

Explorations in Teacher Education presents...

EFL Teacher Journeys Conference Proceedings

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Shizuoka JALT

Teacher Education and Development SIG



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Foreword

The first EFL Teacher Journeys Conference was a great success: teachers gathered from far and near to share their stories and learn from each other about the unique paths and personalities that make our profession so diverse. We are fortunate that many of the presenters from our event in June have submitted pieces to this volume, where we are pleased to present Proceedings of the EFL Teacher Journeys Conference.

This volume starts with featured speaker Wilma Luth's thoughtful reflection on her long career in Japan and the "tools" she used along the way to make her teaching here easier and better. Patrick Kiernan (the conference's other featured speaker) takes a few steps back from the personal view offered in Wilma's piece. He explores the "journeys" metaphor that informed our conference, and highlights three important themes that emerged in his research into the narratives of a diverse group of EFL teachers in Japan.

Benjamin Bailey's piece offers an up-close look into the world of one-to-one teaching with an "itaku" contract at one of the large English schools in Japan. We learn of a business-like environment that challenges common notions of teacher autonomy and may prompt some readers to re-evaluate lesser concerns they've noticed in their own teaching contexts.

John Campbell-Larsen's article returns to the theme of metaphor. He surveys metaphorical conceptualizations of teaching found in a broad selection of literature, and offers some unique and perhaps liberating ways of looking at contemporary classroom spaces and the teacher's role within these.

Shifting gears, Blagoja Dimoski's article shows how technological tools can be used to expand a teacher's capabilities. He describes how digital projectors, handheld scanners, and the Internet has helped him grow personally and professionally as a teacher.

Mary Hillis discusses online professional development. She describes Electronic Village Online (EVO) and explains how she has benefited from being involved in that online community. Mary also introduces a number of tools that can be used for educators who are interested in online professional development.

Michael Iwane-Salovaara's piece describes the impact of negative discourse on the workplaces. To illustrate this, he recounts a number of detailed anecdotes that he has experienced over his 19-year teaching career in Japan.

Sakae Onoda introduces the Media English course at Kanda University of International Studies. She describes a number of teacher-led and student-centered activities that are used to promote student self-efficacy and willingness to communicate.

Finally, Paul Rowan shares his journey from college dropout to doctoral candidate. He reflects on how his personal learning experiences influenced his approach to teaching and his doctoral dissertation.

We hope you find this eclectic volume of teacher narratives as thought-provoking as we did. Thanks to all the contributors for sharing, and special thanks to editor, Mike Ellis for the work of bringing these stories together. Enjoy!

Peter Hourdequin, Conference Chair / TED Coordinator

Adam Murray, Shizuoka JALT President

Tools for the EFL Teacher's Journey

Wilma Luth (Featured Speaker)

Abstract

Speaking at the EFL Teacher Journeys Conference on the theme of "Tools for the EFL Teacher's Journey" was a wonderful opportunity to look back over my time in Japan and think about what I've learned. Although it could be seen as a little self-indulgent to attend a conference so focused on ourselves as teachers, this is the kind of conference that can help us face all the Monday mornings (and Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons) of our teaching career with energy and enthusiasm.

My Teaching Journey

My own teaching journey began in 1991 when I came to Japan. In many ways I think I've had quite a typical career, but every teacher's journey is unique as well. "Why did you come to Japan?" is probably the most commonly asked question to foreigners (besides "can you use chopsticks?") My short answer is that I couldn't find a job in Canada. I graduated from Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario (a Christian liberal arts college, now called Redeemer University College) in 1989 with a Bachelor's degree in English literature and a very strong conviction that I did NOT want to become a teacher. I wanted to get into publishing, maybe work for a magazine or a publishing company. But those kinds of companies weren't hiring and some of them were even going bankrupt.

When I was in university my father advised me more than once to take education classes ("they'll always need teachers") but I was adamant that I did not want to teach. After graduation I worked for an insurance broker and quickly discovered that telemarketing wasn't for me. A friend from college was teaching English in Shimane Prefecture and suggested that I give it a try. "It'll be fun." "Just come for a year." I, somewhat reluctantly, applied for a job with GEOS, had an interview in Toronto, and didn't get the job. I still don't know why I chose to focus on the difference between "further" and "farther" in the sample lesson. But years later I gave a presentation at a GEOS conference in Sapporo and had a good "I didn't get hired by this school, but now I'm speaking at your conference" story to tell for my introduction.

Even though I didn't have a job lined up I decided to go to Japan anyway and arrived in Narita on July 31, 1991, having borrowed money from my parents for the ticket. The flight from Toronto to Tokyo was the first time I'd ever even been on an airplane. It was a major leap of faith and I never could have imagined that I would still be here 21 years later. (Perhaps if I'd known that I would never have gotten on that airplane!)

My first job was in Toyama Prefecture teaching company classes at YKK and other manufacturing facilities in the area stretching from Niigata to Ishikawa. My last job was a three-year contract position at Hokkai Gakuen University, a private university in Sapporo. In between I've taught in just about every context and situation possible. Here's a summary of my time in Japan, mostly in numbers.

20.5 years	of English language teaching
15	different teaching contexts (at least) – including...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ private lessons – 1 to 1 and group lessons in various contexts ▪ language schools (both part-time & full-time) ▪ company classes ▪ a junior high school – assistant English teacher ▪ a high school – classroom teacher ▪ an estheticians college ▪ a junior college – English majors, non-English majors, continuing education classes ▪ universities – part-time & full-time
3 years	longest full-time position (at Hokkai Gakuen University)
4,500	students (at least)
18 years	longest time at one school (Hokusei Women's Junior College)
15,000	classroom hours (at least)
38	different courses taught at high school, junior college, vocational school, university, continuing education program
English Bible (Old Testament)	favourite course to teach
9 interesting things about me	favourite first class lesson
“Ask & Tell” conversation cards	favourite emergency activity

As mentioned earlier, my first teaching job was in Toyama Prefecture teaching company workers. When I started teaching English I had no experience or training in TESL and because I was hired to teach in a remote location I didn't have the opportunity to receive the basic training given to new teachers in my company. Instead I observed a few lessons and then started teaching. Classes were two hours long (and felt much longer than that!), but most students had a positive attitude and were very patient with an inexperienced teacher like me. However there was one group that was not so patient or positive.

Microplanning: The First Tool

Ironically, the overseas trainees were infamous for not being very interested in English and actually having very little desire to go overseas. (Most of them had not applied for this program but

had been chosen for it.) They were very interested in socializing (in Japanese) with their friends in classes and not at all interested in participating (in English). I begged and cajoled them to cooperate, but nothing seemed to work. One day a trainer from the head office in Tokyo came for a visit. He suggested a new tactic – to engage the trainees in activities which were interesting and which could only be completed by using English. He also suggested “micro-planning” lessons and changing the activities often to keep the students engaged. This was my first experience of methodically reflecting on my classroom practice to see how I could improve my lessons. It was a lot of work but the time and effort paid off. The classes went a lot better and the overseas trainees became more engaged. It was my first teaching success story and microplanning was the first tool that I acquired for my teaching journey. This experience sparked an interest in teaching in me as I realized that there were many ways to approach my classes so that the students could learn more easily.

Reflective Practice

In the fall of 1993 I moved to Sapporo and started branching out and teaching in many different contexts – language schools, a high school, and, in April 1994, I started my first college class – Basic English Writing for first year students. What a challenge! During that time I began to attend JALT meetings and eventually decided to get my master’s degree at the School for International Training (now called SIT Graduate Institute). Enrolling in the summer master’s program was one of the best decisions of my life. I gained many new ideas and insights, but the most useful and practical one was reflective practice. One of the main assignments for the interim year between the two summers of coursework was to reflect on lessons and answer questions like the following: What went well in the lesson and why? What didn’t go well in the class and why not? What did the students learn and how do you know that they learned it? Trying to answer these questions about my lessons opened up a whole new layer of learning. There was so much more going on in my classes than I had realized and reflective practice became an important tool in my repertoire. It has helped me become not only more skilled, but also more aware of classroom dynamics.

Reflective practice has practical applications outside of the classroom as well. My first JALT presentation didn’t go very well – I almost fainted and had to finish the session sitting down. But, so much of what I do now in presentations is based on what I learned from reflecting on that experience, like having everything that I’m going to say on one piece of paper, choosing a title that accurately describes the content of the presentation, and doing a run through of the presentation beforehand.

This kind of reflection is incredibly valuable, but the time required can make it a challenge to sustain the commitment to regular reflection. One way to save time is by writing color-coded reflections directly on lesson plans rather than in a separate teaching journal. It’s much easier to recall what happened in the lesson if this is done as soon as possible after the lesson. Mini-reflections, such as thinking of one thing to keep and one thing to change in the lesson, can also be a useful time saver.

Conclusion

I've learned so much from reflective practice over the years – it's been a very important tool for my teaching journey. If it wasn't for reflective practice I'm not sure I would have been able to sustain the energy and enthusiasm for 21 years.

When I was planning for the talk that I gave at the Teacher Journeys conference I did some brainstorming and came up with 42 different tools that I've acquired over the years. (see Appendix 1) That may seem like a lot of ideas, but there are probably quite a number that most teachers have already tried. One of the key ideas in my career has been to “change one thing.” Even small changes have the potential to create ripples that can have lasting effects on your teaching practice. So take the next step. Choose an idea that resonates with you or choose one that you feel resistance towards. And continue on your own teaching journey with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

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Web Resources

Teaching Perspectives Inventory

<http://teachingperspectives.com/>

VAK learning styles tests, Multiple Intelligence resources, & many other things

<http://www.businessballs.com/>

Education Rethink

<http://www.educationrethink.com/>

Onestopenglish

www.onestopenglish.com

Appendix: 42 Tools for the EFL Teacher's Journey

Microplan	Frameworks KASA I – Thou – It	Inspirational quotes	Find your metaphor “When I’m teaching at my best, I’m like a _____.”	Get organized (courses, materials, activities)	Get qualified in TESL (Take a course or class)
Be curious (attitude of inquiry)	Colour-coded reflections on lesson plans	Discover what works for you (and then try a new thing)	Become a student (Japanese language, painting, etc.)	Peer observation	Absolute positive regard
Join JALT and a SIG (get involved)	Reflective practice	Change one thing Let go of the tried and true	Music BGM & song activities	List of 5s Brainstorm at least 5 options	Watch an inspirational teacher movie
Work hard	Reflect in-action on-action	Feedback Ask for it & make decisions based on it	Keep a teaching journal (in a way that works for you)	Write your teaching philosophy / beliefs	Go cycling (...skiing, hiking, walking, running...)
Talk about teaching with colleagues (constructive, not complaining)	Action research	Cross-pollination (get ideas from non-teaching areas)	Give a presentation (then give it again) Do another one	Index cards (find a resource that serves multiple purposes)	Be generous (to your students & to yourself)
Read & learn about language teaching	Keep an “ideas” box	Read an inspiring poem (Or write one!)	Take the next step Let go	Go deeper (depth vs. coverage)	Be yourself (the best version of you)
Teaching portfolio	Meet students where they are at (inter-language)	Do research & write a paper	Mini-reflections One thing to keep, one thing to change...	Share ideas with other teachers	Wine, not whine...

