

# Explorations in Teacher Education

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## From the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education*, the publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Teacher Education and Development (TED) SIG.

This issue is the Proceedings of the 2013 EFL Teacher Journeys Conference, sponsored by the JALT Teacher Education & Development SIG.

The first two papers come from the featured speakers at the 2013 conference. **Deryn Verity** first explores the move between teacher and mentor, and the shifts that we go through as we are move between our various roles.

**Andy Boon** then discusses the importance of reflection in our teaching practices in an article that was first published in *The Language Teacher* and republished here with permission.

Conference papers are also provided from six of the presenters at the 2013 conference. These explore a variety of practices that can help us reflect upon and improve our teaching and mentoring.

The first is from **Yuri Jody Yujobo**, who recounts a study abroad service learning program for Japanese company executives. The value

of this program is clear from the reactions of the participants, including the executives, the teachers, and the groups they worked with overseas.

Following this, **Craig Manning** talks about how we are all teaching with an entourage that deserves our attention.

**Ágnes Anna Patkó** discusses her own development as an educator and teacher trainer and the state of language teaching in Hungary using data from a small scale research project.

**Anamaria Sakanoue** traces her own journey toward becoming a professional educator through the various stages of her teaching career.

**Tricia Okada** then gives voice to narratives from Filipino teachers of English working in Japan and highlights their concerns.

Finally, **Sachie Haga** brings concepts from business that could benefit any educator considering how to improve their teaching or their program.

Tamara Swenson, Editor,  
*Explorations in Teacher Education*

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## TED SIG Information

The Teacher Education and Development SIG is a network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively. Active since 1993, our members teach at primary and

secondary schools, universities, language schools, and in various other contexts.

For further information, contact  
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# **Secret Agents of Change: Or, Life is a Cabaret**

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(An edited version of the talk delivered at the EFL Teacher Journeys Conference,  
June, 2013, Tokyo, Japan)

This talk grew out of a few different points of inspiration. One was a conversation I had with some students recently. We were talking about the formatting and presentation of a class assignment: I was critical of the slapdash preparation of the document, and one student argued that it was the content that mattered. Inside my head, I unexpectedly heard my first TESL role model and professor, Richard Yorkey, speaking: “Sure, I guess you can prepare sloppy work,” I heard him say, “but it’s like getting dressed in the morning. Don’t you always want to look your best?” Wow. That was a surprise. I hadn’t heard Dick’s voice in years; specifically 23 years, since he died in November of 1990. Who knew that I still had a mental tape recording of that distinctive, elegant voice? If anyone here knew Dick Yorkey, you certainly remember that he was a natty dresser, right down to the wildly colorful neckties he always wore: “The only thing that a man can go crazy on,” he used to say.

A second inspiration is my abiding interest in Vygotskian, or sociocultural, theory and how it continues to help me understand and explain growth and change in the classroom and in professional life. For today’s talk, I found myself going over such key Vygotskian concepts as inner speech, intersubjectivity, appropriation and

internalization, the principle of recursive access, and the nature of expertise (Verity, 2005).

And the third is perhaps the most obvious jumping-off point is this: recently, my own professional journey took a sharp lateral turn that has resulted in my re-examining certain aspects of my own principles and practice. Who, what and where am I now and what contributed to my getting here?

So, in a nutshell, and I choose the term advisedly, I would like to talk to you today about the people inside my head. I call them the Secret Agents of Change. Why secret? After all, the people who mentored us are definitely not secret. When we bother to, we certainly express our gratitude and appreciation directly and consciously. Most of us are proud to be associated with our mentors; we don’t want to keep them secret, from ourselves or from others. So why did I decide to call this talk “secret agents of change” instead of just “Mentors: Agents of Change”?

Those of you who know me won’t be surprised to learn that my answer comes from Vygotsky, specifically, the Vygotskian notion of inner speech. As many of you know, a basic principle of Vygotskian theory is that the origins of individual cognition are social: this means that what we think inside our personal minds

came originally from our social interactions with other people. But thought is very different from interactive speech: one of the main differences is that thought is almost entirely form-free. It is, however, incredibly dense with meaning. Compared to audible, or social, speech, the language of thought is asyntactic—nearly without syntax, or structure. For example, when we see a snake, we don't tell ourselves: "Oh, that animal that I see lying on the path in front of me appears to be a member of the class of poisonous serpents." No, our brain screams, in one unbreakable chunk of meaning: SNAKE!DANGER!FLEE! And even that three-word version is relatively atomistic compared to actual thought.

This dense, unanalyzed, structure-free version of language allows us to function automatically most of the time, in most familiar circumstances. Life would be way too arduous if we had to express everything explicitly, both to ourselves or to others. Think how you talk to your spouse or your sibling or your close friend: much of what you "say" is not really said at all: your frequent interactions over the years have resulted in a mutual understanding—an intersubjectivity—that allows you to communicate with an "other" almost as asyntactically—as fluently, as automatically, as implicitly—as you communicate with yourself.

### **On Becoming a Mentor**

So how does it happen, this move from outside (fully external, alien) to inside (fully internal, completely appropriated)? Vygotskian theory posits that the individual mind is a result of numberless social interactions which become internalized, appropriated and re-constructed. In brief, we all have lots of people living inside our heads (Verity, 2006).

So far, the connection to mentoring is probably fairly clear: a mentor starts out as an

external, separate, "other", an external source of knowledge and wisdom whose words we hear, accept, and seek to appropriate (though of course not all mentors are consciously chosen or even sought). As we engage with the mentor, and the words of the mentor, and the knowledge and expertise of the mentor, we transform them—what started as entirely separate become our words, and our thoughts. Finally we can no longer disentangle what is ours and what was theirs. The mentor is now secret in the sense that we have hidden them, for all intents and purposes, inside our own mind. What we have taken from them is fully appropriated into ourselves.

One way of looking at this process is to use the commonly-accepted metaphor for the appropriated voice: we become ventriloquists. Ventriloquation is not limited to Vygotskian theory, of course. It was also central to the work of the Soviet literary philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin, whose ideas are often discussed in association with Vygotsky's. While putting this talk together, I came across a very interesting article in the *International Journal of Dialogic Science* about Bakhtin's ideas and mentoring. In fact, I found this quotation, which pretty much sums up the main point of my talk so far: "Bakhtin's theory of language helps us recognize that the voices of our philosophical mentors and others who have influenced our teaching are ever-present and inform instructional choices....." (Stewart & McClure, 2013, p. 92).

For both of these scholars, the central idea is similar: what appears to be unified and solo is in fact varied and interdependent. Vygotsky, the educational psychologist, focused on conceptual development. Bakhtin, the literary critic and philosopher, took a slightly more artistic perspective and proposed a musical metaphor: what seems to be a unitary mind is actually a polyphony of voices: from many, we become one.

Vygotskian theory helps us pin down the cognitive aspects of appropriating other people's ideas, taking and then making our own the wisdom of our mentors. Bakhtin's approach, on the other hand, reveals something more unexpected about the mentoring process: it creates a deeply emotional relationship. Like a parent, the mentor is both adored and rejected. Like a child, the mentee, in order to complete the transformation, must break free. The process of appropriation is constructive but at the same time, paradoxically, it destroys. The voices of change are potentially transgressive and revolutionary: we are the product not only of polyphony, but, importantly, also of cacophony: the discord of opposing and hedonistic energies that work against the structured legacy of the past, that seek to dismantle the stable authority of the mentor, and aim to create a new potential for the future. Bakhtin summed up this claim in his concept of "carnival."

### ***Listening to your own mentors***

As part of my preparation for this talk, I spent a couple of hours on the phone with an old friend of mine, a librarian who has created one of the largest mentoring networks for young librarians in the New York City area. It was really interesting to hear what she said when I first told her about my talk: "It's really hard, because they always insist on doing it their own way. No matter what you tell them." I thought that it was humbling of her to admit this inescapable point first: despite many successes as a mentor, she still hasn't quite gotten her head around the fact that the people she is mentoring have their own agendas.

Mentoring is a balance between wielding authority and having none to wield: As Bakhtin explains, participants in carnival adopt many roles, referencing both real life and its stable hierarchies, and a projected, fantasy, life in which

those hierarchies are overturned: "Today you may be the expert, but you know what? Tomorrow it's my turn."

Acknowledging and taking on these new roles, whether in costume or just in conversation, means shaking up the authoritative version of language and values, and making room for a new set of meanings. Where Vygotsky privileges the agency of the learner who seeks paths towards development, Bakhtin privileges the disruptive energy of novicehood itself.

To engage with the polyphony within is to risk the reversal of stability and closure and to open oneself to constant possibility. Though exhausting, this engagement allows for renewal and change. So this is where my new job comes in. I now work in a position where what I am is a mentor. What I do is mentor.

When I was preparing the talk I knew that I wanted to reference Bakhtin's carnival, and I knew at the same time that talking about carnival in central Pennsylvania doesn't really fit: Amish Pennsylvania doesn't really "do carnival" so I looked around for another, perhaps familiar, image to represent this sense of 'anything goes': what came to mind is the notion of "cabaret" which is at least familiar to people who may not attend Carnival and its yearly excesses. Most people (well, maybe not the Amish, again) know the words to the song: What good is sitting alone in your room, come to the cabaret....Life is a cabaret, old chum, come to the cabaret.

### ***Professionals are never alone***

I guess my first point today is that as TESL professionals, as experts, we are never alone, even when we are sitting in our room. We always have company: the mentors who words, voices, and ideas live on inside our heads. As my "flash memory" of Dick Yorkey's voice illustrates, as I mentioned at the beginning of this talk, those people we carry around inside our heads are still

there, available for reference and retrieval. Like most everyone here, I am lucky to have had great mentors in my life. It's thanks to them, as much as to my own efforts, that I have become in many ways an expert, and perhaps excellent, classroom teacher. As a language teacher and teacher educator, I've had plenty of time, and plenty of opportunity, to provide what I hope has been primarily a positive influence in the cognitive, affective, and professional development of many—most?—of my students. I love teaching, and I appreciate what a good teacher can do for a learner.

So where did all this expertise get me? Well, it's really interesting. I moved sideways. Not really up. Not really down. But into a new set of hierarchies and a new constellation of roles. I think I was hired for my expertise. But I'm actually being asked to do things which are not part of that expertise, at least not directly. In my new position, I supervise a writing program for

international undergraduate students, teach in the residential MATESL program, and coordinate the online TESOL Certificate program, serve on doctoral committees and support graduate teaching assistants. That's about it, I think. In embodying and concretizing these duties, I've had to confront, interrogate, and to some extent, restructure my expertise in ways that have been somewhat unexpected. I do "teach at Penn State." But I am no longer primarily a classroom teacher. I have become, somewhat surprisingly, a full-time mentor.

