Nevertheless, Japanese culture and society is really different from the one I came from, and no doubt there are many reasons why I was able to settle and make my home here. If I were to begin with "A," I would say that I learned the importance of being *aware* and *attentive*, and that I was willing to *adjust*, *adapt*, and ultimately *accept*, the society I had chosen to live in. And yes, I learned to live with the *ambiguity* of not always knowing what cross-cultural situation I might encounter.

I can say here that no one is more surprised than I am how comfortable I became in Japan. I would not have imagined that I, with my independent attitude and urban sensibilities, would find here so much that is compatible with my thoughts, feelings, and spirit. Cosmopolitan in every sense of that word, it is a matter of some curiosity that I have made my home in one of Japan's principal tea-growing regions, among farmers. Most of the people I know here and interact with on a daily basis do not travel to the neighboring city, let alone go abroad.

There was a lot I did not understand about Japan and its culture when I first came to live here. Reflecting all these years later, it is sometimes disconcerting to think of the many times I must have crossed the invisible lines of decorum and behavior that govern Japanese society. Still, I did see early on that there were cues, and that I could learn by showing a measure of humility. It became clear to me that I could benefit by paying attention, by being self-reflective, and especially, if I could learn to be a careful observer. Now I can say, even after many years living here, one of the things I appreciate most about living in Japan is that I am always discovering something new. I am always learning. Principal among the things I have learned is that even though I will always stand out in Japanese society, I could also fit in.

Years ago, a friend, a Native American Hopi, told me that, when he was a supervisor in the Peace Corps in West Africa, this is what he would tell the volunteers who had come to teach the villagers to read: "First, go into the village—but please, don't do anything. Just observe and pay attention. I know you think you know a lot because you have a university degree and you're going to teach them to read. But believe me, they have a lot to teach you—and you have a lot to learn."

This is the highlight of my experience in my personal journey of crossing borders and cultures—realizing I have a lot to learn.

JALT2021 Balsamo Asian Scholar • Marianne Perfecto

Learning from Learners: Insights from the Lens of Teacher Cognition

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"We teach according to how we were taught" is an adage we have seen in action in many English language classrooms, including mine. Because I learned the English language through its structures—nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adverbs—I taught my first English class that way. After 25 years of teaching, I am still looking for the most effective ways to teach English. I realized that I am still a learner, and that some of my best teachers are my students. I understood this even more because of my research on teacher cognition.

In the 1970s, teaching was viewed from a behaviorist perspective which regards learning as mastering what were considered effective teaching practices (Richards, 1998). Effective teaching was therefore understood as imitating the skills that were passed on by a mentor (i.e., expert teacher) to the novice teacher (Wallace, 1991). This all changed in the 1980s when teaching began to be seen as a thinking activity. Good teaching is now defined as developing one's personal and practical theory of teaching (Richards, 1998). Teachers are seen to have the capacity to make decisions about their teaching and understand the processes and underlying principles that inform these decisions. This shift in perspective of teaching from a behaviorist to a cogni-

tivist lens changed the way teaching was researched. From describing teaching through recording and measuring publicly observable behaviors, research on teaching moved to unearthing the underlying motivations of teaching, concept formation, and knowledge acquisition (Brown, 1993).

This is the core of *teacher cognition*— "the unobservable dimension of teachers' professional lives" (Borg, 2019, p. 1). *Teacher cognition* is an umbrella term that includes, among others, teachers' beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, motivation, commitment, resilience, and identity (Borg, 2006, 2019; Burns et al., 2015). Initial research on teacher cognition focused mostly on these aspects of teacher cognition devoid of the teachers' context but later considered the sociocultural contexts of teaching and learning (Burns et al., 2015). As Borg (2019, p. 6) asserts, "individual teacher cognition does not originate or operate in a vacuum and it is influenced in powerful ways by a range of personal, physical, sociocultural, and historical milieus which interact, in both remote and immediate ways, to shape who teachers are and what they do." In fact, Borg's (2006) language teacher cognition framework identifies the following factors that shape and are shaped by teacher cognition: *schooling, professional course work, contextual factors,* and *classroom practice*.

It is from the lens of teacher cognition that I have always viewed what we do as teachers in the classroom. As teachers, we do not come into the classroom tabula rasa. We bring with us our experiences as learners, as well as our beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge. In fact, we probably would have noticed that in our first few years of teaching, we were teaching the way we were taught by our teachers. However, through the years, as we gain more experience, attend more teacher preparation and education courses, and participate in conferences, our teaching and knowledge repertoire expands. Our beliefs and assumptions also change, eventually shaping our instructional practice. Similarly, what happens in the classroom eventually becomes part of our belief system that influences our instructional practice.

From this perspective, then, we can argue that our learners are also our teachers. What our students do in our English class may challenge what we know about language teaching. *Why are my students not interested in the language activities I give? Why are my students not motivated to read the texts I give?* Such questions make us rethink how we understand student engagement and learning, for example.

Perhaps, we need to consider gamification in our activities since most of our students are into gaming. Games have many features that make them "powerful vehicles for human learning" (Shaff & Quinn, 2017). The games our students play teach them to solve problems, entice them to communicate, cooperate and compete with their peers, and promote creative thinking—skills necessary in the 21st century (Shaff & Quinn, 2017). Thus, the games they play may teach us a thing or two about how we can design our activities.

Similarly, maybe we need to consider what our students read now. They do not just read written texts. Our students are exposed to and are engaged with different types of multimodal and digital texts that entail a different set of knowledge, skills, and competences that will help them cope and responsibly deal with these texts. Therefore, we learn from our students that we may have to expand our definition of literacies and rethink the kinds of texts we give in class.

Clearly, our students may help us develop classroom techniques and approaches suitable to our own contexts and situations. What we need to remember, though, is that teacher cognition presupposes that we engage in reflective teaching. It is important that we critically "self-observe, self-analyze and self-evaluate their [our] teaching practice with a view to effecting desired changes." (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 33). Without critical reflection, we may not recognize the teaching moments our classes afford us.

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