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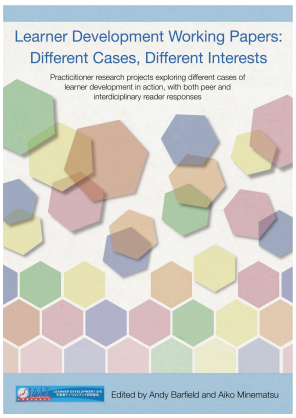

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Chika Hayashi, Guy Modica, and Yukiko Banno

Co-Constructive Storying of Our Journey toward Autonomy

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Main author contact:
Chika Hayashi, 1-1, Gakuen-cho, Soka-shi, Saitama, 340-0042, Japan

Email: c-hayashi@dokkyo.ac.jp

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Chapter One

Co-Constructive Storying of Our Journey toward Autonomy

Chika Hayashi, Dokkyo University, with Guy Modica, Seikei University, and Yukiko Banno, Seikei University

Abstract

This paper is an attempt of multi-dimensional approach toward autonomy based on an explorative dialogue. It starts with my personal reflection on my elementary school days wherein lurked a small seed of autonomy. The monologue then shifts to a dialogue where Guy (the second author) and I share our own experiences as students and teachers and co-construct our original stories about our professional journey toward autonomy. As we relate to and respond to each other, the story interweaves various threads of our own episodes and gradually lets emerge some key concepts of autonomy, such as choice, responsibility and authority. The dialogue is further expanded with the integration of literary elements. Yukiko's (the third author) literary sense of interpretation provides a new insight into the construction of the dialogue. The multi-layered processes of dialogue based on our personal histories helps us to enhance awareness of new aspects of ourselves as well as our own educational philosophy. It also identifies the roots and process of our profession for autonomy, putting some of our personal and professional experiences into each other's stories, which results in indicating the possibility of a new approach to autonomy.

要旨

本稿では、探究的対話に基づくオートノミーの多次元的アプローチを試みる。オートノミーの小さな種が潜んでいた小学校時代の自己省察から始まる著者の独白は、Guy（第 2 著者）との対話の中でお互いに反応また関連し合いながら経験の共有と探究を通して、オートノミーに関する独自のストーリーを共同構築する。そして、様々なエピソードを入り交えながら、選択、責任、権威といったオートノミーの重要な概念を浮き彫りにする。また、第 3 著者である Yukiko の文学的視点は、対話に文学的要素を融合させ、ストーリーの構築に新たな見解を与える。個人史に基づく幾重にも織り成す対話は、自身の教育理念と自己の新しい側面に対する気付きを高め、また互いの語りの中に自己を投影しながら、オートノミーを専門にする著者の教育者そして研究者としてのルーツとその成長過程を明らかにし、オートノミー研究への新たなアプローチの可能性を示唆するものとなった。

Key words

autonomy, explorative dialogue, personal history, an exploration of the roots and process of self and profession

オートノミー、探究的対話、個人史、自己と職業のルーツとその過程の探究

Chapter One

Co-Constructive Storying of Our Journey toward Autonomy

Chika Hayashi, Dokkyo University, with Guy Modica, Seikei University, and Yukiko Banno, Seikei University

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Part One

Chika: Having been brought up in a teacher family, it seems natural that I became a teacher. However, it was my learning experience as a learner and student that really made me decide to pursue a teaching career. When I reflect on my experiences as a learner at different stages of my formal education, particular episodes stand out as influential for me. In my elementary school life, the most impressive memory was the fifth grade "reading" class on Friday afternoon. In the first lesson, the teacher took us to the school library and told us to pick out any books we liked. Some chose picture books which were very popular among teenage girls at that time, while others selected a book from a Japanese history series. As soon as we went back to our classroom, we started reading the books. It was a very special time for me; all of us, including the class tutor, were silently reading the books we liked in the classroom. If the book I was reading was not interesting, I could go to the library even during the class to choose a different book. Although the classroom was full of silence, I liked the atmosphere where I felt we all shared the same time but read the different books. The class tutor did not define or tell us anything about this special time, and it was not until a decade ago that I realized it was a Japanese extensive reading class.

