Explorations in Teacher Development

JALT Teacher Development SIG

ETD, JALT TD SIG, Volume 23, Issue 2

Table of Contents

From the Editor

Welcome to the Fall 2016 issue of *Explorations in Teacher Development*. My apologies for the tardiness of this issue. As you wrap up your school year and reflect back on the highlights and low points and everything in between, we hope you will be inspired by the contents of this issue.

In this issue, we are happy to present you with one research paper. **Richard Pinner** reflects on the identities that teachers may attempt to withhold from students in the face of popular social networking sites today.

After a successful Teacher Journey Conference held in Hiroshima in June 2016, two of the presenters contributed papers. **Timothy Ellsworth** shares his experiences in switching from ESL to EFL earlier in his career, and how those experiences continue to foster his approach to teaching today. **Quenby Hoffman Aoki** describes her journey from exchange student to young wife and conversation teacher to housewife and then to university teacher.

If anyone is interested in volunteering to help out on the Publications Team, we are looking for readers, reviewers, and proofreaders. Please email me if you are interested!

Please read the Call for Papers below if you are interested in submitting a paper. We can receive submissions at any time, and we are currently looking for submissions for 2017 Spring and Fall issues of *Explorations in Teacher Development.*

Happy Reading!

Amanda J. Yoshida

Call for Papers

Explorations in Teacher Development is a journal for teachers, by teachers, where we encourage people to share their experiences and reflections.

Papers for the *Explorations in Teacher Development* (ETD) Journal are accepted on an on-going basis. We encourage both members and non-members of our SIG to submit papers, so please share this information with your colleagues and friends to ensure a rich and diverse publication.

Following is a list of the categories and types of articles we are interested in publishing:

Research Articles (2000-3000 words)

•**Narrative Inquiry**

•**Reflective Inquiry**

•**Action Research**

Explorations (1000-3000 words)

•**Reflections on beliefs/practices**

•**Learning / Teaching Journeys**

•**Other (1000 words or less)**

•**Book Reviews**

•**Creative/Humorous Observations**

In addition, interviews of relevant educators/researchers may be accepted at the discretion of the editors. Please contact us if interested in writing an interview piece.

TD SIG also publishes the proceedings of our Teacher Journeys conference held in June as well as occasional special issues in collaboration with other JALT SIGs.

If you wish to submit a research paper or explorative piece to the ETD, please pay attention to the following requirements:

All submissions should use APA style and a maximum of 12 references. Submissions that are not in APA style will be sent back to the authors for reformatting.

Research articles should include an abstract of 100-150 words.

Explorative pieces do not require references but connections to the literature are encouraged.

All authors should provide their current affiliation and a contact email. A short bio is optional.

When sending in a submission, please indicate which category of the ETD Journal your article will fit under.

Please note that all submissions for the research and explorations sections of the ETD will undergo a peer-review process and that, if accepted, we will provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Authors are encouraged to include charts, images, graphs, etc. with their articles, which will provide a visual representation to our readers.

Questions and contributions may be sent to the following email address:

jalt.ted.ete.editor@gmail.com

Constructing and Managing Transportable Identities on Social Networking Sites
Richard Pinner

Sophia University

Contact: rpinner@sophia.ac.jp

This article offers an evidence-based reflection of one teacher's experience of using social networking sites (such as Facebook) with students. It explores the position of student-teacher interactions online through the framework of transportable identities. The paper argues that teachers need to be aware of the issue of multiple selves when interacting with students online.

Introduction

Identity is a very complex issue, and language is of course one of the main mediums for how people present, express, develop and even conceptualise their own identities as social beings. People present different aspects of themselves according to different social situations, and are constantly reconstructing their identity to fit different discourse contexts (Lin, 2013; Zimmerman, 1998). In his famous treatise on identity in the sociology of language, Erving Goffman (1959) referred to these multiple, socio-contextually dependent presentations of self as 'performances' in his famous dramaturgical analogy. With the appearance of online social networking sites (SNS), the way people present themselves and interact socially is also influenced by online forms of expression. This article presents some of the issues which manifest themselves when language users turn to SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter. In the latter part of this paper, I will examine the role of language teachers and the issues that might surface when teachers and students interact over SNS. I will draw on both published research and the narrative of my personal experience to reflect on the place of these types of online interactions and the inevitable consequences they pose, focusing especially on teacher-student interactions and identity construction.

Identities in Talk

Zimmerman (1998) has identified three main categories of Identity in Talk. These are:

•Situated identities, which are explicitly conferred by the context of communication, such as doctor/patient identities in the context of a health clinic or teacher/student identities in the context of a classroom;
•Discourse identities, as participants orient themselves to particular discourse roles in the unfolding organization of the interaction (e.g. initiator, listener and questioner);
•Transportable identities, which are latent or implicit but can be invoked during the interaction, such as when a teacher alludes to her identity as a mother or as a keen gardener during a language lesson (see also Richards, 2006; Ushioda, 2011 for expansion).

When people interact in different social contexts, they might often invoke Transportable Identities as a way of showing that they are not merely the sum of their situational identity. Teachers are not merely teachers, nor students merely students; they each have various identities which can both complement and contradict our professional or situated identities. This means that, in order to facilitate learning, teachers and students often create a personal connection with each other, and with the learning process. Good teachers in any discipline encourage their students to engage with learning content through a process of personal meaning-making. When speakers use languages which they have learned as either foreign or second languages, however, it can be difficult to render a satisfactory presentation of the Self using a limited or less familiar linguistic repertoire (Csizér & Magid, 2014). This is particularly important in language learning and teaching, where learners may be constructing their identities using limited linguistic resources, whilst often simultaneously having to learn new discourse strategies and socio-cultural modes of behaviour. All of which is often happening in a language classroom, which can be an 'intrinsically face-threatening situation' (van Dam, 2002, p. 238). This is why Ushioda argues that 'the notion of engaging our students' identities is something many experienced language teachers have intuitively recognised as important' (2011, p. 17) which she further explains is nothing particularly surprising, but is actually what many good

teachers do instinctively. Despite this natural tendency, enabling students to create a valid and concrete self-image has become a major preoccupation in recent L2 motivational research literature (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015).

