How my teaching has changed over time: My lifelong voyage

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You are a teacher today. Certainly you have contemplated why you became a teacher, but have you ever thought about why you became the kind of teacher you are? Perhaps you tell jokes in class. Perhaps you give frequent tests. Perhaps you emphasize grammar. But why do you do these things? Did you learn to do them? Or do you just naturally do these things? We develop our teacher identify over time. For most of us, the greatest influence has come from our own teachers. We are an accumulation of influences of all the teachers who have taught us. Some teacher behaviors we emulate; others we reject. In this talk, I will share my reflections from a lifelong voyage as language learner and teacher, both in ESL and EFL settings, and hope to nudge you into reflecting on the people who have shaped your current teacher identity.

今、あなたは教師である。あなたが教師になった理由を熟考したことはあっても、なぜ現在のあなたのような教師になったのかを考えたことはあるだろうか。たぶん、あなたは教室で冗談を言うだろう。しばしばテストをするだろう。文法を重視するだろう。しかし、なぜこれらのことをするのだろうか。そうすることを学んだのだろうか。または、自然とするのだろうか。長い時間をかけて、私たちは教師としてのアイデンティティを養う。私たちのほとんどが、自身の教師たちから一番大きな影響を受けている。私たちを教えてくれた教師たちの影響を蓄積している。その教師たちの態度を見習ったり、否定したりする。本講演では、ESL・EFL両方の場面で、語学学習者として、また教師としての生涯にわたる旅で得た私の考えを、皆さんと分かち合いたい。そしてあなたの現在の教師アイデンティティを形作った人々について考えてもらいたい。

A good teacher develops over time. All of our lifetime experiences make us the educators we are today. Some thirty-seven years ago, I started my teacher training when I entered college as a French major. I loved language and languages, and I was going to be a French teacher. My career as a language teacher, however, actually started much earlier as a language learner, and I've been an avid language student my whole life.

Even as a child, I was curious about foreign languages. There was a popular TV comedy show called *I Love Lucy*, and an actor in the show was a Cuban immigrant who spoke English with a heavy accent. His wife was a native English speaker, and she sometimes tried to speak Spanish to him by adding an –o to words (because many Spanish words end in –o). "Aha," I thought, "If you want to speak Spanish, you just add –o to words." Thus began my lifelong journey into how you speak a foreign language. (For the record, you do not just add an –o to English words to speak Spanish).

In high school, I enrolled in beginning French—my first foreign language classroom experience. Mrs. de Montluzin was an amazing teacher and lifetime mentor in so many ways. (I will be talking about Mrs. de Montluzin and many of my other teachers in my plenary speech at this year's conference in Kobe in October.) She introduced me to French, but more importantly, she was my first experience with what a good teacher can do for students. In this class, we memorized verb conjugations—yes, good old-fashioned memorization—but in hindsight, we memorized language that was actually useful. In following her teaching style, I learned the value of considering learner needs in planning a language lesson. For example, in the first week of class, we had to memorize the conjugations of four irregular verbs être (be), *avoir* (have), *faire* (make/do), and *aller* (go). Years later, I came to realize that memorizing these four verb conjugations made complete sense because they are extremely frequent in French and therefore followed the number one goal of all good teaching: meeting learner needs. Clearly, Mrs. de Montluzin knew that memorizing these four irregular verb conjugations was indeed a worthwhile endeavor. Besides these four French verbs, a more important lifetime lesson I learned is that good teachers choose useful teaching material and then help their students understand why the material is of use to them.

In college, I met and interacted with many ESL students in my dormitory. I knew I really liked TESOL, so I completed a Master's degree

in TESOL and then got my first teaching job. The first six years of my teaching took place in intensive English programs for academic purposes, and the majority of my students wanted to attend a U.S. university. I taught students from Venezuela, Iran, Mexico, Japan, Panama, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and many other countries. These programs consisted of five classes every day: reading, writing, grammar, lab (speaking/listening), and TOEFL preparation. I saw many motivated students move quickly through the program and succeed in increasing their English proficiency (and pass TOEFL). I saw how much the students really appreciated and benefited from their classes, and I saw the important role grammar plays in learning a language as an adult. I also realized that being a native speaker was insufficient to be a good language teacher. I learned about English as a second language, including features of English such as phrasal verbs, adjective + preposition combinations (such as interested in), and the perfect aspect (for past, present, and even future time sentences). Though I now know these are three of the most difficult aspects of English, I had no idea about them then. Sometimes I had the luxury of reading about this kind of information before class, but more often, especially when I was a new teacher, students would ask me these questions in class out of the blue. Initially, I panicked, but eventually, I developed better ways to help students with these questions that put me in the hot seat over and over. I learned to think on my feet fast. Eventually, I found that as a more experienced teacher, I could actually anticipate the questions based on a student's native language and proficiency level.

My first overseas teaching job was in Saudi Arabia. I studied Arabic before going there, but my proficiency was basic. I learned so much about teaching from my students in Saudi Arabia, especially once again the value of learner needs. One day in class, a student raised his hand and asked me, "Folse, encyclopedia, same-same dictionary?" Sensing a teachable moment, I went on for five minutes about the differences between an encyclopedia and a dictionary. When I finished my mini-lesson, the students conferred in Arabic, and then the first student looked at me, smiled, and said, "Ok, same-same."