Journeys of Teaching and Learning

Patrick Kiernan (Featured Speaker)

Meiji University

Abstract

This contribution introduces teaching journeys focusing on insights gleaned from interviews with English teachers in Japan working in a range of teaching contexts. It proposes that the metaphor of a “journey” allows teachers to view their practice in the broad context of ongoing life experience, providing coherence and positive sense of growth. Three stages of the journey are described: starting out and becoming a teacher; adventures on the way; realizing a sense of satisfaction.

As a teacher, it is easy to get caught up in focusing on the here and now with little more on the horizon than the next class, week, or forthcoming course, leaving little chance to reflect on the road that has already been trodden or on where one’s current practice is heading. In this contribution, I would like to suggest how reflecting on one’s teaching experience through the metaphor of a “journey” can enrich one’s practice as well as one’s sense of identity as a teacher. I will refer to episodes from interviews with teachers reflecting on their life histories as teachers. The episodes reflect stages of the life journeys of EFL teachers from starting out, through struggles and periods of growth, to realizing a sense of satisfaction as a teacher. They derive from a project where 42 English language teachers in Japan (21 Japanese teachers; 21 teachers from overseas) were interviewed about their experience as teachers. The project is described in my book (Kiernan, 2010) and the extracts from the data referred to in my presentation are available online (see Kiernan, 2012). Every teacher’s journey is unique and I hope the journeys introduced here will encourage readers to reflect on their own experiences and become more curious about those of other teachers. Whereas “reflective teaching” often implies a close focus on the specific way a teacher conducts herself in the classroom, the aim here is to evoke a broader perspective to promote a positive sense of identity as a teacher and put the day-to-day in the context of the big picture.

Journey as a Metaphor for Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning a foreign language involve abstract developmental processes and are slippery and complex enigmas. One way of coming to terms with such abstractions is through the use of metaphor. The choice of metaphor affects the way that one sees something. Metaphors enable people to see one aspect of something with clarity, while concealing others. For example, if learning is viewed through the metaphor of a computer, the metaphor might embrace notions of “input” and “output” in acquiring a language. Accordingly, the teacher might be seen as enabling learning by

providing language input and evaluating learner language output. On the other hand, if learning is viewed through the metaphor of gardening, different ideas of both learning and teaching come to mind whereby the learner's growth is "organic" and the teacher is concerned with nurturing this growth.

Teaching cannot easily be captured by one metaphor but rather a number of metaphors may be considered together to capture a sense of the multiple identities inherent in the teaching context. This notion is nicely illustrated by McVeigh (2003) when he cynically suggests that university English teachers in Japan actually adopt a number of trivial roles in the classroom that do not match well with the expectations of English professors.

While teaching English, some of the roles I feel I have been assigned include: kindergarten teacher ("everyone sit down and be quiet"); jail warden (enforcer of administration rules); prison guard ("just look like you're going along with the program for four years and you're out"); drill sergeant ("roll call!"); babysitter ("everyone please be good"); parent (wondering if sleeping students ate breakfast); big brother ("I'm here to help you develop your abilities"); coach ("just don't sit there, repeat after me"); entertainer (I know how to grab their attention: "hey, look how funny I am"); counselor ("you haven't come to class in one month; is there something wrong?"); and therapist ("why do you stare back at me without answering when I ask you a simple question?"). But the one role that I often have trouble convincing myself that I am really performing is English instructor at a university (though of course, there were a few times when I felt as if I was "really" being an English instructor).
(McVeigh, 2003, p. 138)

Ironic as this is, I can recognize these roles from my own experience of teaching. The availability of such varied metaphors enables multiple ways of conceptualizing teaching but also potentially creates conflicts in terms of one's identity, implying a fragmented identity. For this reason, studies of teacher identity have predominantly drawn on the more coherent metaphor of teacher experience as narrative (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). These accounts can be divided into those that draw on teacher interviews (Johnston, 1997) and those which present teacher life narratives (Casanave & Schechter, 1997). A number of these studies have focused specifically on Japan (Nagatomo, 2012; Simon-Maeda, 2004; Stewart, 2005). Like narratives, the choice of "journey" as a metaphor for teaching creates a focus for the drawing together of fragmented experience to give it meaning. More importantly, a journey, whatever trials may be encountered along the way, is characterized by progress. This sense of progression is essential to successful teaching as well as to learning. Perhaps for this reason, Palmer subtitles his book *The Courage to Teach* (2007) as "exploring the inner landscapes of a teacher's life". These inner landscapes of teachers' journeys may easily be overlooked in the day-to-day stresses of the classroom. Pausing to reflect on them may help us make better sense of our experiences and ourselves.

Starting Out

The well-known expression that teachers are “born and not made” seems to contradict the notion of teaching as a journey. Whatever truth there may be to this expression, the teachers I talked to described a process of *becoming* teachers by setting out on paths that would lead them into teaching. The paths began with a choice to do teacher training or seek a teaching job (preparations for the journey). For many of the Japanese teachers, the decision to set out to become teachers was spurred by an interest in English at school, interest in Western culture, or positive impressions of their own English teachers, though there were also teachers who disliked English and their teachers at school, coming to it in some other way. For example, one teacher who “detested” English at high school set out to become a teacher of Japanese but later switched to English when an opportunity to cover some teaching came her way. A teacher who became a high school English teacher in her mid-thirties did so because she loved reading and had impressed herself with the power of language learning when she found herself moved to tears while reading an English novel (*The Graduate*) as a college summer vacation assignment. This mid-life change was made possible by the fact that she had taken an English teaching license during her undergraduate studies. Since everyone has to learn English from junior high school and usually through university, becoming an English teacher is one career option for educated Japanese people and so, in a sense, following a well-worn path. This was brought home to me most strongly by a teacher who explained that, for him, becoming a teacher was a “logical choice” reached through “a process of elimination”. As the eldest son, he intended to stay near his family so that either working for the local city office or a nearby school seemed to be the main options, and as he explained, teaching avoided the need to kowtow to the public. Although he mapped out his career choice in this way, it is interesting that after continuing to educate himself to PhD level with ongoing research into the English language, this teacher now commutes to Tokyo where he could presumably have pursued a career in almost any field.

Teaching EFL in English speaking countries has gradually grown in importance and respectability due to the spread of TESOL courses and careers for graduates of these courses in universities throughout the world. Nevertheless, for teachers who come to teach in Japan from overseas it involves a literal journey besides any metaphorical one. Indeed the availability of jobs teaching English for “native speakers” is often a way of funding travel and a life overseas, particularly early on. One teacher who came to Japan to marry his Japanese fiancé took up English teaching after a year of trying to find work in anything but English teaching, assuming it was something he would just not be good at, yet in time coming to fully identify with his role. Another teacher who quit his stable and lucrative city job in London to teach in Japan quoted the reaction of one friend when talking of his plan to teach here as: “You must be crazy! Why would you want to do that?”

Adventures on the Way

Whatever the impetus, the teachers went through struggles and challenges of all kinds in the course of their careers. For local teachers working in public schools this often included dealing with severe discipline problems in unruly classrooms early in their career before being reassigned to schools with a higher academic reputation. One teacher told me about a school where many of her colleagues ended up sick from the stress of dealing with students. She introduced one anecdote regarding a boy who she caught smoking on the school premises. When she confided with her colleagues, she was shocked to find that she had no support, apparently because the teachers feared comeback from parents who she suggested were sometimes mixed up with organized crime. She also noted that she received numerous threatening phone calls during her time there. Her determination to stand up for herself and not quit the school made her a stronger person so that many years later and immediately prior to the interview she was able to overcome cancer, she explained, by battling in the same way. To her, illness was one more challenge along the way. Even for those in more orderly schools, teachers went through struggles in moving beyond a preoccupation with teaching materials and lesson plans that never went to plan to being able to focus on the students and their needs, by seeking out the techniques of skilled teachers, who led the path ahead.

Teachers from overseas faced many of these same problems but also additional challenges such as coming to terms with their identity as foreigners. Some teachers expressed strongly negative attitudes regarding Japanese colleagues, the education system and other aspects of Japanese society. The most severe of these criticisms came from a teacher who left Japan shortly after the interview, returning to the US, divorcing his Japanese wife and taking up a post as a teacher of fine art, returning to the world of sculpture that had brought him to Japan in the first place. Even so, some of the most traumatic experiences came from those who had tried to fit in and “become Japanese”. A striking anecdote in this respect came from a teacher who studied music at one of the prestigious Tokyo music colleges. Trying to fit in caused him infinite frustration because despite his best efforts he continued to be treated as a foreigner. In the end, the comment from a friend, “Why would you even want to be Japanese? They let you into the university as Jim the American.” led to a sense of release so that he no longer felt obliged to fit in and moreover developed a renewed sense of pride in himself.

Finding a Sense of Satisfaction

As mentioned already, several teachers described their careers in the classroom as a journey towards a position of confidence in the classroom, which involved gradually refining techniques, while often strengthening their spirit along the way. One might assume from this that satisfaction in teaching came from a feeling that the journey was over and that having arrived the journey of learning was complete. This did seem to be the case for one teacher who had pursued an ambitious career to rise to the top of an elite language school and indeed go on to manage her own school before retiring to have her first child, or for two other retired teachers to whom I spoke. The day-to-

day rigor of the classroom may not lend itself to complacency. The constant challenges that teachers face contribute to the feeling that the journey is an ongoing one. This idea was nicely captured by a teacher who, at the time I interviewed him, had been teaching some 15 years but was experiencing a renewed sense of excitement about his profession. After coming to Japan on the invitation of a girlfriend he took a job at a language school but a happy experience was interrupted by deportation, which led to him finding himself back in the US homeless with his wife pregnant. Eventually circumstances changed and he returned to Japan. When I talked to him on a sunny Saturday afternoon in the garden of his house that he shared with his wife and daughter in the time before heading off to a basketball game, he struck me as both inspired and contented. Yet as he explained, this happiness stemmed both from the perspective of his past experience of misfortune but also from the sense that things were not quite perfect. He mentioned a group of unruly girls in one class at the private high school that riled him but also explained the excitement he felt when he could see that he had somehow captured his students' interest in learning. As he put it: "I mean they're so fired up about it, and they are so psyched up that they can do it, and they are doing it for me" leading to "you know, satisfaction, that sometimes just my eyes are watering, and I can't...you know my respirations up, I am having a moment there really." Last summer I met a cyclist travelling around the US and when I asked about his trip he said that it was 99% grind but that it was worth it for the 1% of really inspiring moments. Perhaps there are parallels in our journeys as teachers.

Conclusion

Teaching and learning may be envisaged in many ways and from each metaphor comes a particular perspective on what one is doing. From computers we get input-output, from gardening we get ideas of nurturing learning. The metaphor of a journey, however, is a particularly useful one because it allows us to see the breadth of our experience as a cohesive and progressive even in the face of setbacks. Moreover, you can look ahead to the continuation of the journey allowing you to seek future progress, rather than see your practice as a repetitive closed loop. Once you understand the importance of reflecting on your own experience, you can also recognize that learners also have their journeys and that opportunities to reflect on this in the classroom may also be valuable.