The diagram (Figure 1) illustrates some of the easily-identifiable relationships I participate in every day now: I supervise our funded graduate teaching assistants who teach and tutor in a program for international first-year students (plus a couple of classes for international graduate students who want extra help with writing). I also teach in, and help supervise the practicum teaching program, for our MATESL program.

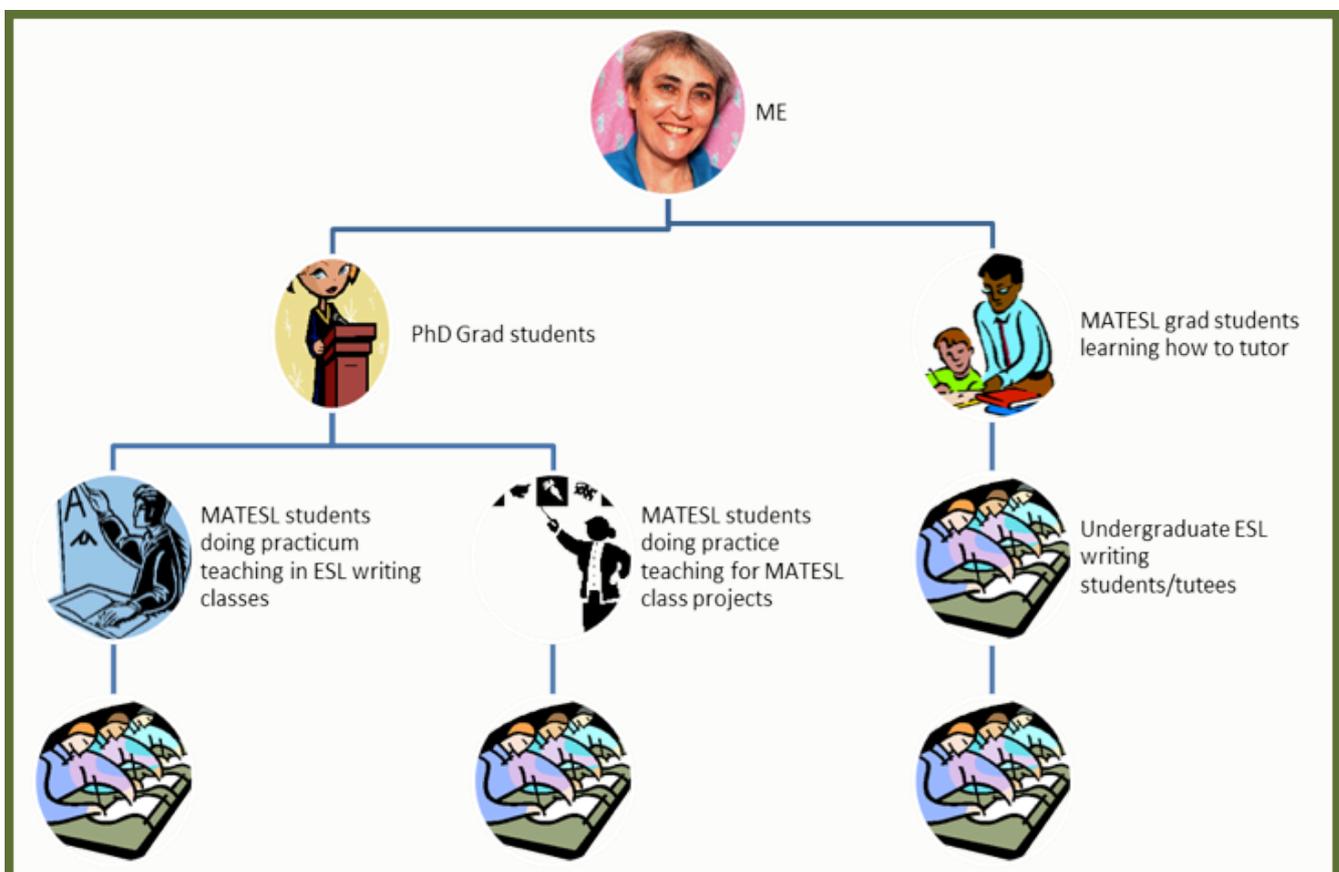


Figure 1. Some of the easily-identifiable relationships I participate in every day.

Within these teaching and tutoring opportunities, we encourage peer tutoring, peer editing, and peer-to-peer mentoring, as well as informal apprenticeships, observations, and assigned microteaching.

None of it is exactly new to me. But in a way, it's all new. Unlike the first three decades of my career, it's no longer about me. Each time I've faced a new challenge in this job, I've found that I do know something that helps me find an answer, a solution, an approach. But the knowledge that I have is not structured to fit the new situation, so I need to bring it out, piece by piece. Examine it. Re-label and re-purpose it.

Expertise is great. But expertise is, like all activity, deeply situated and contingent. Give me a classroom and I'm able to find strategic tools, affordances, to solve almost any problem. Give me a program, and I'm a novice again. Kind of. To fall back on yet another metaphor, I'm learning how to participate in the delicate alchemy, the polyphony, as Bakhtin would have it, that involves helping novice teachers turn the lead of their incomplete knowledge into useful lumps of gold.

### ***Those who can, teach; Those who can teach, mentor.***

So my second point is a reversal of that old, and insulting, cliché: those who can, do; those who can't, teach. Of course I don't buy into the cliché at all. Rather, I embrace a slightly different version: Those who can, teach; and those who can teach, mentor:

- A young writing instructor comes to me about a student who appears to have plagiarized: our plagiarism-checking software suggests that the paper is 96% original, but my instinct, and hers, suggests that the student totally copied. We plan a strategy that would both catch the cheater and stop the cheating. Everybody's face is saved, nobody has to fail,

and everybody learns something new and important. Especially me.

- Another TA comes to me to ask about what to do with a group of girls who chat and giggle throughout all her lessons. I visit the class. I ask the students for their input. I listen to one of the students, who insists on meeting with me separately to tell me about the "terrible" things that this instructor does: calls on her by name! Asks her to be quiet! By the time we all finish working that one out, the most disruptive student is writing thank-you emails to the instructor for her "great teaching."
- I listen to the job hunting travails of one of my best young instructors: to me, this extra personal attention just part of what I do. I've been in the field for a long time and she hasn't. To her, it's a huge gift—none of the other faculty members quite see it as their role to be a sounding board about an instructional career. "Should I go to China to take a job I don't really want, or try my luck in Virginia, where I have only a short-term contract?" To me, thirty years in, the choice is clear: don't take a job you don't really want in a place where you don't really want to live. To her, this is a nugget of wisdom. I'm happy to give it away: it was a hard-earned lesson at one point in my life.

Maybe that's my third point today: these nuggets of knowledge, pearls of wisdom, chunks of advice—they seem so concrete and so practical, so easy to pass on with a kindly smile and an encouraging word. But in fact it is no less difficult to figure out what to pass on than it was to learn it in the first place. Expertise that is formed through the energy of contemplation, trial and error, risk-taking and judgment, in other words, through life experience, is like the formless thought that I described earlier in the talk, dense and meaning-rich and hard to tease apart, to taxonomize, to give structure to. I have

become an expert not because of how MUCH I know but HOW I know: a mixture of lived experience, theoretical information, practical application of the wisdom I received . . . it is not an accumulation of gold bars, this expertise: it is a condensation and a conversion of life into lessons.

Being a mentor is not the same as being an administrator. There is a minimal amount of paper I am expected to push. No, being a mentor is being a role model and a questioner of roles; a sustainer of a legacy and an interrogator of traditions. Even more than being a teacher, being a mentor is something like being a parent: my job requires me to love and to let go. Twenty years ago, in my doctoral dissertation, I compared the classroom instructor to a director in rehearsal of a play: ultimate success lies in becoming invisible, redundant, absorbed into the performance to the extent that one disappears from the stage. As a mentor, my role is more complex; I remain, somewhere, a secret catalyst, an agent for change. But at the same time I must agree to become a bit player in another person's story. The cabaret of their life will, in fact, MUST fictionalize me to some extent. At best, I become a silent partner; at worst, a half-told story.

By chance, about two weeks before delivering this talk in Tokyo, I found myself unexpectedly at a live cabaret performance. The singer was doing a one-man show about music from the years referenced by the musical *Cabaret* (Ebb, 1966): he wove together songs, historical facts, family myths, and personal stories into a seamless and original construction that was both fact—he brought in historical figures from Gershwin to Freud—and art—he sang songs from Hollywood, the Weimar Republic and 1950s America. His show was both a tribute to, and a re-appropriation of, many of the people who mostly closely influenced his life and this work, a roll call of activists, composers, performers, and

ancestors. Watching him perform, and thinking ahead to the talk I was preparing to give here today, I realized that my chosen metaphor—the collection of voices as a cabaret of expertise—was more apt than I knew: being expert is how we get to spend our lives in rooms with lots of other people, even though some of them can't really see or hear us directly. We have become integral to the stories that other people will tell one day.

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# **The reflective teacher: Towards self-actualization**

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Imagine that we teachers were able to be the students in our classes for just one day. What would we see? What would we think? How would we feel? Imagine all that we could learn from this unique perspective. Although everyday classroom experiences can provide us with the potential to understand and learn more about our individual pedagogic practice, in the hectic activity of teaching we often have little time to consider the reasons for and implications of the many “instinctive and automatic” (Peck, 1993, p. 83) decisions we make in our classes. Moreover, there is often too much unfolding at one time to process, respond to, and remember all aspects of a particular lesson. Since much of what happens may remain hidden or unknown to the teacher (Richards & Lockhart, 1994), we need to make opportunities to revisit our teaching experiences in order to increase our awareness of what it is we actually do, to understand it, challenge it, modify it, and develop from it. As Edge (2002) states:

Everyone has experience. Not everyone learns very much from it. I want to take on the responsibility of doing so (p.15).

This responsibility is “a process of continual, intellectual, experiential, attitudinal growth for teachers” (Lange, 1990, p. 250). It is an ongoing

commitment to try to discover more about our classes, to identify problems or puzzles and experiment with possible methods to solve them. It is accepting the need to keep consciously exploring and learning from our experiences; to keep questioning our intuitions, ideas, and beliefs; to keep expanding our teaching repertoire and to keep increasing our ability to respond to the many diverse needs of our students. Through critical reflection both ‘in’ the act of teaching (our spontaneous responses towards critical incidents in the classroom) and ‘on’ the act of teaching (our sustained thoughts and reflections post-lesson regarding our actions and their consequences) (Schon, 1983), we may “evolve in the use, adaption, and application of our art and craft” (Lange, 1990, p. 250) and empower ourselves towards self-actualization; the realization of our full potential as teachers.

