

## **Conducting reflexive ethnography on three novice English teachers in Japan: its impact on the researcher and the researched**

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### **Abstract**

I am currently in the sixth month of an eighteen month ethnographic study of three first-year English teachers at three different junior high schools in Japan. All the teachers are Japanese nationals. The research targets the dilemmas the teachers face in developing their teaching or facilitating student learning and how the teachers resolve these dilemmas. Through understanding the issues and how they resolve them, it is hoped that the nature of their professional development can be better understood. The main means of data collection has been class observation and interviews, which are both audio-recorded. Ethnography acknowledges the reflexivity between investigators and the researched: they collaborate in constructing the object of the research, the world of the insider. This paper will introduce the research design of the study and through analyzing transcripts of interviews and classroom talk document the nature and impact of my involvement on the novice teachers and myself. Up to this point, many questions remain about the reasons behind the dilemmas the teachers face and how the teachers resolved them. I will argue that in order to attain the hoped-for information, the participants will need to assume the role of co-researchers.

### **1. Introduction**

Rampton et al. (2004, p. 12) write that many who undertake research in the field of linguistic ethnography tend to be more mature students whose commitments to research is often motivated more by interests generated by practical experience than by a fascination with academic theory. The researcher himself falls into this category; my interest in researching novice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers came from my desire to make sense of my experience as an EFL teacher educator. In particular, I was skeptical about the usefulness of my classes for pre-service English teachers that emphasized a communicative approach to teaching English when they entered their profession. I wanted to understand how they learned to teach in their contexts, and through this, improve my university EFL teacher education program. Six months ago, I started an eighteen month linguistic ethnographic study of three first year junior high school English teachers. The purpose of this research is to describe the dilemmas teachers face in encouraging student learning and how they identify and resolve these dilemmas. In this paper, I will introduce the theoretical underpinnings of the research, the research design born from these underpinnings, the results I have obtained so far, and, lastly, the apparent methodological issues.

### **2. Linguistic ethnography for researching teacher development**

The teacher's development is investigated under the academic discipline of linguistic ethnography (LE). LE is broadly defined as an area that "combines ethnographic and linguistic methodologies to study language use in a range of settings" (Maybin & Trusting, 2011, p. 515). Educational settings are a common area of focus for LE. According to Maybin and Trusting (2011), LE has been used to investigate how students construct their ethnic identities, how

relationships of power and inequality are maintained in schools, and how in-school and out-of-school cultures interact. In the case of this study, an ethnographic and linguistic analysis of teachers' and students' language use can be used to examine the nature of their participation in the teaching and learning process. The appeal of LE is that it is an eclectic area of inquiry that enables researchers to incorporate a range of perspectives from different disciplines into their research. According to Rampton (2009), LE has at least four sets of analytic resources: linguistic and discourse analysis, conversation analysis, ethnography, and other public and academic discourses relevant to the analysis.

The first rationale for using LE is its ethnographic roots, because this study seeks to understand the first year of teaching from the teachers' perspectives. The aim of ethnography is to uncover how people interpret the world around them. According to Davies (2008), ethnography also acknowledges reflexivity between the researcher and the researched. Accordingly, the researcher and insiders are engaged together in co-constructing the world of the insider. This process can actually transform the ethnographers themselves which "can provide genuine knowledge of the nature of the others' selves and societies" (Davies, 2008, p. 26).

The second rationale for using LE is the analytical resources of its linguistic roots. While ethnography focuses on particular cases, linguistics generally aims to formulate general principles about language and language use. According to Rampton et al. (2004), although there is a tension between these two disciplines, they can be complementary as linguistics serves to tie ethnography down and ethnography to open linguistics up. More specifically, according to Creese (2008), ethnography can inform linguistics on context while linguistics provides an authoritative analysis of language not usually available through participant observation and field notes. In this study, using tools from conversation and discourse analysis, the researcher can compare the nature of language use among the different teachers.

The third rationale for using LE is the opportunity to draw on further academic disciplines. One such discipline is sociocultural theory of learning, which, according to Rampton (2004), has been a focus of a number of LE studies in the UK. A sociocultural perspective will try to explain learning through people's interactions with their community and their environment. Feiman-Nemser (2008) argues that sociocultural theories are useful in longitudinal studies of teacher learning because they "focus on how the various settings in which teachers learn - university courses, student teaching, schools and classrooms, mentoring relationships - enable and constrain their adoption and use of new knowledge and practices and their ongoing learning" (p.700).

