider, 1983) as there is no single dominant prestige dialect in the United States (Wilson, 1993).

Given the existence of hundreds of dialects and numerous varieties of English in the world, arguably, the era of Standard English as a spoken or written language has reached its end, if it even ever existed (Trudgill, 1999; Freeborn, 1998). The processes of standardization in particular, and possibly codification to an extent have become obsolete: a Standard and fully codified English is simply an impossibility. There is no one variety or dialect that is universally agreed to be superior: North American English is the accent of choice for Korean speakers (Algeo, 1960), whereas British-style pronunciation is favoured by those of Singapore (Clammer, 1998). The development of such varieties as Hong Kong English demonstrates a lack of a need for a Standard International English (Schneider, 2003), as users of this and other varieties show pride in their speech and have no desire to use alternate varieties of the same language (Palacas, 2001). Both native and non-native speaking English educators should bear this in mind. Efforts should perhaps be put toward continuing to qualify and quantify the existing varieties of the language with the ultimate goal of having a codified standard for each variety.

Given that historical problems associated with attempts to codify the English language are somewhat outdated and the trend of linguistic standardization should perhaps be abandoned, in turn, future research requires adjustment. The impact of technology and electronic socialization is an area that has garnered significant attention in the fields of communication (Selber, 2004) and education (Lavazzi, 2001) especially. Future efforts, however, need to monitor more closely and document in greater detail such phenomena as the impact of technology on word-development or how online social networking websites impact the spread of new vocabulary through a language, in the same way that the fields of orthography and grammar had a devoted following during the past five centuries (Partridge, 1969; Fisher, 1996; Mugglestone, 1997; Leonard, 1929; Abercrombie, 1981).

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Learner Attitudes and Motivation at a Technical College in the U.A.E.

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While teaching and living in Japan, our minds inevitably wander into the future as we think about long-term security and jobs that could provide us with a salary that might help build towards our future. In the last couple of years in particular, we have witnessed a global recession, inflation and depopulation here in Japan. Good jobs are becoming harder to obtain, salaries seem to be fixed if not falling, yet at the same time, moving to a new country and taking up a new position and taking on a new culture can be a very daunting thought. The Middle-East often looks like an attractive prospect, and Dubai and the United Arab Emirates consistently advertise jobs paying 5,000 dollars or more a month, tax-free. At the classroom level, there are always problems and challenges to overcome and this is part and parcel of an EFL teacher's job. However, there is one big problem that exists in the UAE and I presume all over the Arab world. The purpose of this short report is to highlight this one huge difficulty; the disparity that exists between the teachers' and students' expectations.

Over the course of my teaching experience in the United Arab Emirates both in Abu Dhabi (6 years) and Dubai (2 years) and to the teaching of Arab students in general, I have witnessed an apparent mismatch of learner and teacher expectations. This has offered the potential for two major classroom mismatches, one between learner assumptions and expectations of teachers and their teaching methods and manners, and another between teacher assumptions and expectations of learners and their learning methods and manners. From experience, I have witnessed these misunderstandings impacting negatively on motivation, which has resulted in the collapse of both learner and teacher motivation in the classroom.

Genuine motivation is vital to successful teaching and learning for both teachers and learners. Motivation is like an internal force encouraging us to pursue a course of action. This force appears to vary for different levels of learners and has a great deal to do with cultural influences and the age and maturity of learners. Logically, without motivation, the English language class can be boring and disheartening for both learners and teachers.

In Middle Eastern countries like the UAE there appears to be the existence of a clash of cultural expectations and educational differences. There is a glaring need for further research and analysis, in order to determine the effects of motivation on both teachers and learners as a consequence of these different cultural expectations. The following paragraphs elaborate on a number of them.

The technical college where I worked was based between the cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. As the location lies in the desert, learners reside on site in what can only be described as an environment not particularly conducive to learning. Learners enrol direct from state school and although the minimum age for enrollment is 16 years, learners range from as young as 14 to 18 years old. The intake for first year learners is a steady 16 classes, with between 15 and 16 learners in each. The admissions policy for young nationals, irrespective of ability, operates on a first-come first-served basis with a graduating goal of entering the public sector trained in the field of technical maintenance.

In this institution, attitudes toward education and the roles of both the learner and the teacher were problematic. Learners had increasingly poor motivation and were ill-disciplined while teachers were disillusioned and frustrated by the educational and cultural challenges they were faced with.

There was a clear disparity between learner and teacher expectations. Learners had been reared in a Qoranic instruction system that left them heavily teacher-dependent. For example, religious factors influenced how they would approach a reading text. In Qoranic instruction, what is written is associated with absolute truth. Therefore, no analysing of texts in order to establish validity, opinion, or bias could be undertaken. The students saw reading as a fixed unit and had difficulty discerning the important from the unimportant. Most importantly, they challenged western teachers on this practice and completely undervalued western teachers' training and EFL methodology. Most western teachers, accustomed to a western learning system and trained in ESL/EFL teaching methodologies, expected learners to possess at least the fundamentals in study skills, learning methods and learning strategies. Thus, this incongruence occurred, as learners appeared to have little in the way of learning strategies and frustration escalated among the teachers.

Affective factors are a broad cluster of variables that might appear to lie largely but not wholly beyond the influence of any teacher. Learners react to any language-learning situation, or indeed to any day-to-day situation in a variety of emotional or affective states.

As motivation appeared to be critical in this tertiary setting, it is important to break motivation down into its many aspects. Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (2000) for example, suggest that there are two basic kinds of motivation; integrative and instrumental, and that each has a predictive relationship with learning outcomes. The learner with integrative motivation is said to have a basic desire to learn the language because he/she wants to communicate with native speakers and thus expedite the transition and assimilation into a specific community. Indeed a "consistent correlation between integrative motivation and L2 achievement has been found in studies of Anglophone Canadians learning French" (Ibid:510).

Instrumental motivation is more limited in its outlook and it implies that a learner may view language learning purely as a means to an end, with little regard towards its intrinsic worth or desire to integrate. Ellis, (1991, p.15) has characterised this as the 'carrot and stick hypothesis'. Although instrumental motivation can be identified with shorter-term goals, it does not mean that learners cannot be successful in L2 acquisition. Moreover, Gardner and Lambert (1972) contend that they are not mutually exclusive and learners can be both instrumentally and integratively motivated at the same time.

Skehan, (1989), however, proposes that there are two categories of sources of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic, as the name suggests, emanates from sources external to the learner and is characterised by some form of punishment or reward. The concept of intrinsic was more a reaction to extrinsic theories of motivation in that it emphasised the study of languages for their own sake. Krashen, (1982) integrated these notions into his learning acquisition theory by suggesting that instrumental and external motivation lead to learning, while acquisition requires integrative and intrinsic motivation. Krashen's dichotomy of learning and motivation helps to highlight the importance attached to motivation and its impact on acquisition of a second language. It appeared that the local culture, learning and teaching cultures in this particular situation all impacted upon motivation.

