TEACHER CROSSINGS:
REFLECTIONS ON MULTILINGUAL LIVES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

by

Gilmour Jope

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Department of Language and Literacy Education
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC Canada

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the lives of five language teachers from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds who have achieved high levels of fluency in other languages and how they believe their experiences have shaped their understandings of language learning and teaching. Taking a narrative approach to the study of making meaning of human experience, teachers' stories were found to be deeply embedded in their personal, social, cultural, educational, and professional histories. Continued personal agency, language play, and pronunciation were central features of their reflections on language learning, and their stories revealed an emerging intercultural identity characterized by an increasing acceptance of difference, an awareness of the commonalities of humankind, and a deeper appreciation of their first linguistic and cultural heritages. Teachers' evolving professional knowledge and practice had been informed by a range of influences, yet personal experience with language learning was reported as an important influence on their teaching, resulting in an increased empathy and awareness of difference concerning their students' approaches to language learning and their own, the importance of self-directedness on the part of their language students, and an increasing emphasis on flexibility, willingness, and ability to adapt their practices to the different educational contexts in which they teach.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem Area

Over the past decade there has been an increasing interest in language education concerning the people who teach languages. International language journals are giving greater attention to language teacher research (e.g. the special issue of the *TESOL Journal* on teacher research in 1994, and the *TESOL Quarterly* special issue on research and practice in teacher education in 1998), and there has been an increasing number of publications concerning reflection in second language teacher education (Gebhard, 1996; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards & Lockhart, 1994), teacher development (Flowerdew, Brock, & Hsia, 1992; Li, Mahoney, & Richards, 1994; Sachs, Brock, & Lo, 1996), and research in second language teacher education (Freeman & Richards, 1996; Woods, 1996). While diverse, the underlying rationale for much of this work has been an increasing acknowledgement that a better understanding of language teachers might help to improve teacher education programs and ultimately, enhance classroom-based language teaching and learning.

This recent interest in language teachers has been accompanied by research examining various areas of language teachers' lives and the knowledge and beliefs they hold and use in their classrooms. As a relatively new area of inquiry however, there appear to be more questions than answers concerning what language teachers actually know, how this knowledge shapes what they do, and what the natural course of their professional development is over time (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). One area in particular that has

received little attention is that of language learning in language teaching, and the omission is both surprising and unfortunate: passing reference to language learning by teachers can be found scattered throughout the literature, yet little is known about how language learning might inform the lives and practice of language teachers.

1.2 Background to the Problem Area

In this chapter I would like to provide an introduction to the study by way of presenting four main areas of scholarly work related to language learning in language teaching and some of the theoretical constructs and issues that have appeared in these areas. First, I will provide an introduction to the area of teacher knowledge and beliefs, both in general education and in language education. In the second section, I narrow the focus of the previous one to consider language teachers' knowledge and beliefs about language. In section three, I provide an overview of the recent interest in narrative in educational research. In section four I discuss some of the issues and concerns regarding this research methodology and I conclude the chapter with a summary and statement of purpose for the study, the guiding research questions, and a note regarding the organization of the thesis.

1.2.1 Conceptions of Teachers and Their Knowledge

1.2.1.1 In General Education

Over the past quarter century in general education, there has been a significant shift concerning the education and research of teachers. In contrast to earlier approaches that had sought to describe the discrete behaviors and skills of 'expert' teachers, there has been a growing acknowledgement that teachers hold different, yet interrelated kinds of knowledge, and that the knowledge teachers hold is shaped by a number of influences including personal, contextual, historical, political, societal, and experiential factors (Cole & Knowles, 2000). Perhaps one of the most influential frameworks to conceptualize teachers' knowledge in general education is that of Shulman (1987), who suggested that teachers' knowledge consists of an interrelated set of 'categories' including their content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical-content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values (p. 8).

As scholars and researchers have come to acknowledge that much of what teachers' know is shaped by their experiences, there has been considerable development of Dewey's (1938) notion of the *continuity of experience* in teacher research in general education, as well as the development of various constructs to examine and understand the knowledge that teachers hold and used in their classrooms. Building on Dewey's work, Elbaz (1983) conceptualized teachers' knowledge as *practical knowledge*, characterized as knowledge of the self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction. She asserted that teachers' feelings, values, needs, and

beliefs combined with experience, theoretical knowledge, and folklore guide their instructional practice. Clandinin and Connelly (1987) developed the construct of *personal practical knowledge*, characterized by personal philosophies, metaphors, rhythms, and narrative unity as representing forms in the language of practice and defined as a "moral, affective, and aesthetic way of knowing life's educational situations" (p.59). From their perspective, teacher's knowledge is seen as dialectical, situated, and dynamic in response to their personal and professional lives, embodied in persons, and that this knowledge is shaped and re-shaped over time in the form of stories.

Other constructs have also appeared in general education to characterize how teachers think about their work and their lives: their socialization and prior experiences as classroom students (Lortie, 1975; Grossman, 1990, 1990; Britzman, 1991), their values (Lightfoot, 1983), and their beliefs (Pajares, 1992). From this work has emerged an increasing recognition that teachers' knowledge is not static, but instead dynamic and changing over time (Louden, 1991), and that teachers' personal and professional lives are closely related. Moreover, there has been an increasing acknowledgement that the study of teachers' lives is important, since their experiences and knowledge from their personal lives have a direct impact on their classrooms. As Goodson (1992) pointed out:

> The lives of teachers are deserving of study not least because person and practice cannot be separated: Teachers do not separate their lives from their actions in the classroom, and it is our life experiences which help make us what we are, both personally and professionally.

1.2.1.2 In Language Education

Changing conceptions of teachers and teacher knowledge in general education have been an important influence on scholarly work in language teacher education and research. In their call for a *reconceptualization* of the knowledge base of language teacher education, Freeman & Johnson (1998) noted that - as in general education – language teachers hold different, interrelated kinds of knowledge, and this knowledge is shaped by experience. They proposed three interrelated knowledge domains and issues for better understanding language teachers: (1) the nature of the teacher learner, (2) the nature of schools and learning, and (3) the nature of language teaching, further emphasizing that as in general education, understanding language teachers is important to developing this knowledge base:

> Lagging behind by almost a decade, language teacher education has begun to recognize that teachers, apart from the methods or materials they use, are central to understanding and improving English language teaching. (p. 401)

A related construct from this literature is that of *language teacher beliefs*, and while sometimes overlapping with that of teacher knowledge, there have been some interesting developments in this area. First, it should be noted that there is a good deal of existing literature concerning language learners' beliefs (Wendon, 1986, 1999), and that the discussion here focuses primarily on the beliefs of language teachers. In both cases however, scholars and researchers have acknowledged a lack of consensus on defining the construct of a belief, though one common feature of its definition is suggested by Borg (2001):

> The truth element – drawing on research in the philosophy of knowledge, a *belief* is a mental state which has as its content a proposition that is accepted as true by the individual holding it, although the individual may recognize that alternative beliefs may

> be held by others. This is one of the key differences between *belief* and *knowledge*, in that knowledge must actually be true in some external sense. (p. 187, italics in original)

Richards and Lockhart (1994) considered both the nature and the sources of language teachers' beliefs, suggesting five belief systems that English language teachers hold and which underlie their practice: beliefs about English, beliefs about learning, beliefs about teaching, beliefs about the program and curriculum, and beliefs about language teaching as a profession. Much like teachers' knowledge, they suggested that language teachers' belief systems are built up gradually over time, consisting of both subjective and objective dimensions, and that language teachers develop their beliefs from a number of different sources:

1. Their own experience as language learners
2. Experience of what works best
3. Established practice
4. Personality factors
5. Educationally based or research-based principles
6. Principles derived from an approach or method

Clearly, recent scholarly work in language teacher education and research has been greatly informed by the teacher research literature in general education. Changing conceptions of teachers and their knowledge have moved away from describing the discrete behaviors and skills of 'expert' language teachers to attempting to understand what these teachers know and do in their classrooms and why, and theoretical models of language teachers' knowledge and beliefs are beginning to appear. Overall, this work

suggests that as in general education, a good deal of language teachers' knowledge and beliefs are shaped by their personal and professional histories and experiences.