In summary, this study seeks to use ethnographic, linguistic, and sociocultural perspectives to understand how first year Japanese EFL teachers come to terms with their situations and learn to teach. Although the appeal of LE is the variety of disciplines available to the researcher, the challenge of synthesizing these disciplines to create a coherent description of the teachers' development has been formidable.

### **3. The teachers, their development, and the mediating context**

As indicated above, the teachers' learning is mediated by interactions with their students, their schools, their colleagues, and the researcher. In this section, I will apply the mediate nature of human/world relationships from Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 62) shown in Figure 1 to this research. Given the reflexive nature of ethnography, the "who" of the investigation are both the teachers and the researcher. The what of the investigation is the "object," the teachers' development. The mediating artifacts control how the subjects, the teachers and researcher,

understand the object, teacher development. The mediating *artifacts* can be physical (textbooks) and symbolic (education policy or curricula, interaction between teacher and student, teacher and colleague, or teacher and researcher).

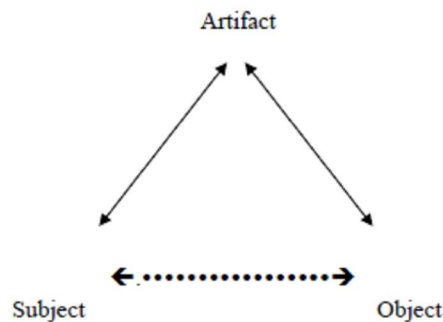


Figure 1 The mediate/nature of human world relationships

### 3.1 Subject (Who): Three novice teachers and one researcher

Novice teachers are considered to be teachers in their first or second year. Teaching is one of few professions in which first year members are expected to perform the same duties as their more experienced colleagues (Lortie, 1975). In his study of a novice English teacher in Singapore, Farrell (2003) wrote that the teacher's transition from university to the school classroom was a "reality shock" (p.95). Teacher cognition research indicates that the first year of teaching is equivalent to what Huberman (1992) refers to as the "Survival and Discovery" stage (Borg, 2006; Farrell, 2008, 2009; Kagan, 1992; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Richards & Pennington, 1998). Part of this stage is thrilling for the novice teachers in that they have their own classes, design their own curricula, etc. However, this stage can also be chaotic, causing the novice teacher to subordinate student learning to class control as a means to survive the turmoil. (Farrell, 2009; Kagan, 1992). This includes regulating the students' behavior and getting through the curriculum.

The three participants in this study were six months into their "survival and discovery" stage when the research began. Risa was a recent university graduate majoring in English literature. Her background in English education consisted of her university coursework and a two-week teaching practice at a high school. Aside from the English classes she had taken, she had also spent a month in an English speaking country doing a homestay. Her experiences using English had a significant impact on her; Risa said that her ultimate goal as a teacher was for students to understand the interest and value in being able to communicate in English and to want to communicate in English (10/28/2013). The second teacher, Yuta, had majored in English education as an undergraduate and also had recently received a master's degree in the same subject. He started teaching soon after completing graduate school. His prior teaching experience consisted of a two-week teaching practice. He had never spent significant time in an English speaking country. Yuta was well-read in the field of English education: he had written his undergraduate thesis on chunk reading and his graduate thesis on vocabulary acquisition. He and the researcher never discussed his ultimate goal for his students. The third teacher, Maiko, had previously been in a profession where she was required to use English and travel abroad frequently; she also had experience working as a part-time teacher at the junior high school and

high school level. She had graduated from an education university 10 years earlier, and had spent almost a year in an English speaking country studying teaching English as a second language (TESL).

Regarding the researcher, I had received my education in the USA, but had spent most of my professional life in Japan. I had been living in Japan for 15 years and been a teacher of teachers at a Japanese education university for 11 of those years. In addition, I had served as an “Assistant Language Teacher” (ALT) at a junior high school, had been a research student studying English education at a Japanese graduate school of education, and had experience as a part-time high school English teacher. I believe that good EFL instruction consists of a balance of form-focused-instruction and meaningful input and output activities. My mission is to help student-teachers learn to do this but I question how successful I have been. I do not consider Task Based Language Teaching and Communicative Language Teaching, as it is practiced in English speaking countries, to be applicable to the context in which I work.