This situational analysis has revealed cross-cultural misunderstandings about perceived educational, teacher and learner norms and the backwash affect they were having on discipline and motivation in the classroom. Learners, graduating from local secondary schools were arriving at the college with little or no understanding of self-reliance, decision-making, responsibility for their own learning, no suitable study skills and an over-reliance on the teacher. Production in class at text level demonstrated that the learners possessed extremely poor strategies for dealing with errors, while bad classroom behavior and low levels of motivation characterized most classrooms. This view was voiced by most of the teachers in my office on a daily basis whose perception of learning however, may also be slightly biased. Nevertheless, this view was one that was expressed by a large number of teachers involved in tertiary education across the country in articles, blogs and anecdotally.

In summation, from eight years' experience in the UAE there are many dilemmas that will not become apparent until a contract has been undertaken. Motivation is something that teachers strive for in their classroom. Without teacher-student rapport, there is a total breakdown in the learning environment. Therefore, before choosing the Middle East, start to realize that stimulating strong, positive emotions from students will most likely never occur. I will leave you with a few anecdotes that affirm this. In a society where personal relationships between the school and the student's family will probably mean the difference between success and failure due to family embarrassments, I was asked to pass failing students. The school director warned me that I could not give homework because homework affects how much time my students could spend socializing and seeing relatives in the evening. Finally, I asked myself why I should have to deal with students from different warring tribes who caused nothing but worry and anarchy in the classroom! Think again; that lucrative salary, those agreeable living conditions, and the fabulous weather that are undoubtedly important concerns, must make way for job satisfaction that is of paramount importance to a healthy well-being.

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Bringing Together and Connecting Sundry Players: *The Black Art of Transforming Cowboys into Collaborators*

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Since Vygotsky's notions that "cognitive activities take shape in a matrix of social history" (cited in Schtz, 2004), educators have come to accept that learning is not only an individual but a community activity. The scope of learning in communities runs from discrete or synergistic, non-formal to formal educational settings; and the differing roles and the ways they evolve over time and amongst cohorts become the individual's responsibilities when those contexts arise (Katz & Earl, 2010, as cited in Cleary, 2010a). The encountering of the different dimensions of learner identities, the adoption and understanding of those roles, from opening up to others, sharing resources, to making oneself available, not only enriches the learning dynamic, but comes as an unpleasant challenge to some. The characteristics of the community cohorts must include those of communication and inclusivity for the community to be successful. Understanding and regard for others and the learning community (LC) itself are important for learning to occur. This study takes a look at the group of instructors at a newly designated Internet English program at a major Japanese university, as well as those of similar programs. This study is limited to the formation of the Internet English networked learning community (IE LC) made up of instructor cohorts from the programs mentioned above, beginning with the perceived need of a LC for the program, the invitation process, formation, and the initial less than successful inclusion outcomes of the LC. The study will then scrutinize the situation using research-based articles and a comprehensive critical literature review. As all of the cohorts are past masters of education technology, computer use and issues of technology will be omitted. This study will look at the IE LC initiation events, including the weak outcome. It will then problematize the outcome. After that, the study will introduce Appreciative Inquiry (AI) along with ubuntugology (described below) as an analysis lens through which to examine the LC. This investigation will contend that AI and its ubuntugologic approach would go a long way toward bringing together the disparate cohorts, creating an appealing atmosphere in which to collaborate, but the extent to which that can be realized remains uncertain due to the vagaries of communication and the make-up of the LC.

The critical event and its assumption

Japanese universities, in a bid to offer more attractive courses, have increased the incorporation of computer and Internet skills classes. This study focusses on one university where a new Internet English program started two years ago. The program began with two native English speaking instructors. There are now three instructors involved in the program. The decision to form a learning community (LC) included that group and one instructor from a different department in a similar program, and one more IE instructor from a different university. All cohorts are Western Ex-patriots.

The two instructors who started the IE program, left a skeleton syllabus, but no provision for fleshing-out, collaboration or expansion, leaving out, among other issues later-comers who desire more that what was initially left on the table. A study by Mittler et al. (1986) contends that that kind of situation “involves a dialogue and an agreement of common purpose” (p. 12). The program’s founding instructors, when asked for their feedback on how their experience helped them in the initial year of the program simply offered to show an artifact from a large project their students had accomplished. Questions about details, alternative methods, and troubleshooting were answered in short, sketchy email replies, if they were answered at all. One instructor of the IE program once disclosed his idea for the program saying, ‘if we continue to keep the focus on English and don’t step on the toes of the native staff who teach Internet skills, we can keep the IE program going.’ This statement implies a cowboy mentality where individual instructors may do what they wish in their classes as long as they stick to the skeleton syllabus. This attitude precludes any collaboration to encourage consistent program-wide effort and quality, professional accountability toward the students, departments, and the IE curriculum itself. If teaching professionals in the same program have differing levels of effort and quality, discrepancies in amount of work, and degree of detail will arise from one class to the next. New tools and methods could be discussed, delegated, and incorporated into the program, further ensuring the quality of instruction while creating a more independent, student-centered environment. Moreover, if a comprehensive collaboration commences now, while the program is still young, it will curtail problems of loose cannons who come later, whose effort and quality may call into question the worthiness of not only their class but that of the program as a whole. Only then can all cohorts, now and in the future “find out why suggested activities may be important”, “and have an informed basis from which they themselves can make suggestions on how the activities can best be carried out” (Mittler et al., 1986, p. 13).

As there was no infrastructure to bring the instructors together, I, the junior-most member of the program, set up a wiki online at PBWorks as a platform for an informal LC, for the purposes of instructor collaboration, learning, tool and reference sharing, and the benefits of leaving a knowledge product (Reil & Polin, 2004) for subsequent IE instructors.

There were challenges from the beginning. Upon inviting the instructors to the wiki, I was met with these responses: “Thinking that it would be much more efficient to get together f2f and give you some shit and explain some things,” and “Basically mate, I won't be posting much there as I really don't have the time to be joining a mini sub group to provide answers.”

And then there was this comment: “Mate, I really don't want to get into any sort of bitch match about delivery systems as I do not see them as central to any task as they are just a medium to assist collaboration.”

Other more temperate responses were also received. Despite the less than optimistic first replies, all invitees became cohorts. The LC has since been plagued by issues of time inconvenience; inconvenience in posting on an unfamiliar platform; perhaps by mistrust, leading to; unwillingness to divulge intellectual properties; perhaps a personal unwillingness to cooperate.