Then I became a junior high school student. As I made this transition, I assumed that there would be a clear boundary between the elementary and junior high schools. I also expected the life style and class should be greatly different in a junior high school. Holding some expectations and apprehensions about the differences, I found one class particularly caught my attention when the class timetable was distributed. It was a Japanese reading class. Unlike the first lesson of the reading class in the elementary school, however, we all received the same thick book covered with blue, which included a collection of short stories by famous Japanese authors. In each lesson, we did chorus reading of certain pages the teacher selected, and where a student was nominated to read aloud certain lines. The student stood up and read the lines in front of the class; the teacher checked her performance and corrected every single mistake she made. Feeling big gaps between the elementary and junior high schools, I gradually felt that doing everything without any mistakes was what the teacher expected students to do in the junior high school.

In a similar manner, my first encounter with English was imprinted on my mind as a practice of penmanship. I was repeatedly told to write English in cursive style. This practice was boring, but I thought it was the initial and important step in mastering English. However, I gradually considered the English class to be a kind of ritual, and this perception became even more intensified in high school with the patterned cycle of vocabulary check, drill practice, yakudoku and chorus reading. Before long, I came to believe that memorization was the only and best strategy to get a high score in any exams. Having doubts about such a systematic way of learning and imagining how I could teach if I were a teacher, I strived to translate

English passages into the best Japanese and memorize all the important grammatical terms (and even dialogues!) in a textbook. My learning experiences in the junior and senior high schools exemplified behaviorist-oriented learning; teachers transmitted all the information to me and I simply but exactly reproduced what I memorized from them.

Forced to become intimate with the memorization-oriented learning, a pre-service teaching course I took in my third year at the university became a turning point in that it crystallized my perceptions about learning and teaching. In this class, I learned various teaching methods and techniques such as Total Physical Response through hands-on experiences. I found tremendous enjoyment in this inductive way of learning. Moreover, we had many opportunities to work in pairs or groups to try out learning methods and were encouraged to think and express our own ideas, which I had almost forgotten for many years. What I remember the most in the class is the first mock lesson I did in a small group. In spite of the fact that all the other members taught one unit in a textbook, I chose "Yesterday Once More" by the Carpenters as the teaching material. I was radical in a sense, as I thought the mock teaching was a great chance for me as a "novice teacher" to carry out an "experiment" to see whether or not my ideal teaching methods I had described in my high school days were effective. I was also curious about how the other members would respond to the teaching material and methods. In this class, I may have taken every chance and tried to challenge my fossilized perceptions about learning and teaching.

Guy: Chika's reminiscences foregrounded quite a few notions that resonate with me: how personalization and learner choice play central roles in the inductive process of discovery learning; differential outcomes from egalitarian or hierarchical class configurations; most importantly, how these stereotypical characteristics of formal learning can impart understandings unintended by teachers, as learners attend to what is salient in their experiences—not necessarily what is in sensei's lesson plan.

These short classroom narratives correspondingly brought back one of my own, a familiar story of immigrant teachers of my era. In Kyoto in 1983, I took a first teaching position without particular language education training, though I had entered university 15 years earlier intending a tertiary teaching career. At my (successful) job interview in Kyoto, I was given a textbook sequence, asked to prepare a lesson, and then performed for staff at the conversation school, who role-played students. As we all do, I applied the methods of the best teachers I had known during my 16-year apprenticeship of observation as a student. Surely I also put on display my personality, enveloped in a stage presence honed as a club musician. These were the intuitive sources of my "naïve methodology."

During my time at that school it was my good fortune to encounter textbooks based on various methodologies: *Spectrum*—a communicative, integrated skills series (including explicit form focus); *Modern English*—an archetypical audiolingual series from Seido Language Institute; *Threshold*—an activity-based communicative series from the Council of Europe, highly focused on situational proficiencies through pair work. In a *Spectrum* unit we started with dialog practice, then did exercises and checked answers; for the Saturday once-a-week program I led each of three groups through a 2.5-hour exercise session. My teaching was scripted to perfection by the third session, while I found students asking the same questions in each session. I could predict both their actions and mine, a pattern that was repeated with other groups the next term. The book crafted our behavior.

Audiolingual and behaviorist, *Modern English* constrained our behaviors even more strictly. At one term's end I sadly realized I knew nothing about my "partners" beyond their names. From dialogs to transformation and substitution drills, all our work was completely defined,

meaning that we shared nothing personal. We became ourselves interchangeable. However, we could take pleasure from developing a smooth facility in performing the routines, doing the call and choral responses rapidly and accurately.