### ***3.2 The Object: Teacher and teacher of teacher development***

The object is the development of the teacher and teacher of teachers (hereafter, TOT). There are various ways to conceptualize development of the teacher. For example, Richards (2012) defines 10 areas of competence for foreign language teachers as well as 6 dimensions of teaching for second language teacher education programs to follow (Richards, 1998). The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (Newby et al., 2007) or the Japanese Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (Takaki, 2012) provides the student-teacher with a checklist of well over 100 necessary skills for foreign language teachers. Rather than separating the skill from the teacher, I decided to consider development to be a stance that the teachers take toward their learning, or what Copeland and Birmingham (1993) refer to as reflective practice. Reviewing the literature on reflective practice, Copeland and Birmingham write that it consists of problem identification, generating solutions, and testing solutions. This process of reflective practice is also advocated by Richards and Farrell (2005) among many others. Kumaravadivelu (2012) writes that rather than modeling the master teacher, novice teachers need to develop the competence and confidence necessary to cope with the unknown and unexpected. By delving into the recognition of a problem, the meaning of a problem, and the solution to a problem, together with a teacher, we might be able to learn what the nature of that teacher’s knowledge is and how the teacher uses it. With the exception of Yanase (2011), few studies on Japanese JHS and SHS English teachers have described how teachers learn to cope with the challenges they face and reconcile their ideals with the realities of their settings. Therefore, this study considers teachers’ development to be their response to teaching dilemmas and their subsequent adaptation.

In terms of growth of the TOT, when working one on one with teachers, Malderez and Wedell (2007, p. 89) recommend five steps:

1. Listen actively while the teachers describe what they noticed.
2. Listen actively while the teachers explore as many explanations/interpretations of what they noticed.
3. Listen actively while the teachers recall what others have said or written about the issues raised.
4. Listen actively while the teachers consider different perspectives.
5. Listen actively while the teachers make decisions and concrete plans.

The TOTs' primary duty is to listen and add possible explanations or solutions only when invited. Therefore, the role of the TOTs is to support the teacher's reflection rather than to offer their own. My ability to elicit the thoughts of the teacher will be considered an essential part of his development.

### ***3.3 Mediating Artifacts of the subjects' development: school culture, education policy and school context***

School culture, education reforms, and teacher interaction with others such as students, colleagues, or the researcher will mediate teachers' development. Education in Japan is compulsory from the first grade of elementary school to the third year of junior high school (*gimu kyouiku*). This means that students are guaranteed to advance grades until they have finished junior high school regardless of their academic performance. According to a handbook for aspiring teachers (Nakasato, 2005, p. 11) schools are organizations with the purpose of "forming character." This is a reality which any study of English teachers in Japan should recognize because the goal of classroom learning can be secondary to that of socialization. Research on learning in junior high schools tends to emphasize the role these institutions play in producing moral, disciplined, and conscientious citizens (Fukuzawa, 1998; Hill, 1996). Therefore, the role this objective plays in planning and conducting the English class is a relevant inquiry.

Regarding educational reforms, there is also a strong push for English teachers to develop in their students the ability to communicate in English. In a "landmark" (Savignon, 2005) policy move, the Ministry of Education made communicative competence a goal in its National Guidelines (*gakushuushidouyouryou*) for the foreign language curriculum in 1989. Among the changes that have been enacted since then is introducing listening into national university entrance examinations, implementing weekly English activities for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year elementary school students, and in 2013 mandating that junior high school English classes be taught mostly in English and high school English classes be taught exclusively in English.

In the author's experience, novice JHS and SHS English teachers in Japan often begin their teaching careers with the ambition to teach communicative English. However, in many cases, they soon abandon this ideal. Many studies of English classes in Japanese secondary schools indicate that Communicative Language Teaching movements have had little effect on classroom practices (Gorsuch, 2000; Hahn, 2013; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). Because the contradiction between Communicative Language Teaching ideals and local realities is likely to be a dilemma for novice teachers, an understanding of the conflict can help us better understand the novice teacher experience.