It was time to review assumptions about the creation of the LC. One notion was that colleague members would take part as a matter of common interest. Putting many heads together, and building what is essentially our own program was thought be an attractive proposition. Beginning with the cohorts themselves, existing relations between cohorts would not be problematic; in fact it is a strength. Contrary to impressions from the statements of anomie above, there is a high level of mutual respect among the invitees to the LC. The challenges are likely those of attitude and motivation; or the type of unwillingness borne of long held ideas of how collaboration should proceed; or as yet unrecognizable adult affective dimensions (Brookfield, 2000) and how they impact group members’ notions of group conformity (Kemp, 1999). Whatever the sources they are harmful, as “a wiki in the hands of an indifferent community fails" (in Cochrane, 2010).

The move to critically problematize the situation occurred at this point of moribundity. Problematization is the seeking out, and embracing of problems, rather than hiding from or minimizing them (Cleary, 2010b). It was decided to look at the matter through the analytical lens of Appreciative Inquiry.

Appreciative inquiry and ubuntu

However, before employing an analytical tool, it is helpful to establish the nature of the LC and its cohorts, especially for an LC that will operate in an online environment, to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the situated identities (Cleary, 2010a). For this purpose, the Reil and Polin (2004) Learning Community Classification was selected.

According to the Learning Community Classification, the IE LC lies at the intersection of Knowledge-based LC, Task-based LC, and Practice-based LC. This classification is justified by the nature of the cohorts, their relationship prior to invitation to the IE LC, and the quality and nature of how the group and its individual constituents has operated. The LC classification round-up configures like this:

In terms of membership

• Leadership emerges from acknowledged experience and expertise (P-BLC)

• For some cohorts there may be a temporary group identity, until their individual contributions to wiki sections is complete (T-BLC)

• Participation is due to relevant expertise and common interest (K-BLC).

Task features / Learning goals

• The project is well defined (T-BLC)

• Collective activity entailing many tasks (P-BLC)

• Evolution of knowledge base (K-BLC).

Participation structures

• Informal small-group interaction (T-BLC)

• Open access to practice, culture, and tools; with the intent of changing members and member roles in the future (P-BLC)

• To the extent that the wiki is intended to be accessible to and used by outsiders (K-BLC).

Reproduction and growth mechanisms

• Community practice carried between discontinuous individuals (T-BLC)

• Evolution of practice through discourse, tools, and artifacts of work, anecdotes about practice, and other tacit and explicit cultural mechanisms (P-BLC)

• Shared values and language; evolution of valued practices (K-BLC)

• Interaction with similar knowledge-building LCs (K-BLC).

from Reil and Polin's (2004) Learning Community Classification

Owing to this classification roundup, the employment of an online wiki seems appropriate, as it allows cohorts to both speak authoritatively yet informally from the perspectives of individual experience and practice; attend to the various tasks called for by individual but similar curricular needs; is flexible and evolving; is public; can accommodate varying ways of practice; and it promotes lifelong learning as it is technological and exists where technology exists (Jarvis, 2010).

Looking more closely at the situation, there is the matter of cohort relationships and learning zones, or where individual cohort learning gravitates; inside the IE LC, between that LC and another, or on the border of the LC. Two cohorts who were the initial instructors of the university's

IE program are both technologically accomplished and experienced within the program; consequently low-stakes stakeholders, as they form the main knowledge pool. However it was thought that they might enjoy the rewards of both more input and the flexibility of the wiki vehicle by which to communicate and collaborate. As another cohort, I am at the same university but a newcomer; technologically experienced, but inexperienced within the program; as such I am a high-stakes stakeholder. Two other cohorts come from a different department and a different university which offer similar IE programs. Both hold high technological experience and are well versed in their respective IE programs. Thus the IE LC can be classified as a synergistic human-community as it consists of cohorts that have in common locale, and interests, triggers notions about the rewards of learning; is curricular-focused and is operating over several slightly differing programs (Kilpatrick et al., 2003).

Given this shotgun-like range, the various levels of participation is not surprising. The cohorts come with several borders, described as practice, communication, role, or participant discontinuities (Walker and Creanor, 2005). The identified borders are temporal, cultural, personal, technological, curricular, and in the future, linguistic.

This diversity foretells a variety of learning zones. The culture issue exists on the border where Western expatriates operate within the Japanese educational system. The personal and technological problems are located within the IE LC. The temporal border too is inward, where all cohorts exhibit some kind of time restraint; where learning will have to be asynchronous.

Boundary type	Issue	Location	Planned boundary method
Temporal	Time constraints, including time on topic & time for collaboration	Inward	*Artifact:* Wiki, enculteration through practice; flexibility *Practice*: asynchronous collaboration; weak link accommodation & appreciation
Cultural	Japan-living Western/Japanese cohorts	On border	*Practice*: weak link accommodation & appreciation of ambiguity; ubuntu
Personal	Ego, professional hierarchy	Inward	*Practice*: leadership & expertise acknowledgement; outline purpose and role expectations; ubuntu
Technological	Differing abilities & practices	Inward	*Artifact*: Wiki and other relevant platforms & methods *Practice*: technological & communication methods allowances
Curricular	Analogous but differing criteria	Between	*Practice*: accommodation & appreciation of

			ambiguity
Linguistic*	English/Japanese speaking group	On border	*Practice*: weak link accommodation & appreciation of ambiguity; ubuntu

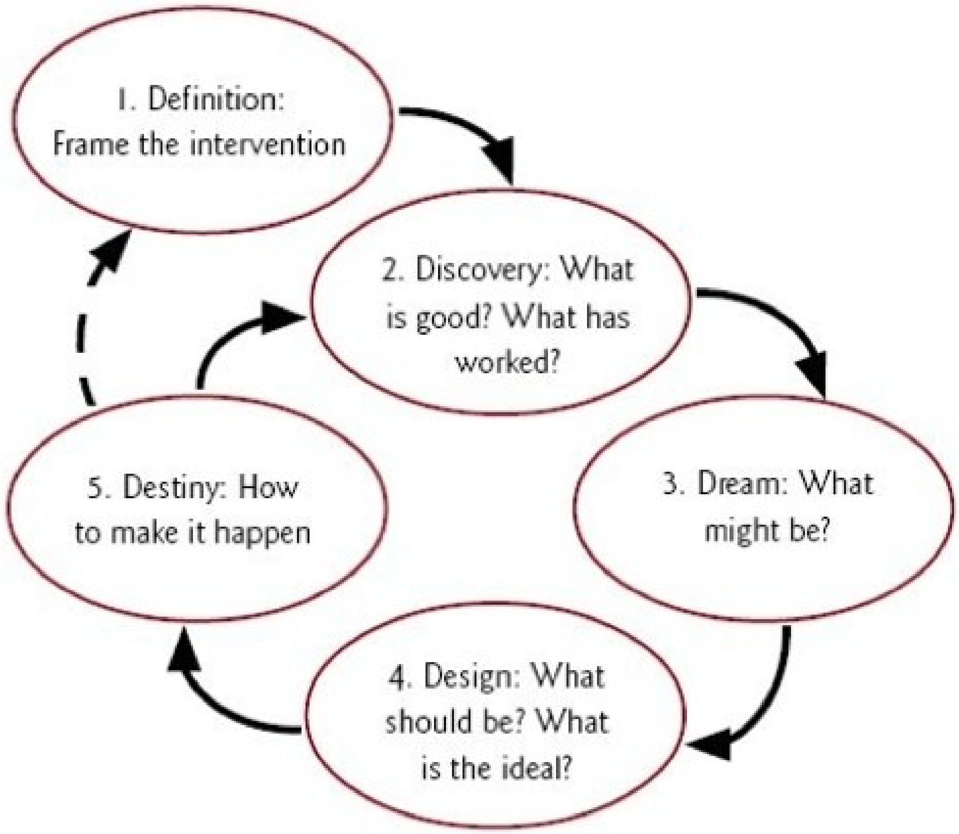
** Proposed expansion of the cohort group includes Japanese instructor counterparts.*