"How," I thought to myself, "can anyone think these two words have the same meaning after my explanation?" Several weeks later, however, I had a chance to see the exit exam for our students. If they passed this high-stakes exam, they could go to the U.S. for additional military training, which would eventually lead to a job promotion. The whole exam consisted of nothing but multiple-choice questions, and there was a huge vocabulary section. It was then that I realized that my Saudi students actually knew much more about their learner needs than I did. The word *encyclopedia* was a word in our mandated textbook, and if that word were to appear on the exit exam, it almost certainly would have been followed by four answer choices, such as "animal, vehicle, dictionary, vegetable." Therefore, my students actually understood their specific learner needs better than I did because I was the new person. They were not trying to learn conversation skills. Their immediate goal was to pass that exit test, and the real goal of my class was to help them meet that need.

Five years later, I learned something similar from my experience teaching English conversation at a large program in central Japan. I had a job teaching adults who attended one ninety-minute class per week. This once-a-week class was a new format for me because all of my students up to then had attended class five days per week. My lesson plans did not seem to work so well, but I couldn't figure out what the exact problem was. Finally, one day a student expressed surprise at how much material we covered in class, and then I learned about another important part of good teaching: pacing. Because all my previous teaching was in intensive programs where students were trying to learn as much information as they could as quickly as possible, I incorrectly assumed that my conversation students wanted the same thing. I came to realize that for many of my adult English learners in Japan, attending English class was not a rush to receive information. Instead, they wanted to know about me and my culture as well as about the English language. Once I reinvented myself and then emphasized information about culture and daily life more than just language, my English conversation students were so much happier.

Perhaps one of the biggest leaps in my lifelong learning occurred when I returned to the U.S. to get a PhD in Second Language Acquisition. I had so much experience as a language learner. I studied French and Spanish in high school, and I really improved my Spanish through the many Spanish-speaking friends I had in college. I studied Arabic while working in Saudi Arabia, Malay while living in Malaysia, German at the Goethe Institute in Malaysia, and then Japanese in Japan.

Unlike most foreign language learners, I studied these languages in informal settings and in formal classrooms. For example, I studied Malay by watching TV with bilingual translations, and I studied Japanese briefly in an intensive Japanese program in Tokyo. All of these language-learning experiences paid off in my PhD courses because I could relate so well to the reading material. I also learned about statistics in depth, which finally gave me the ability to comprehend articles in *TESOL Quarterly* and *Applied Linguistics*. At last, I knew not only how to read these articles but also how to conduct appropriate research.
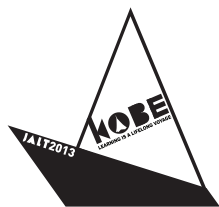
A teacher's life is all about perpetual learning. We learn about our subject, we learn about our students, and we learn about our teaching ability and style. In my plenary speech, I will talk about how we became the teachers that we are today. No, I don't mean *why* we became teachers, since I'm sure that most of us have an idea of why we chose to become teachers. Instead, I will be talking about how each of us has developed into the kind of teacher we are today. Some of us joke with our students, but others do not. Some of us give lots of quizzes, but others do not. Some of us mark all of our students' papers, but others do not. How did all of these different characteristics come about? In my talk, I will attempt to help all of us answer this important question by remembering and giving credit to the many important teachers who have taught us in our lifetime.

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The New General Service List: Celebrating 60 years of vocabulary learning

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This article introduces a new list of important high frequency vocabulary words for second language learners of English. Using many of the same principles employed by Michael West in the development of the original General Service List (GSL) published in 1953, the New General Service List (NGSL) was created with full access to the 1.6 billion-word Cambridge English Corpus (CEC). Based on a more contemporary corpus of English, the NGSL was generated from a carefully selected 273 million-word subsection of the CEC (more that 100 times larger than the pre-computer era 2.5 million-word corpus used to generate the initial word lists for the GSL), the NGSL offers higher coverage than the original GSL (90% vs. 84%) with fewer words (about 2800 lemmas vs. 3600). This brief introduction to the NGSL outlines the basic steps in its creation as well as providing a link to a dedicated website where the public-domain list can be both downloaded and discussed.

本論では第2言語としての英語学習者のために、重要で使用頻度が高い語彙の新しいリストを紹介する。1953年に出版された初代General Service List (GSL)開発の際にMichael Westによって採用された同じ原理の多くを使用しながら、16億語にも及ぶCambridge English Corpus (CEC)を参考にNGSLが作られた。より現代向きの英語のコーパスに基づき、厳選された2億7千3百万のCECの単語リストからNGSLが作られた。（コンピュータ以前の時代に最初のGSL作成に用いられた2千5百万語のコーパスの100倍以上である。）初代GSLと比べ、より少ない見出し語（旧3,600語に対し2,800語）で、より高いカバー率（旧84％に対し90％）を提供している。この簡単なNGSL入門では、NGSL作成における基本行程の概要を述べると共に、公有リストのダウンロードおよび議論が可能な専用ウェブサイトへのリンクを紹介する。