Lastly, school context refers to everything related to the school: the class, students, fellow teachers and the researcher himself. Previous research indicates that local context has the most significant impact on how teachers conduct their instruction (Britzman, 1986; Nishino, 2012)

### ***3.4 The how of the investigation: critical incidents***

To review, up to this point, I have written that teacher and researcher development will be investigated and that their development can be mediated by their interaction with educational culture, educational policy, and local context. Critical incidents will be used as episodes to analyze how teachers understand and teach in their specific contexts. I will also consider the impact of critical incidents on the teachers' development. A critical incident, in general terms, can be thought of as an undesirable event or situation which marks a "significant turning point or

change in the life of a person” (Tripp, 1993, p. 24). In the field of Teaching English as a Second Language, Richards and Farrell (2005) describe it as an unplanned and unanticipated event that occurs during a lesson and that serves to trigger insights about some aspect of teaching and learning. However, according to Angelides (2001), in the field of education, critical incidents are not restricted to sensational events involving significant tensions. Rather, critical incidents can be routine incidents that happen in every school. This routine incident can trigger in the teacher a new understanding of an educational phenomenon. This study will consider a critical incident to be an event that sparked in the teacher a quandary about how to proceed in facilitating student learning. When examining how teachers resolve this dilemma, we can also see how they interact and interpret their context and the effect it has on their development.

#### **4. Research Design**

##### **4.1 Data collection**

Between October, 2013 and March, 2014 each teacher’s classes were observed once or twice a month. In the classes, I assumed the role of observer or participant-observer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) by doing model textbook readings or providing help to students on writing, reading, or speaking activities. After the first two months, when the teachers and students appeared to be comfortable with me in the class, I began to audio record classes with an IC recorder and a wireless microphone attached to my shirt ( For ethical reasons, I thought that it should be clear to everyone with whom I interacted that their voices were being recorded.). For classes that were audio or video-recorded, a detailed transcription of the class was also written up. For classes with no recordings, the researcher typed up detailed field notes soon afterward.

Table 1 Summary of class observations

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Classes viewed</i>	<i>Field notes</i>	<i>Audio</i>	<i>Video</i>	<i>Transcriptions</i>
Maiko	7	3	4	1	4
Risa	7	2	5	0	5
Yuta	8	4	4	0	4

In addition to the class observations, I interviewed each teacher once a month. The interviews were usually conducted on the days that the teachers conducted class. There was almost never a predetermined agenda for the interviews. The topics of conversation usually had to do with the class; the teachers would give their impressions of the class to me or I would ask them their rationale for making certain decisions, inform them of observations he made about the class, or offer advice. Some interviews were conducted under stressful circumstances for the teacher. These interviews were not recorded or transcribed to make the teacher feel at ease. Later, the researcher would write down a summary of the discussion.

Table 2 Summary of the teacher interviews

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Interviews</i>	<i>Transcriptions</i>	<i>Audio</i>	<i>Field Notes</i>
Maiko	7	7	7	
Risa	6	6	6	
Yuta	7	5	5	2

#### **4.2 Data analysis**

At the time of writing this paper, I am still in the process of data analysis. Pages and pages of classroom and interview transcripts have been produced. According to Snell and Lefstein (2012), the ideas in LE emerge inductively, grounded in data. This means that LE takes a “bottom up approach” (Rampton et al., 2004, p. 15): understanding the data and then the theoretical issues that the data can help clarify.

Although data analysis is ongoing, I will explain the analytic strategies taken so far. First, using interview and class transcripts as well as field notes, critical incidents are identified. Then, analyzing the interviews and class transcripts, I seek to understand the causes of these incidents as well as the teachers’ attempts to resolve them. In addition, it is hoped that during the interview, my being able to elicit teachers’ interpretations of the incidents and ways to resolve them will bring into the spotlight my own development as a TOT.

#### **5. Current results**

Critical incidents have been identified for all three teachers. Due to space limitations, only Risa’s critical incidents will be discussed in this paper (In the conference, I will present cases from all three teachers), but her critical incidents present the same methodological issue as the others. Although we have managed to identify dilemmas that they face (I have not used the term “critical incident” with them.), we have not been able to sufficiently discuss the significance of these incidents nor have I been able to see what kind of steps have been taken to resolve them.