Using the Composite definition of Learning Communities (Kilpatrick et al., 2003) matrix to define this context would give us: A learning community made up of people sharing common purposes and interests which learns from its experiences and those of others in order to promote a culturally aware and vibrant environment while respecting a variety of perspectives through common goals of learning opportunities to enhance the potential of all members that may create new knowledge. One important factor left out is the fact that the LC invitation and formation was not mandated by an organizational agency, but was suggested by a colleague with no empowerment. This might cast shadows from Brookfield’s (2000) notions on cultural suicide, or the converse of impostorship. After gaining the views of potential players, the application of AI may begin.

Appreciative Inquiry is an ethnographic way for inspecting an organization. It starts by appreciating what the organization - from small group to community-wide - does best, and to better prepare to address any negative situations that may later appear (Ryan et al., 1999). AI is a move away from a negative, problem-oriented approach, and it attempts to negate the theory versus practice dualism by being a generative tool assisting practitioners to create positive futures, instead of a tool to evaluate past performances or predict outcomes (Raymond and Hall, 2008, cited in Cleary, 2010b). AI differentiates itself from action research by identifying where the organization wants to be, as its starting point, not attempting to get to a pre-determined endpoint (Cleary, 2010b).

In the seminal article by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987, cited in Bushe and Kassam, 2005) there is a set of principles enunciated in the evolution of AI saying that,
1. the inquiry begins with appreciation, of what is already good about the group. (Discover phase)
2. the inquiry is applicable, with cohort input as to what might be. (Dream phase)
3. the inquiry is provocative, with declarations of what should be, or what is ideal. (Design phase)
4. the inquiry is collaborative, toward making it happen. (Deliver phase)

AI can be graphically illustrated like this:



from Cleary, (2010b). University of Southern Queensland, Theme 2 - Analysis lenses: Tools to examine practice in context

Specifically what do these phases mean, and how do they stand up to critical literature. Phase 1 is where cohorts are asked to express their motivations to work, and their most worthwhile experiences, along with an overview of what they think are their values and skills (Kozik et al., 2009). This sets the foundation for the "key element" of "mutual respect of the different qualities and skills which both sides bring to the relationship" (Mittler et al., 1986, p. 12). In his study of a model of small heterogeneous group development that holds that self-verification - through self-disclosure and sharing feed-back, London (2003) says self-evaluation combines "self-esteem", "self-efficacy", "tendency to be positive", and is a "common factor related to important work criteria enhancing their ability to contribute to group performance and enhance their individual performance" (pp. 277, 278). De Lautour (2009) argues that this drives the group's sense of purpose in the present and future. In the only study found where cohorts expressed the same anomie toward the specifics of their LC as that of this study, Troxel (2002) says in this phase he was "awestruck," and "exhilarated" by it and how the conversation was "thought-provoking" and "affirming" (p. 9), prompting him to quote poetry in his study.

In Phase 2, AI continues by taking the professional narratives of values, skills, and knowledge, and transferring them into practice by creating and deploying a checklist (De Lautour, 2009). For Troxel (2002), LC's affirmations were manifested by the similarities between the values stated in his office and those values in another location. De Lautour describes AI's ability to allow participants to use their own narratives to describe and speculate within the process as powerful. This dimension would be useful when coming to terms with the variety of IE LC cohort experiences. Getting cohorts together is "likely to (get them to) commit to changing their behavior when the perceived benefits of development are favorable and outweigh the perceived costs" (London, 2003, p. 280). This type of "flexibility of approach (including method and platform) in dealing with individuals is fundamental to partnership" (Mittler et al., 1986, p. 15), even allowing cohorts to not instantly nor consistently be involved (1986); but simply taking whatever intrinsic value that exists in unsatisfying input is a way of ubuntugologically appreciating what input is offered, catalyzing a cohort's own epistemic assumptions that allow them to understand and accept the uncertainty important in intellectual development (Brookfield, 2000).

Phase 3 entails cohorts working on generating provocative propositions, trying to get a vision for inclusivity (Kozik et al., 2009), in other words: how the group accomplishes tasks, and what is necessary for successful group-wide inclusivity (2009): "In order to make contact, cohorts should make one comment to all wiki introductory postings." "Such methods need to be discussed and agreed, so that, at the very least, each is familiar with the approach taken by the other" (Mittler et al., 1986, p. 3). Cooperrider (1990, as cited in Troxel, 2002) who created AI in 1987 says this type of affirmative competence is the key to the self-organizing system, and creates an "environment that promotes learning goals - for instance, one in which it is "safe" to question and explore - creates greater self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-development" (London, 2003, p. 285), echoing Brookfield (2000) and foretelling Jarvis (2010). Indeed, as Mittler et al. (1986) say, "growth and learning can only be understood in relation to the various environments" (p. 2).

Finally, the process moves into the fourth and final phase. The designated project leader asks participants to develop plans to carry out the propositions that have been presented (Kozik et al., 2009). In Troxel's (2002) experience cohorts concluded saying the two offices had morphed into "one body and one mind" (p. 13). What do these phases have to do with ubuntu?

Ubuntu puts the appreciative in appreciative inquiry, as it addresses a humanistic stance regarding the worth of individuals that make up a group (Olson et al., 1997). A person with ubuntu may be best summed up as:

> open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed (Tutu, 1999).