1.2.2 Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs about Language

One area of concern regarding language teachers' knowledge and beliefs relates to Shulman's (1987) category of *content knowledge*, since scholars and researchers have yet to reach agreement concerning the nature of this particular area of knowledge in language teaching. Johnson and Goettsch (2000) have suggested that language teachers' content knowledge has been characterized as their knowledge and beliefs about grammar, and research is beginning to appear in this area. Eisen-Ebswoth and Schweers (1997) for example, conducted a questionnaire survey asking 30 ESL teachers in New York City and another in Puerto Rico about their attitudes toward teaching grammar. Borg (1998) offered a detailed case study of an EFL teacher's understandings of teaching grammar in a Maltese classroom, and Johnson and Goettsch (2000) focused on three aspects of experienced ESL teachers' knowledge in giving explanations of grammar and other language points.

Another interpretation of content knowledge in language education has been that of *knowledge about language,* and while various definitions have been suggested (Van Essen, 1997), knowledge about language has been likened to *metalinguistic knowledge* or *awareness of language.* From this perspective, content knowledge includes more than knowledge about traditional grammar rules, vocabulary lists, spelling tests and so on, as pointed out by Van Lier and Corson (1997):

> Rather, what is emphasized is the varied nature of language knowledge, and the multiple ways in which such knowledge can be part of educational experiences and human growth. (p.xi)

And while research concerning language learners' knowledge about language is beginning to appear, teachers' content knowledge seems to have been framed primarily in terms of their knowledge and beliefs about grammar, and there has been little reference teachers' knowledge about language as anything much beyond grammatical accuracy. Van Lier (1995) however, suggests that there is more to knowledge awareness (and to language learning) than linguistic correctness:

> Conscious language learning has, traditionally, been focused on the 'nuts and bolts' of language (i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse) emphasizing formal correctness. But full mastery of a language, any language, can only come as a result of understanding its nature and function, of being aware of what it is and what it does, for us and for others.

To summarize, there seems to be a general consensus that language teachers' knowledge and beliefs are informed by their prior experiences, and that - as with all the various categories of teacher knowledge and beliefs –personal experience with language learning would be an important influence on their knowledge and their beliefs about language. Yet this area of teachers' knowledge has been mostly framed as teachers' knowledge about grammar, and there has been little discussion concerning teachers' knowledge *about* language: "the nature and function" of language, and of how learning another language might inform what language teachers know and believe about their work.

1.2.3 Story and Experience in Educational Research

1.2.3.1 Narrative and Teacher Research

As scholars and researchers have come to acknowledge that much of what teachers know is shaped by their experiences, *teacher narrative* has emerged as a key construct in the general education literature, and an increasingly rich body of literature has begun to develop considering the possibilities of story as a qualitative approach to better understanding the experiences that shape teachers and their knowledge (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Trimmer, 1997; Richie & Wilson, 2000; Witherell and Noddings, 1991).

While considerably more recent and less extensive than work in general education, narrative approaches teacher research and education are beginning to appear. In the language teacher education literature for example, Casanave & Schecter (1997) pointed to storytelling as a mode of exploring the lives of ESL teachers and the nature of bilingual teaching in English-speaking countries, while Contreras (2000) suggested a narrative approach to EFL teacher education. Gebhard & Oprandy (1999) on the other hand, emphasized narrative awareness-raising activities to help language teachers explore their pedagogical beliefs.

Story is also beginning to appear in the language teacher research literature. Golombek (1998) for example, examined the nature of two in-service ESL teachers' personal practical knowledge through the narrative reconstruction of their experiences as learners, teachers, and participants in a teacher education program. Gatbonton (1999) investigated

the pedagogical knowledge that seven experienced teachers utilized as they were teaching, and Cowie (2001) used narrative interviews to examine the professional development of eight English language teachers attending a residential course as part of their doctoral studies.

1.2.3.2 Narrative Research on Adult Second Language Learning

Narrative has also been gaining prominence in the area of adult second language acquisition (SLA) research, emphasizing the personal lives and histories of second language learners. In her study of adult language learning and identity, Norton Pierce (1995; Norton, 2000) examined the lives of five immigrant women learning English in Canada over a two-year period, concluding that their opportunities to practice English were structured by unequal relations of power in the home and in the workplace, and that power relations had to be understood with reference to inequities of ethnicity, gender, and class.

Family and workplace were also identified as important sources of identity by Goldstein (1996), who conducted an ethnographic study of bilingual life and language choice in a multicultural/multilingual factory in Canada. In her study, the majority of workers were Portuguese immigrant women. She found that the Portuguese language functioned as a symbol of solidarity for the workers, and that the use of Portuguese functioned as a symbol to access friendship networks, both for Portuguese and non-Portuguese speakers. Those who spoke English in the factory ran the risk of rejection by the community.

The emphasis on social networks was also highlighted by Thesen (1997), who conducted biographical interviews with 13 Black South African English language learners at a White university. Her study examined the gap between the conventional categories by which students were identified and the way they described themselves. She reported that students' emerging identities across the different contexts were clearly agentive, and that students were often alienated from the curriculum, tending to invest more in their social lives than in their academic studies.

These recent narrative approaches to SLA research are beginning to provide a new picture of adult second language learning, and of the lives and contexts in which adults in a range of social, cultural, and political contexts learn other languages. Some of the important themes emerging from this work are issues of identity, family, the minority language communities to which learners may belong socially, workplace, and the larger official language community. In addition, narrative perspectives on adult second language learning and language learners also suggest the recurring theme of change. As guest editor for the *TESOL Quarterly* special issue on language and identity, Norton (1997) observed change as an important characteristic across the five major studies in the issue:

> Indeed, a recurring theme in the articles is that of transition. Most of the participants in the five research projects were undergoing significant changes in their lives, whether moving from one country to another (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Schecter & Bayley, 1997); from one institution to another (Thesen, 1997); or from one community to the next (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997). (p. 419)

In a recent study, Kanno (2002) examined the long-term changes in four Japanese students who lived in Canada until they finished high school and then returned to Japan in order to attend university. Through an analysis of their narratives, she found that as adolescents in Canada, the participants held a simplistic either-or orientation to bilingualism and biculturalism, but that after returning to Japan and readjusting to their home country, they began to develop a more multifaceted view of their linguistic and cultural identities that integrated both of their languages and cultures.

1.2.3.3 Narrative and the New Literacy Studies

Narrative approaches to adult literacy research have also begun to appear in recent work by those working within the New Literacy Studies (NLS), who challenge traditional constructs of viewing reading and writing as distinct and absolute sets of skills and levels. Scholars and researchers working in this area advocate a broader understanding of what we mean when we talk about literacy, rejecting simplistic notions of literacy, and suggesting instead the notion of multiple literacies (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). In their study of the uses of reading and writing in Lancaster, England in the 1990s, Barton and Hamilton (1998) offered a detailed, ethnographic study and description of adult literacy practices in one local community through interviews, documents, and observation. The study included a significant narrative component as well, since the researchers looked at the history and cultural traditions on which the participants' practices rested, highlighting the historical and socially constructed nature of the participants' lives and their literacy practices:

> Literacy practices are culturally constructed, and, like all cultural phenomena, they have their roots in the past. To understand contemporary literacy, it is necessary to document

> the ways in which contemporary literacy is historically situated: literacy practices are as fluid, dynamic, and changing as the lives and societies of which they are a part. We need a historical approach for an understanding of the ideology, culture, and traditions on which current practices are based. (p. 12)

Two central constructs from the New Literacy Studies are *literacy events* and *literacy practices,* both of which have appeared in the NLS literature to conduct ethnographic literacy research, but also to examine the historical nature of literacy and literacy learning. Street (2001) offered his definition of literacy events:

> *Literacy events* is a helpful concept I think, because it enables researchers, and also practitioners, to focus on a particular situation where things are happening and you can see them – this is the classic literacy event in which you are able to observe an event that involves reading and/or writing and begin to draw out its characteristic: here we might observe one kind of event, and there another quite different – catching the bus, sitting in the barber's shop, negotiating the road...(p. 11)