Goffman states that 'there is hardly a performance, in whatever area of life, which does not rely on the personal touch to exaggerate the uniqueness of the transactions between performer and audience' (1959, p. 50). Again, this is particularly important in not only language teaching and learning situations, but also in situations where participants use foreign or second languages in which they may have a limited linguistic repertoire. In modernised societies it is becoming increasingly common for people to make and maintain connections through online forums and social networking sites, such as Facebook. These can be a very effective way of connecting with students outside the classroom, engaging their 'real' lives and identities. It could also be an ethical minefield, a social 'can of worms' and a recipe for disaster.

Teacher-student interactions

Below are two screenshots taken from my own Facebook page (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). They both show the same person, but two very different aspects of myself, from different times in my life, and as different social groups encountered me.

| Figure 1: The author as a student after a night out (2001) | Figure 2: The author as a teacher in his current role (2014) |

I show these images to highlight the fact that in SNS, a user will most likely be interacting with multiple social groups and friend circles. These social groups will all be able to see the many different 'personas' or faces that users present in different social contexts to different groups of people, as they perform very different (and even contradictory) aspects of their Self. In other words, students can see their teachers in situations very different from those in which they would normally encounter them, and vice-versa. Agger (2012) refers to this phenomenon as oversharing, borrowing the term from Emily Gould; an extremely frank blogger who used to work at celebrity gossip site Gawker.com. Several of my former students have posted revealing photos of themselves online, a type of voyeurism which is in itself a very interesting social phenomena made that much easier by SNS. However, whereas voyeurism has traditionally been something which remains within a certain subcultural in-group (Humphreys, 1997), when a person posts revealing photos on very public SNSs, a much wider audience is reached and people are exposed to private images without even having to seek for them. The same is true for seeing people in contexts outside of those in which we ordinarily encounter them, one simply logs on to see a side of other individuals previously never invoked in ordinary interactions within face-to-face social context.

The relationship between a foreign language student and teacher is particularly interesting from this perspective because not only are teacher-student roles heavily influenced (if not entirely constructed) by situational identity, but also here there is the additional struggle for the negotiation of meaning and the construction of identity in the second language, in addition to the power distribution between the learner and the teacher. Furthermore, there are many different types of language learner, with many people continuing to study foreign languages into adulthood at private institutions.

Some language teachers encourage their students to befriend them on social networking sites, while others are understandably wary. SNS can be a very effective way of connecting with students outside the classroom, and engaging with their 'real' lives and identities. It can also create opportunities for authentic and motivating communication, not just between classmates but also creating a web of connections with other learners and speakers around the globe. However, it also opens up the interactions to all of the issues of identity negotiation and presentation of self discussed previously. When I accept students as friends on Facebook, I do so knowing that this is uncharted territory, and as such I have taken pains to learn about online security and how to keep track of my so-called Digital Shadow. I have also tried to become aware of oversharing, and to develop a heightened awareness of the 'audience' in my 'performances'. To manage my online identities, I use lists on Facebook to organise who can see my posts. My students are in a 'restricted' list, who can only see whatever information about me I choose to make entirely public. People who are my 'friends' can

see everything, although there is also a list for 'acquaintances' who might be excluded from more private posts. Many of these functions are relatively new to Facebook, which has become more complex as it continues to play an ever greater role in social interactions. In this way, Facebook's structure has altered over the years to reflect the onion-like structure of our own social interactions. This in itself is a fascinating subject, and one that warrants deeper inquiry.

Reflection

Using Facebook has often brought me closer to people with whom I might otherwise have very little contact. People from my past for example, or even acquaintances with whom I perhaps discovered I have something in common and therefore become closer with through our online interactions. Since I created a Facebook account almost ten years ago, the site has changed and way people use it has altered beyond recognition. Although he notes the key role Facebook played in the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Agger criticises Facebook and other SNS for being inane, made up mainly of 'everyday trivia' and featuring so many posts along the lines of 'I had enchiladas for dinner' (2012, p. 20). But now with so many corporations and information services having recognised the power of SNS, my Facebook feed is composed mainly of posts from magazines and news services, such as the BBC and other information providers, each catering to certain niches (humour, satire, local community and so on). Far from being inane, this is a personalised, customised and highly eclectic thread of different points of view on different events, often ones unfurling in real-time. Furthermore, friends share the posts that they are interested in, meaning that only a small percentage (at least of my feed) is composed of personal comments from individuals. However, I do still quite regularly see embarrassing photos of 'friends', or other even more base examples of oversharing. But this is all part of the SNS experience, it empowers people who have things to say, regardless of how 'trivial' other people may feel it be.