Ubuntu seems to encompass what an active cohort should be, and what he should feel towards his fellow cohorts; it is a Hippocratic oath for players who operate within a group. The spirit of ubuntu can been seen as an engine that would drive AI by aiding cohorts to form positive futures, suggested by Raymond and Hall (2008, cited in Cleary, 2010b).

Accurate assumptions took into account the need for the LC itself, as there is no official or formal support system in place. Indeed some of the cohorts cannot name their own boss, recalling a study of the dynamics of academic identity formation and the nature of academic work in the field of higher education, by Jawitz (2009) who says there was an "absence of a research LC in the department" and that "there was no sign of a research LC within the department" (p.247). The assumption to simply work together was an easy decision. That two heads being better than one in exploring the contradictions and discrepancies of a given issue is regarded as an opportunity for personal development rather than a depressing and confusing reality of going it alone (Brookfield, 2000). Connectivism like this strengthens knowledge generation and maintains cohort relationships in a network, which is more important than what is actually known (Siemens, 2005, cited in Cleary, 2010c). That the connectivism is with mostly known, respected colleagues "primes (motivation and) resultant concrete behavior of helping" (Dijksterhuis and Aarts, 2010, p. 473).

Moreover, an endeavor like this is central to how professionals build identity, values and knowledge; where academic identity thrives (Jawitz, 2009). The composite definition of LC in Kilpatrick et al. (2003) defines the cohort context as a group made up of people sharing common purposes and interests which learns from its experiences and those of others in order to promote a culturally aware and vibrant environment while respecting a variety of perspectives through common goals of learning opportunities to enhance the potential of all members that may create new knowledge. This answers the question of recourse for instructors who may often be floundering and overwhelmed, or otherwise lacking confidence in how to approach a given issue (Mittler, 1986). As Dijksterhuis and Aarts (2010) say, "goals are mental representation of behaviors or behavioral outcomes that are associated with positive affect" (p. 468).

Assumptions about the nature of the cohorts were accurate. The assumption to chose a wiki to facilitate ease of collaboration and negate geographic concerns likewise was realistic. Wikis are practical for the sharing of ideas, experiences, and tools towards the creation and maintenance of that wiki as a reference tool (Brookfield, 2000), collaborative platform, and knowledge product. With learning centered on content, its nature and complexity, and practical skills development (Coll & Eames, 2008) the wiki is an engine whereby learning to learn is most fully realized in LC adult cohorts (Brookfield, 2000; Reynard, 2008). Moreover, a Vygotskyian tool like a wiki is a socially-situated and mediated learning (Clark et al., 2008) platform and cultural artifact producing engine with the promise of uncovering chances for expression (Mann, 2005). It is a state of situated cognition (as in Wikipedia) mirroring Coll and Eames (2008) who see an emphasis on active or problem-based learning as a feature of higher education learning communities. In addition, this type of collaboration helps develop a sense of audience outside of the immediate community (Kasper, 2002; Dornyei, 1998), priming attitude and motivation. All of these forward the potential to realize enculturation within the LC.

Still another assumption had to do with the future direction of the LC and the wiki. Appreciative Inquiry attests that future possibilities remain open. In fact, the most successful organizational changes take place through AI when plans are left open, when action plans are informal, and individuals volunteer (Bushe & Kassam, 2005) contributions to any change. The commitments in the final “deliver” stage of the AI do not result in a typical “plan of action” or “strategic plan” (Kozik et al., 2009, p. 89). Instead, they gain their power and potential for enactment from the process itself, from the witness of the group, and from each individual’s motivation to act (2009). Neither the LC nor the wiki was meant to be a formal, finished product.

Assumptions about operating within the confines of the curriculum including those of Billet (2010) who says organizations (universities) will attempt to organize and direct processes, thwarting instructor (cohort) flexibility; and attempt to regulate learning in ways inconsistent with needs, were found to be true to life. IE LC examples include denying use of the Moodle platform for at least one cohort and software other than Microsoft for all cohorts.

The final assumption was also inaccurate. Though the recognized benefits of the LC included that of learning as part of a lifelong process with important connections between adult education and workplace learning, and the ability to organize those formal systems of operation as part of the struggle of professional adult life, what was not recognized was whether the cohorts would be willing or not to be cognizant of their own styles of learning and adjust them to fit the learning environment, with the ability to take advantage of its disequilibration (Brookfield, 2000). As Dijksterhuis and Aarts (2010) put it, “concrete action (that) can potentially operate as a goal if one is motivated or encouraged by the external environment to attain it” (p. 470). This leads the study to more failed assumptions.

Of the failed assumptions, one was that of collaboration skills, which have been named numerous times as essential for quality inclusive practices to be accomplished (Kozik et al., 2009). The question of whether or not the LC cohorts actually have collaborative skills has not been asked. Is there evidence of their collaborative ability, or are they ‘cowboys’, with cowboys defined as individualist, self-promoting, self-interested, and male? In other words, the kind of “restlessness and resistance symbolic of distrust” (Ghazali, 2010).

Another misconception was that it was not deemed necessary to, as Kozik et al. (2009) suggest, canvass cohorts as to how characteristics should be prioritized to realize collaborative relationships. Instead it was a case of a Field of Dreams build-it-and-they-will-come-and-collaborate, self-talk sloganeering that precluded pre-invite opinion canvassing.

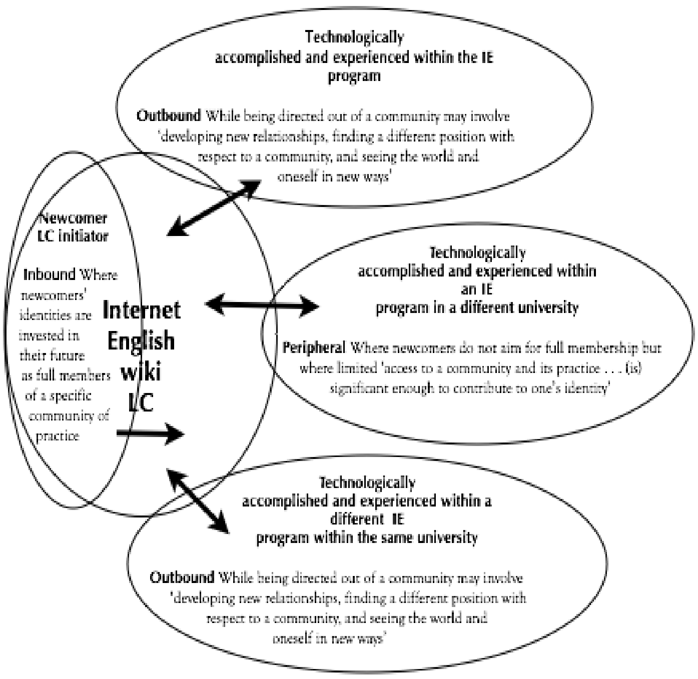
There were a number of dimensions of which we were unaware. One may be the depth of belief, trust, and conviction among cohorts. Another was that identity is renegotiated depending on the nature of participation, and is shaped by the way players continually exercise their agency in the LC (Jawitz, 2009). Kolb (1984, as cited in Troxel, 2002) states that appreciation is affirmation in action. From an affirmative embrace flows a deeper, richer experience. In other words this is a question about enculturation; which can be answered by an ubuntugologic approach leading to participation (Clark et al., 2008). This is important because identity within the LC is continually reshaped by its activity.