In their study, Barton and Hamilton (1998) contrasted literacy events with literacy practices, suggesting that while literacy events are observable episodes, literacy practices involve awareness and the meaning that people give to literacy over time:

> In the simplest sense, literacy practices are what people do with literacy. However practices are not observable units of behavior since they also involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. This includes people's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy, how people talk about and make sense of literacy. These are processes internal to the individual; at the same time, practices are the social processes which connect people with one another, and they include the shared cognitions represented in ideologies and identities. (p.6)

1.2.4 Issues and Concerns in Narrative Research

1.2.4.1 Whose Knowledge?

A central feature of narrative research is its orientation toward the nature of human knowledge. Brockmeier and Harre (1997) suggested that "the point of departure of the new narrative interest in the human sciences seems to be the 'discovery' in the 1980s that

the story form constitutes a fundamental linguistic, psychological, cultural, and philosophical framework for our attempts to come to terms with the nature and conditions of our existence" (p. 264). Indeed, since narrative takes an essentially phenomenological orientation to human knowledge and experience, it represents a significant departure from traditional positivist orientations to scientific research. As Palys (1997) noted:

> Phenoneologists feel that positivists, in their zeal to mimic the natural sciences, did an injustice to the very humans they wanted to understand. Qualitative researchers therefore argue that any science of human behavior is destined to be trivial and/or incomplete unless it takes people's perceptions onto account. Any approach that defines itself as phenomenological makes understanding human perceptions its major research focus: if perceptions are real in their consequences, and a major determinant of what we do, then clearly we must understand them and their origins. (p. 17)

Narrative knowing then, in contrast to scientific knowing in the positivist tradition, is concerned more with human intention and meaning than with discrete facts or events, more with coherence than with logic, and more with understanding than with predicatability and control (Rossiter, 1999). Bruner (1986) highlighted this contrast, and suggested two separate modes of knowing, each reflecting different approaches to reality and with different criteria for judging the validity of each: "A good story and a well-formed argument are different kinds...Arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. (p.11). Polkinghorne (1988) also contrasted narrative knowing in the human sciences with the knowledge produced through the physical sciences. As he said of the human sciences, "...they do not produce knowledge that leads to the prediction and control of human experience; they produce instead, knowledge that deepens and enlarges the understanding of human experience" (p. 159).

1.2.4.2 Methods, Researchers, and Participants

Some of the issues in narrative research concern narrative methods, researchers, and their participants. Clandinin and Connelley (1994, 2000) have pointed to issues of ethics, anonymity (both of participants and researchers), ownership and relational responsibilities, factuality and truthfulness, and the possible risks, dangers, and abuses concerning narrative interviews and the development of research texts. Lieblich et al. (1998) noted that data collected during interviews are influenced by the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee as well as other contextual factors. Working in the area of teacher education, this issue is further developed eloquently by Ritchie and Wilson (2000):

> Those of us who use narrative in teacher education must ask: what is the context in which the story is told? Where are the gaps, the silences, the tensions, the omissions? What narratives from other lives might contradict or complicate our own? Who is privileged by these narratives? What positions and relationships do they reinforce? (p.21)

1.2.4.3 Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

Other concerns relate to narrative criteria of validity, reliability, and generalizability, since these concepts are understood in a different way than they are in traditional scientific research. Validity is based on a well-grounded conclusion, but it does not presume certainty; rather its proposed 'lifelikeness' (Bruner, 1986). Reliability is not about the consistency or stability of measuring instruments that always result in the same score, but about the dependability of the data and the strength of the analysis of the data (Polkinghorne, 1988). Generalizability is not about probability due to chance in a random sample, but about meaningfulness or importance (Polkinghorne, 1988).

In addition, since narrative research deals with open rather than closed systems of traditional scientific research, several other important criteria in narrative research have been suggested, including apparency and verisimilitude (Van Maanen, 1988), the importance of avoiding 'the illusion of causality' (Crites, 1986), narrative resonance (Conle, 1996), an explanatory and invitational quality, authenticity, adequacy, plausibility (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990), and wakefulness (Clandinin & Connelley, 2000). Finally, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) have suggested the criterion of ecological validity, since narrative research and theory should have something to say about what people do in real, culturally significant situations (Neisser, 1976).

Despite these issues and concerns regarding narrative however, many scholars and researchers continue to point to story as a useful means of inquiry into human experience and knowledge, both in general education and in the study of language learning and teaching. As a qualitative methodology grounded in phenomenology, the major focus of narrative is that an understanding of human beings can only be gained by taking people's perceptions into account.

1.3 Summary and Research Purpose

There has been an increasing interest in the knowledge that language teachers hold and use, and a growing acknowledgement that teachers hold different kinds of knowledge, that it is informed by experience, and that it is consequential. One such category of knowledge is language teachers' content knowledge. This area of teachers' knowledge has usually been framed as knowledge about grammar, and there has been little

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discussion of how the experience of learning another language might inform teachers' understandings of its "nature or function."

As in general education, there has been an increasing interest in narrative research in several areas of language education. Narrative language teacher research is beginning to examine various aspects of the experiential nature of teachers' knowledge and how their personal histories inform the knowledge they hold and use in their classrooms. Narrative research has also begun to appear in the SLA literature, suggesting an important relationship between language learning and sociocultural identity. These findings can also be seen in recent narrative approaches to adult literacy research, where the constructs of literacy events and practices have emerged as central concepts in examining the historical and socially situated nature of literacy, literacy learning, and meaning making in the lives of adults. And while concerns have been raised regarding the phenomenological nature of narrative research, story seems to capture the experiential nature of teachers' knowledge and of personal meaning-making that traditional approaches to research in the human sciences do not.

The purpose of this study was to explore language teachers' reflections on their lives and on their experiences as learners of other languages, and how they believe their knowledge, beliefs, and practices have been shaped by their personal histories as language learners.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do language teachers who have learned other languages tell the stories of their lives?
2. How do they first encounter other languages and cultures, and what key events and practices do they associate with their personal histories as language learners?
3. What meaning do they give to these experiences, and how do they believe their sociocultural identities and understandings have been shaped by learning other languages?
4. How do they believe their experiences have shaped their knowledge, beliefs, and practices as language teachers?

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

I would like to conclude this introductory chapter to the study with a note concerning the organization of this thesis. In Chapter Two I will provide a review of the research literature concerning some of the social and cultural influences that shape language teachers' lives, as well as research that has specifically examined language learning in language teaching. Chapter Three will provide a description of the research methodology, analysis, and participant selection for the study. In the next five chapters, each of the participants is given his or her own chapter, and each chapter includes an introduction, biographical profile, interpretation of the narrative, and a final summary. In Chapter Nine, the emergent themes from the study are presented and discussed, and Chapter Ten concludes the thesis with implications from the study and some suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter I would like to provide a review of the major research findings from the literature related to language learning in language teaching. Much of this research has appeared in the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) literature, and is disparate and often overlapping. This review is divided into two major sections: in Part One, I provide a review of research that has examined some of the social and cultural influences on teachers' lives in language teaching. Part Two reviews research that has appeared examining second/foreign language learning by language teachers. A summary of the literature review is provided at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Part One: Research on Language Teachers' Lives

A number of studies have been reported concerning various aspects of English language teachers' lives while living and working abroad: their professional lives and status in TESOL, their changing sociocultural identities, understandings, and practices as expatriate teachers while abroad, and a few retrospective accounts of teachers living and working in countries other than their place of birth. While most of this work concerns native-speaking (NS) English language teachers, studies are also beginning to appear in the TESOL literature concerning the lives of non-native speaking (NNS) English language teachers.