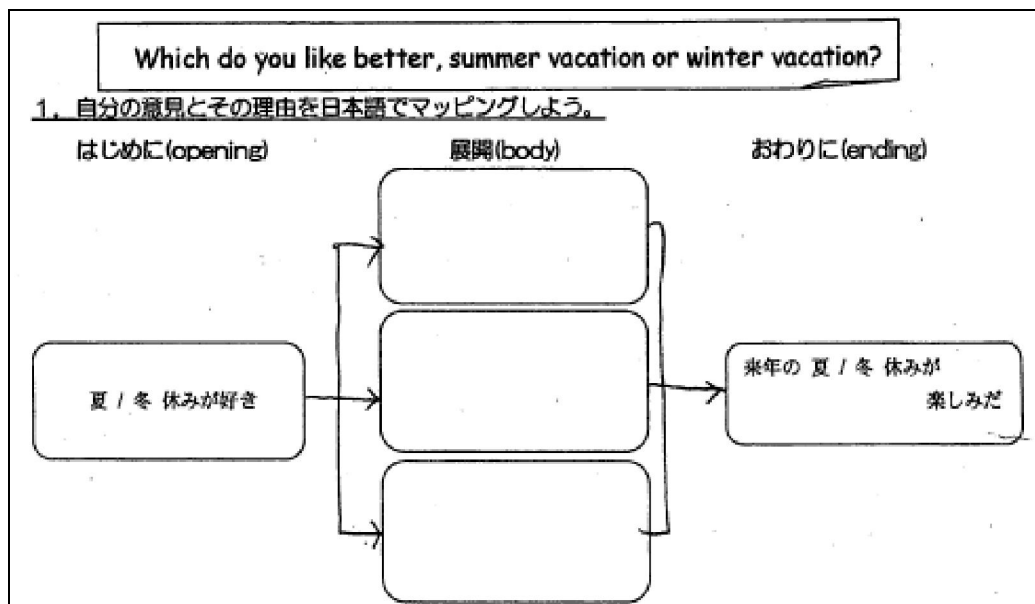
Table 3 Summary of Risa’s classes and critical incidents

<i>Class (HR)</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Critical Incident</i>
① 2013/10/18 (1)	Reading and writing about Severn Suzuki	Not enough time to do the reading and writing
② 2013/10/22 (3)	Sing a song and practice giving directions	Students do not sing. Risa cannot confirm students’ memorization.
③ 2013/11/18 (4)	Sergio/Reading Writing	Girls do not volunteer to do a demonstration
④ 2013/12/17 (1)	Writing about summer or winter	A number of students do not make any effort.
⑤ 2014/1/27 (1)	Writing about a place they visited	A number of students do not make any effort.
⑥ 2014/2/17 (1)	Reading about Kasuga Megumi	Students do not answer the questions until the teacher has written the answers on the board.
⑦ 2014/3/4 (3)	In class grammar exercise sheets, quiz, game with an ALT	There is little communication in the ALT-led activity.

Table 3 shows the classes I observed as well as the critical incidents for each class. Classes ①, ④, ⑤, and ⑥ were the same homeroom. One recurrent issue in this particular class was that 5 to 8 of the 30 students invariably would not perform the task Risa asked of them. These students were not disruptive but would either sit at their desks staring downwards or quietly socialize with friends. One representative episode was noted in class ④. The episode is described below.

### 5.1 Critical Incident 1: Which do you like better, summer or winter?

*In the previous class, students had written an idea map (see below) detailing their reasons for liking summer or winter vacation better. Those students who had not finished were to have completed the idea map for homework. In this class, students were supposed to write an essay based on their idea map. They would write their essay once, the teacher would check it, and then they would write the final version again on a separate piece of paper which they would then hand in to the teacher. When the class began, at least six of the students had not written anything in their idea map. Throughout the class, Risa and I actively assisted individual students. Some students would not write unless the teacher helped them. By the end of the class, a number of students had not finished. Risa told them to write the essay for homework. What made an impression on me was that students did not seem to be concerned about finishing. Furthermore, I doubted that these students would do the homework Risa assigned them. If they did not write the idea map for homework, was it realistic to expect them to write their essay?*