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Life With an Itaku Contract

Benjamin Bailey
University of Shizuoka

Abstract

In this presentation I discuss my experiences as a Gaba “man to man” English teacher with an Itaku contract. I look at some of the legal issues with the Itaku contract, and how they affected the work environment. I recount experiences from other teachers and myself as I taught over 200 lessons a month. I explore issues such as developing a support group and handling burnout. Finally, I will share the JALT resources which enabled me to move on to a university position, and reflect on—in hindsight—how the experience made me a better teacher.

I began working for Gaba shortly after finishing my MA degree in TESOL. It was always my goal to return to Japan to teach at the university level, but unfortunately I lacked the knowledge to achieve this goal. Most of my university connections were in Seattle where my I attended my MA program.

I decided to make moving to Japan my top priority and then work on finding a university position later. I made a list of criteria for potential jobs. First, as an American citizen without permanent residence, I required a sponsor for my work visa. I also wanted a decent salary, adult students, and free time to research and search for a university position.

I used the Gaijinpot website to find jobs. My three candidates were Westgate, Aeon, and Gaba. I quickly ruled out Westgate after reading messages from former employees. I next vetoed Aeon due to the child classes. Gaba seemed the most attractive option. It boasted a flexible schedule, the possibility of salary increases, and limited students to adults. Although the start up costs were troublesome, I decided to join Gaba.

The Itaku Contract Life

Gaba's public image is designed to impress. All teachers--officially referred to as instructors--must wear suits. (Business formal for women.) Suits must be black or very dark. I was once told to change out of my light grey suit. Facial hair and wild hairstyles were discouraged in my experience. Instructors resemble lawyers more than traditional English teachers.

Gaba has various schools, most of which are located in the Tokyo area. These schools are officially referred to as "studios." I personally taught at the Meguro, Ginza, and Shinbashi-Shiodome studios. The interior design is minimalist and warm. Clients wait for their lessons on square couches in an open lounge. Soft music signals the end and start of each lesson. Clients walk through a row of booths to find the correct number. Instructors wait by the opening and offer to take the client's coat.

The lesson begins as soon as both are seated. The pair sit at an angle around a half-circle desk to create an environment more relaxed than a traditional classroom. Gaba is located more in the service industry than in education.

Salary

Gaba is a dangerous employer due to the fact that employees aren't guaranteed any salary. Gaba instructors open 45 minute slots when they are available to teach. Students, or "clients" reserve these times online or by phone. All lessons are one on one. "マンツーマン" is Gaba's slogan. Of course, if no clients book lessons, the instructor sits in his booth alone all day. No lessons means no money.

Unfortunately, this means that instructors must hustle to get clients and that charisma is more important than teaching skills. Honestly, many of my clients came to me after long days at work and wanted to relax and discuss topics like football rather than work on a role-play. This was officially sanctioned and encouraged.

Gaba employees must work hard to ensure that they book clients to get paid. In addition to charisma, image is important. In my experience, any instructor who stood out--by being European or African --could expect a steady stream of clients. Different genders seemed to be in demand in different environments. For example, female instructors were more popular at Shinbashi-Shiodome where most of the clients were male businessmen. Male instructors fared better in Ginza which had more female clients.

Finally, consistency mattered. Although the schedule is flexible, instructors must be available at consistent times to build up a strong client base. I remember taking one Sunday off to watch my father run the Tokyo marathon. The next week I returned to find that many of my "regulars" had moved on to a different instructor.

For those interested, I've included some specific numbers:

- 1 lesson is 40 minutes.
- There is a 5 minute break between lessons.
- 1 lesson= ¥1,500
- Each lesson costs the client ¥7,000 - ¥10,000

Reexamining Gaba

I quickly found myself completely consumed with working for Gaba. I averaged over 200 lessons per month and worked six days a week. In December, I worked 2 straight weeks, took a day off, then worked another full 2 weeks. After January 3rd, I didn't have 2 consecutive days off until my July birthday.

On March 11, everything changed in Japan. My studio closed 30 minutes after the earthquake, but was open again the next afternoon. Occasionally, we would close early due to stopped trains and blackouts.

Many instructors left. I was one of the few who stayed at my studio. There was a one week period when our instructor staff dropped from 16 to 3. The situation made me reflect on life. I discovered that many of the "benefits" I assumed were actually false.

As my ultimate goal was university teaching, I had decided to focus on adult students. I believed Gaba only allowed adult students. However, Gaba implemented a new "Gaba Kids" program. Soon, 9 year old children were being taught in booths next to CEOs. The setting didn't seem to work well for children, but no instructor would turn down a lesson and the money.

I also discovered that there were very few salary increases. Gaba does have a belting system where instructors with high evaluations can increase their pay. However, the most recent CEO decided to cap these pay-grades at a low number. In fact, the company looked for ways to "de-belt" and decrease salaries. Despite teaching over 200 lessons a month, I never received a pay increase.

Furthermore, the flexible schedule turned out not to be so flexible. Although instructors can make their own schedule, these schedules must be submitted over a month in advance. Once entered into the system, it is very difficult to change. This means, for example, that my classes on September 30th could be fully determined by August 10th.

Visa Work sponsorship further complicated the issue. Instructors from countries such as Australia can enter Japan on Working Holiday visas. Employees from other countries must depend on company sponsorship for a work visa. Instructors with visa sponsorship are required to teach a minimum of 160 lessons per month. For an American such as myself, the flexible schedule wasn't truly flexible.

The Itaku Contract

The Itaku contract has long been a source of conflict between employers and English teachers. A 2004 Japan Times article notes; "The Education and Labor Ministries have declared that these "gyomu-itaku" contracts for ALTs violate Japan's Dispatch Law. Unfortunately, boards of education and private companies all around the country have yet to get the message. Many schools apparently want to avoid the responsibility of directly hiring foreigners but want the right to fire at whim and will. And they do" (Carlet 2004).

Today, many private schools utilize the Itaku contract in various forms. This allows the company the freedom to fire employees at will as well as deny benefits under the presumption that employees are actually freelance workers. In a 2011 Japan Times article, Gaba Union officer Adrian Ringin states; "Because you have flexibility, that is a magical thing which changes everything else. You have the flexibility to open the lessons when you want and close them, therefore you are not an employee and you have no rights whatsoever. The constant mantra which the company says is 'flexibility' " (Scott 2011).

As previously noted, the Gaba schedule is not truly flexible. In addition to this, there are other issues with the idea of being a "freelance" teacher. Is the work truly freelance if the company

determines the location, uniform, and materials? Currently the Gaba Union is attempting to improve the quality of life for instructors. A recent meeting (Gaba General Union, 2012) outlined these goals:

- Travel allowances
- Paid holidays
- Overtime and premium rates
- Right to challenge unfair dismissals
- Unemployment insurance
- Health and pension insurance
- Guaranteed salary
- Job security

Leaving Gaba

I decided to refocus my efforts on gaining a university position. I joined JALT and searched for positions on the Job Center. I was amazed how many positions were available. After March 11, many foreign teachers left the country and left many positions open. I began compiling a list of university positions to apply to. There were almost 30 applications to fill out.

I also formed a support group of friends and "rivals." My friends in other industries took time to prep me for interviews, proof-read essays, and ask around about possible openings. I also had friends who were in the same boat--looking for positions at universities. We kept pressure on each other. I knew if I missed a deadline, my two friends would be one step ahead in getting the position.

I found that my time at Gaba had well-prepared me for the job hunt. Keeping track of a dozen applications didn't seem complicated after preparing 14 individual lessons a day, 26 days a month. I also found that interviews went much more smoothly than in the past. Hours of teaching English with movie stars and CEOs gave me confidence.

I was extremely fortunate and accepted an offer from the first school I applied to. The previous teacher left mid-year, so I began teaching almost immediately. I left the Itaku contract life for a more secure, relaxed position.

Conclusions

Although I'm happy to have moved on from working at a private English school, I would also like to be able to view my experience objectively. It is my opinion that companies like Gaba might be a good match for some, but not for others. Personally, I was overqualified for the position, overworked, and underpaid. However, this might not be the same for everyone.

I would not recommend Gaba for people who require work visas. Company sponsorship gives too much control to the employer. It also cancels out the promise of a flexible schedule. Also, people with masters degrees or higher can find better positions.

People who have Working Holiday visas or permanent residence might have a different experience. For them, the schedule can truly be flexible. There is no threat of being kicked out of the

country if there aren't enough students one month. Also, young people, fresh out of university, will likely enjoy the experience. Schools such as Gaba put teachers in contact with workers from a wide variety of occupations. I personally met actors, athletes, accountants, lawyers, advertisers, photographers, executives, politicians, and many more. I learned a great deal about the job market as I planned English lessons to better meet my students' needs. I would recommend Gaba for any young person who is attempting to find their place in life.

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Metaphors We Teach By

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Abstract

The title of this paper is derived from Johnson and Lakoff's influential book (1980), which investigated the centrality of metaphor in human conceptualization of the world around us and also the pervasiveness of metaphor in the way we use language to interact with others and the world. This paper will describe some of the metaphors that informed the author's early conceptualizations of language, teaching, and language teaching and suggest that these metaphors clustered around concepts of power, control, authority, differentiation, hierarchy and prescription. The author will then outline some of the important concepts that effected a reconceptualization of the respective roles of teacher, learner, language and classroom. Some metaphors which emerged from this reconceptualization were clustered around concepts of equality, autonomy, convergence, fluidity and interactivity.

Viewing teaching through the use of metaphor is a well-established conceptual approach. Even a casual on-line search of the terms 'teaching' and 'metaphor' will throw up a very large number of hits and the metaphors that have been employed by various teachers and researchers are a wide and varied. McVeigh, (2003, p.138) offers a comprehensive list of metaphors to describe some of the roles that a teacher may be assigned, such as 'jail warder', 'drill sergeant', 'entertainer' and so on. Most teachers will probably recognize these roles and admit to having fulfilled them at some point.

It is clear that many teachers see themselves, at least some of the time, through the prism of metaphor, but on a deeper level, unconscious metaphors of teaching, students, and language may undergird approaches to pedagogy. That is, teachers may carry with them into the classroom metaphorical outlooks that affect the whole shape of teaching that subsequently takes place. And, if these metaphors are limited in accounting for the multi-component, holistic and dynamic processes of language teaching and learning, then the whole process will be handicapped, and the metaphors may have to be reconceptualized. This paper describes such a reconceptualization.

Initial Metaphorical States.

Since antiquity there has existed the tendency for education to be viewed through metaphor. "The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be lit." is a concept that has been reformulated in one way or another from Plutarch to W.B. Yeats. The 'vessel to be filled' metaphor has remained a persistent one. Reddy (1979) discusses a version of this in 'the conduit metaphor'. "Human language

functions like a conduit enabling the transfer of repertoire members [thoughts] from one individual to the other.” (Reddy, 1979, p.311) The metaphor extends from language to teaching. The conduit metaphor, with the central concept of transfer from one locus to another, readily lends itself to the language classroom. In this setting the message is the vocabulary, grammar and so on of the target language from the mind of the teacher to the mind of the learner. The transfer is uni-directional, teacher controlled and the receiver is a passive, unknowing vessel.