Failing to canvas cohorts may have come from ignorance of the benefits of personal narrative appraisals from which cohorts can infer original, real feedback (De Lautour, 2009). The other cohort in the De Lautour study recalls it as the first instance of profound, revealing and illuminating feedback, adding that peers can recognize the strengths of another’s practice (2009). This opens the ‘courage to change’ dimension in Kozik et al. (2009), and findings on ambiguity in De Lautour’s study where she cites the strength of embracing paradox so that cohorts can learn at deeper levels (2009).

A tool that was not utilised was a group checklist. Narratives can be transferred into practice by using a checklist. Kozik et al. (2009) claims narratives produce professionally mature candidates for the program, and the process for the first time puts all cohorts on an equal footing in the discussion (Ryan et al., 1999). This would go a long way to realizing a safe peer environment (Brookfield, 2000) where cohorts can speak easily on a topic of mutual importance (Jarvis, 2010).

Also not assumed was that enculturation may progress at its own pace, as cohorts advance in their learning (Clark et al., 2008). This notion gives credence to ideas of Fox et al. (2007) about waiting out sporadic and ephemeral contact. As it stands, at the time of writing, the IE LC is only seven months old since its inception.

Schematic of cohort ID trajectories



For all of his poetic waxing Troxel (2002) states “it is not possible to make a clear, linear connection between the AI research and what happened afterwards” (p. 14).

Indeed there appears to be a missing or hard-to-pin-down element in the recipe; an element that is part and parcel of the social component in all of LC involvement, AI and ubuntu. That component appears to be the quality and nature of communication itself.

In the IE LC communication has been limited, and threaded conversations rare. It was determined after all that cohorts would use the wiki for heutagogical learning; learning molded by their needs, interests and self-efficacy (Billett, 2010; Paiget in Kilpatrick et al., 2003; Clark et al., 2008). However LC collaboration is a community affair, with communication at its crux. Mann (2005) states that collaborative problems are a ‘failure of communication’ rather than a ‘failure of community’.

To what extent could cohorts be coerced into divulging their inner voice on the topic of the IE program, collaborating about it and their feelings with others on the topic? The inability to convince the IE LC into writing to the IE wiki is ironic, though the benefits of committing cohort ideas on the topic appear obvious. Documenting ideas stabilizes them as they develop in conversation (Anderson, 2004, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008). Textualizing ideas makes them public and permanent depictions of the real state of the organization, at once stabilizing it and allowing change to occur (Johansson & Heide, 2008).

In the twelve skill survey in Kozik et al. (2009) the participants expressed the importance of listening/communication, collaboration, and flexibility/adaptability. As listening and communication must happen before the others, the issue of communication appears to be both the missing but also the indecisive link.

The role of communication

In Johansson and Heide's (2008) exhaustive critical literature research where they examined 100 articles from 1995 to 2007, looking at communication approaches to organizational change, the authors conclude that despite the vast academic and popular change literature, communication approaches to change are still underdeveloped and lament the paucity of communication scholars. The Johansson and Heide study found numerous writers have focused attention on the important function of communication in the change processes (Daly et al., 2003; Elving, 2005; Ford & Ford, 1995; Kotter, 1990; Lewis & Seibold, 1998, all cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008). Beside that, scholars often state the importance of developing the area of communication and change (Jones et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2001, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008), saying it is the "very medium within which change occurs" (p. 296), the kind of change needed for inclusion and cohort involvement being understanding, or accurate assumptions, leading to communication and negotiated involvement by stakeholders.

It is apparent that misunderstandings and breakdowns in negotiation, not to mention organizational entropy will occur without communication. AI proposes stage models of organizational change which are still popular (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Such models involve not taking proper explicit steps of courting, aligning, connecting, embedding, and refocussing (Fox et al., 2007) through dialog (Johansson & Heide, 2008) - in other words, an ubuntugologic approach whereby the promoting of equality and fairness respecting diversity and the whole over the individual (Tutu, 1999) is championed - all parties might accommodate to unexpected assumptions about the task, what their role would be, and how to act (Mann, 2005).

A typology of growth activity (taken from Kubiak & Bertram, 2004, p. 13)

Co-leader activity	*Description*
Focusing	
Courting	Approaching potential network partner schools; developing proposals for new network activity.
Aligning	Winning buy-in from heads through individual or group negotiation. Developing norms and protocols for institutional collaboration. Preparing network plans.
Connecting	Establishing structured opportunities and shared foci for teachers to work on together.
Embedding	Establishing network groups—networked becomes established way of addressing some issues. Drawing in successive cohorts into activities.
Re-focusing	Addressing issues and problems with a network response. Re-energizing any stale networks. Need for new partners identified. Some groups may be dissolved.

Courting begins with understanding. With the Field of Dreams wishfulness stated earlier, attention to this vital area has gone begging. The initial mistake with the IE LC was belief that simply keeping cohorts informed would draw them to the table (Johansson & Heide, 2008), reducing communication to a declarative tool; an explanation of the plans and how change would occur (2008). By contrast in the study of their planning, implementation and management of an ICT intranet into the school community, O'Brien and Wisbey (2008) carefully consulted with key stakeholders. Goodman and Truss (2004, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008) established that the communication process and content are vital to the outcome. It is a "critical tool to inform, create understanding and change people's attitudes and behavior" (Johansson & Heide, 2008, p. 293). Not allowing the IE LC stakeholders to have an initial say in the change process precluded feelings of involvement and control of resulting outcomes, increasing resistance to willingly changing (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Without that understanding and a stake in the control of the direction of the mission comes a less than clear vision of its future (Cooperrider, 1990, as cited in Troxel, 2002). Having a say, Elving (2005, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008), declares, reduces a cohort's uncertainty about their future in the group and creates a readiness for negotiation and effective change, making them willing collaborators not saboteurs (Sillince, 1999, cited in Johansson and Heide, 2008).