My initial impetus for creating a Facebook account was as a language teacher, because of my previous role as the social program coordinator for the school I worked at in London. Because of this, the majority of my 'friends' on Facebook are students. I have discussed this thorny issue with colleagues, and even given presentations about it, to find out what other practitioners are doing in terms of using SNS with their classes. Particularly those who wish to use computers as part of their lessons, or teachers who wish to have some form of online virtual exchange, have much to say on the topic. Some teachers create two accounts, one for students and one for themselves as their 'non-teaching persona'. Others refuse to 'friend' their students, although this is also a face-threatening act, one which can have connotations in face-to-face interactions. For instance, one teacher told me that students have asked him to 'friend' them during a face-to-face conversation whilst holding their smartphones in their hands, ready to do it in real-time as part of the face-to-face exchange. This could make for a very awkward situation, in which the barrier between student and teacher is made abundantly clear. Others still avoid SNS altogether. It is not necessary to become 'friends' with students just to participate in an online virtual exchange with another institution or social group, however it is still likely that this situation would arise.

Conclusion

In addition to discussing how language and social identity is mediated through online forms of interaction, this article has attempted to highlight a few of the specific issues that might surface if teachers and students were to interact in SNS and other online forums. Basically, as this is still mainly uncharted territory it presents a rich ground for further inquiry. There are several researchers working in this area (Blattner & Lomicka, 2012; Lantz-Andersson, Vigmo, & Bowen, 2013), but the need for a deeper, critical and qualitative understanding of this area seems paramount to gaining further insights into how online social interactions and new modes of discourse are linked to identity development. Teachers should make ensure they understand the ramifications of contacting students through SNS and put in place measures to delineate their own identities in online exchanges. Therefore, I think identity management is as important as digital literacy when considering interactions on SNS between students and teachers.

References

Agger, B. (2012). *Oversharing: Presentations of self in the internet age*. New York: Routledge.

Blattner, G., & Lomicka, L. (2012). Facebook-ing and the social generation: A new era of language learning. Alsic. *Apprentissage des Langues et Systèmes d'Information et de Communication,* 15(1).

Csizér, K., & Magid, M. (Eds.). (2014). *The Impact of Self-Concept on Language Learning*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Dörnyei, Z., MacIntyre, P., & Henry, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Motivational dynamics in language learning*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor (Random House).

Humphreys, L. (1997). *The sociologist as voyeur*. In K. Gelder & S. Thornton (Eds.), The subcultures reader (pp. 231-245). London: Routledge.

Lantz-Andersson, A., Vigmo, S., & Bowen, R. (2013). Crossing boundaries in Facebook: Students' framing of language learning activities as extended spaces. *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*, 8(3), 293-312. doi: 10.1007/s11412-013-9177-0

Lin, A. (Ed.). (2013). *Problematizing identity: Everyday struggles in language, culture, and education*. London: Routledge.

Richards, K. (2006). 'Being the teacher': Identity and classroom conversation. *Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 51-77.

Ushioda, E. (2011). Motivating learners to speak as themselves. In G. Murray, X. Gao & T. E. Lamb (Eds.), *Identity, Motivation and Autonomy in Language Learning* (pp. 11 - 25). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

van Dam, J. (2002). Ritual, face, and play in a first English lesson: Bootstrapping a classroom culture. In C. Kramsch (Ed.), *Language Acquisition and Language Socialization: Ecological Perspectives* (pp. 237-265). London: Continuum.

Zimmerman, D. H. (1998). Identity, context and interaction. In C. Antaki & S. Widdicombe (Eds.), *Identities in Talk* (pp. 87–106). London: Sage.

Teacher Journey Conference Proceedings

Mike Ellis, Program Chair, TD-SIG

Three weeks after Barack Obama's visit to Hiroshima last spring, TD SIG was there to promote teachers' professional development through the sharing of narratives of growth. June 19, 2016 was the fifth annual Teacher Journeys Conference, and our first collaboration with Hiroshima JALT.

The event began with an interactive plenary by Hiroshima legend David Paul. David asked the conference's 40 attendees to choose stories for him to recount from his exciting career as a teacher and teacher trainer. These stories ranged in content from developing trust over a game of shogi, to lamentations on the profit motive in education.

David's talk was followed by 15 presentations over five sessions. The presenters came from various levels of schools spread out all over Japan to relate their experiences as lessons of teacher development. Memorable topics included the negotiation of identity as a non-native native teacher, and the benefits a back injury can have on teaching practice. We are thrilled that some of these stories can be shared further in this publication.

Thank you to Hiroshima JALT for all of their hard work in this successful partnership, and to the YMCA for hosting the mini-conference. We hope to bring Teacher Journeys back to Hiroshima one day.

Please look out for information on Teacher Journeys 2017 (*https://sites.google.com/site/teacherjourneys/*), which will take place in Kobe this spring. Until then, happy journeying!

Mike Ellis

TD SIG Program Chair

Looking Back: Reflecting on My First Two Years as a Teacher

Timothy H. Ellsworth

Kansai Gaidai University

Contact: timothy.h.ellsworth@gmail.com

Introduction

Like a lot of people who teach here in Japan, I got my first experience teaching in a both an *eikaiwa* and as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) in a number of Junior High Schools. This was a short but rewarding experience that prompted me to continue teaching English when I returned to the United States, first as a volunteer, then as an intern/graduate student, and finally as an instructor in both the Intensive English Program and English as a Second Language program of a local community college. I have since returned to Japan to teach at the university level, and while I have overwhelmingly enjoyed the experience, there have been some issues. Fortunately, the two years I spent working at the college provided me with similar experiences that I was able to learn from, and I have since been able to apply what I've learned here in Japan. This paper will describe these experiences, discuss the lessons learned, and then show how they have helped me here in my current position.

The IEP

I spent my first year teaching in the college's Intensive English Program (IEP). The focus of this type of program is to give students the skills necessary to transition into mainstream college/university classes. As the name implies, the course work is quite demanding. For example, in my Grammar/Writing Course, students were expected to study eight grammar points and write three five-paragraph essays out of class, as well as semi-regular in-class writing tests that built up to writing a five-paragraph essay in class. Likewise, in my Reading/Vocabulary class, we would cover a chapter a week in their reading textbook and students would be responsible for learning 25-30 words per chapter (including their word families) and finish a graded reader each week. Speaking/Listening classes were centered on three presentations as well as regular visits to the library to speak with native speakers.