Clustered around this central metaphor of transfer are several other metaphors, one set of which relate to power relationships. Metaphors such as *drill sergeant*, *prison warder* and *parent* apply to this aspect of the prototypical language classroom. In this case the teacher is seen as holding power over the learners which is non-negotiable. The teacher holds institutional power over the students and can assert this power by giving sanction for such breaches as lateness, and is the sole arbiter (in the learner’s eyes) over lesson content. The teacher holds situational power in that s/he decides such things as group membership, seating arrangements, task initiation, duration and termination. And, of course, the language teacher, either native speaker or proficient non-native speaker determines what constitutes ‘correct’ language.

A further conceptual cluster concerns the nature of language itself. In this case language is held to be a mysterious, alien and complex artifact whose underlying structures are understood only by the initiated. The initiated are those who by dint of being native speakers (NS) are assumed to be able to pronounce with authority on all aspects of the target language. Or, they are proficient non-native speakers (NNS) who have arrived at their state of knowledge after intense study. In either case, knowledge of language was acquired on a distant shore or after a long and arduous physical and mental journey. Language in these metaphors stands apart from the daily life of the learner, understandable only with the aid of the already initiated. Language is also seen as a ‘destination’, with the language learning process geared towards the reaching of a discrete goal, which is taken to be native-like ease of language use. Anything short of this goal is taken to be failure.

To sum up, the general concepts informing the author’s initial views of language, teaching and language teaching were based on notions of inequality of knowledge, uni-directional movement of information, power differentials between teachers and learners and (perhaps more unconsciously) between native speakers and non-native speakers. In this incipient conceptualization, language itself was seen as primarily an abstract body of knowledge, whose systems and processes have to be looked at as a kind algebra. Only the correct application of the correct formulas can bring about ‘correct’ results.

Language, Teaching and Language Teaching Reconceptualized.

Central to the argument of Firth and Wagner (2007) was the idea that language exists as a social, interactive phenomenon. “Language is not only a cognitive phenomenon, the product of the individual’s brain; it is also fundamentally a social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, in a variety of contexts for myriad practical purposes” (p. 81). This interactive nature of language

counters the conduit metaphor in at least one key area; namely, a conduit does not transfer in two directions at the same time.

The notion of the interactive, social nature of language and language has been dealt with by a variety of authors. Wong and Waring (2010) assert, “The importance of conversation as the foundation of all language learning cannot be overstated” (p. 1). Brower and Wagner (2004) take the view that; “Learning a second language, then, may be described in terms of increasing interactional complexity in language encounters rather than as the acquisition of formal elements” (p. 44). This concept is echoed by Seedhouse (2006); “...competence is co-constructed by the participants rather than being fixed and static” (p.112).

The refocus away from notions of sentence-level grammatical correctness is highlighted in a study by Wong (2005, pp.159-173) which compared native speaker (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) interaction in educational settings and in naturally occurring conversations, and found that issues of grammar are often sidestepped in naturally occurring conversations, with NS speakers “emphasizing meaning rather than form or accuracy” (p.160). However, in the classroom, a different model prevails, orienting to the conduit metaphor with all of the implied differentials; “...the teachers and the nonnative speakers jointly orient to and build the talk in a different manner, constructing their identities as linguistic expert and novice, native and nonnative speakers of the language of classroom interaction” (p.160).

Carroll (2005, pp. 214-234) discusses the view that NNS are not interactionally incompetent, and suggests that even novice learners can employ sophisticated techniques, in this case vowel-marking, as a “situated resource for organizing aspects of their interaction” (p.215). Carroll concludes that;

“Explicit instruction not just in the ‘grammar’ (in the traditional sense of that term) but also in the micro-practices of the target language/culture, including those of self repair, may resolve a number of difficulties and may even significantly improve subjective impressions of students’ spoken abilities.” (p. 233)

If classroom discourse is to move away from the three part exchange system (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975), then certain staples of classroom identity and lesson content will have to be re-evaluated. Cook, (1989, p. 56) gives a list of some of the defining characteristics of conversation, including the partial suspension of power roles, the fact that conversation is not primarily necessitated by any practical task and that it is not performed for any outside party. These three factors stand in complete opposition to traditional notions of language learning with its institutionalized power differentials, the idea that all classroom activity must be purposeful in a very narrow sense in that it must demonstrate to the teacher (a non-participant) that learning is taking place.

This calls for a different view of the teacher and learner roles, based on equality and negotiation, a review of how and under what circumstances and for what purposes talk-in-interaction takes place and necessitates a break with the conduit metaphor/empty vessel view of teaching.

Metaphors of Language and Teaching Revisited

In a reconceptualization of teaching and learning that moves away from the conduit/empty vessel metaphors, a new series of metaphors suggested themselves. These metaphors are clustered around concepts of dynamism, equality, emergence, and interactivity.

The Fractal Metaphor.

Fractals are shapes or structures which are extremely complex and that have an underlying pattern that belies the seemingly random form. The same forms are repeated at different levels of scale. In language this metaphor may be apt to describe the way that talk-in-interaction unfolds. That is, the chaotic system ('chaos' being used in the mathematical/scientific meaning, not the 'disordered' meaning) unfolds from a starting point, where the "future behavior is fully determined by their initial conditions, with no random elements involved" (Kellert, 1993, p. 56), but "the deterministic nature of these systems does not make them predictable" (p. 62). This fits with the account of spoken language given by Schegloff, (2007) "As sequences get expanded, their structuring becomes progressively less determinate" (p. 181). This unfolding, structured but unpredictable pattern is expanded upon by Coultard and Brazil (1992).

It is partly because a quality of relevance, accessible only to participants, and valid only at the time and place of utterance, can attach to any utterance regardless of form, that no generalized judgments about well-formedness in discourse can be made. (p. 63)

The unfolding and essentially unpredictable nature of fractals and conversations is one point of similarity. Another is the 'self-similar' nature of both fractals and conversation. That is, fractals replicate the same structures again and again at different levels of scale. Conversations have this feature as well. The basic unit of interaction is the adjacency pair. (See Schegloff, 2007.) This basic structure of two adjacent utterances (perhaps even a single word in length) by different speakers is also found at larger levels of scale, "yielding extensive stretches of talk which nonetheless may be understood as built on the armature of a single adjacency pair..." (p. 12). That is, from the point of view of turns, the same basic pattern is replicated from the smallest possible utterance, a single word, to large scale utterances such as story telling episodes, in which a story may be told in response to a story. (See Schegloff, 2007, pp. 41-45.)

The fractal metaphor also extends into the actual practice of teaching a language. To adopt a well-worn idiom, no lesson plan survives contact with the student intact. Lessons, like conversations, have beginnings which are often formulaic, but may unfold in unexpected ways which were not in

any way predictable prior to onset. In practical terms this metaphor manifests itself as ability to react to these kinds of unfoldings, rather than insistence on rigid adherence to a pre-determined lesson plan. Lessons, like conversations, depend on the ongoing engagement and commitment of all participants to deal with the here-and-now in pursuit of multiple, emergent and often conflicting communicative goals.

The Pub Metaphor

In addition to conceptualizing the roles of teacher, student and language, it is also worthwhile to give some thought to the physical space where learning is (supposed) to take place, namely the classroom.

Now, the classroom is of necessity an institutional space and as such will affect the orientations of the people within it when they engage in spoken interaction. Seedhouse (2004) discusses the way in which participants orient themselves to the goals tasks and identities of the institution in question, creating interactions which are different to non-institutional conversation.

The institutional nature of the classroom reinforces the kinds of power imbalances that lay behind some of the metaphors referred to earlier, and these power imbalances manifest themselves in direct physical ways in the traditional classroom. The teacher controls entrance to and exit from the space, with the timing and seating being set by the teacher. Learners are provided with desks and chairs and normally remain seated unless directed to move by the teacher. The teacher is free to position himself/herself anywhere within the classroom. In effect the whole area of the classroom belongs to the teacher, not the learners. Institutional spaces often have these kinds of demarcations of power and access.

The traditional British pub is a different kind of psychological space where autonomy is maximized and institutional influence is minimized. The social phenomenon of the pub is discussed by Fox (2004). The ways in which pub customers perceive the space is very particular. Unlike restaurants, customers are not seated by the staff but freely choose their own place. They may stand or sit. They will not be approached by staff members anxious to take orders; in fact the staff will remain outside the psychological space of the customer, behind the bar, thus leaving the initiation of any interaction to the customer, not the staff. Drinks are paid for when ordered, so customers may leave whenever they wish, without having to enter into interactions with the staff to settle the bill. In sum, the pub is a psychological space which is controlled by the customer, not the staff, in as many aspects as possible. If classrooms can become such psychologically egalitarian places, (and in the authors view they can be 'talked in to being'), then it stands to reason that naturalistic conversation is not an impossibility. Seedhouse (1996) argues that the institutional nature of classrooms largely precludes truly naturalistic conversation from taking place, but if a determined effort is made to change the concept of the classroom space is made and explained clearly to the students then institutional concerns can fade to the background.

An egalitarian social space can be talked into being as follows; after taking registration at the beginning of the class period, the students should be habituated to initiating conversation without any kind of cue from the teacher. The teacher will not allocate, groups, seating arrangements, topic or anything whatsoever. No sanction will be placed on use of L1 and the teacher will be available to join the interactions as a co-participant if invited to do so by the students. Learners have responded positively to this fostering of autonomy, and gradually oriented themselves to a more social identity in the classroom. A research project carried out by the author found that the amount of time students will converse in English increases steadily across the semester. The project also showed that in lessons that were somehow different from normal classes, for example, make-up classes held on a weekend or classes scheduled on a national holiday, institutional concerns disappeared entirely and the whole period was given over to conversing in English. This demonstrates that the institutional nature of the language classroom is not unchangeable or monolithic, but that classrooms can become autonomous social spaces.

Conclusion

In thinking about language, teaching and language teaching it is very easy to fall back on metaphorical descriptions. Indeed, metaphorization of teaching and learning is a long established trope, dating back to antiquity. However, it is important to realize that metaphors are more than just *post hoc* descriptions of situations, but rather, have the power to color thinking and influence behavior from the outset. The (few) metaphors chosen here (and there are many others) illustrate a conceptual shift away from traditional views of language and teaching based on power and knowledge differentials to a more nuanced humanistic and dynamic view of what language is and how it can be taught and learned.

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Technological Journeys in EFL Teaching

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Abstract

Every journey begins with a willingness to venture beyond one's familiar surroundings and embark on a new path of discovery. This, in fact, is how my own journey as an EFL teacher began in Japan some twenty years ago. Particularly during the formative years of my journey, I felt a strong sense of adventure, not only because I was embarking on a new career, but also because of the many discoveries I was making during the numerous opportunities I had to travel within Japan and throughout the world. What I learned firsthand from that eventful phase of my life was that, by following my natural curiosity, more often than not, providence would lead me to meaningful, and often unexpected, discoveries. In more recent years, after reflecting on my past experiences and once again allowing my natural curiosity to be my trusted guide, the same processes have led me down new paths full of exciting discoveries, which ultimately have culminated in technology playing a more pivotal and valuable role in my teaching.