The balance of the AI stages are concerned with negotiation; that of roles, the mission and its future would be the next step. Social change is negotiated and performed through discourse, patterns of power, and norms of behavior where stakeholders negotiate for their meaning (Mumby, 2004, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008). In this way, the intersection of discourse, identities, and feelings are underlined (Garrety et al., 2003, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008). A coherent narrative helps cohorts make sense of change that is credible for all, and impacts the group-wide sense-making activity in general, according to Beech and Johnson (2005, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008).

Critical literature suggests negotiated reframing of LC issues as they arise instead of changing them. By heading off resistance as something to be controlled, it should be considered as a new way to express communication (Ford et al., 2002, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008).

That said, people have unspoken self-conversations with themselves, where they may worry about time investment into the group, for example. There may also be the question of personal underlying assumptions and expectations where technologically accomplished and experienced cohorts might not feel the impetus to move into a LC. These are cases where people may say one thing but do another as each successive point of negotiation come and goes, rendering the communication role indecisive. The Johansson and Heide research also exposed that kind of ambivalence. Compounding the complexity of the communication-organization matrix is the insight that there are expressive patterns, as well as the unseen assumptions, understandings and values, that allow these actions to happen (Johansson & Heide, 2008).

Discussion

The Johansson and Heide study found communication and organizational change through communication to be a tangled matrix (Lewis, 1999, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008). Concerns for muddied outcomes in the IE LC are thus not imagined. There have already been signs of involvement being revoked. How might the indecisiveness of communication impact the AI-based LC formation?

Gazing at the area of communication through the AI lens, in the Discovery phase itself (1), gathering cohorts appears to be doubtful, as cohorts live far apart, have a heavy workload, and may be unimpressed by the boon of group formation as opposed to cowboy independence. Part of group discovery is talking about its goals. Dijksterhuis and Aarts (2010) say “goals cannot always be enacted directly in the same situation, we often have to take temporal and spatial aspects into account” (p.474). These would be aspects of identity, mission, pecking order, and dubious assumptions. A newcomer to the IE LC would discover an unlimited possibility to expand, whereas cohorts already seasoned in the field of education technology, and IE might be less enthusiastic (London, 2003). These all speak to the slippery slope of implementing self-verification in an invitation-based LC of disparate players from various boundary types and trajectories.

In the next phase, the Dream phase (2), Ryan et al., (1999) recommend cohort propositions be classified to make analysis manageable. Propositions identify areas of group strength that may be refined and expanded, as well as weaknesses that may call for reconsideration. However, Ryan et al. suggest caution in accounting for the differences in responses by the various stakeholders, so as not to confuse what is real with notions of some ideal. As Coupland et al. (2005, cited in

Johansson & Heide, 2008) suggest, cowboys may talk about thinking one thing and do or say another, at once cooperating and resisting ideas of shared goals. Adding to this, “people who are high in public self-consciousness also tend to be high in evaluation apprehension” (London, 2003, p. 278), which begs the question of an individual of great intelligence and skill being compromised by public self-consciousness. London adds more gunpowder by reckoning that having information about group members to develop one's own self-evaluation may cause positive outcomes of group involvement, but personality measures of self-awareness may constitute an intrusion to some cohorts, as it may "reveal irreconcilable differences of opinion or defensive behaviors" (p. 288) of cowboys circling the wagons.

What is more, in Troxel (2002) there are claims of disbelief that opinions of outsiders using different methods could be of value. Another downside might also arise, “the notion that self-verification can lead to learning more about oneself may be counterintuitive because it would seem that individuals are not learning anything new when feedback verifies their self-concept” (London, 2003, p. 275). Adding to the vagary, “Griffith University (Brisbane) researchers, they worked with a small cohort of students - all men” where “students reported that the process of giving feedback was beneficial, and students found receiving feedback a negative experience” (Jobst, 2010). On the other hand, “self-monitors want to impress others and fit in” (p. 275). “Conversely, those who are low in these characteristics are likely to disclose information about themselves and seek self-verification” (London, 2003, p. 279), creating an uneven playing field in this phase. A sure-fire way to gauge if this phase is a failure, is the group “diffusing responsibility reducing individual motivation, which, in turn, decreases group cohesiveness and effectiveness” (p. 286).

Moving to the Dream phase (3), Kozik et al. (2009) claim the process for the first time puts all cohorts on an equal footing in the discussion, and produces professionally mature candidates for the program. The initial reaction of IE LC may have sprung from confusing members’ long, cordial collegial relationships with that of the ‘strong relationships’ between members as a basis (Mann, 2005) for the group, needed to squelch alienation. Clegg (2008, as cited in Jawitz, 2009) argues that “identity is a ‘multiple and shifting term [which] exists alongside other aspects of how people understand their personhood and ways of being in the world” (p. 242). Newcomers, like myself who formulated the IE LC, have a dilemma. “On the one hand they need to engage in existing practice which has developed over time: to understand it, to participate in it, and to become full members of the community in which it exists. On the other hand they have a stake in its development as they begin to establish their identity in its future” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, as cited in Jawitz, 2009). This is not to mention London’s declaration that this “self-verification motivation is defined as group members wanting others to see them as they see themselves, regardless of how positive or negative their self-image" (2003, p. 273) might be too much to entice cowboys out from behind their corrals.

The Design phase (4) speaks of an equal sharing of leadership responsibilities (Ryan et al., 1999). However Fryer (2008) states that in terms of an individually defined hierarchy within the group, egoism and sense of entitlement may lead to difference marking, closing of ranks, and dismissal of ideas and methods deemed too different from personal practice, such as insistence on using differing platforms or collaborative methods (Walker and Creanor, 2005), limiting the quality of intercourse. The likelihood goes begging that to attenuate the problem of ego and assumptions of hierarchy, and how they may resonate with matters of technological ability and dearly held technological and collaborative methods, leadership should be allowed to emerge from acknowledged experience and expertise of well seasoned cohorts (Reil and Polin, 2004); those of high status, through "the amount of respect, influence, and prominence a given member enjoys in the eyes of others" (London, 2003, p.282). The sharing of leadership responsibilities remains a concern for the IE LC. On the one hand, for a seasoned experienced individual who began the IE program, overtures to join a wiki on the topic from someone just joining the program may be mistaken as a shift in power relations. Indeed the person playing the role of seasoned experienced originator of the IE program exhibited evidence of anomie (Mann, 2005). In all four phases there is a constant need for cohorts to refocus and calibrate their roles, accept new roles, deal with unsatisfying outcomes, muddied assumptions, the group's undertakings, and others' practice methods as they settle and resettle into the realities of the LC. This begs the question, to what degree of efficacy is it possible to induce cowboys to partake in the AI process; a process not typically male-oriented, nor a cowboy trait?

The study of how communication impacts organizational change has not yet reached high noon and needs further development, and still lacks a cumulative sense (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Deetz (2000, cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008) sums up the ambivalence wondering if "the whole picture" or "the truth" ever will be captured (p. 299).