The Threshold series educated me in crucial ways. It allowed students more chances to explore the language of the situations, reduced the central role of the teacher and introduced my first experiences as a facilitator. The greater degree of interactivity and peer support had an intuitive appeal. One *Threshold* group was the site of a most powerful epiphany. On the first day we all took turns, yet Ms. Ono was too introverted to manage her self-introduction. In each meeting, the eyes of others (particularly the teacher's) had a stultifying effect on her production. One of my gambits was to practice situational dialogs with learners standing in two matched lines. It broke the classic seating arrangement and allowed quick reshuffling of partners. I would walk the line, leaning in to listen, encouraging, assisting pronunciation, grammatical accuracy or expression of ideas. That day, midway through the course, I stood listening to Ms. Ono's pair. She turned, put her hand on my chest, pushed me backward and declared "We're busy now." I went to my chair. Sat in the corner in wonderment. Somehow events had transpired to turn a wallflower into a momentarily powerful, self-directed learner. It was hugely gratifying, overwhelming and transcendent.

Wanting more of that rapture of teaching, I went to graduate school, where I was imbued with approaches, methods, hypotheses and all the theoretical machinery of the discipline. In practicums and assistantships we looked for the praxis that would meld that scholarship with our classroom life. While I found the specialist terms to describe the principles of learning and teaching, it turned out these principles were in fact the same ones I had brought with me that first day. The values I had acquired as a child—respect for the person, honor for autonomy, team building, and collaboration—I also internalized from my best teachers. These principles later informed my professional choices as I became more expert in language education.

Chika and I have changed, becoming more curious about our teaching interventions, more fluent in utilizing them, and deepening our understanding by enriching our conceptual frameworks. Yet I sense in our course of development that a fundamental core remains. Development means letting the core identity that emerges from our childhood, and the values acquired there, find their way into our experience (and through our experience), as learners, as teachers, as people.

Part Two

Chika: Guy's narrative tells us that every single incident can become a significant cornerstone of our professional development and even makes me realize that there are overlaps with my experience as a teacher. My professional journey started in a private secondary school in Tokyo. It was one of the greatest turning points in my life because I was given a real stage to try out the ideal teaching strategies and techniques I had desired and even demonstrated in the mock teaching.

In line with Guy's insights of textbook as a determiner of teacher and student behaviors, as a teacher I also found both teachers and students have fossilized perceptions towards textbooks. When I received a set of textbooks I was expected to use in the high school

courses, I flipped over the pages, wondering how I could "cook" the textbooks. However, the three teachers I collaborated with considered textbooks to be like a map highlighting the exact directions we should follow. We believed that we had to cover each unit in order, without diverting from the main road. Of course, I acknowledged the importance of the textbook, but I felt that the three teachers paid closer attention to how to teach the textbook, rather than learn through the textbook. Later, I also realized that students had the same but rather firm perceptions of textbooks. One day, I skipped some sections in the textbook which I thought were not so relevant, and then the students looked at me as if I had done something wrong, something against the principle of following a predetermined path.

Remember that I chose the Carpenter's songs for my mock teaching. From this experience, I had begun somewhat to strengthen my belief that using songs and other teaching materials would work better than sticking only to textbooks, especially in terms of learners' enjoyment. However, I was not fully confident about the educational effects of using songs mainly because I did not have enough expertise in language education grounded in strong theoretical understanding and practical experience. However, my professional journey started together with my graduate study; this provided valuable opportunities for me to understand the theoretical background and expand my knowledge base as I was reassured that my ideal way of teaching was theoretically justified.

One of Guy's critical incidents—Ms. Ono's physical push—reminded me of a memorable episode I had with Yuji. It occurred in my seminar class at the university taken by just two students, Yuji and Kumi. In the first few lessons, I noticed that Yuji's statement almost always included a preface, such as "This may have nothing to do with what we are talking about" or "It may sound strange to you." Moreover, the tone of his voice sounded uncertain and his contributions were always very brief. However, a few months later, I realized that his talk no longer had those patterned preambles, but he had added some less formulaic and personally detailed explanations instead. Moreover, I often saw him engaging in thinking-aloud and sharing ideas that were emerging as he talked them through, which Mercer (2005) defines as "exploratory talk." Before that, he might have waited until he was ready and confident enough to articulate his answers, but he came to contribute to a decision-making process about the flow of the lesson, in particular, the distribution of class time. In another lesson, he even disagreed with my opinion and expressed his own contrasting idea with confidence. What is more, when we discussed Total Physical Response (TPR), Yuji even demonstrated "holding shoulders" by actually catching Kumi's shoulder; Yuji and Kumi held each other's shoulders for a while with a smile. I did not expect to see such a scene, as I knew Japanese students, much less university students, hesitated to have physical contact. Given the gender difference, who could imagine facing such a situation?