Prior Journeys

Prior to the establishment of standardized and compulsory systems of education, teachers through the ages relied largely on the spoken word, and with time, on the written word in varying forms. With the onset of compulsory education and growing demands on teachers, technology of the times provided educators with much needed tools, most notably the blackboard, chalk, and textbooks. Nowadays, in addition to these staples of teaching, educators have a vast array of technological aids at their disposal. Despite the prevalence of technology, however, teachers who are either unaware of its potential or believe they lack the necessary knowhow to utilize it, may be hesitant to access technology, preferring instead to rely on more traditional – and proven – tools and methods.

Technological Teaching Tools

Although it is certainly *possible* to teach relying solely on traditional tools and methods, my own experience, prior to embarking on this current leg of my journey, tells me that limiting ourselves to such familiar surroundings places unnecessary limits on our capabilities and potential as educators. In my own case, my decision to purchase a digital projector was the first step along my technological journey. This in turn led me to a host of other indispensable teaching tools, which ultimately have opened up a whole new realm of exciting teaching possibilities.

Digital Projector

For a modest financial outlay, one can purchase a digital projector, which in conjunction with a laptop computer, instantly gives a teacher the capacity to present a vast array of lesson materials in the classroom through text, color, sound, images, and video; not to mention a range of other benefits.

Digital Projector – Freedom

Having my own projector means that I am far less constrained by my physical surroundings. To illustrate, regardless of whether a classroom is or isn't fitted with a computer, monitor, DVD player, screen, speakers, etc., having a personal projector enables me to display a multitude of lesson materials, i.e., worksheets, scanned pages from textbooks, lesson plans, Internet pages offline, images, audio, video, interactive PowerPoint slides, etc., with the minimal requirements being an electrical outlet and a white/blackboard. In reference to the latter, I find it surprisingly more effective to display materials on a white/blackboard, as opposed to a conventional screen, as it allows my students and me to interact with the projected materials (literally) by writing over or highlighting parts of the images directly on the white/blackboard. Displaying materials and interacting with it in this way allows my students to *see* what I am saying, not only *hear* it. From my experience, this has a threefold effect: it 1) raises learner comprehension, 2) reduces the need for teacher-talk, which in turn 3) creates more time for student-talk.

Digital Projector – To copy or not to copy? That is the question.

Ironically, the well-intentioned efforts of teachers with 'a *load* of good lesson materials' can result in 'an *overload* of photocopied materials'. Excessive photocopying can be time-consuming for teachers, and overwhelming for students. In situations when *seeing* the materials is more important than students *having* a permanent record of it, an alternative to handouts is required. However, when the only available tool is a photocopying machine, short of physically holding up the materials in class, teachers are left with few, if any, viable alternatives. Nowadays, having a personal projector enables me to bypass the photocopier all together and, instead, display (selected) materials digitally.

Digital Projector – Color my world

Photocopied materials teachers hand out to students is, for the most part, monochrome. However, in situations where color plays an important role in learning, (i.e. describing fashion, objects, etc.), the absence of color, or lack of it, can be detrimental. Therefore, whether the goal is to enhance learning (i.e. educational), or simply for esthetic purposes (i.e. motivational), a projector allows teachers to *display* handouts – and other materials – in full color, easily and effectively.

Digital Projector – Keeping it current and authentic

Once printed, textbooks begin a slow, yet inevitable, process of becoming outdated. In addition, although textbooks may contain examples of authentic English, in the main, much of the content is specifically tailored for language learners. Exposing our students to material which is both current and authentic requires teachers to go beyond the textbook. The Internet is arguably the most obvious source for such material, yet without a projector (as described above), it can be problematic, if not cumbersome, to present authentic material on a regular basis. In a sense then, the project serves as a virtual bridge to the outside world, enabling teachers to display current, authentic, and relevant content from almost any source, not only the Internet.

A Handheld Scanner

Another exciting addition to my technological toolkit, which has made a meaningful difference to my teaching, is a *handheld* digital scanner. Out of class, I use it to scan pages from textbooks and other lesson materials, which I can then display during a lesson. In the classroom, it is equally effective as it enables me to quickly scan students' work (particularly group-work) and display it almost instantly via the projector, while students stand and present their work to the rest of the class. Another advantage of this practice, albeit an unexpected one, is that it gives me a permanent digital record of students' class-work that I can keep for my records.

Software – Microsoft PowerPoint

Although Microsoft PowerPoint is widely used by educators for *giving* presentations, it appears, on the surface at least, that it is less commonly used for *teaching*. In addition to using PowerPoint in the classroom to display a variety of lesson materials, my journey has led me to other, less conventional, applications of the software. Popular games, such as 'Jeopardy', 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire', and 'Spin the Wheel', which teachers may already be using via traditional methods, are also available in PowerPoint versions (with animation, sound, and color) and ready to download (for free) from the Internet. Such interactive PowerPoint games require very little teacher input, and I have found them to be, not only effective tools for teaching, but also, fun and motivational for my students.

Software – Microsoft Publisher

Microsoft Publisher is another inexpensive yet valuable piece of software, which I have also included in my professional toolkit. In short, the software contains a multitude of templates grouped into various categories (i.e. brochures, restaurant menus, business cards, pamphlets, signs, flyers, advertisements, labels, newsletters, etc), which are authentic-looking and conducive to common EFL teaching themes. The software can also transform plain Microsoft Office Word files into highly professional-looking documents in a wide range of color and boarder schemes. In short, Microsoft

Publisher enables teachers to create a wide range of high-quality lesson materials; in a minimal amount of time.

The Internet – YouTube

In terms of sheer quantity and variety of videos, one would be hard pressed to find a more comprehensive online resource than YouTube. I have incorporated YouTube videos, both EFL specific and general themes, into my lessons on numerous occasions to stimulate and enhance learning. Although having internet access in the classroom to play YouTube videos may be desirable, it is by no means a necessity. Teachers need only access one of the many software applications that are readily available online and free to install, allowing users to download videos directly from YouTube and save them for later viewing offline.

The Internet – Google earth

EFL textbooks commonly contain maps – often fictional – for teaching ‘giving directions’, as well as images of locations from around the world to support a particular piece of text. Although such content is very useful, if not essential, I also believe that we, as teachers, can offer our learners more. In my own search for ‘more’, I discovered that Google Earth ‘Street View’ is, not only very useful for expanding learners’ real world knowledge about content in textbooks, but more so, it is a powerful and versatile tool for teaching ‘giving directions’.

An effective way of bringing Google Earth into classrooms without internet access, is to first create a Google Earth ‘tour’ of the target location while *online* (before class), which can then be saved and played *offline* later (in class). From personal experience, creating such tours requires very little time or technical knowhow, yet their impact on learning can be great.

Challenges

Since all tools come with their very own unique set of challenges, technological teaching tools are no exception. That said, however, with a little foresight and planning, such challenges can easily be minimized.

One of the main the challenges of using technology, I have found, is the time required to set up, and then pack up, the equipment. Generally, it takes between five to ten minutes to set up my equipment and five minutes to pack it up. Granted, it necessitates going to class a little earlier, but given that, once set up, the tools save me valuable time *during* class, not to mention all of the above advantages. I firmly believe that the benefits more than compensate for any minor inconveniences, i.e., at the beginning and end of each lesson.

Another challenge relates to lesson content. As already stated, when compared with more traditional tools and methods, technology provides teachers with access to a greater array of lesson materials than ever before. With this newfound freedom, however, comes the need for greater vigilance. To avoid the risk of selecting lesson materials based merely on its novelty aspect, rather

than its education value, teachers need simply apply the same stringent standards and set of criteria they would normally apply to *any* teaching materials, regardless of the tools they are employing.

Future Journeys

My technological journey, thus far, has led me to a host of new and exciting discoveries, which I feel has helped me to grow as a language professional. Looking ahead, I am keen to venture further into this rapidly changing technological landscape. In particular, (online) Skype appears very promising. Bringing outside English speakers in to the classroom via Skype – within a set framework – would provide EFL learners with a whole new world of opportunities to apply their language skills for truly authentic and real world purposes, making it, I believe, a path worth exploring.

On a more technical note, as the rate of technological advancements continues to grow exponentially, it will be vital to keep abreast of major changes and upgrade my tools accordingly. In the meantime, however, it is equally important to maintain the tools I already have to ensure their continued, trouble-free, and long-term use.

Conclusion

I am convinced that the technological landscape I have described above holds great potential for EFL education, and yet, it remains relatively uncharted. With a lack of definitive roadmaps to lead us forward, I believe that future meaningful applications of technology will come from teachers *using* technology – through trial and error – and *sharing* their stories with others in our field.

I therefore encourage EFL professionals everywhere to embrace technology and use it as a vehicle to follow their curiosity and venture beyond, as I am confident that what awaits will evoke a sense of adventure, and lead educators and learners down new paths filled with exciting discoveries, and boundless possibilities.

Online Professional Development Journey

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Abstract

I have been involved in an online community of practice, Electronic Village Online (EVO), that connects a global group of language teaching professionals who work together to develop their knowledge of web 2.0 tools and technology integration in the classroom. This experience has changed my teaching career because it increased the frequency and personalization of professional development opportunities. For example, as I became more involved in the community, I realized that the benefits also included participating in international collaborative projects and forming personal connections with other educators. I will review my online professional development journey and introduce some of the online tools that teachers can engage in to start their own professional development journeys.

Online professional development is becoming increasingly popular as teachers seek out ways to develop their skills in an accessible and sustainable manner. I have been involved in an online community of practice, Electronic Village Online (EVO), and this experience has changed my teaching career. I would like to introduce this community, review my current and past involvement in this community, and explore ways in which teachers can begin their own online professional development journey.

Electronic Village Online

EVO is an online professional development event facilitated entirely by volunteers who are trained online moderators. Annually in January and February, a variety of free, five-week online courses are offered to anyone who is interested. Although the event is sponsored by TESOL's CALL-IS, participants do not need to be a member of TESOL in order to take part in the sessions. There are no grades or certificates awarded for completing the courses. A variety of courses are offered each year, and past courses have included technology-related topics such as digital storytelling, digital gaming, and digital tools. However, not all sessions have a technology focus; sessions on topics such as mentoring and drama have also been offered. I have participated in many EVO courses since 2005, and I have co-moderated five EVO sessions, including the 2012 EVO session *Digital Tools with a Purpose in the Classroom*, which was a highlight in my six year online professional development journey.

Moderating Digital Tools with a Purpose

Describing the Digital Tools session will provide a brief introduction to the structure and environment of a typical EVO session. In this Digital Tools five-week session, participants were introduced to various online tools and learned how to incorporate these resources into their teaching practices. By the end of the workshop, participants had an overview of simple ways to spice up writing, listening, speaking, and reading lessons while promoting students' creativity, engagement, and learning.

EVO is an international professional development event. For instance, the Digital Tools moderating team had nine members from seven countries in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia. Each EVO session is sponsored by a TESOL interest section (IS); Digital Tools was supported by three: EFL-IS, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL-IS), and Non-native English Speaking Teachers (NNEST-IS). Participants in the Digital Tools session came from all over the world. Over 500 people from around the globe joined the session and produced hundreds of assignments, artifacts, posts, and comments. Although some teachers in Japan may be hesitant to participate in TESOL organization or events, as you can see, the EVO has an international focus and is relevant for educators in both EFL and ESL teaching contexts. In these respects, EVO is a unique learning opportunity.