2.2.1 Teachers' Professional Lives in EFL

Studies concerning the professional lives of NS expatriate English language teachers have examined their motives for entering English language teaching, their professional roles and experiences while living and teaching abroad, and their career paths in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Porter (1990) for example, examined the motivations and roles of foreign teachers in Chinese colleges and universities, a study that included interviews with five American NS EFL teachers with advanced qualifications and experience. Of the five, none mentioned a commitment to teaching EFL as the primary, or sometimes even secondary reason for entering China. Instead, their primary reason for entering the country was to live overseas. This motive was echoed by the other foreign teachers in the study, many of whom had moved into EFL from other disciplines, and were unable to find work in their specific areas of training. Secondary motives for teaching included the opportunity to develop intimate social and personal relationships with the Chinese people, and a desire to contribute to a greater Christian presence in the country. Outside the classroom, teachers' roles were strongly influenced by extra-curricular demands made by their employers. These expectations often precluded teachers' private lives, and included translation, mandatory social interaction with students (often in teachers' own homes), student counseling, and acting as 'bridges' between the Eastern and Western countries to assist students in gaining entry to Western universities and colleges. The study makes regular reference to the heavy workload of the EFL teachers, and to their own self-descriptions as full-time English language 'teaching machines'.

In his study of seventeen NS and NNS EFL teachers in Poland, Johnston (1997) also found that many teachers had occupations in other areas prior to teaching English, and that a discourse of career was absent from the participants' account of their lives. His findings supported previous empirical findings by McKnight (1992) and the Centre for British Teachers (1989), who concluded that many teachers are vague about their career plans and aspirations, and that the major reason for this is the lack of an institutionalized career structure in EFL.

2.2.2 EFL Teachers' Lives' Abroad

Research has also appeared concerning the lives of NS EFL teachers while living and working abroad, and this work is beginning to suggest that many teachers struggle with the personal and professional challenges that they face as expatriates overseas. Recently, Johnson (1999) revisited his original study, this time focusing on three of the expatriate NS teachers and highlighting the multiple and complex nature of living and teaching abroad. He found that on one hand, "their very identity as foreigners renders them marginal in social and often professional terms" but on the other, "they have actively sought out a life in which they occupy a marginal, de-centered position", and that for many EFL teachers, change (of job, country of residence, of methodology) is often valued for its own sake.

Teachers' struggles with personal and professional challenges while abroad can also be seen in Jackson's (2000) study, which examined the experiences of a large group of over 300 NS EFL teachers teaching conversation skills in Hong Kong secondary schools. The

study suggested that while some expatriates adjusted quite well to their new environment, others experienced severe culture shock and had difficulty coping with linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical realities of teaching abroad. In a smaller study, Schechter (1992) offered a personal narrative of a beginning EFL teacher struggling with the realities of teaching English in Portugal after completing a pre-service TEFL training course. Jenks (1992) considered some of the 'circumstances' that may be perceived by ESL/EFL teachers as impediments to good teaching and learning: geography, philosophy, economy, sociocultural factors, and views on language.

In their study of four NS and NNS EFL teachers in a private language school in Japan, Duff & Uchida (1997) examined how the teachers perceived their classroom roles in relation to the teaching of culture, and how such perceptions shaped (and were shaped by) their experiences of teaching English. The teachers' sociocultural identities were seen to be subject to constant negotiation due to changing contextual elements such as classroom/institutional culture, instructional materials, and reactions from students and colleagues. Teachers' perceptions were found to be deeply rooted in their personal histories, based on past educational, professional, and cross-cultural experiences. Common themes that emerged from the study were teachers' appreciation for the complexities and paradoxes of their professional, social, political, and cultural identities, their quest for connection, and the need for educational and personal control.

Fanselow (1997) also highlighted the notion of struggle, and how institutional demands can give teachers new roles, often placing them in conflict with other EFL expatriates.

After working as a teacher, he was suddenly given 'expert' status as a teacher trainer and responsibilities for selecting volunteers and making professional presentations. He found these roles often conflicted with the solidarity he felt with his fellow teachers.

2.2.3 Retrospective Accounts of Teachers' Lives in Language Teaching

In addition to studies that have examined various aspects of teachers' personal and professional lives at the point at which they are living and working abroad, a number of retrospective accounts concerning teachers' lives in EFL have also appeared. These retrospective accounts provide a different perspective on teachers' lives, and suggest that an 'expatriate experience' can have long-last effects on teachers' personal lives and professional practice after they come home.

Butt et al. (1992) looked at Glenda, a 44-year-old ESL Canadian public school teacher with nine years of experience, two of which were at an international school in Pakistan. Early in life, she developed an interest in other cultures, one that was never realized by foreign travel until her husband joined External Affairs and was posted to Pakistan. Rather than participating with the host culture however, her social life consisted mostly of mingling with ambassadors, diplomats, and other international VIPs. While she came to reject what she describes as this particular social group's 'cultural superiority' over the local people, she also experienced severe culture shock in her host country. She failed to experience the first phase of euphoria often associated with arriving in a new culture, and immediately experienced frustration with Pakistani culture. She rejected the local culture and refused to accept what for her were 'meaningless' behaviors and traditions. Finally,

she began to explore cultural and gender issues, and it was in her language classroom that 'the bud began to open', and where ultimately, she became more accepting of cultural differences. In her current life as an ESL teacher in Canada, her experiences abroad have transformed Glenda into a more self-initiated and self-determined person, and a teacher that values diversity, communication, and self- directedness in her language classroom.

Woods (1996) examined the processes that eight experienced ESL teachers went through in planning a course curriculum, and interviews with the teachers often involved references to prior learning and teaching experiences. One of the participants, Participant B, made reference to his experiences as an EFL teacher and language learner in Japan, and how his views of teaching and learning had changed as a result. As a language learner, his previous belief that language learning would simply occur as a result of immersion in an L2 environment came to include a new perspective on language learning that emphasized a concentrated effort as well. Pedagogically, he found his training in communicative approaches to language teaching problematic in his Japanese classrooms, and that after a year he had to "adapt my way of thinking to the Japanese mentality about education" (p. 208). Woods found that what changed most in Participant B was not how language should be presented in the classroom, but rather that the major responsibility for learning was the responsibility of the language learner, with the primary role of the teacher as facilitator in the process.

Other retrospective accounts of teachers' lives in EFL include Oprandy (1999), who in reflecting on his career as a language educator and five years as an EFL teacher in the

Peace Corp, considers himself to be a global citizen. Gebhard (1999) found that his experiences in EFL and as a language learner have raised his awareness of the importance of paying attention to the affective side of language teaching, and to the emotional needs of students in the English language classroom.

Research with a retrospective focus on teachers' lives in EFL provides a different picture of the social and cultural influences on language teachers lives overseas. In contrast to localized studies that focus on EFL teachers' initial struggles and adaptations to their new personal and professional environments in their host countries, the few retrospective studies that have appeared seem to suggest more long-lasting identity transformations and changes in teachers' knowledge and beliefs, their sociocultural identities and understandings, and their practices as language teachers.

2.2.4 Emerging Voices of NNS Teachers in TESOL

While most of the above studies concerning the personal and professional lives of teachers in TESOL have taken place in an EFL context and concern NS teachers of English, studies are also beginning to appear concerning the lives of NNS teachers in TESOL. Hayes (1996) has argued that the *voices* of ESL/EFL teachers have received too little attention in the TESOL literature and that too often, NNS teachers have had to implement "visions" of teaching-learning generated by NS academics in institutions of higher education. He looked at how nine Thai English language teachers perceived their lives as teachers in the Thai educational and social systems during a five-week in-service development course. His study found that parental wishes and respect for teachers as a

social group were influential motivations for entering teaching. Amin (1997) examined race and identity among NNS ESL teachers in Canada. Liu (1999) explored the NS and NNS labels from the perspective of seven NNS professionals, contending that these terms are related to issues such as the order of learned languages, language competence, language-learning environment, cultural affiliation, and social identity. Finally, Seidlhofer (1999) described some of the dilemmas that NNS English teachers face as they are exposed to competing discourses of educational ideologies and market forces, and that they have to reconcile the contradictory demands of global pressures with the local conditions in which they work.

2.3 Part Two: Research on Language Learning in Language Teaching

Overall, research that has examined language learning by language teachers has broadened from early studies that looked at short-term, classroom-based language learning by beginning teachers-in-training to more recent studies of that look at more advanced levels of language learning over the lives of experienced language teachers and educators. Work in this area can be broadly divided into three sub-areas in terms of chronology and focus: (1) classroom–based studies concerning foreign language lessons and classes as part of language teacher education programs, (2) introspective studies of language learning by language specialists, and (3) language learning and literacy autobiographies by language educators in a range of disciplines.