## **The ritualistic teacher: Towards over-routinization**

As we try out new ideas or activities in the classroom either when thinking on our feet or planned, we tend to pay them great attention in terms of their success or failure, their contribution to achieving the lesson outcomes, and their

reception by the students. Once used a couple of times, the particular ideas or activities may become habitual, routine, a recurrent part of our pedagogic bag of tricks. As classroom actions and behavior are repeated over a period of time, we may begin to accept without question or regard our existing beliefs and classroom procedures. The danger here is that if this continues, our teaching may become ritualistic, mechanical, and overroutinized. As Prabhu (1990) states our sense of what may be plausible at any given moment in a lesson may become “frozen, ossified, or inaccessibly submerged, leaving only a schedule of routines” (p. 174). Thus, it is through continual critical reflection on what we do by which we remain open, active, and alive to the possibilities each lesson provides for the growth of our students and for ourselves as teachers.

## Strategies for reflecting

### 1. Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring refers to “a systematic approach to the observation, evaluation, and management of one’s own teaching behavior” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 34) in order to achieve a greater understanding about it. Here, teachers develop their own methods of recording their classes so that information can be accessed later for self-review. Such strategies as using pre-designed checklists, keeping diaries, and video-recording lessons allow teachers stimulus towards recall when reflecting on classroom events. However, in a typical busy working day, it is often difficult to find the time either during or after teaching to document, examine, and explore the many critical classroom incidents or habitual actions that have occurred in each lesson. Thus, we need a quick and immediate means of self-evaluating our performance after each class to help jog our memories of what has happened and to facilitate reflection at a more convenient period of the day. Thus, I often assign lessons a football score (soccer for the American readers!) as a method of

self-monitoring. The ‘match’ has two teams; the teacher and students working together towards achieving the lesson objectives on one side (Teacher and Students United – T.S. Utd) versus things not working as expected on the other side (Unforeseen chaos / Collapse – Un F.C.). Let me explain how this may work. A lesson begins well, the students are on task, and actively engaged in using the L2 (The score is T.S. Utd. 1 Un F.C. 0). In the middle of the lesson, one activity is too difficult for the students. This results in several students code-switching to the L1, whilst others simply do not complete the assigned task and begin to play with their cellular phones (The score is now T.S. Utd. 1 Un F.C. 1). The teacher makes an immediate decision to modify the activity, to provide more scaffolding, and to introduce a game element. The students respond positively to this and the lesson is back on track (The final score is T.S. Utd. 2 Un. F.C. 1). Football scores can be used to evaluate many aspects such as student motivational behavior, comprehensibility of teacher instructions, student reactions to material and activities and so on. Scores can be quickly written down after each lesson and then reviewed and reflected on during the commute back home at the end of a working day.

### 2. Exploring our teaching within dialogic meditational spaces

Johnson (2009) outlines several frameworks for reflective practice that place value on teachers’ narrative accounts of their pedagogic experiences and:

create the potential for sustained dialogic mediation among teachers as they engage in goal-directed activity...and struggle through issues that are directly relevant to their classroom lives (p.95).

One such framework is Edge’s (2002) Cooperative Development (CD) in which two teachers agree to work together for a set period of time to discuss their teaching. The

meditational space is “deliberate and carefully regulated” (Johnson, 2009, p. 105) to maximize the opportunity for one teacher (The Speaker) to talk about and explore a topic of his or her choice whilst being supported by a supportive, non-judgmental listener (The Understander). Through a process of articulating about classroom experiences and explaining them in a way that can be understood by the Understander, the Speaker can externalize and give coherency to his or her previously internal random and chaotic thoughts. As talk continues, the Speaker may heighten recognition and awareness of specific classroom events, discover new perspectives on his or her teaching, and begin to make a plan of action regarding ways to deal with a particular teaching puzzle or critical incident in subsequent classes.

During CD, the Understander withholds any advice, suggestions, opinions, evaluations, or personal anecdotes to make space for the Speaker’s ideas to grow. Being freed from the need to contribute a response from his or her own frame of reference, the Understander is able to focus wholly on listening to and understanding the Speaker and communicating back what he or she has understood. Hearing one’s words repeated back by the Understander as a carefully constructed summary of his or her ongoing thoughts, ideas, and emotions, the Speaker feels encouraged to move forward, to keep exploring, and the potential for new realizations is thereby enhanced. (For further reading on studies conducted in the field of CD and its online version; IMCD, please refer to Boon, 2011).

## Conclusion

Reflection is at the core of teaching. By reflecting in the act of teaching, we make continual, spontaneous decisions on how best to proceed at any given moment within a lesson. However, to learn and grow from our experiences,

to remain fresh and innovative, we need to reflect carefully on what it is we do each day. Whatever strategies we may choose to engage in reflective practice, our goal is to seek pedagogic solutions, evolutions, and revolutions as we strive towards the dizzy heights of self-actualization.

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# Customizing L2 into a Service-Learning Study Abroad Program Japanese Executives at an American Soup Kitchen

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*“Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, learning naturally results” – John Dewey*

“Fifteen volunteers serve meals to the homeless at a soup kitchen.” It is effortless when one is asked to make a mental picture of this caption because Americans are known for their outstanding volunteer spirit. According to the Corporation of National Community Service (2011), 64.3 million Americans volunteered 7.9 billion hours in formal organizations in 2011. Now try to make a mental picture of this caption. “Fifteen Japanese corporate executives come to the United States to volunteer at the soup kitchen, inner-city high school gardening project, shelter for abused women, senior retirement home, and after-school program for at-risk children”. It is much harder to envision this. But inspired by Dewey’s quote and service-learning education, as an EFL teacher and former human resource development (HRD) trainer at Fuji Xerox Learning Institute, I was able to make this unconventional picture into a reality.

This paper will explain two separate but related journeys. The first is my personal journey of growing up in the United States during the height of the busing system for desegregation. It is here that I was first introduced to the spirit of volunteerism and led to the development of the second journey of taking fifteen Fuji Xerox executives to Philadelphia. It is here that ESL and service-learning were united into a customized program through a carefully set up three-step model that I will refer to as The Sandwich Model which includes briefing, volunteering, and reflecting.

MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels (1998) mentioned situations of variables influencing willingness to communicate (WTC), for example, social situation, intergroup attitudes, and self-confidence. As MacIntyre et al. (1998) stated, the ultimate goal of the learning process should be to engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication

opportunities. These three steps of The Sandwich Model produced positive attitude, confidence, broadening perspectives, and motivation. They are all necessary for WTC, L2 competence, and intercultural awareness. Through the reflection process, the entire experience was pulled together to create further dialogue on ways of transferring

their reflections by enhancing their capacity to solve the world problems that leaders face today.

## Introduction

One of the programs provided by the Fuji Xerox HRD training department was the highly selective executive management forum for executive cohorts ranging from legal, finance, R&D, and domestic sales departments. The fifteen selected members met for yearlong weekend forums to foster ongoing dialogue on the three pillars of leadership: What makes a good individual? What makes a good society? What makes a good corporation? Thereby, the dialogue challenged to deepen their knowledge, broaden their perspectives and enhance their capacity to solve the problems that leaders face. A study abroad component was included in order to add a global perspective to the dialogue.

During the development process of the study abroad program, we realized that this program needed to focus more than linguistic competence and offer more value than the numerous summer English open-enrollment programs. Also, several missed opportunities for L2 development of the executives affected motivation and self-confidence, which were necessary for WTC and L2 communicative competence in both business and social situations.

The English proficiency level of each executive varied from false beginner to low advanced, and all of them could manage in English on work related situations. First, one of the missed opportunities for L2 development was their overreliance on media and competencies other than their own, such as interpreters, Teleprompters, well-rehearsed presentations, professional translators, and bilingual subordinates. Second, although it is inevitable, the executives had limited interaction with the American non-business community and various communities with differing social-economic

status because of their shared background of growing up in an extremely homogeneous country of 99% Japanese with a literacy rate of 99%, and living in a country with 100 million people belonging to the middle class. Finally, several executives had previously attended workshops in the United States and had falsely assumed sufficient exposure to American culture, but in fact, each trip was limited to shuttling between the airport, meeting with business associates, and the hotel; and did not affiliate with members of the American community.

The study abroad concept needed to cover all of these missed opportunities through some kind of immersion into the American community. I recalled my childhood in the United States to find a more specific answer with regards to immersion.

## My Journey

Now make a mental picture of this caption. “A bus full of children commutes for 40 minutes to their assigned public elementary school in the inner-city ghettos due to the city’s hope of balancing out racial inequalities”. Perhaps for people in Japan, this caption would sound unfathomable and absurd. But, this is my personal journey.

## ***The busing system for desegregation***

My neighborhood of south Denver fell under U.S. District Court mandate for Busing for Racial Balancing of 1970 in the Denver Public School district. The Busing System, as it was generally referred to, had grown monumentally across the United States. Students were bused across the district in attempting to balance the school demographics for each public school, but the busing policy choices had been made and expanded without regard to the impact on the central enterprise of schools, which is

student learning (Zars,1998) . My assigned elementary school was in northwest Denver's Hispanic community and had strikingly different demographic and socioeconomic populations. Many of the students from the school community spoke Spanish as their first language. Also, it was hard to ignore the growing crime and poverty rate that was already above the national average. At the age of seven, this sudden immersion into a new community was an eye-opening and unforgettable experience.

Desegregation within the Denver Public Schools system began in 1970 and continued until it was lifted in 1995 and labeled as an overall failure to desegregate. Zar (1988) claimed that researchers found that busing could be considered exploitation of children's time, and that students with large average times on buses report lower grades, poorer levels of fitness, fewer social activities, and poor study habits. Also, Watrus (2006) described that the participants agreed that the era for litigated desegregation was over because busing had failed to raise academic achievement of the children and court ordered racial balance caused white families to move to the suburbs (ie: white flight). While this picture of racial desegregation fueled efforts to enhance the education of the youth, it disguised the cause of the suburban sprawl that was endangering the region.

### **Cultural awareness derived from the busing system**

Contrary to the controversy of the prolonged Busing System and white flight, however, I saw it as a positive and an enlightening experience. Although I saw the struggles of L2 English learners as they tried to integrate with the mainstream students, I also saw ways that helped to alleviate those tensions. Wells (1981) stated that the momentum for bilingual education derived from the 1973 Supreme Court decision in

Keyes v. Denver School District which addressed the language needs of desegregated Hispanic students. The Court stated that a meaningful desegregation plan must not only physically integrate Hispanic students, but must also help them to be proficient in English.

My school poured all of its resources into its strong English as a Second Language (ESL) program. At the same time, the school provided Spanish language classes and Hispanic cultural experiences to mainstream L1 students to bridge the intercultural communication barrier. This followed closely with what MacIntyre et al. (1998) points out on the fear of assimilation of integrativeness as one of the variables of influencing WTC. "A minority group member risks assimilation into a majority group when the individual has acquired the language and feel that their linguistic and cultural heritage was vulnerable and may resist learning English. However, when a majority group member learns to use the language of a minority group, there is far less risk to native cultural identity and, therefore, less resistance". This dual learning approach by both the majority and minority group helped to take away fears of assimilation and therefore, motivating them to learn English.