Surprised at all of his transformative actions, I came to wonder what made Yuji change his behavior. Was the class safe enough for Yuji to take risks and express his opinions? Did Kumi become a "near peer role model" (Murphey, 1996)? Did the improvised experience of TPR help both Yuji and Kumi establish a close relationship? Did I mantle my authority as an expert and play more humanistic roles in the class? Was the small class ideal in establishing the healthy relationship and lowering their affective filters? I then thought all of these might have been somehow interwoven and contributed to stimulating his transformational behavior in mingled ways. More importantly, this transformation was generated not from a one-shot or stimulus-response relationship, but from a process-oriented, unpredictable and accumulated system. In this class, we were not placed in extreme positions, simply playing the roles of teacher and students as we relied heavily on each other about the expected performance of each role. Rather, our roles were more fluid and flew flexibly like a compass. We co-

constructed our own learning experiences as we constantly shared our own values, insights and sense of humor, which resulted in generating a catalyst.

Guy: We know from the earlier parts of this narrative something of how Chika developed as a result of her class experiences. She came to love pursuing her interests through reading and the camaraderie of the quiet time spent reading together in fifth grade. Junior high classes impressed on her the need to abhor mistakes and please the teacher's needs, to carry out ritual practice and value memorization. She absorbed an unfortunate archetype of student in secondary school that was turned around by university class experiences, reconfigured as a role of discoverer, experimenter, investor in living her self.

We are not certain what fomented change in Yuji or Ms. Ono, though Chika has speculated on possible factors. Smith (1998) prompts teachers to seek a classroom that can "provide enriched opportunities" (p. 98)—to appreciate that we "might do better with more opportunity in schools for respect, collaboration, reflective thinking, individual initiative, wide experience, and personal interaction" (p. 91). When we give students opportunities, we must trust them to find the best, suitable use of them. Assuming roles as perfectionists, readers of the teacher's mind and ritualistic performers provide fewer opportunities for students, and consequently less development and critical learning takes place. Transformation flourishes with the enriched opportunity for initiative, interaction, and reflective thinking Smith mentions.

Through the classroom opportunities Chika and I created, Yuji and Ms. Ono took steps toward expressing autonomous selves; a transfer of responsibility from teacher to student commenced. But Chika's observations of high school students' perception of a predetermined path, together with her comment on the teachers' view of textbook as map and directions, lead me to consider how those participants appeared to give up responsibility, looking instead to text-based routines and testing procedures to define their roles and measure learning.

Mostly, students relinquish their autonomy docilely. However, trends toward scripted teaching (such as I did with Spectrum and Modern English) and the "standards movement" toward more testing threaten teacher autonomy as well. In Chika's tale, the three teachers had already handed over nearly 100% of their responsibility for activities to the textbook. Yet to create opportunities, taking responsibility for supervision of activities and classroom style is a powerful way teachers can influence outcomes. Perversely, we often see teachers in a double bind, where they feel obsessively responsible for student achievement (which is fundamentally the students' responsibility) and yet feel powerless to decide on how to create learning opportunities in the classroom (which should be a primary teaching responsibility).

As only one classroom participant, my limited ability to take complete or final responsibility for learning has always been apparent to me. As a teacher trainer, I often encounter pre-service teachers with an almost obsessive need to accept full responsibility for outcomes, a recipe for dissatisfaction and frustration. A student's failure (or success!) may be accountable to many factors besides the teacher. Manke (1997) has noted "When teachers are held fully accountable for student learning, as if they were wholly in control of everything that happens in their classrooms, they are placed under unnecessary and unfair stress" (p. 129). Why? Because "teachers never are totally in control of what happens in their classrooms" (Manke, 1997, p. 133). Micromanaging of each learning step, excessive bottom-up discrete learning points, telegraphing of test content (or even providing actual answers) and attempting extreme physical or psychological control of students are some of the responses to the pressure of perceived 100% responsibility. A part of granting students agency and

encouraging them to develop is accepting that some will, even given opportunities, achieve little learning.