2.3.1 Experiments in 'Role Reversal'

The most long-standing area of research concerning language learning by teachers in TESOL can be characterized as 'role reversal' studies – those which have taken place within the context of pre- and in-service teacher education programs (e.g. Lowe, 1987; Rinvolucri, 1988; Waters et al., 1990; Birch, 1992; Tinker-Sachs, 1996; Flowerdew, 1998). Using diaries and journals, the aim of these studies has been to provide teachers-in-training an opportunity to reflect upon language learning and teaching by way of experiencing a short foreign language lesson or course as part of their programs of study. Lowe (1987) for example, examined the diaries of a group of English NS ESOL teachers from the London UK area learning Chinese during a twelve-week course, finding that the teachers reconsidered the roles of praise, grammar, repetition, revision, and communicative teaching during the course. Located within a reflective approach (Schön, 1987) to language teacher education, research findings in this area tend to echo those of Lowe, and there seems to be a general agreement that 'role reversals' can offer teachers-in-training a valuable learning experience, although concerns by researchers and trainees regarding the validity of the experience (Golebiowska, 1985), as well as its purposes and constraints in a teacher education context have also been raised (Waters et al., 1990).

2.3.2 Introspective Studies

A second area of research in this area concerns 'introspective' studies of language learning by language teachers and educators. Similar to 'role reversal' studies, research in this area also uses diaries and journal entries as the primary methods of recording teachers' experiences and reflections on language learning. Yet an important distinction

here is that introspective studies are usually first-person accounts written by the learners themselves as the primary researchers, and often include out-of-class language learning experiences. Schumann and Schumann (1977) for example, recorded their study of Arabic. Bailey (1983) found competitiveness and anxiety to be important elements of her experiences in a beginner's French class. Schmidt and Frota (1986) provided an account of Schmidt's first steps of learning Portuguese in and outside of the classroom in Brazil, while Neu (1991) investigated her study of Polish.

With the publication of *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching* (Freeman & Richards, 1996), several autobiographical studies appeared addressing various aspects of language teachers' prior experiences, often with reference to second/foreign language learning. Bailey et al. (1996) examined the autobiographies of seven M.A. candidates to explore Lortie's (1975) "apprenticeship of observation". They concluded teachers' prior experiences as second/foreign language learners were powerful influences on their perceptions of language learning and teaching, often more so that the knowledge presented in their teacher training program. A number of the participants in the study also reported natural language learning experiences outside of formal instructional settings. Not only were these experiences reported as more influential than their prior in-class experiences as language students, but several reported that their experiences abroad had led to language teaching as a possible career choice, a theme that also emerged in Johnson's (1996) autobiographical case study of a practicum student teacher. Almarza (1996) found that the four student teachers in her study had prior language learning experiences in both formal and natural settings abroad.

Campbell (1996) kept daily journal entries while studying Spanish as her third language for two months at a language school in Mexico. From her review of the journal entries, she found that the most important influence on her language learning in Mexico was socializing with the teachers – more important than classroom study, her associations with the family she lived with, or anything else. She found that this strategy grew out of her prior college experience as a language learner in Germany, and that her prior German language learning experiences and attitudes determined the course of her Spanish learning to an extreme.

In contrast to 'role reversal' studies of language learning by teachers that tend to locate language learning within an institutional context and at the initial stages of language learning, these introspective studies begin to provide glimpses into language teachers reaching higher levels in other languages and in more natural learning contexts. In addition, they begin to point to the social, cultural, and professional contexts in which language teachers study and learn other languages.

2.3.3 Language Learning and Literacy Autobiographies

The most recent area of research into language learning by language teachers involves first-person autobiographical narratives by language educators who have reached advanced levels in other languages. As with narrative approaches to research in SLA, teacher in research in this area is beginning to suggest an important relationship between language learning and teachers' changing sociocultural identities and understandings.

Hynde (2000) for example, described her experiences as a learner of four languages (Polish, Albanian, Hungarian, and Lithuanian) while working as a teacher and teacher-trainer abroad. She concluded that her "unplanned agenda" of language learning has resulted in an increased awareness of students' learning preferences and needs, insight into local teachers' learning backgrounds, seeing language from the "outside", and a gain in intercultural understanding.

Zou (1998), an associate professor in education in the US, described his redefinition of self as a Chinese immigrant learning English in the United States. His powerlessness after arriving in the US is attributed to the transition from a familiar to an unfamiliar sociocultural environment, and to his lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge. He credits his own growing self-confidence and transformation to the support he received from his growing social relationships. "Not until I had the opportunity to play the role of teacher, assistant editor, interpreter, or colleague and friend was I finally convinced that I could use the English language well" (p. 8). The author suggests that his emerging self-awareness of second language competency has led to his current pluralistic and positive self-identity as a Chinese American immigrant.

Two full-length autobiographical books concerning language learning by professional educators have also appeared. Lvovich (1997), a native-speaking Russian who learned French in France, Italian in Italy, and English in the United States, examined the internal struggles and the process of clarifying identity in youth and as an adult, a language teacher, an immigrant, and a language learner. Ogulnick (1998) examined the relationship

between language, language learning, and personal identity as an American Jewish woman learning Japanese in Japan, providing personal observations about the interrelationship of gender, race, culture, social class, historical experiences, and language learning, in which the themes of feminism and friendship were prominent.

In a comprehensive collection of language learning autobiographies by professional educators, Belcher and Conner (2001), offer a collection of personal accounts in narrative and interview format concerning the formative literacy and language learning experiences of eighteen well-known specialists in a variety of fields (including language teaching and the social and physical sciences), representing fourteen countries of origin and a range of first and other languages.

2.4 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I have presented a review of research that has examined some of the social and cultural influences on teachers' lives in language teaching, as well as research examining second/foreign language learning by language teachers. In both areas, a number of issues and questions arise from the findings.

Research concerning the lives of language teachers in TESOL has begun raise some questions about the nature of EFL and the people who teach English overseas. To begin, it seems that many of these teachers enter teaching with the goal of traveling abroad rather than with a commitment to language teaching. Yet work in this area is also beginning to suggest that after teachers arrive overseas, their pre-departure identities as

hopeful world-travelers often collide with their personal and professional roles as teachers, employees, and expatriates, often becoming important sites of conflict during their time abroad. Teachers can face professional and social marginalization overseas, and experience severe culture shock coping with the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical realities of teaching abroad.

While limited, the few retrospective accounts of EFL teachers' lives that have appeared begin to provide another perspective on the 'expatriate experience', pointing to even further revisions of their identities, understanding and practices. In Duff and Uchida's (1997) study for example, Kimoko's experiences as a language learner abroad led to a teaching practice that aimed at fostering tolerance. She came to reject idealizing native English speakers, and valued the communication of personal ideas over accuracy in her language classroom. Both for Glenda (Butt et al. 1992) and for Participant B (Woods, 1996), teachers' practices of language teaching had been transformed to emphasize self-directness and self-determination. Yet while Glenda valued diversity and communication in her classroom, Participant B came to emphasize the learners' responsibility in language learning, stressing the role of the teacher as facilitator rather than as a dispenser of knowledge. Gebhard (1999) on the other hand, highlighted the importance of affect in language teaching and learning as a key element in his own transformation as a language learner and teacher. As with Kimoko, these transformations of practice, like the teachers' identities and understandings, appear to be connected to their personal histories as language learners.

Yet most of the studies that have examined language learning in language teaching have focused on beginning-level, classroom-based language courses as part of TESOL teacher training programs. While very little research examining language learning to more advanced levels has appeared, a number of themes are beginning to appear. First, it seems that more than a few teachers cite their prior experiences as language learners a key motive in their decision to enter language teaching in the first place. Second, the 'introspective' studies in this area point the social, cultural, and professional contexts in which language teachers study and learn other languages, aspects of language learning that are rarely mentioned in the 'role reversal' studies. Finally, the more recent language and literacy learning autobiographies by language educators suggest a strong relationship between teachers' experiences as advanced language learners and their own evolving personal and professional identities and understandings.