Artifact 1 Idea map used in Risa's 2013/12/17 class

In the interview, Risa and I first established that many of the students did not complete the writing task. I then offered Risa my observations about the types of students I observed in the class. I told her I could see four categories of students: (A) those that can write and will; (B)



those that can write but choose not to; (C) those that can write with help; and (D) those that struggle to write and will not respond to help. Risa had said that one challenge with teaching such a class was that there were too many students for her to help by herself. Extract 1 begins with my trying to elicit from Risa other challenges she faces in doing a writing task. My goal is to determine the causes of the problem. First, in lines 1 to 9, I ask her what challenges she faces and use her previous statement of too many students to help as examples (11 and 18). In line 9, Risa indicates that she understands with a rising intonation. In lines 10 and 12, I am trying to emphasize the challenge that Risa faces in trying to help 31 students with the writing task at once. After that, Risa and I compete to hold the floor (113 - 118). Although I am trying to elicit a challenge for doing a writing class from Risa, I sense that her contribution will not be what I am asking. Risa manages to hold the floor and offers a solution to the problem (119). In line 20, I interrupt her and confirm that she is offering a solution, to which she gives a quiet acknowledgement token in line 21. Then I finish her statement by saying that she can let (A) students teach (122). In lines 22 to 29, I am able to elicit one more solution from Risa. After that, Risa is unable to think of any more solutions. In the ensuing conversation, I tried to elicit Risa's opinion on a solution and then shared my experience teaching writing.

Table 4 Transcription conventions used in the study

//	Overlapping utterances
=	A turn follows another without a pause
[ ]	Editor's translation
<i>Nihongo</i>	Anything in italics is Japanese
↑↓	Marks changes in intonation
◦	Talk quieter than surrounding speech
-	Someone is interrupted
(( ))	Editor's comment
:	The sound of a vowel is extended
(xxx)	Inaudible speech
(...)	A pause of less than 2 seconds

Extract 1: 2013/12/17 Discussing the writing class

- 1 James: Challenges of writing classes. One, you mentioned, um, you know, you are
- 2 by yourself, right, and you have to help all the students. That's one challenge.
- 3 What's another challenge? One of you, many students to help. What would you say
- 4 is another challenge for doing writing?
- 5 Risa: Uh, what this means me? No other student?
- 6 James: Yeah. (...) So the first challenge is =
- 7 Risa: =is =
- 8 James: =You know, one Risa Sensei

- 9 Risa: Ah ↑  
10 James: And today, today how many students?  
11 Risa: There are thirty-one  
12 James: Thirty-one students saying sensei, sensei!  
13 Risa: Maybe I can make them=  
14 James: =Right  
15 Risa: I can make them=  
16 James: =So I  
17 Risa: I /can/  
18 James:/(xxx)/  
19 Risa: I can make them teacher for their -  
20 James: -Ah! OK. Oh, so you are already talking solution.  
21 Risa: °un°  
22 James: Solution, alright, so make, like, A students teachers.  
23 Risa: Un.  
24 James: OK, I see. OK. What's another solution?  
25 Risa: U:n, make a pair of group. And, teach, uh, tell help each other in pair or  
26 group.  
27 James: OK.  
28 Risa: But, it's my. It maybe a little noisy.  
29 James: Ahhhh. Could be noisy.  
30 Risa: Un.  
31 James: OK, ok. (...) Any other, any other possible solutions you can think of?  
32 Risa: Solutions? Un. (...) I have no idea.

There were many missed opportunities in this interview. For example, when Risa discussed the solutions of the “A students” teaching others or having the students work in pairs or groups, it was an opportunity for me to ask her whether or not she had tried this before, what she knew about group work and pair work, if she were to try it in this class, how would she go about doing it, etc. In other words, it was an opportunity to help her consider the plausibility of the solutions. Overall, in this interview, we failed to clearly identify the underlying factors of the problem and a possible strategy for resolving the problem. In addition, by interrupting Risa, I arguably prevented her from completing her thoughts. That in turn sheds light on my development as a TOT.