My school encouraged dual intercultural awareness through second language programs and it worked as the L1 and L2 students became closer. L2 students were motivated to integrate into the mainstream classes. I believe this was the first time I had dreamed of becoming an English teacher.

### **Volunteer programs for the L2 community**

Since the 1980s, eight million immigrants arrived in the U.S. and poured two million students into the nation's schools. These newcomers changed American schools from biracial to multiracial, multicultural, and

*Yujobo, Service-learning study abroad*

multilingual institutions (Ascher, 1993). As a child I was also introduced to several other ethnic cultures inside America's melting pot, but with that wave, also came the understanding of socioeconomic disparities, and the visible struggles of the immigrant community.

The school, churches, and the local community organized many opportunities for youth involvement. I volunteered to help on the food, clothing, food stamps, and holiday gift drives. Through community service, one can acquire a sense that they can make a difference and a concern for society's welfare and volunteer work can be a key building block of self-development; change their values and became more mature and caring people (Youniss, 1995). The active volunteer experience led me to believe that volunteerism and ESL were connected. I found ways of linking both of these and spent several years as a literacy volunteer in ESL classes at various California public schools. Putting together my experience of cultural awareness and volunteerism, this led me to the development of the underlying concept: ESL based service-learning program to raise cultural consciousness. This is their journey.

### **The Executives' Journey**

I researched several U.S. universities and locations to customize this program. I came across the expertise of the English Language Program at the University of Pennsylvania. Also, Harris Wofford, the former U.S. Senator and head of Corporation for National Service said, "Service-learning is big. It's growing, and it's taking root, and Philadelphia has led the way, becoming a model of service learning, which helped create a new generation of active-duty citizens" (Moore, 1999). In fact, the Philadelphia School District became the first in the nation to make service-learning a part of its academic requirements for promotion and graduation.

### **The Sandwich Model: briefing-actual task-reflection**

With the expertise of the ELP staff, the curriculum was set up in a three step process to help the executives reflect and pull together all of the volunteer programs and L2 challenges that they may face. I refer to the three step process of Briefing-Volunteering- Reflecting as 'The Sandwich Model'. The briefing stage was represented by the first stage or the 'bottom layer of the bread', the volunteer activity was represented by middle stage or the 'meat of the sandwich', and the reflecting stage was represented by the third stage or the 'top layer of the bread'. Like building a sandwich, there were no shortcuts and all three steps were needed to make the perfect combination.

Stage 1: The Briefing Stage (The bottom layer of bread)

First, the bottom bread of the sandwich was the classroom briefing stage that took place prior to the volunteer task. This stage was similar to the preparatory stage in service-learning curriculums. As Sheffield (2003) mentioned in service-learning education, reflection before service may seem a contradiction, but we commonly reflect on and use prior knowledge and experience. In preparing for service work, students recollect, propose, hypothesize, predict and make judgments. In the same manner, the briefing took place allowing brainstorming, activating schemata in relation to the home country and prior knowledge of the volunteer organization, and growing anticipation to the actual volunteer work that followed.

Authentic and current reading materials on the volunteer organization were chosen such as pamphlets, mission statements, and relevant websites. The language was then dissected into manageable chunks to learn new and review vocabulary and build on lexical competence. According to Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, Thurrell (1995), sociocultural competence were cultural

factors of the knowledge of the target community and therefore, data on demographics, cultural history, and socioeconomic situations were analyzed and briefed according to each volunteer organization. The briefing stage increased anticipation toward meeting the target community by identifying and affiliating with those members. According to MacIntyre et al, (1998) positive attitudes toward the L2 group had been widely implicated in L2 learning motivation and achievement. The willingness to communicate model (1998) postulated that willingness to speak was determined not only by learners themselves but also by the situation they were in.

Stage 2: The Volunteering Stage (The meat of the sandwich)

Five different volunteer activities were offered. These organizations were carefully selected in order to a sample of different targeted age groups of the community: elementary school aged children, high school students, single mothers, senior citizens, and the homeless population of various age ranges.

1. The Soup Kitchen. The soup kitchen served free nutritious meals every night to the homeless and low income families of the Greater Philadelphia area. The soup kitchens were funded or managed by NPO organizations, universities, charities, churches and donations. There were many similar soup kitchens mainly in inner-cities across the nation.

Volunteer activity: The actual experience included food preparation, washing dishes, lunchroom set-up, and serving food. The executives talked to the volunteer staff and wanted to learn more information due to the anticipation from the briefing. After the round of serving, two executives sat down next at the tables to meet the homeless acquaintances and initiated interaction. Other executives played with the children after dinner. All of the executives engaged in natural conversation

in their L2 without inhibition. According to MacIntyre et al, (1998) personality patterns had been shown to facilitate language learning and intergroup communication. For example, the intuitive-feeling types showed high levels of L2 learning achievement, presumably because they were adept at forming interpersonal bonds and inferring meaning from conversation. It was interesting to see the executives take their first volunteer activity with such inhibition and self-confidence.

2. Simon Gratz High School Urban Gardening Project. This inner-city high school was listed as persistently dangerous based on the number of dangerous incidents in which weapons possession or violence results to an arrest. Snyder and Purcell (2011) found recent statistics recorded at this school with 32 assaults on students, 13 on teachers, and 5 on school police regardless of the metal detector at school. Despite the high school's violent track record, the school was active in service-learning education, a requirement for graduation, and to teach strategy in real-world problem-solving of community needs. The high school students set up urban gardening programs to plant flowers and clean up the neighboring open spaces.

Volunteer Activity: After an initial tour of the school and grounds, the executives helped with planting flowers, de-weeding in urban gardens, and sliced wood chips used for landscaping. This physically demanding volunteer work struck an emotional chord with some of the executives who had sons or daughters of the same age. The violent learning environment and the number of school police to sort out disorderly conduct was a daily struggle and affected student's focus on learning. The executives had a chance to ask questions and talk to some of the student volunteers. The executives were truly impressed with their maturity and sense of self. Despite the violent environment of

the school, these high school students had a remarkable outlook on life and their positive ambitions to better their community.

3. Shelter for Abused Women and Children. This shelter provided emergency service for abused women and children. They provide the basics: shelter, food, clothing, medical care, mental health; as well as, Education: job training, nutrition, child care, skills to help lead the residents to self-sufficiency.

**Volunteer Activity:** The Japanese executives prepared lunch in the kitchen, stocked food, and folded origami with children in the parent-child program within the shelter. They talked with the volunteer staff and asked many questions. They had a chance to talk to volunteers and found out that many volunteers were former residents of the shelter themselves and decided to return to help others in similar situations. The shelter received funding from public, private, and individual donations.

4. Senior Retirement Community. This was a luxurious senior citizen community for affluent seniors. This center had a volunteer program in which the seniors, the hospital, and the community came together. The seniors tutored students in schoolwork, children and volunteers provided activities and computer classes. Also, the seniors made large donations to several agencies and organizations: The Cancer Society, United Way, Opera House Tours, Alzheimer's Association, and hospitals.

**Volunteer Activity:** The Japanese executives sang songs, wrote names in kanji, and talked with the seniors. Unlike the other volunteer programs, this center was for the affluent citizens of Philadelphia. It emphasized that the upper class citizens also volunteered and made large donations to organizations. In exchange, services for other areas are promoted. This two-way volunteer program added to further insight on American volunteerism.

5. After-school Program for At-Risk Children. This afterschool care was for elementary

school-aged children that were at risk of dropping out of school, at risk of running into a gang or drug related problems, or at risk of family abuse. Fifteen organizations and several public school teachers volunteered at this afterschool and summer program. Field trips were often integrated into the program to help children see other parts of the city to encourage them to stay in school and to remain focused on moving up and out by hard work and education.

**Volunteer Activity:** The elementary school children were very excited with their fifteen new friends from Japan. They were all eager to communicate with them. The executives accompanied them on a field trip to the Japanese Tea house and gardens at Fairmont Park. The situation created WTC and desire to communicate under situated antecedents as research in social psychology reveals that affiliation often occurs when persons who are physical nearby” (MacIntyre et al,1998). These children were very friendly and often held hands and hugged the executives. The executives explained the Japanese culture of the tea house and had a chance to bond with the children by showing them the gardens.

**Stage 3: Reflecting (The top layer of bread)**

The reflecting stage was the most essential part of the three stages. Dewey (1933) explained that there were two kinds of experiential processes which led to learning: trial and error; and the reflective activity. Dewey believed that it was this kind of activity that enabled effective problem-solving to take place and that it improved the effectiveness of learning. This reflective activity for the executives was essential because of their responsibilities to transfer their knowledge into practice and because “only through understanding reflection completely and correctly could students and teacher decide how the academic skills were to be applied to the community problem (Sheffield, 2003)”.

After the half or full day experience at each volunteer location, the executives returned to the classroom for this reflection stage facilitated by the ELP staff. I participated as an interpreter because, for this program only, executives could opt to use their L1 in order not to interrupt the flow of thought, disturb the reflection, or the internalization process. The reflecting session allowed the executives to open dialogue and pull together all of their individual experiences and individual thoughts into a collective discussion.

## Conclusion

This paper explained the customization of L2 into a service-learning study abroad program for Japanese executives. This program was ideal for the executives, but it would be just as valuable and transferable to high school and university students, and other business men and women.

Volunteer work in itself does not create intercultural understanding in fact, it could cause the language learners to feel extreme anxiety and a fear of assimilation. The program must be set up in a service-learning education approach with three distinct stages: briefing, volunteering, and reflecting.

Now try to make a mental picture of this: “Several hundred Japanese high school students, college students, teachers, and company employees follow suit by volunteering at the American soup kitchen!!” - Perhaps, this is your journey.

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# Teaching with an Entourage

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## **Abstract**

Attempting to provide support for students alone may not be the most effective approach. A ‘teaching entourage’ has the potential to make studying more enjoyable and effective in the classroom, as well as enabling a variety of beneficial learning opportunities beyond. This short paper aims to identify a ‘teaching entourage’ and suggest steps for developing a stronger one. Examples are given to show how the contagious enthusiasm of a few students can be harnessed to have a significant impact on the surprising number of students.

The EFL Teacher Journeys conference is special as it encourages holistic and long-term reflection, as opposed to focusing on shorter studies conducted in very specific contexts. Every teacher is continuously developing and refining his or her unique style. Recently, a colleague joked that mine has evolved to include an entourage. What I took to be normal, he saw as distinctive.

Yet, without my so-called entourage, I probably wouldn’t have been able to do much beyond my basic teaching duties. It wouldn’t have been possible to establish an official tutoring program within the university’s curriculum. We wouldn’t have triple the achievement gains of our remedial English program and turn it into a sought after learning opportunity. Without an entourage, it wouldn’t be possible to raise the average GPA by providing freshmen with one hour of personalized academic support for

any subject. Without it, we wouldn’t be doing outreach programs to help Jr. High school students study for final exams or visiting other universities to help start new tutoring programs. To go into detail on all of these programs is beyond the scope of this paper. However, without an entourage, I wouldn’t love my job nearly as much.