The major gap that emerges from this literature is that there is a lack of retrospective accounts of language learning to advanced levels by language teachers. Historically, the literature has characterized language learning by teachers as little more than a short-term 'experience' course as part of a teacher training program, yet there is passing reference to language learning to higher levels scattered throughout the research on teachers' lives. Of the few retrospective accounts that have appeared, there seems to be evidence that language learning has been an important influence on teachers' personal and professional lives and on their practice as language teachers. Yet one cannot help but notice that to date, the bulk of these retrospective accounts of language learning to more advanced levels have been authored by NS language education professionals and while helpful, few

reports have appeared on language learning to higher levels by practicing language teachers, NS or otherwise.

What lessons have been learned in crossing "the border into the domain where selves and worlds are reconstructed" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), and how do teachers believe language learning has shaped their lives and their practice? More autobiographical accounts of language learning by language teachers might help to better understand this area of teacher learning in language teaching.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 A Qualitative Approach

Since the goal of this study was to explore language teachers' reflections on their lives and experiences as learners of other languages, my approach to this study was qualitative in nature, emphasizing process and meaning, and aiming to include the contributing participants as co-researchers and as co-authors as we sought answers together to the questions that guided the study.

3.2 Teacher Narrative as Method

The study drew upon narrative approaches to the research of teachers' lives in general education (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Goodson, 1992; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), but was also informed by some of the more recent narrative approaches to the study of adult SLA (Kanno, 2002; Thesen, 1997; Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000) and adult literacy learning (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 2001).

After Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Atkinson (1998), I used open-ended question to guide audio-recorded interviews with each participant. Shortly afterward, I used the interview transcripts to write the participants' first-person autobiographies. The narratives were then returned to the participants for suggestions and changes to ensure that it was a good representation of their stories. Following their approval, the narratives then served

as the primary field texts and research data, which were then analyzed for emergent themes.

3.3 Participant Selection

Five teachers with different first languages and countries of origin participated in the study. As indicated in the previous chapter, most of the existing studies concerning language learning by teachers have focused on NS English language teachers, and I wanted to include teachers from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

As a TESL graduate student at the university where I studied during the 2000-2001 terms, a number of my colleagues fit this description quite well. Three women and two men volunteered for the study. All of the participants were experienced language teachers completing graduate studies in Vancouver, and all have advanced credentials in their second or third languages.

3.4 Data Collection

Prior to the interviews, I provided each participant with background information on the study and a copy of the interview schedule (see Appendices A and B) and arranged to meet with each participant. Interviews were conducted either at the participants' homes or at their offices at the universities where they study. The interviews took approximately 90 minutes to complete. I refrained from taking field notes during the interviews, although I did so immediately afterward to record any impressions that I felt the recordings did not capture.

I came to the interviews clearly aware that my relationships with the contributing teachers were not much beyond casual acquaintance. Overall, I believe that the interviews went very well, and I was genuinely impressed at the depth of personal disclosure and sincerity that they all contributed during the interviews and during the revision process. At the same time, I was also concerned with issues inherent in narrative data collection concerning factuality and truthfulness (Clandinin & Connelley, 2000) and the gaps, silences, and omissions (Ritchie and Wilson, 2000) as teachers told their stories. Even though my primary role during the interviews was as a listener, I chose to share some of my own history as a second language learner and teacher with the participants during the interviews. In listening to their stories, I sometimes attempted to clarify some of my own questions, while at others I chose not to out of respect for my colleagues.

The stories were returned to the respective participants via email for their approval, and I asked questions and made changes as they requested until each participant was satisfied with his or her story. The revised narratives averaged 4,660 words and served as the primary field texts for the study.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

My approach to the analysis of the narratives was informed by grounded theory following Glaser and Strauss (1967), in which analysis is guided by a set of principles as well as an epistemological stance toward research. From the beginning of this project my goal was, as much as possible, to let theory emerge from the data provided by participants and their stories. Thus, my intent was not so much to analyze but rather to interpret teachers'

stories, and to avoid the 'illusion of causality' (Crites, 1986). Following approval of the narratives by the participants, I began to interpret the emergent themes through 'data reducing, pattern making, decentering, and connecting' (Miles & Huberman, 1984) my findings to theory.

I found this to be a challenging task. Recently, a number of computer software programs have become available for the analysis of qualitative data, and I began my analysis using the QSR N5/NUD*ST software package. I found the program useful for coding, searching, and working with texts, though I also discovered that themes only began to emerge through constant and regular reading and rereading of the narratives themselves and by coding and working with texts using standard computer files and a word-processing program (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 144). As I read and reread the narratives, I developed an appreciation of the challenges and complexities of this facet of narrative research so well noted by Riessman (1993):

> Narrative analysis is not useful for studies of large numbers of nameless, faceless subjects. The methods are slow and painstaking. They require attention to subtlety: nuances of speech, organization of a response, local contexts of production, social discourses that shape what is said, and what cannot be spoken. Not suitable for investigators who seek an easy and unobstructed view of subjects' lives, the analytic detail may seem excessive to those who view language as a transparent medium. (p. 69)

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) have spoken of the issue of voice in interpretation and writing of narrative field texts, and I found this to be a significant issue throughout this part of the research. I was often tempted to edit the stories to provide structure, cohesion, and to avoid what I felt were contradictions at some points in the narratives. Ultimately however, I chose to lean more toward what was said (and in the order in which it was

said) in the interviews by the participants, and the narratives were sequenced chronologically and for the most part, written up as they were told by the participants themselves.

3.6 Limitations of the Study

Throughout this study I developed an appreciation of the concerns regarding validity, reliability, and generalizabilty of narrative from the perspective of traditional scientific research, some of which I discussed in the introductory chapter to this study. To address these concerns, I tried to provide the study with the narrative validity of lifelikeness (Brunner, 1986) and the reliability of the dependability of the data and the strength of the analysis of the data (Polkinghorne, 1988). Given the small sample size, it would be difficult to generalize from the findings, although I have tried to provide a discussion concerning the meaningfulness and importance (Polkinghorne, 1988) of this project.

Other criteria specific to narrative inquiry were important to me as a researcher as well. I tried to provide this endeavor with the quality of narrative resonance (Conle, 1996), with wakefulness (Clandinin & Connelley, 2000), and with the ecological validity of saying something about what people do in real, culturally significant situations (Neisser, 1976).

CHAPTER FOUR: CATHERINE

> Many people told me that you couldn't learn a second language as an adult, and I wanted to try it and to see if this theory was true. I wanted to try and see if I could do it. And I don't think it is true, at least not for everybody.
>
> - Catherine

4.1 Introduction and Interview Context

Originally from China, Catherine immigrated to Canada in 1999 with her teenage son. She started learning English in China as a young adult, and later taught English at two universities in China. At the time of the interview, she was 44 years of age, a single parent, completing an M.A. degree in Modern Languages in Vancouver, and teaching a TOEFL preparation course at a private international college.

Catherine and I first met as fellow graduate students in the Department of Language and Literacy Education during the fall of 2000, where we took several classes together and occasionally ran into each other in the cafeterias and libraries of the university. Initially, our exchanges focused on our course readings and assignments, but these conversations came to include our professional and personal lives as well. It occurred to me that she would make an interesting participant for this study, and after explaining the nature of my research, I asked if she would participate by sharing her story with me. She agreed, and we arranged to meet for an interview at her home in residence at the university. Before beginning our interview, Catherine invited me to a traditional Chinese lunch she had prepared with her son. After our meal, her son went out for the afternoon, and we conducted our interview in their living room.

4.2 Biographical Profile: Catherine's Story

Growing Up in China

The youngest in a family of five children and the daughter of a high school Chinese and English language teacher, Catherine grew up in a large and educated family in a rural town in northern China. Her father was a university-educated English and Chinese teacher, and Catherine did well in her early school years, receiving encouragement from her teachers and family:

> I grew up surrounded by books and chalk, and my whole family valued learning and education. They told me stories and I read widely - children's books and adult literature and the classics. But the most enjoyable time for me was reading picture books in the library. I enjoyed it so much that I sometimes almost forgot to go home for dinner.
>
> I was a top student in middle school and high school and I was quite confident in my academic abilities. I wrote plays in Chinese when I was little girl and my teachers always encouraged me to study language. My older brother learned Russian, which was a popular second language in China during the 1950s, but I didn't start learning English until I was in my twenties.