In EVO sessions, interaction takes place in several online spaces and all of the sites used in EVO are free. Edmodo was the main communication hub for the Digital Tools session. Edmodo is a social learning network for educators and their students, and the layout is similar to Facebook. In addition, all the weekly instructions were posted on the Digital Tools wiki. Finally, a Diigo group for sharing bookmarks and a Scoop.it page for digital curation were also maintained.

EVO sessions have clear aims and instructions for each week. In the Digital Tools session, during the first week, participants became familiar with the previously mentioned online spaces. The major assignment for the first week was to create an online introduction. Although participants could use any online tool of their choosing, recommended tools included about.me, Animoto, Voki, flavors.me, and Prezi. Over the course of the next four weeks, digital tools to enhance writing, listening, speaking, and reading lessons were explored and participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the tools. Some popular tools were Zooburst, Smories, Time 10 Questions, Sketchcast, Intervue.me, and Big Huge Labs. As a final project, participants created lesson plans using the tools that would be useful in their particular teaching contexts. Throughout the session, participants were encouraged to keep all of their work in individual blogs or online portfolios to showcase their learning experiences and teaching ideas.

Finally, a survey to assess the effectiveness of the session was made available to everyone. Although this marked the official end of the session, all of the materials are still available online and our spaces are still open for interaction; additionally, a Facebook group has been created to facilitate continued communication. The moderators hope that through the Digital Tools session, educators could see the possibilities of incorporating web tools into their lessons. The teachers created artifacts

and made connections; we hope that they will share this transformative experience in their classrooms.

Learning to Teach Online

It is interesting to reflect on my online professional development journey that led me to become involved in the EVO session as a moderator. The first step of this online journey began in 2005, when I was teaching English composition and public speaking to native English speakers at a community college in the U.S.. Even though I didn't have any experience in teaching online or using technology in education, my supervisor asked me if I might be interested in teaching composition online the next semester, and in order to gain the necessary qualifications, I enrolled in "Teaching Online," a four week faculty development web course at the community college. This course followed a typical distance learning model: the textbook, Teaching Online, and the course management system, Blackboard, were used. In this course, I learned how to facilitate an online class and how to develop components for a composition course to be delivered via Blackboard. The course was interesting because instructors from all departments were enrolled, so I was able to interact with math, biology, and history teachers too. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience and teaching online the following semester.

Because of my new found interest in teaching online, I was pleased when I discovered TESOL Electronic Village Online. I signed up for a course called Becoming a Webhead 2006 (BaW06). This course was designed to provide a basic introduction to technology, and from the course outline, I could see that it would offer me a chance to develop knowledge of a variety of online tools, such as blogs, wikis, online surveys, and so on. The course was given through Yahoo Groups, and participants also interacted synchronously through Yahoo Messenger. I followed the course with interest and was amazed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteer moderators and the participants from all over the world. I enjoyed creating online artifacts and imagining how to put them to good pedagogical use. After reflecting on the experience, I was surprised by the differences between these two online learning experiences.

Noticing Key Differences between EVO and Other Courses

Unlike the Teaching Online course I had taken at my workplace, the EVO session was not institutionally bound, nor conducted in a closed online environment. EVO was collective and all participants learned from one another. Although there was a schedule, it allowed for nonlinear progression in learning. All materials were freely available online for everyone to see at any time; in other words, it was self-controlled. While I had expected to learn a lot about online tools through EVO, I hadn't expected to make lifelong friends and colleagues from all over the world. I was also surprised that the frequency of professional development became an everyday affair. The learning and connecting didn't end once the course was finished; interactions on Yahoo groups, blogs, Twitter, and other online venues could be accessed at any time. Professional development was no longer

something that occurred once a year at a professional conference. I continued to stay connected with the people I met in the online session, and branched out into other online spaces and developed my own online presence.

Making Online Connections

The connections I made in my first EVO session in 2006 profoundly affected my development as a teacher and as a professional. In 2007, I was invited by the moderators of Blogging for Beginners to assist with the course; then in 2008, I co-moderated Blogging for Educators. These courses focused on the basics of starting a blog, using RSS, and microblogging with Twitter. As a result of this work, I was invited to present online at Training the Trainers Network to Support Trainers in a Europe online conference with online professional development. Also, I blogged with students and conducted international collaborative projects, such as an international cartoon festival, connecting students in Japan, Argentina and Brazil.

Then, in 2009 and 2010, I co-moderated Images for Educators which focused on photo sharing and digital storytelling web sites. As an offshoot of this session a colleague and I developed a new project, Using 21st Century Tools to Teach 19th Century Literature, and I began using online tools, such as Twitter, to enhance my literature lessons. Finally, because of my continued involvement in EVO, I was invited to participate in an EVO panel discussion at the Virtual Round Table online conference. At present, I am in the process of developing new projects using social networking tools. None of these projects would have been possible without the knowledge and connections made through EVO and other online professional development endeavors.

Starting your online professional development journey

Starting your own online professional development journey will be a rewarding experience both professionally and personally. The following online tools and communities are quite useful to connect with like-minded teaching professionals:

- **Facebook:** A great way to start using Facebook professionally is to connect with JALT. There are many JALT-related groups on Facebook, so simply search for “JALT.” More publicity for chapter and SIG events is happening on Facebook, and some groups post job information or discussions on professional topics as well.
- **Twitter:** Twitter is a microblogging service that allows users to send and receive 140 character updates. Following influential educators and participating in #ELTchat are two simple ways to become involved in the Twittersphere.
- **Scoop.it and Pinterest:** Both of these are digital curation sites that allow storage of online information in a visual manner.
- **Diigo:** Diigo is a social bookmarking site. Not only is it a convenient way to store bookmarks, but it is also a great way to collect information by joining groups and following other educators.

- **EVO sessions:** In 2013, registration for EVO will be held from January 7-13, and the sessions will take place from January 14-February 17.

Conclusion

From 2005, I was able to find a professional area of interest: CALL. I was able to develop skills, connections, and confidence that enabled to me to become a more active and contributing professional. These experiences affected me not only as a professional, but also as a teacher. I would like to encourage language teaching professionals in Japan to become involved in EVO or other online professional development opportunities.

Notes

This presentation was developed for the EFL Teacher Journeys 2012 Conference. Slides for this presentation are available at <<http://www.slideshare.net/MaryH/online-professional-development-journey>> More information on Digital Tools can be found at <<http://classdigitools.pbworks.com/w/page/44702717/Welcome>> and on EVO at <<http://evosessions.pbworks.com/w/page/10708567/FrontPage>>.

Keeping Perspective in the Workplace

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Abstract

As an EFL teacher of almost 20 years, I have experienced and witnessed my share of conflict living and working in Japan, which was invariably recounted in conversations both at work and outside work. From this experience, I have noticed that there are two types of conversation: conversations about actual problems within the workplace and conversations that are basically gripes, and complaints with no basis. While the former conversation type is needed to help deal with the issues and conflicts that arise day-to-day, that latter is not needed and in fact may contribute more conflict rather than resolve any. This type of negative discourse can often end up defining our workplace, yet it is rarely discussed openly or constructively.

In the Teacher Education Development (TED) SIG guided discussion in Shizuoka, I wanted to focus on how we deal with this type of conflict at work outside the classroom. First, I gave a brief presentation on how identity and place can contribute to conflict. Then, I shared some anecdotes of conflict and suggestions on how to respond. Finally, I opened the floor to further the discussion and asked the participants to reflect upon how they react to negative situations in their work life and to suggest ways to respond to them constructively.

Conference Response

The discussions were lively and it seemed everyone had something to say, which indicated that the presentation was topical. There was, however, a problem. The discussions quickly migrated to issues of job security, “psychopathic” bosses, and how to succeed (success is “25% intelligence and 75% attitude”). These were all worthy issues to discuss except I had wanted to focus on how negative discourse in the workplace can have a negative impact on our work experience including the issues just mentioned.

Of course I should have framed the purpose better or have prepared a presentation on these all too familiar issues. But that was part of my point, these issues are very familiar and what I wanted to do was to focus on what is often called “trash talk”.

So I will reframe my approach in explaining why I think that this kind of negative discourse can be detrimental to the workplace and possibly our jobs. First I will discuss how negative discourse can negatively affect reality, then give some anecdotal examples and finally a specific example of how a self-proclaimed activist contributes to the kind of negative discourse that I am concerned about.

The Social Imaginary

Philosopher Charles Taylor has written much about the social imaginary. The social imaginary is “the way our contemporaries imagine the societies they inhabit and sustain” (Taylor 2007, p.6).

The example Taylor used was the rise of the French republic arguing that the French crown could have never been overthrown if the society at large had not been able to envision and accept a monarch-less French society. Similarly, this phenomenon could be sensed around the time of the Soviet collapse and the fall of the Berlin Wall. At that time, even ordinary people could “imagine” the change in their surroundings as could all levels of society express their common desire for fundamental change (Taylor, 2007, p.23). The point I want to make is how we imagine ourselves and talk about our lives here, be it at work or elsewhere, can have an impact on our workplace environment.

This is highly theoretical, but I am very interested in how our language, our rhetoric and discourse, as English language teachers in Japan has contributed to a seemingly collective complaint that begins with the refrain, “Those Japanese...” or some similar generalization that ends with a putdown. John Heritage writes that it is through this kind of negative discourse or interaction “that context is built, invoked, and managed... made real and enforceable for the participants.” (Heritage, 2003, p. 224). In other words, when someone makes a generalized complaint or gripe it can become real, and rebuttals and challenges to this newly realized complaint become more difficult to mount as time goes on. When accepted, this complaint, generalized and untrue at first, becomes integrated as “ordinary conversation” (Heritage, 2003, p. 225) as if it were true and valid. Paul Seedhouse (2004) also writes about “talk into being”, a social construction based on what is spoken by the participating interlocutors.

What Taylor, Heritage, and Seedhouse are all saying is that our discourse can have real effect in world we live, for example our workplace. So when we engage in negative discourse that exaggerates and marginalizes others such as the Japanese staff, it can make our work experience more negative and the Japanese perhaps less responsive to our real concerns.

First Contact with Negative Discourse

I first became aware of the negative discourse used by native English teachers when referring to the Japanese about 19 years ago, soon after I first arrived in Japan. There was this swirl of excitement and opportunity that was intoxicating as we newly arrived teachers took in the sights and sounds and the tales other teachers told. One tale caught my attention. A young person who had been here for several years teaching English somewhere in Wakayama Prefecture was visiting friends in Osaka at Orange House, a dormitory type place where foreigners stayed, mostly English teachers. One night on the roof a bunch of us were hanging out drinking beer and this person started to tell us of her recent good fortune. Apparently s/he (I'll use this proto pronoun) was an ELT to a wealthy student. In the course of these lessons s/he let it be known that s/he had this huge student

loan to pay off back home. At some point the wealthy student offered to pay off the student loan. That was of course a generous offer and it was accepted.