As Chika reported, teachers (and even students) can respond to the pressure responsibility produces by falling back on textbooks, institutional norms or bureaucratic edicts. As a beginning teacher I was undertrained, as are, unfortunately, many newly certified in-service teachers. I felt safe with the behaviorist oral drills and the straightforward exercises with clear, simplistic learning points. I could fulfill my responsibility by simply following the script. Over time I began to reject the circumscribed role that materials writers and educational guidelines offered – too few opportunities and too little learning. Once I began to see how the opportunities Smith enumerates could be more powerful tools for successful learning/teaching, I began to improvise. To seek out the teachable moment. This fashionable cliché attempts to express the unpredictable, spontaneous, collaborative improvisation no textbook or guideline can manufacture.

Sawyer (2004, 2011) has explored how teacher improvisation is not just critical, but unavoidable. As my ability to find praxis has advanced through the years, I gained confidence in myself and my students, whose attendance and attention are testimony to their desire to learn. Now I come to the classroom ready to orchestrate a number of ingredients: my own intuitions and repertoire of teaching gambits; a loosely associated set of materials which I expect will fall into sequence through collaborative interaction; the learner community, and the time and place where we gather. Like Chika, I have to cook my materials. Even with a syllabus I have used before, each class group interacts with it and me in a different way: an article that was central with one group may even be skipped with another; a video that helped conclude a module last year may introduce the theme this year. The collaboration with students influences the opportunities we find and how we interact with each other and the learning tools. At our best we establish real relationships grounded in trust, choice, autonomy. And where I used to seek safety in teaching, I now seek the unmoored, exciting sense of unknown possibilities that teaching affords.

Chika: Through the whole dialogue with Guy, self and authority are echoed and resonate as key concepts for developing learner and teacher autonomy. A case study I carried out (Hayashi, 2010) revealed that one Japanese junior high school teacher of English had three different selves: an English teacher, a class tutor and a 'private' person. Of course, there were some aspects which overlapped between/among each self, but the teacher was more likely to stick to representing herself as an English teacher; and when she did so, she chose more teacher-centered methods and pursued perfection. As Freire (1998) points out when he discusses the difficulty teachers face about sharing their personal selves, teachers are more likely to wear a mask of an authoritative figure and play the role of a teacher. This might have been true of my junior/senior high school English teachers who chose a "safe" teaching style and adhered to yakudoku over one academic year.

However, it is clear from our narrative that Guy and I are not archetypical teachers. Among several authority bases (French & Raven, 1959 cited in Levin & Shanken-Kaye, 1996), our own authority base is more highly characterized as referent. We care for students, have a parental-like sense of expectation of their potential and trust and accept students as they are, which Rogers (1961) defines as "unconditional positive regard." As Guy says, it is easier and safer for teachers to simply choose drills and yakudoku, but we did not rely heavily on the apprenticeship of observation as a primary resource for our teaching practice. Instead, we naturally gave up wearing an authoritative mask; we dared to take risks and embark on our exploratory journey for our best practice. Like ethnographers, we are very keen to understand who our students are, where we teach, and what obstacles and requirements we have at both

micro and macro levels. We have both created our own personalized theory, methods and techniques from our hands-on and improvised experiences. In the process, we go through reflection, consolidation, modification, re-examination and transformation as we feel uncertainty, face dilemmas and establish confidence.

From our own experiences, we also realized that this whole cognitive and affective process had had a parallel effect on our students. At the end of the academic year, Yuji left the following message for me: "My understanding about the class at the university was just sitting at the back of the big classroom and listening to the teacher… In this class [my seminar class], I learned that each person's personality is well reflected on each of our stories, which was a very fresh and new discovery to me. Then I came to like sharing my own experiences and opinions with the classmates more and felt that I could step forward. My next step is to clearly state my opinions so that others can understand me very well." He expresses his transformational perception about learning and his strong desire to share his personal experiences and stories, which helps him to realize the changes evolving in himself. He even sets his own goals with an awareness of learning as more internal, personalized and dynamic processes involving the interchange of personalities and affect.