The students in this program all came from overseas and were in the US on student visas. They tended to be younger (16~23 on average with some older students and their families). Students came from a number of L1 backgrounds, but the majority in my program came from China and Saudi Arabia. As mentioned, their goals centered around entering mainstream university courses - usually at the undergraduate level, with some older Saudi students hoping to enter graduate school. This program was also quite expensive since the students were paying out-of-state tuition, which is roughly three times the price a local student would pay.

With its set curriculum, strict time frame, and demanding students, the IEP was an excellent way to begin teaching at the tertiary level. With constant feedback from my students and supervisors, as well as plenty of help from more experienced colleagues, I was able to learn a lot in terms of explaining grammar, teaching the four skills, and how to manage my time both in and out of class. After a few quarters, I felt like I had teaching down. I knew how to plan a lesson, how to teach what were once difficult grammar points, and how to build a good rapport with my students. Then, at the beginning of my second year, I was given the opportunity to teach in the college's English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

Speaking/Listening 5a

I had been asking to teach ESL classes for most of my first year, but there isn't a lot of turnover in ESL. From my experience, people get those classes and hang on to them until they retire. Fortunately, one of the teachers in our program wanted to take some time off, so they offered me a class. It was ESL 5a: Speaking and Listening, and it met twice a week from 6:15 to 8:45.

Like the IEP, the students in this class came from a wide variety of L1 backgrounds; however instead of students mainly coming from East Asia and the Middle East, I had a lot of students from East Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea), Latin/South America (Mexico, Uruguay, Panama, El Salvador) as well as small groups from Russia, Ukraine, Fiji, Iraq, Vietnam, Thailand, and number of others. These students were also much older (the age range ran from people in their 30s to their late 70s). The main difference between these students and their counterparts in the IEP was the fact that they were adult learners who actually lived and worked in the United States. Therefore, their coursework reflected both academic and life skill needs. While many of the students needed English skills for similar goals like entering mainstream university classes or licensing programs (usually in the healthcare field), they also needed English for everyday use. Another huge difference was that almost all of my students worked outside of class, which was impossible

for IEP students on a student visa. Many of my students came to class after working all day, and wanted to study English to make their daily lives much easier.

One of the first things I learned in the ESL class was to make the materials reflect the students' needs. This may seem a given, but I was coming out of a year of working exclusively in a very structured curriculum. I remember thinking about how I would manage a class of 32 students on my first night of class, and then panicking on the second night when only 18 returned. I learned that this wasn't unusual in an ESL night class. Over the next couple of classes, I noticed that while there was a core group that would come for every lesson, some of the students would come and go. Usually this had to do with their lives outside of class, but it also had to do with the types of assignments I was giving them. For example, I wanted the students to practice the grammar points we studied in class for homework, so I assigned them activities from the textbook alongside activities from websites like ELLLO and VOA news, like I did with my students in the IEP. For some, this was too much homework, and they would either not show up if they hadn't done the homework or drop the course. Others would come, but without having done the homework, which made follow up in class difficult.

I learned pretty quickly that I had to start planning lessons that didn't rely on the previous lesson or would need to carry over to the next one. Everything had to be started and finished in that class. This wasn't completely impossible in a 2.5-hour class. It meant that I would do a quick grammar activity in the beginning of class, usually something that I had done or covered earlier in the IEP, and then spend the second half dealing with a specific situation from their life skills book. Homework assignments like ELLLO were dropped (as their speaking and listening skills were actually far beyond anything in the IEP, and that purely skill-based work was better handled in class). On the advice of a colleague, I also ended the week with a 5~10-minute TED Talk that tied into what we were studying. This proved to be quite a popular activity as students brought much more life experience to this activity, which helped them understand the content better and make the discussions afterwards richer. For homework, the same coworker gave me the idea for an assignment called the Speaking/Listening Log, which pushed students to interact with native speakers at their jobs or in their communities and with authentic materials on a weekly basis. Again, this proved successful, since it not only got the students using the target language outside of class, but it got them actively interacting in their communities and reflecting on their learning. Presentations were done on a daily and individual basis, usually at the beginning of each class and two people were scheduled at a time in the event that one person was absent. Finally, things culminated in a speaking test every couple of weeks, the contents of which were derived from the life skills unit we were working on and students own stories and life experiences. Once this pattern was established, I noticed the numbers tended to stabilize, students began to complete homework more regularly, and I created a pretty good rapport with the class. Or so I thought…

Tom

Once I got the course moving along, another issue in the form of a student named Tom (a pseudonym) came up. He and his friend would joke around a lot in class by making sarcastic or ironical remarks to something said, and for the most part it was harmless fun that did a lot to lighten the mood of the class. Sometimes they'd go a little overboard by either interrupting too much or saying something crass, and the other students would look annoyed, and I'd have to ask them to quiet down. Tom didn't like this and would constantly challenge me in class and question my ability as a teacher, either directly or through the aforementioned remarks to the class. For the most part, I tried to avoid responding directly to his comments and keep the class moving along, but one incident prompted me to confront him.

We were having class on election night, Obama vs. Romney, and the class was on a break. I was on my way back to my office when I walked by him and his friends. They were having a smoke, and I foolishly (and perhaps a bit provokingly) asked them what they thought about the election. They all said they hoped Obama won. Tom asked me who I thought was going to win, and I foolishly and perhaps a bit provokingly asked him whom he thought I would vote for. He said Romney, and without missing a beat explained, "because you look like a racist white guy." He laughed, but his friends looked a little shocked and definitely uncomfortable. I wanted to say something, but I nodded and went back to classroom and finished the class.