In conclusion, that the task will take time is the only thing which is clear when weighing the pros and cons of the validity of the LC, the ability of the cohorts to join and collaborate, the realistic deployment and effectualness of the AI framework, not to mention the vagaries of communication and how it impacts organizational evolution in a small group of cowboys. It was wondered, as in Troxel (2002), if cohorts refrained from freely collaborating for fear it would cut into their own work or free time. That creating, communicating, and collaborating in a LC are not outcomes rapidly arrived at is the conclusion Langer and Thorup (cited in Johansson & Heide, 2008) arrived at when they scoffed at the idea of a quick fix (p. 295). The job is not a one-shot deal. "Surface-level diversity has less negative effect on group cohesion the longer the group is together" (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998, as cited in London, 2003, p. 281). As Mittler et al. say, "the knowledge that progress often comes in spurts after a consolidation period, can bring comfort" (p. 14). What is more every organization needs constant reaffirmation (Cooperrider, 1990, as cited in Troxel, 2002). Then caring for the LC is like caring for a prized bull or show horse, minding it with dedication and care. At seven months old the IE LC is still in its infancy.

Concerning the future, Johansson and Heide (2008) even go so far as to say that notions of change and communication influence the whole research process; from formulating research question to material collection, and results interpretation. Johansson and Heide suggest to wait for more research. The IE LC cannot wait for that research. Future work should entail using questions in the Johansson and Heide study, and perhaps the ones in London, and examples in the first hand account of O'Brien and Wisbey as a model, to help gauge cohort interest, readiness and willingness to become involved. Depending on those results a careful application of AI may be in order.

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Shizugatake

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Here I am again with my regular article on where to get out and about so you can get rid of all the tension and frustrations that can sometimes adversely affect your teaching. Nothing like a spot of bracing, winter sunshine to clear away all the mess. However it can be difficult to find a place to go hiking that is not covered in snow. So this time I have a lovely little hill for you. Despite being only a smidgen over 400 meters there is a stunning 360 degree view from the top. There may be a bit of snow down, but nothing you can't do in a half-decent pair of walking boots. The day we went it was snowy, but the trees kept it shallow on the way up, and there were some lovely deep drifts on the top to play in.

The hill is called Shizugatake (賤ヶ岳) and is located on the northern edge of Lake Biwa (琵琶湖). The route we took is 3.8kms return. You can do it in two or three hours, so it is a nice day-trip from the Nagoya area or the Osaka area.

By car:
From Nagoya take the Meishin (名神) expressway west towards Maibara (米原), Osaka and Kyoto. At Maibara take the Hokuriku (北陸) expressway heading towards Fukui (福井).

From Osaka direction take the Meishin expressway towards Nagoya and at Maibara go onto the Hokuriku expressway towards Fukui.

Exit the Hokuriku at Kinomoto (木之本). It's the second junction. Take Route 365 north. As you exit the expressway you go straight on. Go along 365 for about 4kms following the railway tracks. Turn left onto Route 33. Cross the railway tracks and in about ½ km is a left turn onto Route 532. This road snakes round Lake Yogo (余湖) which is small but much more beautiful than Biwa. You'll drive past a visitors' center and then some public toilets, and just at the southern end of the lake is Yogo Villa (余湖荘). You can park in the area in front of here and to the right of the villa you will see a wooden sign for the start of the walk for Shizugatake.

By train:
This will mean a longer walk! Check the map at the end or go to the link below for a clearer version http://www.okubiwako.jp/mountain/shizugatake.htm

From Nagoya, take the shinkansen to Maibara. It is the second stop and takes about 25 minutes. Change to the Hokuriku line. It is 8 stops and also takes 25 minutes. It costs about ¥4,000 each way.

From Osaka it is the same drill. Take the shinkansen to Maibara and change to the Hokuriku line. It takes the same time, but strangely costs ¥5,000 each way!


The Villa


The Junction

From the villa you head up a gentle slope through pine trees. When we were there at the end of December there was evidence of Inoshishi (wild boar) rooting around in the snow. There are signs saying that bears have been seen - you'll be lucky! The path meanders up the hill, not hard work. After one kilometre you will come to a junction. Head left up a slightly steeper section and the trees become sparser. There is more sunshine and a chilly breeze. You are walking along a ridge now towards the top. After the initial steep bit, it eases off to an easy stroll.

At the top there is a shrine and a viewing platform and a free binocular viewer. Lots of people have left ema (絵馬), wooden plates, most of them asking for exam success. The views are magnificent. You can see Biwa and all the plains around it to the south. You can see Lake Yogo to the north. Really worth the walk.


Biwa plains from the summit


Lake Yogo from the summit

The map shows the route we took, as well as some longer routes. We started at the black tozanguchi (登山口), turned left at the junction and finished at point 3, Shizugatake Summit (賤ヶ岳山頂). We returned by the same route because all the other routes were snowed over.

If you fancy a longer walk, when there is no snow, then go from Mt. Oiwa tozanguchi (大岩登山口). It is 4.4kms to the summit, so about 9kms round trip

And add another 4kms (2kms each way) if you walk to and from Yogo station (余湖駅). You could always turn around at Oiwa summit (大岩山頂) and you would still have bagged a hill!

Happy hiking.

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Guidelines

Articles - sharing your research with other teacher educators. Up to 3000 words.

Essays - your opinion or ideas about a topic relevant to teacher educators based in Japan. Up to 2500 words.

Stimulating Professional Development series - teacher educators are often quite professionally isolated. Write up about your teacher education activities, and the institutions that you work in. See previous issues for examples. Up to 3500 words.

Conference Proceedings - did you give a great presentation recently? Write up your presentation. Up to 2500 words.

Conference Reviews or Conference Reports - did you attend an interesting conference? Share your thoughts with the TED SIG members. Up to 2500 words.

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Font: Arial 11 point, single spaced, one line between paragraphs, SINGLE space between sentences.

Notes: Please include a catchy title, your name and professional affiliation, an e-mail address to go at the top of the article, and a 75-100 word bio-data for the end.

Deadlines: ongoing. Submit by e-mail to Simon Lees <simich(at)gol.com>. Attach as a Word document, titled with your surname, such as ‘croker.doc’ or ‘robins.doc’.

Also, please cut and paste your article into the body of the e-mail, in case the Word document does not open.

<u>Please do not hesitate to contact the Editor if you have any questions or ideas.</u>

What is the Teacher Education and Development SIG?

A network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping each other teach more effectively, the TED SIG has been active since 1993. Our members teach at universities, high schools, and language centres both in Japan and other countries. The TED SIG focuses on five areas: action research, teacher reflection, peer-based development, teacher motivation, and teacher training and supervision.
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