With that in mind, this short paper provides readers with a framework for reflecting on their own teaching practices, specifically on the extent to which they work with students. In this paper, I aim to define what a ‘teaching entourage’ is, outline how to develop one, and share some of the potential benefits of such practices.

## **Defining a ‘Teaching Entourage’**

The Oxford dictionary defines an entourage as “a group of people attending or surrounding an important person” (2013). In a classroom, the teacher is important. However, the teacher’s

primary concern is often to attend the learning needs of the students. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, a ‘teaching entourage’ will be defined as those working with the teacher to attend the learning needs of the students. If the teacher is the sole provider of support, there is no teaching entourage. If the teacher encourages cooperative learning, provides training on how to be an effective supporter, and the students actively help each other, there is a strong teaching entourage.

Of course, there are many varieties and degrees of support to consider, as well as the extent to which students are cooperating with the teacher. However, from the teacher’s perspective, it may be sufficient for general reflective purposes to use the cline in Figure 1 to gauge the approximate strength of a teaching entourage.

### **Let students know you want them to succeed**

Letting students know you care about them and want them to succeed is the foundation for creating a strong teaching entourage. Brophy (2004) points out, “Motivation to learn tends to be high when students perceive their teachers as involved with them (liking them, sympathetic and responsive to their needs)”(p.28). For example, telling a student, who is at risk of failing, that it would break my heart to fail him and that I would like to help him pass is often enough to make us a team with a common purpose, instead of opposing forces.

It isn’t difficult to extend this practice to start building a more caring and supportive community. When a student is absent, asking one of her friends to call and see if she is okay is an easy thing to do. It also serves as a wake-up

Teaching mostly  
alone (weak)



Figure 1: Gauging the strength of a teaching entourage.

call. When the student shows up, asking another student to help her catch up on what she missed further adds to the feeling that she is cared for and supported. These small acts can have a surprisingly strong impact.

### **Create a Shared Vision**

Creating a common goal or shared vision is the next step to creating a strong teaching entourage. Sinek (2009) found that inspirational speeches consistently focus on why something is important, as opposed to what to do or how to do it. In the classroom, it is too easy to simply instruct students to open to the desired page and talk them through the instructions. This is not an inspiring practice. Before starting an activity, it is important to talk about why you are asking students to do something. Giving students a choice between activities or co-constructing goals may also make the experience more meaningful than merely dictating goals.

It may also be worth taking a bigger step back. Why do you teach? Is it a reason others would be enthusiastic to support? For me, I think learning is usually fun, but I’ve noticed that’s not always true for studying. Formal education can take the joy out of learning. As a teacher, I want to put it back. By inspiring and empowering students, I hope to make studying more enjoyable and effective. I’ve found that communicating my overall aim with students, teachers, and administrators before discussing a new idea has often lead to more enthusiastic responses.

### **Notice Opportunities for Students to Contribute**

It is not difficult to find opportunities for students to actively support each other. Think of

Teaching  
with students  
(strong)

all the things you do and then ask yourself if you are the only person who can do them. Even small things like turning on the heater or passing out papers can make students feel useful, especially when they receive praise for their efforts and sense genuine appreciation.

Noticing opportunities for students to help may lead to deviations from more traditional classroom procedures. For example, I try to be the last person to answer questions in class or avoid answering if possible. When a student asks me a question, I redirect the question to their partner and give him or her a chance to answer. Students quickly learn to ask their partners, then other groups, and if multiple groups don't know, then I'll explain to the student who originally asked and let him or her be the expert to teach others. Alternatively, I might challenge the class to figure it out before the next lesson for a few bonus points. This practice streamlines questions that only I can answer, develops autonomous learning skills, and creates opportunities to reinforce what students already know.

Finding new roles and responsibilities may have the added benefit of keeping the class more engaging over long periods of time. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests that people are happiest working on tasks while in a state between anxiety and boredom, which he calls flow. As a person's skills increase the level of challenge or difficulty must also increase to maintain a state of flow. For students who grasp the material, giving them the chance to explain it may increase the level of challenge.

### ***Train Students to be Effective Helpers***

As students become more skilled, challenging them to help each other understand more effectively is one appropriate way to keep them in the flow state. When I ask my students whom they understand best, they usually reach a consensus

when someone says, "myself". So, rather than explaining something, it is more effective to ask questions that encourage other people to explain things to themselves. There are many ways to do this. For example, to help people feel comfortable attempting to explain something they don't understand completely, it is important to avoid negative criticism and to praise effort (Kamins & Dweck, 1999). It is important to practice active listening techniques (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). It is also important to ask clarifying questions to pinpoint exactly what is difficult to understand and ask them what they think it means. Asking where or how to find the answer is a good way to avoid forming dependency issues when they really don't know. This list of techniques is only a small part of a 15-week tutor-training course students reported to be useful. The techniques are all very simple, yet extremely effective.

Not only will challenging students to become more effective helpers keep them engaged, but it will also prepare them for the future. Whether they become doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, store managers, or parents, they will be responsible for helping others understand new information and procedures (Goodlad, 1998). Again, if students understand why learning to help others is an important skill, they will likely be enthusiastic to learn and to practice. In addition, they may really enjoy it. It feels good to help others. It feels good to have a sense of purpose. It feels good to be appreciated.

### ***Transcend to a Learning Entourage***

Students are capable of teaching with you. They are also capable learning with you. Let them help push the boundaries of knowledge, develop programs, manage programs, research, or enhance lessons. For example, after several semesters of tutoring remedial English, a small number of students had truly mastered the simple and powerful tutoring techniques. It was beginning

to get a little boring for them. We still shared a passion to make studying more enjoyable and effective, but they needed a new challenge.

When asked about the next challenge, the students wanted to extend the tutoring program to offer support for other subjects. I briefly introduced how to do action research, another transferable skill for their future professions. They set up pilot studies to determine the best way to extend the tutoring program to support other subjects. They found one hour a week was comfortable for language studies, but too much for other subjects. They recommended studying multiple subjects in one session. The following semester, we supported groups of incoming freshman using their recommendation. It worked. The freshmen with tutors had slightly higher grades on average and very positive comments about the study sessions.

Many of the freshmen that received help wanted to become tutors the following year. Rather than limit the program to what I could manage on top of my regular teaching duties, the older students took over most of the responsibility for managing and continued development of the new program. The program quadrupled in size to support about half the freshman class, about 120 students. The feedback is still extremely positive and we are learning and improving faster than ever due to the large quantity of feedback. We hope to support all the new freshmen next year. The older students have designed original tutor-training materials and even trained new student managers. They continue to look for ways to improve and to expand, including outreach programs for anyone interested!

## Conclusion

Teaching with an entourage is about working with others to meet the learning needs of your students. Showing students you want them to succeed provides a supportive emotional

foundation. Taking time to discuss why an activity is important will generate enthusiasm, create shared vision, and enable teamwork. These two steps are meant to inspire students. Once they are eager to make an effort, maintain a state of flow by finding appropriate challenges to keep them engaged as their skills increase. Continue to challenge and empower students by training them to help each other and themselves. These are things that can be done within a classroom. Setting up a more formal peer-support system is one way to extend it beyond the classroom. Finally, welcoming students to search for better ways of doing things with you can be a wonderful experience for both you and your students. Teaching with an entourage is fun and learning with an entourage is even better!

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# What made me the teacher I am?

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## **Abstract**

In this paper I introduce the audience to various factors that affected my career and made me the teacher I am. I will first present the various features of Hungarian teacher training and teaching profession to make it understood what a Hungarian EFL teacher's identity comprises of, and then outline the impact that this identity has had on my career as a teacher inside and outside of Hungary. The second half of this paper introduces my teaching experiences in Japan. I am currently an EFL teacher at Meisei University in Tokyo. As the Japanese are not used to meeting foreigners who speak English but whose native language is not English, my position as a teacher can involve criticism (or even prejudice), as non-native teachers have not been widely acknowledged yet in Japan. Yet, my identity as a non-native teacher of English allows me to provide a strong role model for my students, and gives me valuable insight into their learning difficulties, needs and identities.

## **English teachers in Hungary**

I come from Hungary, Europe. I graduated from Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), which was founded in 1635 and has been a leading institution of higher education and research in Hungary since then. It trains a great number of teachers on a high level (Department of International Education and Mobility Rector's Office, 2013): teachers graduating from ELTE have a strong background of theory as well as practice in their study fields which is reflected in their teacher identities.

However, English teachers do not form a homogenous group. Depending on when they

received their education, they show considerable differences. At the moment there are three generations of English teachers in service in Hungary. The first group attended higher education before the end of the Communist regime in 1989. At that time, Russian language was compulsory at school, and only a few students could study English in the major cities. Basically, Grammar-Translation Method was applied in the lessons with the barest minimum of communicative tasks.

The second group, to which I belong, entered teacher training between 1990 and 2005, that is, before the pan-European implementation of the

Bologna Process. There were great changes in the education system during that period. Russian language was not mandatory any more, and at the same time, there was a sudden demand for English teachers. Therefore, many Russian language teachers were re-trained to become English teachers. In general, their language proficiency was quite low and they were lacking cultural knowledge also.

As the Russian oppression seized, borders opened to the public and it became easier for students to study abroad and for educators to keep their knowledge up-to-date. The proficiency level of English teachers rose rapidly and soon re-trained Russian teachers were only to be found in junior high schools but not in levels above. In relation to the methods, there was a move away from grammar translation to the communicative methods. From this generation on, the latest findings of research and modern teaching methods have been accessible to students.

The third group of English teachers studied under the new, Bologna-Process education system. It caused the transformation of the whole higher education system introducing 3 years of undergraduate and 2 years of graduate studies at universities instead of the traditional 5 years.

These groups of teachers have different educational backgrounds, experiences and living conditions; consequently, their identities and attitudes to teaching methods are also dissimilar. What all of them experience now is that the teaching profession is publicly disrespected and the government reduces the budget spent on education annually; therefore, the standards of education are decreasing rapidly. Even though the gross wages are raised annually, resulting from the taxation changes the net income of teachers' has remained unchanged since 2008 (Közalkalmazotti Bértábla 2013 calculated on the basis of the Central Budget Act 2013 (Hun)). As the world has become money and profit oriented,

people with low salaries are considered inferior to the rich. This implies that teachers are not respected by many. Consequently, most young teachers leave the profession – or the country – and the elder ones long for an early retirement (Solymos, 2012.).