The next day, I talked to my colleague about him. She had taught him the previous semester, and they had gotten along well. She mentioned that he's an overall nice guy, but he hates his job and he feels stuck. He worked at a car dealership with a bunch of people he often described to her as "redneck, racist, white guys" who say all kinds of demeaning things right in front of him. "So when he says that you look like a racist white guy, he probably means you look like them." When the next class finished, as the other students were leaving, I asked him to stay so I could talk with him. We spent about 20 minutes talking about his job and his life outside of work, and he mentioned a lot of what my colleague had told me. He didn't have his friend there to make jokes with him or the rest of the class as an audience. He explained that he had no intention of being disrespectful and that he had no idea his comments could be misconstrued that way. I was a little skeptical; however, after talking with him, all of the problems I had with him in class seemed to disappear, and at the end of the quarter, he shook my hand and even asked me to eat with him at the end-of-the-quarter party. In the end, I am glad I decided to find out what was wrong and let him explain himself. Instead of responding directly to the Romney comment, I tried to find out what might be wrong. After talking to my colleague about him, I was better able to understand where a lot of his comments and behavior might have come from. Because of this, the situation did not escalate, I did not lose face, and the quarter ended on a positive note. In this way, he taught me the importance of getting to know my students' lives outside of class and to consider them as more than just members of my class.

Japan

Teaching academic English in the states has prepared me for a life of teaching writing and reading classes here in Japan, but the experiences I've had in my ESL class have helped me to deal with some issues here in Japan.

For example, my second semester I taught one particular group where the average class size was about eight students (out of 25), and it wasn't always the same eight students. There were about four that came regularly, but for the most part it was a revolving cast of characters. To make things worse, I had no way of contacting their other teacher. So, I asked one of the more fluent students what was going on, and she said that it was because I wanted them to do homework, use a textbook, and the teacher they had the previous semester didn't take attendance and passed everybody. Also, many students had part-time jobs that kept them working late into the night, and they were too tired to make my 10:45 class. This reminded me of the situation in my ESL class, and I had to take to creating one-off, self-contained lessons. Luckily, I had a textbook that had some interesting topics, but it meant a lot more in terms of prep-time, and discussions instead of formal presentations. Towards the end of the semester, I implemented the same style of speaking tests that I used in the ESL program, with the characters' situations based on what I had learned about my current students. By the end of the semester I had a dedicated six students, and it ended up being a relatively successful class.

Also, in another class there was a student who seemed to be a problem. Like Tom, this student was a high-level learner who projected a kind of cool/tough guy attitude. He often looked almost antagonistically bored. My initial reaction was to be provoked and respond to this, but I'm glad I didn't. I remembered Tom, how he displayed certain behavior as a way of dealing with other frustrations in his life. This student wasn't projecting anything hostile, just indifference, and when I once asked him to share his writing with the class, his voice cracked and shook, and he turned red. He wanted to appear cool, confident, and aloof because, perhaps, this wasn't really the case. His actual work was excellent. His writing showed depth and clarity. Likewise, his ability to relate to characters in weekly book reports always impressed me. I concluded that his attitude didn't affect the flow of the class, he got along with most people, and he produced some very high quality work. Instead of jumping down his throat every time he checked his watch, yawned while looking in my eyes, etc., I let his work do the talking for him. He otherwise seemed completely engaged in the course material, got high marks, and would eventually start coming by my office when he needed help. Through this I learned that he had several native speaker friends, whom he got this attitude from. According to Dornyei (2013) there is both an ideal and ought-to L2 self. Perhaps he saw in his friends his ideal self and felt that aloofness was an attribute he ought to possess to make himself appear more native like. In the end, this situation didn't devolve into an incident because I took the time to talk with him and consider who he was beyond "my student."

Conclusion

As mentioned, my early experience in the IEP gave me valuable experience in the basics of academic instruction; however, what I learned from that first ESL class made my two years at the community college a more holistic experience. Ultimately, I learned the importance of adjusting my expectations to fit the needs of my students. Many of the IEP students were younger, and focused on transferring into a four-year university, which, if they weren't staying at our college, meant they needed to get good scores on either the TOEFL or IELTS. This actually made it quite easy to motivate many of the students since all I needed to do was show how whatever we were working on could help their score on either of these tests. This approach didn't have the same effect in ESL. This was best achieved not through esoteric, strictly academic coursework, but through creating materials and activities that reflected their daily lives and had immediate application. This was basically a shift from a pedagogical approach to an andrological one. To paraphrase Knowles (1988) adult learners are more likely to learn something when they see an immediate need to learn it and the immediate potential to apply it. I had studied this in graduate school, but it really took hold when I saw the difference in student attendance and engagement after adjusting my materials to fit their needs and experiences. Additionally, by taking the time to learn about a student's situation outside of class I was able to avoid a potentially uncomfortable situation. As mentioned, I've been able to use what I've learned here in Japan, where again I have had to modify my expectations. Japanese students have their own unique set of needs, talents and limitations, and some of the methods and assignments I used in the IEP and ESL program simply don't work, however, the fundamental lessons learned during my two years of teaching at a community college have helped me readjust to better fit and find success with my current environment. To quote an interview with Hinkel (The Editorial Board , 2009), "Those who adhere to prescribed methodologies in the face of classroom realities don't last long. (question no. 7)"

References

Dornyei, Z. & Chan, L. (2013). Motivation and vision: An analysis of future L2 self images, sensory styles, and imagery capacity across two target languages. *Language Learning*, 63(3), 437–462