Going back to Guy's metaphor of an orchestra, each player has a different personality, style and range of preferences, but it depends on the conductor whether or not the players can maximize their potential and contribute to the performance. Of course, in an orchestra, the players need to listen carefully to others and do an improvisation to change the speed and tone they think are the best. However, if the relationship is not based on trust and choice, the musicians will pay too much attention to the conductor and other players, and feel it is obligatory to keep up under pressure like the chorus reading in my junior high school days. Reflecting on my favorite Japanese extensive reading class, the teacher was a conductor who showed her trust to the students by allowing us to go to the library during class and to decide whatever books we liked. The teacher represented herself not as an authoritative figure but as a role model by reading her favorite books in the same manner as we did. As the teacher kept her close physical and psychological position with the students, we students were provided with the opportunities to nurture several seeds for autonomy. We naturally realized and accepted our differences and similarities, such as the choice of books, reading speed and how to read books. As we co-constructed and shared a silent atmosphere, we also explored our own paths to autonomy with care and trust.

The 11-year-old girl was just looking forward to Friday afternoons and absorbed in the Japanese extensive reading. However, she was not aware that this was to become one of the critical experiences in her education and a springboard for her later journey of personal and professional development for autonomy. The seed that one small girl picked out and planted is still growing…

Part Three

Yukiko: As an interdisciplinary responder and a scholar of English Literature, I am going to analyze these "narratives" using the interpretative techniques I am familiar with. What I mainly read is English poetry, and we usually start with writing a prose synopsis of the poem. Let me summarize, therefore, the passages written by Chika and Guy: They form a set of

loosely connected double monologues between two educators. A younger teacher who believes in learners' choice and autonomy looks back at her past. In a first-person narrative she tells us how she came to be the teacher she is now, writing about her pivotal anecdotes. The more experienced teacher, who also believes in learners' choice and autonomy reads her accounts, interprets them while sharing his own stories at the same time. Switching places as narrator and a responder provides them with opportunities to recognize and verbalize their core values in education and to come to a better understanding of how they came to be who they are.

Next, let me move on to a brief analysis. There are plenty of elements that I would like to expand on: how their figures of speech such as "journey" or "unmoored" help them position themselves as adventurous inquirers, for example. I will focus, however, on just one thing that made their writing distinctively different from that of, say, two poets.

The one thing I noticed is Chika and Guy's demand for theoretical accountabilities: they already had a preference for a certain teaching style before going on to graduate schools, and yet they still needed theoretical confirmations. In the first section of his narrative Guy tells us how he preferred a textbook that "allowed students more chances to explore". One student eventually had a transformation while using this textbook and gave him a "hugely gratifying" teaching experience, or a "rapture of teaching". Why did this particular textbook succeed in bringing him such a joy? Because it agreed with his "values[…] acquired as a child." And he later realizes that such a "fundamental core" remained constant throughout his career. Nonetheless, he had thought he should be better versed in the "conceptual frameworks" of education, and went to graduate school. Chika enjoyed having personal choices and autonomy in elementary school, where a teacher of Japanese language let her class "pick out any books" they liked to read. Unfortunately, her high school teachers did not give her much freedom, which led her to imagine "how [she] could teach if [she] were a teacher." As an undergrad student she was once again "encouraged to think and express [her] own ideas," and when she was given the opportunity to put her "ideal teaching methods" into practice, she did. Both of them, therefore, knew in their hearts that autonomy and personal choices are crucial to learner development. In the world of professional educators, however, such empirical knowledge is not a good enough reason to choose one method of teaching over others. Peer educators and scholars will ask you for a theoretical explanation for your choice. Chika says in her second passage that she "was not fully confident" about her pedagogic approach before going to graduate school, but after studying there she "was reassured that [her] ideal way of teaching was theoretically justified".

Now, let me compare Chika or Guy, who needed "theoretical understanding" of their craft, to a poet. If a poet looks back at his/her own development as a writer, it is unlikely that he/she would feel the need to understand his/her skills in an academic framework. Peer writers and critics would not expect him/her to explain the underlying theory, either. If the writing is good, it is all that matters. What is the difference between an author of literary works and a professional educator, then? If the poems and plays are the final products of William Shakespeare or William Butler Yeats, what are the "products" of Chika or Guy? Is it their lessons, methods of teaching, or students' outputs?

If an educator's role is to help, encourage, and support the students to produce something original, meaningful and beautiful, is it better to compare teachers to editors, rather than to writers? Does it mean that creativity or originality is less required of educators? Or is an editor's job much more creative than people might assume? Chika and Guy's analytical and yet personal style of writing seems new to me, and I recommend other teachers to try it, too. It is quite different from writing teaching materials or academic papers, and it might be a

good way to start expressing your "personal" side in re-composing your understandings of your own learner and teacher development.