## Teachers' Voice Survey

To support the above statements about the state of teachers in Hungary, I conducted a mini survey. In four days between the 3rd and 6th of June I had 50 respondents (see Appendix). They are teachers of all levels of education. The average age of respondents was 34.4 years. There were 15 male and 35 female respondents. The results are summarised as follows:

- The teaching profession and teachers are not appreciated: 96%
- Attitude to teaching and teachers in the past few years has become worse: 84% (has not changed: 16%)
- there is uncertainty, depression, fear of losing their jobs, unpredictable future, and they are overburdened
- Their social and financial state is unsatisfactory/ poor: 56% (not bad but could be better: 44%)
- Plan to leave the profession mostly because of financial reasons: 30%.
- Love teaching and would rather have a part-time job along with the full-time teaching than leave the profession: 70%
- Plan to leave the country: 10%

Here are a few quotations from the respondents, which describe the situation of teachers perfectly, translated from Hungarian:

“Teachers are disrespected.”

“As the profession is not respected and does not provide financial stability, there is a tendency that those start teacher training who were not admitted anywhere else; therefore, the standards are decreasing. There is a lack of well-educated and devoted new generation.”

“There are two types of teachers left at schools: those who have no other choice and the devoted and enthusiastic teachers, who, in spite of all the difficulties do wonders to educate students. It is due to the latter group that Hungary still has education.”

Since June, when I gave my presentation, there have been changes, and a new framework of secondary school education has been implemented from September 2013, which comprises the rise of wages by approximately 50% and the teaching hours from 22 to 26/ week.

### **My teaching career**

Having read the situation of education and teachers in Hungary, the reader might not be surprised to hear that I had reservations against a school job after graduation. However, as I love teaching I did not want to leave the profession completely, I had a non-teaching full time job and secretly – as it would have been unacceptable to my boss – worked part time as a teacher. When I was offered a position at Meisei University, Tokyo, I did not hesitate.

### **Japan**

As an English teacher in Japan, I face different problems and difficulties. Teachers are highly respected. Here, it is no problem to photocopy handouts for my students or order any teaching materials I need. At Meisei, and generally, university teachers have considerable freedom in selecting materials and compiling the syllabus as opposed to lower levels of education, where teachers must follow a strict curriculum to prepare students for examinations which allows little space for communicative activities (Kurihara, 2013).

English is compulsory from junior high school. However, as various test results (e.g. Eiken) are essential for graduating to higher levels of education, the lessons concentrate on preparing students for the tests. Consequently,

students come to dislike English as they dislike tests. Students are not taught to communicate in English, moreover, they do not have anyone to talk to in English; therefore, they do not see the point in learning it.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports Science and Technology (MEXT) is making attempts to alter the system. According to a research conducted in 2004, at that time there were many teachers whose language ability was rather low, and in order to compensate for the lack of communicative competence concentrated their lessons on teaching grammar. In addition, some teachers were not aware of what communicative language teaching was (Sakui, 2004). Since then, Japan has invested a lot in teacher training and study abroad programmes. MEXT sends teachers to study abroad to improve their teaching and language skills and then make lessons more communicative. Although this is a great opportunity, the problem arises when these teachers return to Japan and see that the system of examinations for students has not changed yet. In that environment, no matter how eager they may be, teachers often find it complicated to implement in practice what they newly learnt abroad (Kurihara, 2013).

### **English teachers in Japan**

There are three types of English teachers in Japan regarding their native language: Japanese English teachers, English native speaker (NS) teachers, and non-Japanese non-natives (NNS). Although they are widely recognised and employed outside their home countries in Europe, NNS teachers are still facing criticism and non-acceptance in Japan. EFL teaching positions are divided into positions for Japanese English teachers and NSs, which leaves no space and validity for the NNS EFL teachers. A reason why NNSs are not considered equal to their NS colleagues is the unrealistic objective that

students set for themselves. That is, they wish to achieve the native speakers' abilities for the fulfilment of which a NNS teacher is not good enough, as far as they are concerned.

### **Why is a NNS teacher good?**

Research has revealed that both NS and NNS teachers have their advantages and disadvantages (e.g. Árvai & Medgyes (2000), Madris & Canado (2004), Meadows & Marumatsu (2007), Medgyes (1992), Merino (1997)). It is true that a NNS cannot compete with the native speakers' range of vocabulary and communicative competence; however, a native speaker will never understand completely what difficulties the learners are facing. It is because, even if they have learnt foreign languages themselves, they cannot fully understand the difficulties connected to English language learning. NNS teachers are able to share experiences of anxiety and ways to overcome it, help with introducing learning strategies that worked for them, and serve as an example of a successful language learner. They can emphasise world Englishes and prove the usefulness of speaking a foreign language. The above characteristics also make NNS capable of helping students define their own realistic and achievable goals.

As a NNS, I attempt to raise my students' awareness of the points above and motivate them to find their own, achievable objectives and approach it step by step as I did. I also introduce my own culture to them and emphasise how English has been a means of self-actualisation to me. I try to motivate them to see the joy and the challenge in learning and speaking English and strive to see them progress and learn to love the language as I did.

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**Appendice****Teachers' Voice Survey – English version**

age:	sex:	Responses	
		Number	Percent
1. How long have you been working as a teacher?			
	a. 1-5 years	24	48%
	b. 6-10 years	8	16%
	c. 11-20 years	4	8%
	d. longer than 20 years	9	18%
	e. I retired	2	4%
2. Are teachers and the teaching profession respected in Hungary as far as you see?			
	a. highly respected	0	0%
	b. respected	2	4%
	c. little respected	21	42%
	d. not respected	16	32%
	e. disrespected	11	22%
3. Has the attitude to teachers and the teaching profession changed in the past few years?			
	a. No, it's the same	8	16%
	b. It has improved	0	0%
	c. It has become worse	42	84%
4. What is the atmosphere like at your school among the teachers? Do the government regulations and the new bills affect it?			
5. Are you satisfied with your social and financial state?			
	a. yes	2	4%
	b. it could be better, but it is not very bad	20	40%
	c. no	23	46%
	d. I can hardly make ends meet	5	10%
6. Are you planning to leave the profession? Why? If you already left it, why did you opt for it?			
7. Any other relevant opinion or comments. (optional)			

The Hungarian version and comments are available from the author.

# I am NOT just an English teacher: I am a professional educator

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This paper is based on the contents of my doctorate courses at the Institute of Education, University of London, October, 2012.

I have been teaching at Berlitz for over nine years now and I consider myself to be “a reflective, learning , blended professional” (Cunningham, 2008, Guile and Lucas ,1999, Whitchurch, 2009) in the field of education. Through my professional development, I have learnt that educators grow and develop according to the environment in which they work while other educators around them have an impact as well. At Berlitz, the definition of “professional” goes more with the traditional terms (Millerstone, 1964) where “being a professional implied membership of an occupational group that could be distinguished from other (usually lesser) occupational group on the basis of a number of characteristics”(p.144). I would like to explain my teacher development as a professional over the last ten years to further support the core arguments of this paper. To me a professional is an individual who is reflective of one’s work and develops themselves consistently through education and experience.

I shall divide my professional development into three stages: the first being my first three years at Berlitz as an English instructor; the second, the six years teaching both at

university and Berlitz (the beginnings of feeling professional); and the third after teaching at the university and taking on the role of teacher/mentor at Berlitz and the last stage I shall call it plus one stage when I have started my doctorate courses and I went back to teaching at one universities in Kanagawa. I have called it plus one because it is not a full stage yet. It has just began since last October.

## **Stage I - the first three years**

My grandmother is still a professor at a university even at the age of 81 and she was trained as a teacher for children with disabilities when she was studying at a vocational high school in Romania. She has been my inspiration and due to her, I decided to become an educator and develop myself as a professional. When I started working at Berlitz, I was greatly focussed on my academic development and saving money for a post-graduate degree in education. I was not very much motivated in my job even though I liked teaching, until meeting my mentor at work. At that time, I realised slowly that I would like to better myself as a teacher and become more responsible for my students. I started taking my work more seriously and I undertook a month’s intensive CELTA programme. Now, when I look back, that was my first step towards

becoming a professional and reflecting on my own work. After receiving certification from this, I thought that in order to understand my students better I needed to brush up on my Japanese skills and I decided to take the Japanese Language Proficiency test. My lessons at Berlitz were improving and I could apply my mentor's suggestions more into my lessons. I was becoming more flexible and motivated and hence, a better teacher.

Professionals are not created on their own (Cunningham, 2008). There are incidents and people that influence educators on their way to become professionals. The reflective moments in life enable us to develop personally and professionally. The "critical incidents" (Cunningham, 2008) not only create disturbance in the professionals' life but through recognizing the moment educators are able to create a balance in their professional development. Therefore through dialogues with mentors and seniors educators go through an interactive process which leads them to the revelation point: "A critical incident compromises an event in professional life that creates a significant disturbance of our understanding of important principles or of effective practice, and which following a period of focused reflection will be experienced as a turning point" (Cunningham, 2008, p.166).

## **Stage 2 – Teaching at university**

During the six years, in which I taught at university, I began to grow into an educator and a professional. The reason for this is that I started to reflect on and question my professionalism as a teacher. I was teaching both at Berlitz in the evenings and at university during the day. I was starting to feel the differences in teaching styles and students' progress. At university, we, as a team, were designing our own curriculum and implementing it on a daily basis, through trial

and error. The number of students I taught ranged from ten to twenty-four the largest group. This enabled me to learn classroom management and to find ways to motivate large groups of students. For instance there were some students who had difficulty speaking while looking at the teacher since they were shy or intimidated in speaking in English. But gradually through practice and appraisal students managed to communicate effectively with confidence. Teaching the low communicative level of students, I looked forward to every lesson on how the students progressed and what helped them best to learn. Each day was a challenge and it brought something new to my development as a teacher.

During this time I have also realized that teaching is a two way street: teachers and students learn and motivate each other. I was able to exercise my autonomy as a teacher and educator and I could apply some of knowledge from the graduate programme into my lessons. I was beginning to feel like a "blended professional" (Whitchurch, 2009). At Berlitz, I was teaching the direct method to a smaller number of students and also being evaluated differently. At times, it was difficult to switch between teaching at university and at Berlitz.

As my experience grew, my understanding of both of my roles deepened as well. While teaching at Berlitz, I enrolled in a post-graduate programme as well, graduating from it two years later. This was a milestone in my life, being the "lightbulb moment" (Cunningham, 2008), which enabled me to grow closer to feeling professional. This meant that I gained more confidence and autonomy in my practice as an educator. This also established the foundation from where I was able to reflect over my work, development and achievements as a professional educator.

### **Stage 3 – The blended professional/ instructor and mentor**

After finishing my contract with the university, I taught only at Berlitz and I took on the role of a mentor. While teaching at university, I was able to gain more autonomy through designing my own curriculum and preparing my own original lessons. Making educational professionals aware of the “blended professional” concept giving them autonomy and knowledge vis training, and creating a space for learning and reflection. When people are able to think and learn on their own, it enhances autonomy (Benson, 2001), which gives educators the power to be in charge of their own decisions and choices. When individuals are allowed to do this, they can be more responsible for their actions and growth. Therefore, through this process of becoming more autonomous, they can reflect on their tasks and responsibilities and eventually see themselves as a “blended professional. According to Barnett as cited in Cunningham (2008), a professional has the possibility of performing, creating and giving service in the field of education and it is entirely up to the individual to be aware of that.