The twist in the story is that the person telling it did not tell it as someone with gratitude but as a grifter. S/he did not say one grateful word but instead insulted and mocked the generosity of this person. I do not know if the story told is actually true. I have been here long enough to not believe everything I hear. But the language used to disparage someone who, in the story at least, had done a generous act, had left its mark on me.

Of course there are rude and inconsiderate people everywhere in all cultures, even among the Japanese, but no one challenged this person, including me. So it seemed that taking advantage and speaking ill of the Japanese was made “real and enforceable” by someone who dominated the conversation.

More anodyne are the daily criticisms, put downs, and negative comments directed at our Japanese employers, colleagues and support staff that many native English teachers make seemingly at the drop of a hat. Like talking about the weather, the latest on Facebook, or where to drink, disparaging our Japanese co-workers, support staff and administration has become something that has become phatic and therefore disrespectful and demeaning.

I need to stress that I am not suggesting that real and substantive issues should not be addressed, but this paper is not about those issues. This paper is about our negative and phatic discourse around the proverbial water cooler about the staff that support us, the administration that hired us, and the society we live in. To illustrate I would like to share some anecdotes that I have witnessed over the years.

Anecdotes

The Grudge

A native English teacher got hired several years ago to her/his first contract position at a university that had a better than average compensation package which included subsidized housing. On arrival s/he had discovered to justified disappointment that the apartment had not yet been cleaned by the previous tenant. As it turned out, the previous tenant was a teacher at the university who had quit on negative terms and vacated the apartment on the last possible day without cleaning it. The new teacher was greeted with this act of insouciance on the first day and was understandably upset. The university apologized but did not do much beyond that since the teacher had already cleaned up the apartment.

The original three year contract ended up being six years with a substantial raise. All through those years, this teacher left Japan as soon as classes finished and arrived just before they began. Conversations with colleagues often center on criticizing the university. Nothing the university did could make up for their mistake on this teacher’s first day, but they honoured their contract throughout. Upon completing the contract, the apartment was left uncleaned and vacated on the last possible day: a legacy of the previous teacher who had left with a grudge.

How different would this teacher's experience have been had s/he, after making the grievance to the university, left it behind instead of making it the lens through which s/he saw and judged everything else? How much smoother would this experience have been had s/he been grateful for the generous salary and benefits package? Finally, how much more positive would the workplace have been had this grudge not infected conversations with colleagues?

The Exaggerated Claim

"I'm being ripped off!" proclaimed a teacher when s/he discovered that the hourly per class rate at one university was less than the per *koma* rate s/he was paid at another. There was no actual cheating by anyone. S/he signed a contract without understanding the pay structure. Yet the first response was to accuse the university of some kind of financial shenanigans.

"I can't believe how stupid they are!" exclaimed another teacher complaining about room scheduling. S/he had to use in consecutive periods two classrooms next to each other. In this case, s/he had given conflicting room resource criteria to the Japanese staff who had to schedule thousands of classes a term trying to accommodate all teacher requests. Even though the confusion was caused by the teacher's contradicting room requests, the first response was to insult the staff responsible for classroom assignment.

These teachers failed to conduct themselves to professional and fair standards of behavior and judgment.

The Change of Focus

Recently one Japanese member of a committee that manages the native English teachers decided for some poorly explained reason that contract teachers needed to, for the second year in a row, reformat and resubmit their resumes before being offered their renewal contract. It was a jump-through-the-hoops exercise that served no purpose, but was too small an issue for the committee to argue against because more important issues had to be resolved. So this needless revision had to be done.

In the teachers' office the conversation understandably turned negative quite quickly to the charge of power harassment. This charge had merit, however, the focus of the irritation also changed from this one committee member to "they", "them", and "the university". The irritation was understandable but the change of focus to the whole university was not. There was no actual plot against the contract teachers by the university but, as later revealed, the committee member was "marking territory" for political reasons that had nothing to do with the teachers.

A single person in a position of authority can easily misrepresent the university's goals because of personal ambition or vendetta that has nothing to do with those most affected.

Micro-Aggression

Recently the former American David Aldwinckle, now commonly known as Japanese naturalized Debito Arudou and a self-proclaimed activist “trying to make Japan a better place for everyone regardless of how they look”, took a new tack by embracing microaggression as the latest threat to non-Japanese living in Japan (Arudou, 2012a). While there are many issues that we teachers have to contend with living in Japan, micro-aggression is not on the list for most teachers. Arudou’s use of microaggression as a way to explain why some Japanese ask if foreigners to Japan know how to use chopsticks, is a misapplication of the research Dr. Sue and his team, as this research deals with interactions between peoples of the same culture, specifically peoples of color in the United States, and not with peoples brought up in different cultures (Sue, 2007, p. 271). As Dr. Sue wrote to me, “it is important to note that both the quality and quantity of microaggressions are very different for those ethnic groups born and raised in their country as opposed to those who immigrated with intact racial/ethnic identities” (D. W. Sue, personal communication, July 8, 2012). Dr. Sue is not saying that microaggressions do not exist where the players come from different places, meaning there is no direct correlation between the examples he uses in the United States and those used by Mr. Arudou. After reading Mr. Arudou’s follow up article (Arudou, 2012b), I am left wondering if it is not he who needs to recognize his own microaggressive tendencies when he uses the labels *guestists*, *haters*, *the vested* and *apologists* against those who disagree with him.

Mr. Arudou seems to consistently misframe issues which end up being overcritical of Japan. Through his website and newspaper column in *The Japan Times* he contributes to the negative tone of similarly negative water cooler discourse that does nothing to solve any real problems but adds to a general dissatisfaction which can, to use his phrase, “grind us down”. And this is why I wanted to talk about the negative and overcritical language and discourse that does little if anything to improve our working lives, either collectively or individually, in Japan.

In doing the TED discussion and writing this paper I have found how difficult it is to maintain objectivity because how we talk is very personal. I do not claim to have the answer, however, I feel that there needs to be some pushback against the kind of discourse and disrespect that can create a social imaginary that serves no real purpose but harms the workplace environment.

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Teaching Ideas to Enhance Overall Student Proficiency

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Abstract

This article discusses teaching techniques employed in a Media English course for improving the language skills of English majors. The primary focus is on the development of academic listening and speaking skills through discussions and presentations using college-level texts. Based on literature in second language learning and educational psychology, the course is designed to provide students with good quality input and output, and to promote self-efficacy and willingness to communicate. More specifically, the course draws on Nation and Newton's (2009) four strands of teaching: (1) meaning-focused input, (2) language-focused learning, (3) meaning-focused output, and (4) fluency development tasks that also improve self-efficacy and willingness to communicate. It is well-documented in the literature that self-efficacy has a profound impact on academic performance (Bandura, 1986) and L2 learning performance (Matsuoka, 2006), which in turn influences willingness to communicate (Yashima, 2002; Onoda, 2012). In this article, several tasks are briefly explained, based upon the four strands of teaching (Nation & Newton, 2009). Then two major tasks, discussions and presentations, are explored extensively, with practical suggestions for their use.

In recent years, universities have been revising their academic language programs in order to improve student academic English skills in discussing and presenting ideas and opinions on issues covered in the media. Consequently, the potential for content-based Media English courses have attracted the attention of educators (Onoda, 2011). Such courses provide an optimal learning environment where students get information on social issues, think about and discuss them critically, present their findings, analyses and opinions, get feedback from an audience, and reflect on their performance. During this interactive process, learners can maximize their language use in authentic contexts, enhance their discussion and presentation skills, and improve their overall proficiency (Murphey & Arai, 2001). More importantly, this interactive approach has the potential to promote student self-efficacy and willingness to communicate (hereafter WTC). In context-based courses, students are often allowed to select materials to discuss and present. Such an approach increases their motivation and autonomy because it encourages learners to display their ideas, skills and performance, and promotes cooperation (Dornyei, 2001).

Literature

Nation and Newton (2009) propose that the ideal language course should be composed of four strands in order to effectively promote learner English skills. These are meaning focused-input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output, and fluency development. Different kinds of activities are suggested for each component. For meaning-focused input tasks, listening to and discussing a familiar story are useful; for language-focused learning tasks, intensive reading and listening, shadowing, and dictogloss can be employed; for meaning-focused output, discussion and presentation are effective tasks, and for fluency development, 4/3/2 (a repeated story-telling task) and intensive listening are helpful. Among these four strands, much attention has been given to meaning-focused input and output in the Japanese EFL context (Onoda, 2011). However, these strands have not always been employed effectively with regard to college-level discussions and presentations, where critical thinking skills are required, as well as accuracy in language use.

One challenge is that the selection of academic English texts requires serious consideration because these texts pose challenges to learners. The materials and tasks must satisfy the intellectual curiosity and intrinsic motivation of the learners, as well as match their proficiency levels (Dörnyei, 2001; Onoda, 2008).

Research indicates that other factors significantly affect language learning: self-efficacy and WTC. Self-efficacy refers to judgments by the learners about their abilities to successfully complete a specific task (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Self-regulation literature (Bandura, 1986; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Onoda, 2012) indicate that self-efficacy has a direct impact on self-regulation strategy use, which in turn influences academic and L2 learning. It is well-documented that highly efficacious learners envisage success in learning, are able to overcome difficulties, and maintain their commitment to learning (Rothman, Baldwin & Hertel, 2004). Bandura (1986) suggests several techniques that improve learner self-efficacy, such as having learners successfully complete a particular task, receive positive feedback from teachers or classmates, or observe peers overcome difficulties to achieve goals, thereby lowering their affective filters.

L2 literature (MacIntyre and Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002) also suggests that it is important to incorporate techniques that improve WTC. Some research suggests that L2 proficiency influences perceived L2 confidence (a concept similar to self-efficacy), which in turn, predicts L2 WTC. Other research demonstrates that L2 confidence or self-efficacy has a profound effect on WTC, which in turn, influences speaking skill development (Matsuoka, 2006; Onoda, 2012). It is logical that WTC is a key factor in aiding output tasks such as discussion, presentation, and 4/3/2. In either case, promoting WTC is positively linked to improving language proficiency and self-efficacy. WTC enhancement can be facilitated in a number of ways: (1) using authentic materials that stimulate intellectual curiosity, satisfy intrinsic interest, and promote critical thinking (Dörnyei, 2001), (2) giving positive feedback and encouraging peer feedback on student performance (e.g., discussions and presentations), (3) providing opportunities for students to contribute to the class (e.g.,

presentations) (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003), and (4) promoting interaction, cooperation and sharing of personal information and opinions among learners (e.g., 4/3/2 and discussions) (Dörnyei, 2001).