The Editorial Board (2009). An interview with Dr. Eli Hinkel, Working papers in TESOL and applied linguistics. 9(1). Retrieved from: http://tesolal.columbia.edu/article/interview-hinkel/

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge

A Teacher's Journey from Japanese to TESOL to Housewife to Something Else Entirely

Quenby Hoffman Aoki

Sophia University

Contact: quenbya@yahoo.com

Setting the Scene: Not an Abstract

Our life paths often take unexpected turns which surprise us upon reflection, but ideally lead us to personal and professional growth. Through a series of good and perhaps not-so-good choices, complicated interpersonal relationships, and simply being in a certain place at a certain time, I find myself a middle-aged mother of two bicultural teens, with a full-time position at a well-known private university in Tokyo, in the English Literature Department although my degrees are in Japanese Language and TESOL, teaching mostly content-based courses in subjects for which I have no formal qualification, in possession of my own desk for the first time in twenty-five years, and yet a limited-term contract employee facing another crossroads in the not-too-distant future. This paper will explore these various strands, isolating the major transition points in the larger context of one teacher's narrative in order to "focus on experience and follow where it leads" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000. p. 188).

Introduction

When I was in junior high school, there was a popular song called "Once in a Lifetime," by the new wave group Talking Heads. The lyrics have always felt as though they were written for me, and are particularly relevant for a reflective article: "….you may find yourself in another part of the world…/ And you may ask yourself/ Well, how did I get here?"(Byrne, Eno, Harrison, Frantz, & Weymouth, 1980). If I am asked to isolate the major transitions which have led me to this particular place in my journey, the list would read as follows:

1. I came to Japan as an exchange student to learn about Japanese language and culture.

2. After my college graduation, I returned to Japan as a JET Program teacher, which inspired me to become a "real" teacher. Because my husband happened to be transferred to Southern California as my contract was ending, getting my Master's Degree in TESOL in those pre-Internet days became a physically and financially accessible option.

3. I chose to stay home after my second child was born; while I had no definite timeline, the result was five and a half years as a full-time housewife.

4. I returned to teaching in 2009, and realized that academia in Japan had changed greatly. These changes, while sometimes stressful and frustrating, have led me in new professional directions, including finally getting started in research and publishing (which my long-term colleagues will agree were not required in the 1990's!) and the possibility of starting another degree program in a completely new field.

This paper will examine each of these formative experiences and reflect upon how they have affected my professional journey, in hopes of connecting with other teachers "who share a vision of the centrality of attending to lives, and the making and remaking of lives, as vitally important work in classrooms, schools, and communities" (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013. p. 213).

Stage One: Girl Meets Japan

Around 1980, I became fascinated with Japan, largely due to *Shogun*, a TV mini-series based on James Clavell's bestselling novel, which I did not read until a few years later. The series involved impossibly garish pink kimonos, Welsh actor John Rhys-Davies pretending to be Portuguese, and Richard Chamberlain as the Pilot Anjin-*san*, based on an actual historical figure who surely must have spoken better Japanese. The novel *Shike* by Robert Shea (1981) was popular at the time, too. Naturally, I pronounced it "Shaik," rhyming with "bike." At that time and in that place, there was no way to correct my error.

A few years later, I went to college majoring in Spanish, staying with the language I knew but deliberately choosing a school that also offered Japanese, which I planned to take as my required additional language. I started in my second year, and I knew by the end

of the first semester that I wanted to study abroad in Japan, not Latin America as I had originally intended. I found myself applying for junior year abroad in Tokyo. When I arrived, I could barely say the simplest sentences, and could write *hiragana* and perhaps ten or twenty *kanji*. I was placed in the lowest elementary class, and made rapid progress, at least in speaking and listening skill, not because of the class or the Japanese man I happened to meet (and to whom I am now married, but that is another story).

The fact is that I became a competent speaker of Japanese because of my wonderful host family, and the fact that I was downright rude to people. If someone tried to speak English to me, which any Western-appearing person in Japan can attest still happens often, I would insist, "*Nihongo wakarimasu!* (I understand Japanese!)," even when I did not actually understand and would end up making a complete fool of myself. I recall arguing with my teachers that the Japanese they were teaching us in class was strange and unnatural. "Nobody talks that way!" I would insist, while the teachers just as strongly insisted that I was speaking "colloquial, broken Japanese," whereas what they were teaching us was "correct." Meanwhile, on a daily basis, I was experiencing what I now know is called "othering." Most people's intent was good, but when I said *sumimasen* (excuse me) or *konnichiwa* (hello) people would praise my excellent Japanese. Since I hadn't actually said much of anything, this implied that people rarely expected to hear their language coming from someone who looks like me, and they would often follow up with "*Nihongo, muzukashii desho?*" ("Japanese is difficult, isn't it?"). I also became very tired of hearing how amazed they were that I could use chopsticks and being asked whether I could eat rice. Yes, the way that question is usually phrased in Japanese is not "Do you like rice?" but "Can you eat rice?" as though eating rice required a special physical ability.

On my first day exploring Tokyo on my own, I walked into a curry restaurant in a busy part of central Tokyo. When the waiter brought me my curry, he placed a big spoon next to the bowl. I lost my temper. Indeed, I may have raised my voice a bit, from sheer frustration that people were treating me like a "foreigner," assuming that I couldn't or wouldn't want to do things "the Japanese way." I firmly told the waiter to bring me chopsticks. Without hesitation, he did as I asked. As I sat there, feeling very self-righteous, struggling to eat the soupy curry with chopsticks, I looked around and realized that all the Japanese people around me were using spoons!