However as a mentor, I have to follow the standardised evaluation guidelines of Berlitz, though I still feel that I have the autonomy to evaluate instructors according to my concept of “a good lesson”. I question where my professional space is and, according to Whitchurch (2009), the blended professional has created this new space called the “third space”, in which they are able to switch identities and knowledge flexibly and easily. Being in this third space, I can see more clearly when I am an instructor and a mentor. This, of course, can be both risky and safe at the same time and instructors need to build a common box of knowledge, which is open and which educators can share. In this way, knowledge becomes more fluid and instructors are able to

deliver better lessons and acquire knowledge from their peers. The risky part of this third space can be the reliability of the knowledge and the professional autonomy. How, for example, can instructors trust each other’s knowledge and stay independent at the same time? In this situation, the need for a standardised criterion of evaluating educators and a strong identity of the teacher as a reliable professional are essential (Ball, 2008). These criteria are measured and evaluated in accordance with the company’s system and the image of the school. Ball (2007) explains that “within institutions – colleges, schools and universities, the logic of education for economic competitiveness transforms what are complex, interpersonal processes of teaching, learning and research into a set of standardized and measurable products” (p.186). Educational institutions provide educational services in a way that a shop or restaurant does, where education is a commodity and can be traded like any other service. Bernstein (1996) argues that “knowledge should flow like money wherever it can create advantage and profit. Indeed knowledge is not like money, it is money. Knowledge is divorced from persons, their commitments, their personal dedications” (p.87). Knowledge should be part of a professional group, from which educators can learn and share.

When making educators aware of their being blended professionals, some factors need to be taken into consideration: the ability of the individual to be a learning professional both at work and home (Guile and Lucas, 1999; Wright, 1970); to be able to act as a reflective practitioner (Guile and Lucas, 1999); and to be aware of the turning-point (Cunningham, 2008) in both their working and personal lives. As an instructor/mentor, I monitor and train instructors in the Berlitz method, but I also listen to their ideas about new ways of teaching and as a team, we aim to implement some of these into the method.

Professional educators need to be able to reflect on their teaching and curriculum. This is an ongoing process where reflection for the educator is very important. Many times, they are not only teaching, but also mentoring, grading papers and designing courses.

A reflective practitioner in any institution tries to expand their skills and capabilities beyond the ones, which they already possess. They are eager to learn more about their skills and interested beyond the practices of their institution. Educators, who are able to reflect on their work, do not feel constrained by their institution and can see the value of improving themselves as individuals and educators (Broadfoot et al. 1993). This, then, leads to the turning-point factor or “incidents” which occur in the life of a professional. “Incidents” are parts of our lives and they happen in order to teach us something or to correct one’s situation. In this way, individuals find their equilibrium both professionally and personally. According to Tripp, 1993: “Incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgment we make, and the basis of that judgment is the significance we attach to the meaning of the incident” (p. 8). In this way, educators can assess how effective their practices are and what they have learned so far.

A “disturbance” may slow down the individual but it is necessary for them in order Therefore a turning-point is essential for all professionals to undergo in order to evaluate their stance at that certain point in time, move to the next step. The “turning-point” is there and it is up to the individual to see and understand it and then use it: “The processes of reviewing and deconstructing critical incidents encountered in their working lives offer professionals in education very significant increments to the

quality of their understanding” (Cunningham, 2008, p.185).

### **Plus one stage- The blended/ reflective professional**

Going back to teaching at university and enrolling in a doctorate course enabled me to enter a new stage in my development as a teacher. This new phase is giving me the opportunity as an educator and individual to reflect over my work and my studies. In this stage I may able to find my third space (Whitchurch 2009) and be able to recognize and manage the tuning-points in my career and personal life. I am not just an English teacher! I am a blended professional since I am both an instructor and a mentor. I work with both students and instructors. Through this course, I have realised that in order to become an authentic blended professional, three factors are important, namely: being a learning professional, a reflective practitioner and being able to recognise the “turning-point” moments.

Making educational professionals aware of the concept of the “blended professional” is through, I may propose, by giving them more autonomy and knowledge via training and creating a space for learning and reflection. When people are able to think and learn on their own, it enhances autonomy, which, in turn, gives educators the power to be in charge of their own decisions and choices. When individuals are allowed to do this, they can be more responsible for their actions and growth. Therefore, through this process of becoming more autonomous, they can reflect on their tasks and responsibilities and eventually, see themselves as a “blended professional”.

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*Continued on page 36*

# “How Did We End Up Here?” Narratives of Filipinos teaching English in Japan

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## **Abstract**

One of the effects of globalization is the emergence of English language teaching becoming more in demand and evolving among English native speakers and non-native speakers. This has paved the way for many Filipinos - originally born and raised in the Philippines - to teach the English language in Japan. This paper, which is based on data from the author's personal experience and participant observation, aims to focus on teacher identity and migration through the narratives of Filipino English teachers who are transients or permanent residents in Japan. The transient teachers are foreign students in Japanese universities who do part-time jobs as English teachers. Similar to other foreigners who become English teachers, there are Filipinos who come to Japan because they are fascinated by the Japanese culture as soft power. Filipinos are the third largest immigrants in Japan consisting of Japanese descendants and those from inter-marriages. How do these Filipino teachers work and adjust to the Japanese system? Although they may have different educational backgrounds, how do they apply their specific expertise and knowledge in English teaching? Why do some of them change careers while others decide to build a career in English teaching?

What do most Japanese know about the Philippines? Surprisingly, the typical answer would be “bananas” and not the known facts such as the 7,107 islands, Filipino and English as the official languages plus the 170 dialects, and Taglish, a mix of Tagalog and English language.

A common debate among scholars tackles the Filipino identity since its history dates back from just a few early immigrants - Negros, Malays, Indians and Chinese (Zaide, 2002). The Philippines, transforming into a “Salad Bowl,” manifests its origin of Filipino language.

The Philippines was a Spanish colony for 333 years from 1565 to 1898. The Spaniards at that time, led by Ferdinand Magellan, lived by the words, “God, gold, and glory” to conquer the island (Zaide, 2002, p. 52-53). Spanish became the official language. Due to this major colonization, the Church is a heavy influence on the State.

During the American period in the Philippines that was briefly interrupted by the Japanese occupation in World War II, the English language was introduced and used in schools

for teaching. If the Americans did not colonize the country, Spanish could have been the official language.

## **The Filipino Language and Education in the Philippines**

Tagalog is the Filipino language but it was officially called Filipino when the Philippine Constitution was changed in the 1960s. The Filipino language also uses the alphabets and is comprised of two phonic syllables. Hence most Filipinos can easily switch to different accents since the Filipino language itself has flexible syllabic words.

Based on the Department of Education Republic of the Philippines, the education program and the official total number of years of education in the Philippines are undergoing some changes (Department of Education Republic of the Philippines, 2013). President Benigno Aquino's current government has started implementing the K to 12 basic education program last school year (Official Gazette, 2013). Before this gradual transition, the average number of years of education in the Philippines is 17 years with 2 years of kindergarten, 6 or 7 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and 4 or 5 years of university depending on the course. Education in the Philippines is influenced by Western education except for the school calendar that starts from June until March and the non-existence of Junior high school. Most of the subjects like Math, Science, History and Social Sciences are taught in English so the textbooks are also written in English. Moreover, Filipinos are trained as early as in primary school to participate in discourse; therefore, by the time they reach the university they can easily and actively interact in class debates and discussions.

Not only is English taught in schools but also in some households or television shows. Even though daily conversations are both in Filipino and English, public announcements are mostly made in English; thus children in their formative

years can naturally pick up the language. Still others learn the language through self-study, interest in the language, music and literature in the English language. Undeniably, English fluency in the Philippines has also become a status symbol of good education and breeding.

## **Fresh off the Boat**

The data in this paper is mostly based on participation observation and my personal experience as a Japanese government scholar (Monbusho) and Filipino immigrant of Japanese descent currently working as an English teacher in Japan. It focuses on the narratives of how Filipinos, excluding the Filipino-Americans, have become English teachers in Japan.

Based on their backgrounds and narratives, I have divided them into four categories: foreign students, enthusiasts of Japanese culture, those who are married to Japanese and those who specialize in English teaching as a second language. First, the foreign students who are under scholarships but trying to make ends meet because of the high standard of living in Japan, particularly in the capital, and who are doing part-time jobs in their spare time. Not only do they do it to earn extra cash, but also to have a break from academic life. What is also interesting is that most of them can easily get a part-time job in teaching English whenever their Filipino senior or senpai, who are about to graduate and leave Japan, recommend them to the job. The students or graduates belonging to the Filipino community in Japan have a solid network depending on the field that they are in. Since they intend to pursue a career related to their further studies, they see English teaching as a temporary job.

Similar to other foreigners, there do exist Filipinos actively responding to Japan's soft power. The hardcore Filipino fans of Japanese popular culture initially apply as English teachers to get working visa and enjoy living in Japan. They are fans of animation, manga, Cosplayers, J-pop, Japanese talents or idols. As they enjoy their special interests, they support themselves by

teaching English in Japan that can also be short-term since it serves as a stepping-stone to get into other jobs that are more suitable for them or just to hold over until they decide to go home.

Another category of teachers refers to those who are married to Japanese or foreigners living in Japan. Since there are numerous jobs in English teaching, this has become a primary choice for those who want to have a work-life balance and have more quality time with the family. Given the time and demands entailed, teaching English in Japan may be considered financially rewarding. Some wives of Filipino scholars also seek English teaching jobs to get access to social life with other foreigners living in Japan while augmenting their family income. There are also some cases wherein Filipino mothers are invited by other Japanese mothers to teach English to their children during playtime with other Japanese children.

We also have Filipinos who have post-graduate degrees in teaching English as a second language or related to this field. They usually have more opportunities of getting higher positions or salaries. They have more opportunities to get higher positions and salaries.

The Filipinos admit that they enjoy teaching not only because of its financial rewards compared to teaching in the Philippines but also because of the cultural diversity it offers in the working environment. Moreover, it is not as stressful since the Filipinos learn more about Japanese culture and people through their students. Thus, it becomes a win-win situation for both teacher and student.

### **In Hindsight**

*“Being considered as a “non-native” speaker. Some students don’t even know that English is widely spoken in the Philippines. I guess that’s not really my problem and I refuse to be part of other people’s ignorance over cultural diversity and academic competence of other Asian countries. It used to bother me a lot but I just let the end*

*Okada, Narratives of Filipinos teaching English in Japan*  
*product (of teaching) speak for itself.” – an Eikaiwa teacher with 7 years of teaching experience*

In the 21st century, the different varieties of English will influence the way teachers view syntax, phonetics, and the importance on the “correct” language (Warschauer, 2000, p.515). The Filipino English accent is distinctly recognizable among Asians with English accents. Because the Filipino language uses two phonic syllables, most Filipinos can easily mimic and adapt to various English accents and even other languages. This is clearly evident in the numerous call centers established by foreign companies in the Philippines. Since the Philippines used to be under the American occupation, the English language is mainly based on American English. On the other hand, some Filipinos, who are familiar with the British English language, are exposed to British pop culture, art, music and literature.