Catherine also grew up against the larger social and political backdrop of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, a time that Catherine recalls as difficult for her family and for her father in particular:

> The Cultural Revolution was a difficult time for educators and teachers in China. A lot of books were burned and my father brought a lot of books with him when he first moved to the town because he wanted to protect them. Eventually the books were discovered and burned and I remember my whole family was very sad when this happened.

After completing high school, Catherine worked as a Chinese and Mathematics teacher in the Chinese public school system for four years. By this time, the Cultural Revolution was ending, and changing educational policies within China meant that Catherine had the opportunity to pursue a university education. Believing that there would be professional

opportunities in China for teachers who spoke English, Catherine applied for an undergraduate teacher education program in English Education at the university in the town where she lived. Before she could be accepted into the program however, she needed to pass the university's English-language entrance examination, and she had never studied English in school. So, Catherine began her English language studies in her early twenties to that she could pursue a university education and ultimately, find a better job.

Early English Studies in China

Catherine faced a number of practical obstacles as she began her early English studies. Even though her father was an English language teacher, he refused to help her to prepare for the entrance examination due to his advancing age and hearing loss, and also because he believed that a native English speaker would be a better teacher for her. Catherine was also living alone at the time and did not know any other English teachers or English language learners. Another problem was that self-study resources and materials for learning English were difficult to come by in her home town, and there were strict regulations and penalties in China at that time for using language study materials that were not approved by the government. In response to these challenges, Catherine ultimately prepared for the entrance examination through a combination of self-study and with the guidance of a tutor:

> Even though my father was an English teacher I didn't learn it from him. By this time he had lost a lot of his hearing and it was difficult for him so he could not correct my mistakes in pronunciation. Another reason he did not teach me was that he believed that it was better for a native English speaker to teach me because the pronunciation would be more accurate. At the time however, I was living alone and teaching in a high school and we didn't know any native speakers and no one else around me was learning English. It

> was also very hard to find English books and it was against the law to listen to foreign programs – if you were caught they could put you in jail.
>
> However, there was a Chinese government-approved radio program for learning English that basically involved sentence translation and grammar, and so my brother bought a radio for me as a way to learn English. I listened to the program for about two hours every day for six months, and this was how I prepared for the test. My father's friend was an English teacher who had graduated from a prestigious university in China, and he became my tutor during this time. On the weekends I walked 20 miles to the town where he lived and he gave me lots of grammar exercises and corrected my mistakes.

After several months of self-study Catherine passed the exam on her second attempt and was admitted into the program.

Undergraduate Studies in English Education in China

Catherine was eager to study at the university and to take formal English language classes, but she came to feel an increasing dissatisfaction with her language skills in English during her four years of the program:

> As I said before, I was quite confident before I started going to the university but I really lost confidence in myself during those four years. Most of the English teachers had previously taught Russian and I had difficulty in understanding classroom instructions in English. Language instruction in the program was grammar-oriented translation, and we spent a lot of time listening to a tape recorder. It was especially bad during the first year. Things improved a bit during my time there but even when I got high marks I never felt very satisfied. I didn't know what I was going to do with the language or who I was going to speak to.

Teaching and Learning English at Two Chinese Universities

After completing her program, Catherine worked as a translator for three years and was then hired as an academic EFL teacher at the university where she had studied. During this time, she taught EFL test preparation courses for several years, and began working with visiting English language teachers from the United States. As an English language teacher, she was finally able to use the language she had studied with other English

teachers - visiting international faculty from the United States who didn't speak Chinese – and she began to feel more confident about her English language skills:

> During the time I taught at the university I had quite a bit of contact with visiting native English teachers from the United States. They didn't speak Chinese and they needed an interpreter in daily life and for their classroom teaching, so I would work with these teachers and translate for them in the classroom and observe their teaching. I think I had more contact with the English language and learned more by doing this than I ever had before.

It was at this time that Catherine began thinking about taking a graduate degree at a foreign university, and in order to do this she had to take the TOEFL and GRE tests. So, she decided to get practice materials for the tests and to prepare for them on her own:

> This was substantial period for me to learn the language. I borrowed books from the library and followed the books and tapes and worked on the activities. I set myself the goal of remembering fifty words by heart in an hour, which may sound like a lot but I was able to do it when I really tried very hard. I used vocabulary lists from the test books and sat down and counted fifty words from the different pages by grouping the words into categories. Sometimes I remembered the words by their alphabetical order, root forms, or parts of speech. It was pretty much rote memorization, but I learned a lot of vocabulary this way, and I really felt that I didn't have enough vocabulary to do well on the tests and so I forced myself to do it. I spent two months preparing for each of the two tests.

Catherine wrote both tests and scored high enough to apply to a number of universities in the United States, but she never pursued her applications at the time. By this time, she and her husband had separated and Catherine needed to work and take care of her son. It was also at this time that she got a better paying job as an English teacher at another university in the southern part of China, and so she moved there with her son and her father. Once again, the relationships she developed with other language teachers appear to have contributed to Catherine's growing self-confidence in English, as well as to her growing interest in pursuing graduate studies abroad:

> I also had contact with visiting American faculty from a university in Arizona, and I developed close friendships with many of them. I still wanted to study abroad, and their friendship and support to do this during this time was very encouraging to me.

Catherine's father passed away at the age of ninety-three, and shortly after her son turned thirteen years old, she decided to apply to the Canadian embassy to immigrate to Canada – ten years after she first had the idea. And while her application was quickly accepted, she had to wait another three years before she could actually move to Canada.

Immigrating to Canada

Catherine and her son arrived as landed immigrants in Canada in 1999. At first, she wasn't able to go back to university because she needed to find a job. Uncertain about what kind of work to look for, she felt "lost and sensitive" during their first few months here, and her first job was at the cafeteria at her son's high school:

> When I got home I was so tired that I couldn't cook our own supper. We were so tired that I did not have strength to prepare dinner and both of us went to sleep. We slept so soundly that when I woke up my watched told it was six o'clock. I didn't know whether it was 6pm or 6am in the next morning. Should I prepare dinner and then go to bed again or should I prepare breakfast and then go to work afterwards?

Catherine also started thinking about further English language training to improve her speaking skills, as well as changing careers altogether. Eventually however, she decided to follow her dream, and she began her graduate program here last year:

> When I started looking for work, people told me that I had a heavy accent and so I thought that I should take some pronunciation classes. I also wanted to take some courses here that would help me to get a job, but I wasn't sure what kind of job I wanted or what kind of work I was qualified to do. I had attended accounting school in China for two years before I went to university and I always got high marks, so I thought I would take an accounting program at a local community college here. But I wasn't sure; I didn't really enjoy accounting that much and I hadn't done it for a long time. I also loved teaching and my friends encouraged me to apply for a graduate program in Modern Languages. Eventually I did, and this is what I am doing right now.

The Present Context and Looking Forward

In the present context, Catherine continues to improve her language skills through a range of activities: working with fellow graduate students, professors, networking with various support people at the university where she studies, and studying on her own at home. And while she continues to have doubts about her abilities to improve her speaking and pronunciation skills, she seems to feel that eventually, she will improve her English in these areas:

> When I started my MA program last year I went to some instructional skills and presentation workshops and I videotaped them. I took those videos to the administrator where I am teaching now and asked her to give me some feedback on my pronunciation. We sat down together and watched the videotapes and it was very helpful for me. I also use my computer and record my own voice and listen to myself speaking. I think that if I work hard I can make progress and improve my speaking skills.

In addition to her academic studies, Catherine works part-time as a TOEFL preparation instructor at a private international college in Vancouver. She isn't sure about her professional plans for the future, noting that a lot of it depends on the opportunities that are out there when she completes her M.A. She would like to do a Ph.D. and become a professor at some point, but whether or not she does that in the future will depend on other things. She would prefer to stay here in Vancouver if possible, but she says she would move somewhere else if the right job came up and would also like to teach Chinese again at some future point.