As this incident shows, I was here to learn Japanese and have an "authentic" cultural experience, and I felt I had something to prove. I was not one of those tourists stopping through on their way to go backpacking in India or the beach in Thailand.

At the same time, I started teaching English conversation, and it seemed that I was good at it. By the end of the year, I was teaching nearly every day after my Japanese class ended. Also, as mentioned above, there was a man in the picture. I vehemently denied that our relationship affected my subsequent career choices, but in retrospect I know that was simply not true, as will be discussed in the next section.

Stage 2: Call Me Sensei

In many ways I owe my Master's Degree to my husband. His company transferred him to Southern California just after my JET contract ended, and I went with him as a "trailing spouse." I was the youngest and the only non-Japanese wife in the office. I had lived in Los Angeles as a child, so I qualified for the much lower resident tuition at California State University, which has a well-known TESOL program. The decision and all the required paperwork took several months, but I knew I was not yet ready to have children, and that the degree would help me find better jobs when I returned to Japan. Once I started taking classes, I truly felt that I had come home.

The program required at least two years of foreign language study, and the rooms were full of people who had lived and worked all over the world, from a Peace Corps volunteer who had worked in Cameroon, to an Egyptian journalist, to a former flight attendant. The classes helped me broaden my perspective on language learning and teaching, and contextualize my teaching experience. I began to understand why certain things worked in the classroom and others did not. In my second year, I was able to teach an adult education class composed almost entirely of Spanish speakers, a completely different cultural and linguistic atmosphere from English conversation classes in Japan.

I came back to Tokyo in the summer of 1995, degree in hand, and spent the next year at several *Eikaiwa* (English conversation) jobs for which I was now overqualified. I finally found my first university position, through a Monday advertisement in The Japan Times newspaper. Those working in academia in Japan will be aware that, as I was interviewed in late March, it must have been an emergency and my employer must have been desperate, but as I still teach for them today they are clearly not disappointed with my work. This first position opened other doors for me, and by 1999 I was teaching a total of 20 classes at several universities and colleges in the Tokyo area. At the time, and since I was still child-free and in my thirties, this was a hard schedule but not unusual.

Stage 3: Mommy and Me

In 2003, after the birth of my second child, I became a full-time housewife and mother for five and a half years. The very word "housewife" is now considered outdated, even offensive by many North Americans, as it conjures a retrograde image of aprons, ironing, and homemade cookies. I deliberately choose to use it here, not only because it is easily understood in Japan, but also because it represents a clearly-defined identity which comes with a particular set of expectations, and still affects my thinking and behavior today. I took my children to bilingual and neighborhood Japanese-monolingual playgroups, participated in PTA when my son started at the local public school, and watched a shocking amount of Cartoon Network and Disney Channel.

I have found that my students tend to be very interested in this aspect of my background, and especially for female students I make a point of mentioning it. It helps them identify with me as a woman who has been in and out of the paid workforce, and to consider possibilities for their own futures after graduation.

In the fall of 2008, we experienced a personal financial crisis completely unrelated to the "Lehman Shock", which happened about three weeks later and affected the entire world economy. It was time for this stage to end. I contacted everyone I knew, letting them know I was ready to return to teaching, and at the end of the year had my first real job interview since 1997. My most helpful contacts included one of my former program directors, and an old colleague who managed to get my resume to the top of the stack. I must also mention the community of my fellow foreign wives of Japanese. Any other member of this particular sisterhood will attest that it is an immensely valuable support network.

A critical incident occurred my first week back in the classroom. I had received a call the previous afternoon from my new supervisor asking me, due to a faculty emergency, to take over an additional Thursday morning class which started the next day. I quickly chose suitable materials, typed a tentative syllabus, got my children to bed, and prepared to get up at 5:30 to make a box lunch for my five-year-old daughter, who was scheduled to go on a field trip with her daycare center.

A little before 5 a.m., I was woken by a scenario most parents are familiar with: a teary child who burned with fever and had just vomited. Clearly, the field trip was out of the question, but so was missing the first day of class at a new job. At 6:00 I called my husband, who works in another city and usually comes home only on weekends, and begged him to come home. He said, "Of course!" and was on the *Shinkansen* (Bullet Train) and home by 8:30. I was able to make it to my new class, which by the way turned out to be an excellent group of students, and all of us got through the rest of the day. My daughter, by the way, was perfectly recovered by Monday.

This incident is relevant because it reveals much about attitudes toward motherhood, in academia and in society as a whole. I was lucky that my husband is both stubborn and willing to use a paid holiday to save me in such a situation. His boss apparently gave him a hard time, asking, "Is your wife's job really that important?"

"Yes it is," replied my husband, "It's her first day at a new job. She needs me." In fact, my supervisor assured me later that missing class would have been perfectly acceptable since my child was sick, but that attitude is far from universal. Putting it bluntly, a father stays home, and he is a hero. A mother stays home, and it is simply what is expected. It is unlikely that any eyebrows would have been raised if the situation were reversed.

Stage 4: What am I now and where am I going?

I confess that during my time at home, I allowed my knowledge of current developments in TESOL to fossilize. Juggling two young children while teaching eight classes was a real challenge for the first few years, so I continued with what I knew: general skills-based Communicative Language Teaching. I was unfamiliar with concepts such as native speaker-ism, narrative inquiry, or critical pedagogy. Indeed, I scoffed when a younger colleague said that he did not consider himself a representative of his birth culture, that it was perfectly acceptable to let students use L1 texts in English class, that culture does not really exist anyway (how poststructuralist of him!), and that he encouraged his students to "get beyond the concept of culture, because it's limiting." If memory serves, I rolled my eyes at him and retorted that he was "not really an English teacher." I still clung to my beliefs that of course native or "native-level" speakers were the ideal, and culture not only existed, but was the very foundation of an individual's development.