Chika: Yukiko's critical and literary perspectives provide new ways to look at my story and also help me to examine my learning and teaching experience in terms of the philosophical paradigm, which is often divided into three main schools: positivism, constructivism, and radical constructivism. If I were asked about what my educational philosophy was, I would say that it falls somewhere between constructivism and radical constructivism. However, reflecting on my experiences as a learner and teacher, I think my position continuously went back and forth like a pendulum among the three schools, but now I can say that the pendulum is more likely to stay in the school of radical constructivism. As has been described, the initial learning experience I remember the most was the Japanese extensive reading class. I did not feel that I was bound by any theories or constraints and just enjoyed the student-led reading activity. I would interpret this as constructivism in as much as it emphasizes bottom-up approaches and individuality. The books were not selected or given by the teacher; we students did not keep the same reading pace but established our own reading styles as we enjoyed the reading itself. However, my junior and senior high school experiences were closely related to the concept of positivism and later made me aware of positivist perspectives, which value more top-down approaches and reality-oriented nature. As I have confessed, I did not enjoy the transmission type of teaching, such as chorus reading, yakudoku, and drill practice; however, reflecting on my experiences, I would have been lucky to realize the presence of these dual perspectives at an early stage of my life. With a realization of the contrasting views, I could expand my theoretical understanding about teaching, especially when I started my professional career; my concern was more on how the two opposite ideas could be integrated. I always tried to keep a good balance between the two and decided to teach English in a high school as a teacher and study at a graduate school as a student at the same time. Overtime I drew great satisfaction from this dual experience as I had great opportunities to try methods and approaches I learned at the graduate school in my class and see how they work. Likewise, some critical incidents that happened in the class were taken as case studies and discussed at graduate school. As I pursued a good balance between the two, I could expand my knowledge base and even crystalize my theoretical understanding which I thought I was lacking when I did mock teaching. Moreover, this parallel experience enabled me to have confidence in my teaching, as well as gradually but smoothly shift into the paradigm of radical constructivism. All the teachers and colleagues I encountered in my life became my role models in various aspects; my adoration and desire I had towards them gave me a sense of empowerment to take on something new and original for my professional development. Moreover, through gaining a lot of practical experience as well as consolidating my theoretical bases, I gradually moved into another stage where I found enjoyment in constructing my personal practice and theories.

In addition, this paradigm shift is parallel with my desire to share my personal story in this specific period of time in my professional career. Either I have never shared or I have simply had no chance to write about my personal stories in my academic work; I may have slightly revealed part of my personal experiences in some of my works but sharing my private self is a new and radical attempt for me. Although the value of teacher transparency has been supported by Moustakas (1966) and Ginsberg (2007), it is difficult for Japanese teachers to project themselves as persons mainly due to a prevailing cultural notion that teachers are considered to be authoritative figures. I cannot deny that this cultural notion affects teachers in many ways; I rather took this opportunity to write something about my personal experiences in relation to autonomy. I believe writing this kind of personalized story is a transformative action towards a set of cultural values aligned with the concept of radical constructivism.

This is also concerned with another issue Yukiko raised about the role of teachers. I would say that teachers are both writers and editors. Of course, teachers write (in a literal sense) their own stories as they reflect on their teaching experiences, including their interactions with students; however, in the process of writing, their roles are more likely to be those of editors. As editors, teachers observe each student, listen to their voices and sometimes take snapshots of students' developmental processes from much wider perspectives. As they write their own stories, teachers weave the threads of several episodes and incidents they share with students into their own stories as they compare certain phenomena with the similar experiences they had before, and even evaluate specific episodes with new perspectives. This is similar to looking into a kaleidoscope in that each piece is combined with different pieces and creates new forms: the movement is dynamic, but the process is synthetic. Whatever the pattern designs, I believe most teachers enjoy each student's different collection of stories and hope that some classroom experiences will be meaningful and influential for their development. I am still in the course of my own personal and professional journey and I always try something new and interesting, flipping over the previous pages of my experiences and adding further pages with new colors. My story will develop together with those of my students. As a writer and editor, I would like to know what will happen in the next episode, but I cannot predict or foresee the future direction and path I will trace for my personal and professional development. What I can do however is to constantly reflect on myself as a teacher and person in a mirror position to my students. I believe in our potentials as change agents as I trust students and value our symbiotic relationship as well as our powers of collaboration.

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