Some Japanese prefer to be taught by Filipinos because their English seems to be easier understood. Since English language is not the native language of Filipinos, the Filipino teachers can explain English grammar to their Japanese students, just like how they learned it in school. Some Japanese, on the other hand, favor native speaking teachers for their own personal reasons.

Interestingly, there are more Filipino women than men teaching English in Japan. Similar to the education in the Philippines, teaching as an occupation in an all girls’ or all boys’ school from kindergarten to primary school caters to women. Being Asian has both its advantages and disadvantages in English teaching in Japan. While some Japanese prefer to have Caucasians as their teachers, some want to have Asians because they feel less intimidated. Sadly, there are still some institutions that allegedly pay Filipinos lower salaries even if they are just skilled and competent.

Most of the respondents can speak and understand basic Japanese conversation skills.

Being an English teacher does not require Japanese language proficiency. However, I would like to point out that being an English teacher has its disadvantages when it comes to social interactions with other Japanese outside of their work. Most Japanese do not have enough opportunities to practice their English so they take advantage of practicing English with foreigners who cannot speak Japanese. Sometimes the foreigners find it difficult to distinguish whether the Japanese are making friends or just trying to practice their English with them.

*“In Japan, since English teaching falls under the “service industry”, there are many expectations from English instructors that are different in other countries. Being in the service industry in Japan means putting the “client” first. As the student is a (high-) paying client, everything must be done to satisfy them, which can be frustrating for a teacher. The instructor has no claim to authority at all.”* – former Eikaiwa teacher for 3 years

Having mentioned this, it is greatly beneficial for Filipino English teachers who can speak the 3 languages: Filipino, English, and Japanese. These languages can be used separately in their private or public spaces. While Japanese is used in their public space and English in their work environment, Filipino language is used in their private space. It can be less frustrating to teach English to Japanese when the Filipino teachers can understand Japanese as they can customize the lesson to their students’ needs, especially for the beginners. Based on my survey results and participant observation, Filipino English teachers, who are scholars and have formal studies in Japan, are more proficient in the Japanese language.

*“On average, the Philippines as an English speaking country is probably not at the top of their (Japanese) minds. When I ask a student to try to guess where I’m from, it’s not unusual for them to guess Singapore.”* –

PhD candidate doing part-time teaching at an Eikaiwa for 3 years

The Japanese image of the Philippines still varies - it is not as popular as Thailand or Singapore as tourist destination given the media’s unflattering portrayal of the country as dirty, dangerous, and developing. Although these are quite apparent in Japanese media, some Japanese still think the Philippines is an interesting country, full of beaches, with a lot of warm-hearted, cheerful, English-speaking people. Whether these Filipinos are doing English teaching as a full time or part time job, they subconsciously have a social responsibility to promote the Philippines with its rich history and cultural diversity and, currently, as one of the fastest-growing economies and resilient nations in Asia, despite the corruption and natural calamities.

On the other hand, the Filipino teachers’ image of Japan evolves through their students. They learn how things work in Japanese society because they sometimes get students who are well connected or who may be working in high levels of government, business, or the academe. Moreover, they are educated by ‘ordinary’ students about culture, about how Japanese people relate to each other and to foreigners, and their perception of foreigners.

## Conclusion

The journey of every Filipino’s experience in English teaching in Japan is different. Whether the goal is to make a living or earn extra cash, full time or part time, it has become a mutual gain for the teachers to learn about Japan through their students and likewise, the Japanese to learn English through their Filipino teachers. The Japanese- Filipinos’ strong relations is also manifested through this cultural exchange in teaching. For Filipino students who teach part-time, they feel they have gained more from their students, which help them understand the culture and adjust to living as foreigners in Japan. As long as one finds fulfillment in teaching English,

then it becomes a profession for them. For the Filipinos who find the job rewarding, they build a career out of it and excel in it. Depending on what kind of working environment they teach, their educational background, work experience and how they learned English are significant factors to be considered to measure how competent they are as teachers. An organization called Filipino English Teachers in Japan (FETJ) offers support to become competent teachers. Teaching English in Japan with its financial rewards and stability has also become attractive for some Filipinos to migrate whether permanently or temporarily in Japan. However, with the emergence of more affordable and convenient online English learning taught by Filipinos based in the Philippines but owned and managed by non-Filipinos, there is an income disparity. This, however, proves that the field of English teaching in Japan has become more in demand and English learning can become more affordable due to globalization and will continue to be so now that Japan will host the Olympics in 2020.

## Notes

This presentation and paper are results of my personal experience as a Japanese government scholar for four years and later, as an English teacher for five years. The data are also based on participant observation, discussions with friends and colleagues, and questionnaires answered by 5 respondents.

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# Becoming a strategic learning partner: Applying business frameworks to enhance teaching practice

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## **Abstract**

Prior to commencing a career in education I worked for six years as a business consultant. Many people separate business from education and treat them as distinct entities. However, as a person who has practical experience in both worlds, I feel that although there are differences it does not mean we should treat them separately. There is a lot that business can learn from teaching, and a lot that teaching can learn from business. In this paper I will introduce three practices that are ubiquitous in business, but are not as common in education. I have been applying these practices as a teacher, with significant results, and would like to share them with you.

After graduating university I worked for three years as a business processing analyst for a human capital consulting firm. Basically I was responsible for understanding how my clients process their pension plans, standardize those processes across all clients, and then innovate and streamline them to their most minimal task after which I managed the project to offshore the work to our office in India. The contact with our colleagues in India really opened my eyes to what was going on globally. Prior to this experience I did not have an interest to pursue work outside of Canada. However, my role demonstrated to me the importance of international experience. Although I grew up

in Toronto, and thus had exposure to many different cultures, I had never lived outside

of Canada, and I was keen to immerse myself completely in a different culture so that I could heighten my intercultural sensitivity. So I decided to take a year sabbatical and came to Japan.

In Japan I worked as an executive recruiter for several years when in 2011 I decided to make education my full time career and do a Masters in TESOL. I graduated this May and have begun to work in a university teaching English. As I have only recently made teaching my full time career my business experience is still recent and deeply ingrained within me. Many business practices transcended culture and industry; they were employed in Canada, the local firm I worked in Japan as well as my clients' (Japanese and global) organizations. However, I was surprised to learn that these practices are not used in education. So today I would like to introduce three practices

that I learned in business and have found them to be beneficial to me as a teacher: 1. SMART Goals, 2. Plan Do Check Act (PDCA) 3. Planned Innovation

## SMART Goals

SMART is an acronym for five characteristics that are all needed to make goals effective.

S=Specific

M=Measurable

A=Achievable

R=Relevant

T=Time bound

For example a typical goal one might make at the beginning of the year is “I want to improve my English/Japanese”. However, this is not a SMART goal. It does not hold any of the above five characteristics and as such it is less likely to encourage successful attainment of that goal.

Let's consider how to make this goal a SMART goal:

- To make it specific, what aspect of English/Japanese do you want to improve? (eg. Listening? Speaking? Writing? Reading?)
- How will we measure your improvement? (eg. Will we look at your ToEIC/JLPT score? Or test how many words you can read per minute? Or whether or not you can read a novel in your L2 by the end of the year?)
- How can we ensure that your goal is achievable? For instance some students may say that they want to get a ToEIC score of 900. While under certain circumstances this may be attainable but to go from a score of 300 to 900 in one week is very unlikely. Other students may say that they will read an extended reader every day to improve their reading speed. However, given their other commitments is this truly realistic?

To make the goal relevant it must be personal. In business we would tie our individual goals to the organization goals. In my classroom I tie my students' goals with my curriculum goals. For

instance a student may say that they will watch one English movie a month to improve their listening. However, I might add that they watch it without dubbing, or Japanese subtitles to ensure it is relevant.

Finally, is the goal time bound? A goal is more effective if it has a specific and realistic time frame. For example by the end of the year I will have read at least one complete novel in my second language, or I will learn 500 new vocabulary terms and write a story using them.

I use SMART goals for myself as a teacher in my own professional career and I teach them to my students. The students enjoy learning about goal setting and tracking their progress.

## Plan Do Check Act (PDCA)

This is a business model that is similar to reflective practice. I use this framework as I design my lesson plans.

- Step 1: Plan the lesson – at this stage it is critical that we give ourselves enough time to tie our lesson objectives with that of our overall course objectives.
- Step 2: Do the lesson
- Step 3: Check- Reflect on how the lesson went. What went well? What did not go as well as we would have liked? Did the lesson meet our objectives? If not why? What can we do going forward?
- Step 4: Act – Use our results to improve our next actions.

What I found is that many teachers get into a habit of only doing Step 1 and Step 2. However, in order to really innovate one's practice Step 3 (reflective practice) and Step 4 (actively change your behavior and practice) are essential.

## Planned Innovation

Innovation is critical to business. Any business that wants to be competitive in the market must make a concerted effort to

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consistently innovate. And that innovation must be made from the ground up. As a consultant I had weekly, monthly and yearly goals. These goals were split between administrative objectives and innovation. So, I was not only thinking about what I need to do now, but what can I do now to make things better. Many companies will budget a significant portion of their revenues (eg. 25%) towards research and design of new products or new ways to market existing products. They know that if they do not change while everything around them is evolving, they will not grow and even the seemingly most successful companies can quickly face difficulty if they do not adapt quickly enough to the new environment (eg. Blockbuster, IBM etc.).

I have scheduled innovation into my practice by making it one of my goals to attempt at least one new activity every week. I have long commute to my school and I reflect on my activities on the train. At home I have a spreadsheet where I write down my ideas right away. Every Sunday I look at that spreadsheet with all of my ideas and use that along with my goals to create new lessons.

## Conclusion

I have introduced three business practices that I use as a teacher. I think it is important to note that these practices are most effective when applied together. As a teacher with many conflicting demands it is very easy to get used to doing the same lessons. Perhaps as a recent graduate, or new teacher we are excited and motivated to search out and attempt new lessons, but at some point it is very tempting to revert to old materials that we “know” work. Of course there is nothing wrong with using effective activities every year. However, I think it is important to make a planned and concerted effort to consistently search out and try new materials, activities and methods. This innovation should be tied to SMART goals and scheduled to the point it becomes a habit. Moreover, it is critical that when we try out new activities or methods and it does not go as we expected we should not simply dismiss the activity, but rather we should extend our findings from the Plan and Do stage to Check and reflect upon our results and determine how we can make it better and then finally Act on our ideas. Through this cycle not only will our teaching practice consistently improve, but we as people will evolve.

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