Around the same time, my main employer introduced a new content-based CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) curriculum. It also became clear that, in spite of my degree and teaching experience, if I did not get started in research and publishing my days in tertiary education would be limited. Even adjunct positions now asked for a list of publications, which was not the case in the 1990's. I was teaching three days a week at one of the most prestigious private universities in Japan, with one of the best libraries available to me, but had never set foot in that library, nor taken advantage of the intelligent, articulate, international student body to do classroom research.

Just after Golden Week, 2013, I took my first steps. One Friday, rather than going back to have coffee in the teachers' room after lunch, I said goodbye to my friends and headed for the stacks. I was home, as I always have been in libraries, and I quickly found a quiet study desk, which I still use regularly even though I now have my own office. Writing and research have gradually become an integral part of my professional life. My years as a stay-at-home mother have served me well in this area, because I can multi-task and use small blocks of time, even twenty or thirty minutes, accomplishing tasks step by step. Nevertheless, I feel like the famous fictional character Rip Van Winkle, who wakes up from a nap (not to say that child-rearing is a nap!) and finds that he has slept for twenty years. Somehow, although the settings are familiar, the teaching world has changed without my noticing, and I am often rushing to catch up.

Among the long list of changes since I taught my first university classes and then was "interrupted" by motherhood are the following:

•People ten or fifteen years younger than me have tenure or tenure-track positions and PhDs. They see research as a given, and some have even published books.

•The part-time teachers' room is deserted ten minutes before the chime rings. My full-time colleagues tend to eat while working in their offices. No longer do my colleagues usually chat, eat lunch together, or finish their coffee and walk in a leisurely manner to their classroom; if the chime is close to ringing, they run!

•Presentation software has become the default. When I explain that I generally prefer to use paper handouts and the blackboard, I get reactions somewhere along the spectrum from blank stares to eye rolls and sarcastic comments. I am gradually developing basic 21st-century technological skills, but I still see machines as optional tools, rather than necessities.

•Among my full-time colleagues, the men are mostly married with children, quite a few with stay-at-home spouses, while the majority of the women are single or married but child-free. To quote a Japanese colleague, "You'll find all the mommies in the part-timers' room!" I have made a point of connecting with other mothers, both adjunct and full-time; we face the same challenges and speak the same language regardless of our nationality.

•Long holidays are mostly spent researching, writing, and presenting at conferences, rather than visiting family or relaxing on the beach in Thailand or Bali. (Not that I ever did that, of course.)

•Finally, in what are definitely positive developments, class size has decreased; no more multi-level conversation classes of 50 students. Also, I am increasingly asked to teach content-based or CLIL courses in subjects for which I am not trained, including gender studies and psychology.

For all the above reasons, despite being older and having more years of teaching experience than many of my colleagues, I feel as though my career is just getting started.

Conclusion: Future Directions

Inspired by the many content-based classes I have been teaching recently, I have begun to look into further study, probably Comparative Literature or Cultural Studies. Clearly, TESOL has given me a good basis for classroom practice working with students, which should be any teacher's first priority, and it has also allowed me to see other, different possibilities for the future. Motherhood and my Japanese language background are also important aspects of the identity which I bring into the classroom. I stand at yet another crossroads, and I look forward to whatever comes next.

References

Bercovici, E., Chapman, B. Clavell, J., & Feltman, K. (Producers). (1980). *Shogun* [Television mini-series]. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Television.

Byrne, D., Eno, B., Frantz, C., Harrison, J., & Weymouth, T.(1980). Once in a lifetime. [Recorded by Talking Heads]. *On a different light* [LP]. New York, NY: Warner/Chappell Music, Inc.

Clandinin, D.J. and Connelly, F. M.(2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M., & Steeves, P. (March, 2013). Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education: The extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience. *Review of Research in Education*, 37, 212-242.

Shea, R. (1981). *Shike: Time of the dragons*. New York, NY: Jove Books.

Teacher Development
JALT TD SIG

The JALT Teacher 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. New members are always welcome to join our conversation and share their experiences with other teachers. (Please note that the name was officially changed from Teacher Education & Development SIG in early 2016.)

Become a TD SIG Member

Joining:

TD is a special interest group (SIG) of the Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT). To join TD, you must be a JALT member. Information on joining JALT is available on the JALT web site (jalt.org).

If you are already a JALT member, you can also add a TD SIG membership to your existing JALT membership. Please see the JALT membership page for information on joining in the TD conversation.

Benefits:

Joining TD connects you to a network of teacher colleagues who are interested in growing professionally. Members receive the most current issue of TD's Explorations in Teacher Development (ETD) Journal by email (and in print if requested), and can participate in our mailing list.

TD also sponsors and co-sponsors events throughout the year to help teachers gain experience in mentoring and presenting.

TD SIG Officers

SIG Coordinator:
William (Bill) Snyder
Kanda University of International Studies

Membership Chair:
Tracey-Ann Tsuruoka
Rikkyo University

Program Chair:
Mike Ellis
International Christian University High School

Publications Chair:
Amanda Yoshida
Toyo Gakuen University

Publicity Chair:
Adrianne Verla
Seikei University

Treasurer:
Matthew Turner
Rikkyo University

Member-at-Large:
Peter Hourdequin
Timothy Knowles
Quenby Hofman Aoki

TD Web Site:
http://jalt.org/ted/

Contact TD:
ted@jalt.org

Contact the Publications Chair:
jalt.ted.ete.editor@gmail.com