Media English Course

Tasks employed

Given these theoretical frameworks and empirical data, the Media English course is designed based on Nation and Newton's (2009) four strands of teaching, and incorporates tasks that promote self-efficacy and WTC. Among them, the following tasks are utilized in the course:

Day 1 (Teacher-conducted instruction)

1. Oral introduction of the main points of a TV news clip, and relevant background information
2. Partial TV news clip viewing and fill-in-the-blanks exercise
3. Language/Expression analysis
4. Teacher-led interactive news story-retelling

Day 2 (Student-centered instruction)

1. Group presentation to explain the TV news story
 - 1-1. TV news clip viewing and fill-in-the-blanks exercise
 - 1-2. Explanation of the answers to comprehension questions and summary completion
 - 1-3. Explanation of background information (using PowerPoint)
 - 1-4. Interactive news story-retelling
 - 1-5. Dictogloss
 - 1-6. Group discussion
 - 1-7. Opinion sharing session
2. 4/3/2: A news story-telling task

Notes:

- 1-4. Interactive news story-retelling is a task where the presenting group summarizes the story by asking questions of the rest of the students and using their knowledge.
- 1-5. Dictogloss is a task where a small group of students takes notes and listens to the summary narrated three times by the presenting group. Later they reproduce the story, as close as possible, to the text.
- 1-7. Opinion sharing session is a task where the presenters elicit ideas from each group, make comments, and finally, discuss their own ideas.
2. 4/3/2 is a news story-telling task based on extensive listening assignments. In this task, students summarize, in their own words, a news story they have selected. They summarize the story to one partner in four minutes, a second partner in three minutes, and a third partner in two minutes.

Group presentation and discussion tasks

As discussed, group presentation and discussion tasks comprise the majority of the teaching in this classroom. However, it is reported that these two tasks are not effectively implemented in many classrooms (Onoda, 2011) due to teachers' lack of experience and to excessive time dedicated to language-focused learning exercises. Thus, it is advisable to use the following reinforcement techniques. For economy, practical suggestions for facilitating effective presentations are described below.

- (a) Give a model presentation to demonstrate important points that one should consider while presenting, such as good eye contact, clarity of explanation, and the use of visuals. This technique can be used for developing discussion skills.
- (b) Invite a group of good student presenters and students who are highly proficient at discussion to provide a model performance for the other students.
- (c) Teach formulaic expressions that the students can use in presentations and discussions, and that help them speak more naturally and fluently, while freeing working-memory capacity.
- (d) Give the students practice in writing summaries of news stories and in paraphrasing their and their interlocutors' opinions and ideas, to be used in oral interaction with an audience.
- (e) Use fluency development tasks, such as the 4/3/2 story-telling tasks and shadowing exercises, on a daily basis to promote automatization of effective expressions and discourse features.
- (f) Teach strategies for coping with difficult questions so that presentations and discussions will not be disrupted.
- (g) Require presenters to think about and discuss the topic, material, and approach to the presentation with the teacher, a few weeks in advance of the presentation in order to guarantee good quality input to the audience.
- (h) Direct students to distribute the handout to the class a few days before their presentations, so that the class can read and complete the exercises, and can prepare ideas for discussion questions.
- (i) Require the students to rehearse the main parts of the presentation in front of the teacher a few days before the presentation.
- (j) Designate a fluent speaker to moderate the discussion session.

These suggestions are geared toward developing good presenters, but given the fact that effective presentations are co-constructed by good audiences, teachers should also consider how to develop effective listeners who actively interact with the presenters. Based on my teaching experience, the following suggestions might be of value.

- (a) Point out that the students need to participate actively in the presentations by completing all of the assigned exercises and preparing their ideas for the discussion questions.
- (b) Check completion of the exercises, and the language and ideas, before the presentation.
- (c) Encourage students to contribute ideas and information to the presentation whenever possible.
- (d) Give extra points to students who have actively participated in the presentation and discussion.

- (e) Have the presenters ask questions about the points they are discussing, or which require deep thinking, to confirm that their audience is listening during the presentation.
- (f) Encourage the audience to use the evaluation sheets to evaluate the presentations and to write comments for improvement.
- (g) Incorporate feedback sessions so that the audience can ask questions regarding the information presented, and can make comments on the performance.
- (h) Monitor and evaluate the degree of participation in the discussions and presentation by the audience.

Final Words

This course is designed based on the four strands of teaching with a primary focus on group presentation and discussion tasks in order to promote self-efficacy and WTC. It was found (Onoda, 2011) that this instructional design was well received by English majors and that their speaking and listening skills, as well as self-efficacy and WTC, improved over the academic year. Although the results might not be generalizable to other populations, suggestions from the findings, backed by the author's 10-year teaching experience, seem to validate the teaching approach.

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Dyslexic College Dropout to a Doctoral Candidate: A Journey to a Dissertation

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Abstract

Diagnosed with dyslexia, I was fortunate to have gone to a school with a staff that could help turn a disability into a simple learning challenge. These experiences impacted my studies in numerous ways, including my becoming a college dropout, twice. However, as an adult learner and teacher, initially as an Emergency Medical Technician and later as a language educator, my formative experiences impacted my instructional approach and now, influence the direction that I am taking with the dissertation in my doctoral studies. Self-reflection and self-responsibility for one's own learning are keys for dyslexic learners to have positive outcomes. The dissertation that this paper will introduce is based on both, and is grounded in my own experiences as a dyslexic learner receiving learner/peer feedback/critiques for assigned tasks.

Whether one works as an educator to children or to adults, the educator cannot help but be affected by their own educational experiences and foundational knowledge of the topic they teach in order to have the confidence needed in the delivery of their subject. In the process of building a comprehensive plan of delivery that culminates (hopefully) in learner mastery of the subject/topic, the tutor must be reflective so as to seek ways of improving the delivery of the topic of instruction. For the tutor, the importance of self-reflection is well noted in the literature and with multiple instructional models that can be followed. For example, the instructional designer who follows the ADDIE (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2005) model or the grade school educator who employs the ASSURE (Smaldino, Lowther, & Russell, 2010) model of instruction, like most models of instruction, self-reflection of the lesson is a key component. The goal of this self-reflection is the improvement of one's instruction so to better facilitate learning outcomes. With the understanding that one's immediate and long-term past learning experiences can impact how one approaches teaching and research, this paper will briefly outline how past experiences have influenced the methodological approach to instruction that this researcher holds today, and how these experiences have formed the basis to the dissertation research I am currently undertaking.

The Impact of Dyslexia

I was diagnosed with dyslexia and treated so many years ago as a third grade student. I was lucky that my school had the staff to treat my learning issues unlike my cousin from across town. Though I was trained in how to work with my issues, I remember that my training was based in

building my experiences with language in a way that my third grade peers did not experience; it was not a case of memorizing spelling, but of understanding how words and letters are constructed so that I could use them better. Indeed, I know that as I progressed through the public school system, I was never satisfied with “showing the work” or with having to “memorize x ”; I wanted reasons to study and it was not until I was in the eleventh grade when a biology class became interesting that I found reasons to study. I was then able to build knowledge in part because the reasons for my study had purpose and because the study was not just to pass a test but also to understand how an organism functioned.

Reflectively, it is easy to see now that I was a learner who responded better to an andragogical system of instruction rather than a pedagogical system. Of course, I neither knew nor understood the differences between these two instructional approaches, but my experiences show that I was trained to question, not follow. As an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), my training was very practical, adult orientated with tangible goals that were, for example, to aid individuals in physical distress. Knowledge was gained through experience. Leaving this career was not easy due to the change in how learning was conducted – a schematically applied (EMT) educational experience versus intellectual pedagogy (university) with very different learning environments and methodologies of instruction. Where I excelled in practical learning environments, I chafed at the memory of being told, “do, and do not ask why”. Eight years after my second college experience and the dreaded and pointless assignment for an English class: “Better red than dead” or “Better dead than red” that caused great friction between me and my instructor and ultimately lead to my dropping out of college twice, I had to return to college. I expected a return to a pedagogical system of instruction like I had previously experienced as an eighteen year-old. Fortunately, on my third attempt I had two English professors, Mr. Guppy and Ms. Jenson, who both understood adult instruction and their methodological approach to adult instruction enabled me to survive my return.

Fast-forward to today, and I can see how these two professors impacted my learning experiences. Their respect for my experience, their requirements that I had to justify my thoughts/actions in a logical manner stuck through the years since the completion of my undergraduate studies. The requirement for the learner to justify their reasons is an approach that I continue with today. I first noted this fact about six years ago, when teaching a presentation course with an inadequate textbook. Students were asked to watch a presentation and as a team, explain the positive and negative points of the presentation using a form that did not necessarily meet with their feedback needs. Later in the course, I again asked my student to provide peer feedback but first they had to agree with what they were to critique and then formalize their statements of success onto a rubric form. This is peer feedback, not based on teacher definitions, but on learner derived assessment points starting with a system of co-constructed assessment criteria and with explanations for each level of success. It worked and more importantly, the students loved the exercise because they were better able to understand the desired outcomes as they defined them themselves with, of course, some tutor guidance. Their learning experience changed from a passive, “did the speaker do x ”

to “we need to ensure that we do y”. They went from a pedagogical approach of receiving instruction to an andragogical approach of participating in instruction.

Learner Derived Feedback/Assessment

Experiences are what aid human development, and my experiences have lead to my promotion of learner derived feedback critiques with the purpose of aiding learner comprehension in their assigned tasks. As one who did not enjoy his youthful educational experiences, it is easy to see that the experiences and learning issues I have faced are the same ones that have influenced and aided my dissertation research. Orsmond, Merry, and Reiling (2000) had a group of native English users in a university biology class derive their own feedback criteria for their assigned class presentations. This is an exciting concept but unfortunately, the demonstrated results were weak. Yet despite the weakness of the presented feedback forms, students declared that the experiences aided their understanding of their assigned tasks and aided their motivation toward the class activity. The research involved within my dissertation will build on the peer derived feedback/critique and on the Orsmond et al. (2000) work but with five different study parameters: first, students will work on a writing task; second, learners will be asked to explain the levels of success for each of their defined criteria; third, participants will be English language learners at the university level; fourth, the study will assess different processes used to formulate the feedback so to identify efficacy; fifth; students will be requested to participate in a survey that questions the exercise and the different process used to formulate the feedback forms. The study will essentially seek to understand the degree to which language learners want self-reliance skills in their studies. Having worked with this exercise numerous times in the past, I believe that building the learner’s experiences is key to their continued educational success – much akin to what it takes for the dyslectic learner to build success.

Conclusion

Learners who receive education that builds on their experiences attain stronger outcomes and show a greater understating of assigned tasks. Whether or not my learning experiences coupled with the fact that I was made aware of my learning style at a young age allowed for me to identify the potential for this peer derived feedback/critique exercise is moot; rather, it is just a statement of my journeys through the education systems that have had an influence on my research. That I began using a learner derived feedback/critique in both youth and adult classes approximately six years ago, and that I discovered the Orsmond et al. (2000) study about three years ago is important only in that it shows that activities that add to one’s experience are effective and complement one’s past leaning experiences or learning styles.

The current research being conducted on learner derived critiques is exciting in part due to its potential as a motivating activity that aids learner understanding of a given assignment. Learners, by creating their own feedback, feel that they better understand the task objectives and are better able to reflect on their and other’s work. The dyslexic learner understands that self-reflection and self-

responsibility for one's own learning are requirements for success. The research into peer-derived feedback/critiques is exciting in that it brings a new level of awareness to the assigned tasks of the learner. If one has not attempted to have their students formulate their own assessment parameters for a given task, I would highly recommended it as a task that is worth the effort and with encouraging results. If you do try this process, please forward your results.

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