The second critical incident took place in the next month’s class (see class ⑤, Table 3) which also focused on writing.

### **5.2 Critical Incident 2: Introducing a place of interest to a friend**

*Risa and I conduct the interview before the writing class. She says that in today’s class students will write about a place of interest. In the previous class, they were supposed to write an outline in Japanese consisting of: 1. The name of the place; 2. The reason for choosing it, 3. Detailed information this place; 4. What they want to tell other people about the place. (See the top half of Artifact 2). For today’s class, students were to have prepared their outline as well as bring a picture of the place. Risa said that about six students had not chosen a place to write about. To ensure that they would write, she*

*prepared pictures of places for them to choose. She asked me to help these students write. In addition to my being in the class, the school Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) was also present. The three of us spent the entire class constantly helping students. The end result was better than in the previous class; more students were able to finish. However, many of the students' attitudes were no different. If they did not receive help or significant encouragement from the teacher, they did not work. The slow work of a lot of students meant that there was no time for students to present their writing to each other at the end of the class. If more of the students had worked with more initiative, we could have finished the writing much earlier and had time for students to present their work.*

Artifact 2: A writing exercise in the textbook (Nisato et al., 2011, p. 107)

In this class, more students were likely able to finish because there were more teachers to help. Extract 2 shows the type of help I gave to students who could not think of anything to write. In the extract, I am helping a girl, Ami. She chose one of Risa's pictures at the beginning of the class, the Notre Dame Cathedral. There are 8 minutes remaining in the class and, although she has chosen a place, she has not written her outline. By the end of the class, she must finish her outline and then write the English essay. I, at least, felt a sense of urgency that Ami should finish

by the end of the class. For each item in her outline, I attempt to elicit an idea from Ami. Because time is limited and there are other students whom I need to help, I propose ideas that Ami can write about. All the ideas that I propose are spoken in Japanese. My concern is not English but rather that Ami has not put down any ideas for her short composition even in Japanese. In line 6, Ami appears to have chosen one of my candidates as the reason for choosing the cathedral, “*Kirei da kara.*” I write the English equivalent on my clipboard and she copies it. Next is detailed information. I try to elicit some ideas from her, but I am not successful. In lines 16 to 18, I give her some candidates. After an uncomfortable silence (l19) and a worried “hmmmm” on my part (l20), Ami seems to acknowledge that she should choose something with her “*Ja:*” (Alright) and chooses “*Ja:, naka ni haitte mitai?*” (l21). Again, I write the English translation on the clipboard for her to copy.

Extract 2: 2014/1/27 Helping Ami

- 1 James: OK, Ami, you want me to *tetsudaimasuka* [help]. OK, *eranda riyuu\_ eranda*
- 2 *riyuu ha* [reason for choosing, your reason for choosing is] *nandemo ii, kirei ni*
- 3 *mieru toka, itte mitai toka. Kyoukai ga suki toka. Nandemo ii desu ga. Eranda riyuu*
- 4 *ha nan deshouka.*[Anything is fine, it looks pretty, I want to go there. I like
- 5 cathedrals. Anything is ok. What is your reason for choosing it?
- 6 Ami: *Kirei da kara.* [Because it is pretty.]
- 7 James: OK, so, you know. It is, it is pretty. So, it is pretty ((James writes down “it is
- 8 pretty” on his clipboard and shows it to Ami.)).
- 9 James: It is pretty. Then *kuwashii naiyou, kuwashii naiyou. Nandemo ii desu ga,*
- 10 *omoi ukabu mono ha nandesuka.* [Detailed information, detailed information.
- 11 Anything is ok, but what can you think of?]
- 12 Ami: ((Silence))
- 13 James: *Nihon no nanika otera ni kyoumi ga arimasuka.* [Do you have an interest in
- 14 Japanese temples?]
- 15 Ami: *Amari.* [Not really.]
- 16 James: *Amari nai ↓.* [Not really.] *M-a, koko ni iku to sureba, nani wo shitai?*
- 17 *Tatoeba, ue made nobotte mitai toka, naka ni haitte mitai toka.* [If you went there
- 18 what would you like to do? For example, climb up to the top? Go inside?]
- 19 Ami: ((Silence))
- 20 James: Hmmmm..
- 21 Ami: *Ja:, naka ni haitte mitai.* [A:lrigh, I want to go inside.]
- 22 James: OK, so you can say, "I want to go inside." I want to go inside ((James writes
- 23 it down on his clipboard for Ami to copy. ))
- 24 James: *Saigo ni tsutaetai koto. Dare ni tsutaetai desu ka. Dare ka ni kaiteiru to*
- 25 *souzou shita hou ga ii desu ga, souzou shite mitara yondeiru hito ha dare desu ka.*
- 26 [Last is what you want to say. Who do you want to read this essay to? I think it is
- 27 best to imagine who you are writing to. If you try to imagine, who will you think
- 28 of?]
- 29 Ami: *Tomodachi* [A friend]
- 30 James: *Tomodachi dattara, tatoeba, issho ni ikimashou toka, Tatoeba.* [If it's a
- 31 friend, you can say, “let's go together.” For example..] ((James writes let's go
- 32 together on the clipboard and Ami copies it.)

Ami was being asked to write about a place she seemed to have little interest in. However, considering that she had been unable to choose a place initially, it is possible that she had little interest in the task to begin with. In the dialogue, I repeatedly tell her that she can write anything, but this perhaps give the message that rather than content, completing the task is most important. Therefore, it can be concluded that among the reasons for Ami not doing the task, her not seeing the value in doing it (Williams & Burden, 1997) likely contributed. It should be noted that on 2014/1/29, Yuta did the same task and had a problem similar to Risa's; many students did not choose a place or write an outline in the first class. He also took an approach similar to Risa's, preparing pictures for the students who could not write anything. However, his pictures were of places that students knew: local tourist areas, local restaurants, etc. My experience in this class was that although many students could not write in English without help, they were all able to propose their own ideas for the items.

Of course, there are more potential reasons for Ami not writing than the content of the task. For example, further issues to consider are: How does Ami feel about herself? How does Ami feel about her classmates? How proficient is Ami in English? What is Ami's awareness of writing strategies? There are many avenues of inquiry but what this critical incident shows is that the solutions that both Risa and I took, giving Ami something to write about, were not sufficient. Furthermore, Risa and I were unable to sufficiently explore the underlying factors behind students' lack of initiative and discuss possible solutions.

## **6. Issues in conducting the linguistic ethnography**

The aim of this study was to examine the conflicts teachers experience and how resolving these conflicts affects their development. It was hoped that critical incidents would serve as a window into viewing this phenomenon. So far, however, this research has not been as successful as hoped in revealing how the teachers interpret these issues and how they resolve them.

Ogi (2007) discusses that teachers in Japan are often too busy with administrative work, club activities, and student guidance to devote time to planning for and improving their classes. All three first-year teachers in this study also mentioned this in her interviews. For example, Risa supervises a club, is a member of two school committees, and is a homeroom teacher. When class starts she has to drop whatever she is doing and teach, when class finishes, she has to immediately do whatever her next job is. Therefore, it can be challenging for Risa to reflect on the types of issues that she faces in encouraging student learning and make plans to resolve these issues. Up to now, I have not elicited from Risa how the shortage of time might impact her pedagogical decisions or strategies she takes to manage her time and teach class.

At this stage of the research, it is likely that I, the researcher, have been more impacted than the participants as I am routinely reevaluating my interview techniques and classroom interaction through transcribing the recordings. Before writing up this paper, I was worried about the relationship between researcher and researched being too reflexive. Now, I realize that perhaps the participant/researcher relationship has not been reflexive enough. I believe that to be able to understand the issues teachers face and how they resolve them, the teachers and I will need to collaborate more on the inquiry. This will entail their paying attention to any critical incidents while they teach and informing me

about them in the interview. Focusing on critical incidents together will hopefully give the interviews more of a purpose for both the researchers and participants and will also enable us to use their limited time more efficiently. Davies (2008) cites other ethnographic studies where the researcher and the participant act as co-researchers and construct the environment of the participant together. It is my belief that in order to do what this study originally intended, this is what I myself must do. I will report on the status of this methodological shift at the Doing Research in Applied Linguistics (DRAL) conference in June, 2014.

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