4.3 Interpretation and Discussion

4.3.1 Catherine's Reflections on Language Learning: Self-Confidence

The most predominant theme that emerged from Catherine's story was her emerging self-confidence as an English language learner. Catherine suggested that her biggest obstacle in learning English has been her lack of self-confidence in the language, particularly regarding her speaking and pronunciation skills:

> I think the biggest obstacle I have faced in learning English is that I don't have a lot of confidence in my language ability, especially my pronunciation. Pronunciation was never a part of my independent language learning or the formal classes I have taken, and I still have an accent that I try to reduce. I don't feel I am a successful language learner – I don't think that way. Maybe other people feel that I am, but compared to my struggle, I don't think that I am.

Catherine says she started out confident in her academic abilities as a girl growing up in China, but she was uncertain about her ability to learn another language when she began her English studies as a young adult. By this time, she was working as a Chinese and mathematics teacher, and her decision to start learning English was a professional one – she thought it would lead to a better teaching job. But despite her eagerness to begin her undergraduate program in English Education, Catherine's academic studies left her feeling unsure of her abilities and dissatisfied.

Eventually however, she began to feel more confident in the language after completing her undergraduate program when she began working as an English teacher, and it was in this context that she was finally able to use the language she had been studying, and where she began to develop personal relationships with visiting international teachers. These other teachers, who shared Catherine's Christian faith, encouraged her to continue

her English language studies and to pursue her dream of graduate studies abroad, and she began to feel more confident in her English skills and of her goal to study abroad:

> When I was studying English on my own and at the university I never had the chance to use it. I just learned to recite things from memory, and by having contact with these other teachers I think I really improved, and I learned that what I had learned was practical. Learning the language in this way was meaningful because I was able to use the language to communicate and it helped to build my confidence.

Catherine's emerging self-confidence as an English language learner can also be seen in her reflections on her more recent experiences as an immigrant to Canada. While she continues to have doubts about her skills, there seems to have been an overall increase in her self-confidence. In the present context, she plans to continue her English studies, and she seems positive as she looks forward to her new life in Canada:

> Before I moved to Canada I thought that as soon as I moved to an English-speaking environment my English would automatically improve but that wasn't true. I have worked hard to improve my English and I am still learning the language. It is very important to me and it is the language I use everyday in my studies and to communicate with my friends and colleagues. It is also important for my professional future.
>
> As a newcomer I learned that everybody makes different contributions to this world. Maybe I am not important in other people's eyes, but I have made some contributions too. So if I see myself in this way, I have to see others in the same way as well.
>
> I am a landed immigrant here and I plan to apply for Canadian citizenship when I can. But I see myself as an international citizen - I belong to the world. And I want to do good for the world. I think that living here in Vancouver has influenced my plans for the future. I know what I can do and what I am interested in learning and what I need to learn to reach my goals.

4.3.2 Catherine's Reflections on Language Teaching: From 'Boss' to 'Helper'

Catherine grew up in an academic family environment that valued education and learning, and the support she received both at home and at school appear to be important influences on her later decision to become a Chinese and Mathematics teacher. As an

adult however, her decision to start learning English was career-related, since she hoped learning English would lead to professional opportunities in post-Cultural Revolution China, and these larger social and political influences appear to have informed her professional history as well.

Catherine's story also pointed to the general nature of teachers and teacher education programs in China during the time she was completing her undergraduate degree, as well as to her own professional experience as an English teacher in China. Overall, she says she didn't find her undergraduate program in English Education especially helpful to her as a teacher, and her success as a university-level English teacher was measured by how well her students did on their national examinations:

> I didn't have any teacher training before I started teaching Chinese at the high school level in China. When I went university however, I studied at the Teacher's College and there was a teacher preparation program. It used a knowledge-based approach to learning and instruction, but there was a practicum. Many years ago, teachers were highly respected in China but when I studied at the university the profile was very low and the pay wasn't very good. This is starting to change but even today in many parts of the country you don't really take any teacher training – you just get your degree and then you can teach. Of course, this may have changed since I left China three years ago.
>
> Even though I had taught Chinese in high school before going to university, the first two years were tough because it was all so new for me. I taught English as a foreign language to first and second year Chinese university students who wanted to pass the national examination. The courses I taught were aimed at preparing students for this test, and the teacher's assessment was based on the percentage of students that passed the test after they had completed the course.

Another important influence on Catherine's professional history appears to be other teachers, who not only encouraged her to continue with her English language studies, but also to pursue her academic work and dream of graduate studies in language education abroad. This encouragement took place not only while she was teaching at the two

universities in China, but after she arrived in Canada and began to consider leaving teaching altogether. Finally, Catherine spoke highly of her current graduate program, and of the professors and other teachers that she has met and worked with in her program here.

In her present professional context, Catherine works part-time as a TOEFL preparation instructor at a private international college in Vancouver. She has a few international students in her class, but most are immigrants to Canada who live in the local area. They are all adults with ages ranging from twenty to thirty years, and have come to Canada from mostly Asian countries - Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

In reflecting on her current teaching assignment, Catherine recalls that she had several concerns after being hired at the college and before she began teaching the class. First, she expected the students to be at an advanced level in their English language studies, and she was uncertain about her ability to teach the high-level class due to doubts about her own English language skills. Catherine also anticipated that classroom management would be an especially problematic aspect of the class, since she had heard that there were a number of discipline problems in the class. In the six months that she has been with the group however, she appears to feel more comfortable with these aspects of her present teaching assignment:

> Before I started I thought that their language skills would be pretty good, but they are actually lower than what I thought. I was also anxious about teaching them because I didn't know if I would be able to teach them. But I feel better about that now. One of the things that I had heard before I started teaching there was that there were some behavior problems in the classrooms – students being disrespectful and arguing and that kind of thing. And one of the students told me that she was really concerned about it because it

> was so difficult to concentrate on what was going on in the classroom because of these kinds of things but I never have these kinds of problems.

In considering how she has been able to address (and continues to address) these issues of her current teaching assignment, Catherine pointed to several aspects of her knowledge and practice as a language teacher that seem to have changed for her over the course of her career. First, her personal history as an English language learner and immigrant seems to have led a deep empathy for the challenges and frustrations that her students face as language learners:

> I think that I know the kinds of problems that students have when they are learning another language and a lot of this comes from my own experience. They feel frustrated and anxious. They stay up all night studying and making progress takes time and it can be frustrating. And when I see this in my students I feel that I have to help them with these sorts of things. A lot of this is very familiar to me because I have experienced it myself as a language learner and newcomer.

Second, Catherine pointed to a revision of how she sees her classroom role as a language teacher. Early in her career, she says she was guided by a vision of the teacher as an authority figure and dispenser of knowledge, yet she now sees her role as a "helper," who not only respects the students in her classroom, but who shares in classroom learning:

> As a teacher, I try to accompany my students in the learning process and I see myself as a helper. Back in China I thought I was more of a boss. I had the power to give them credit or not – I could tell them to do certain kinds of assignments and certain kinds of homework and I had the authority to pass the knowledge but here we just learn together. I have to respect each person in my classroom as an individual. As a language teacher I don't think you can expect students to learn if you don't respect them.

Finally, Catherine's revised perceptions of her students and of her classroom role have been accompanied by a revision of the guiding principle underlying her practice as a language teacher. Over time, she has come to believe that the most important thing she

can do as a language teacher is to encourage her students to develop self-confidence in themselves as language learners:

> I think the most important thing that teachers can do is to encourage their students – don't put them down. One of my students is in her late 30s and she came to me one day because she thought she was too old to learn another language. The real problem was that she didn't have confidence in herself. And I told her, "You need to have short –term goals and don't have too many expectations at the beginning. Once you reach those goals, you build confidence, and then you are ready to move on the next goal. If you take your time and focus on these smaller goals, one day you will realize that finally you are perfect."

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

Catherine was 44 years of age at the time of the interview. She grew up in a large and educated family in a rural town in northern China. After completing high school, she worked as a Chinese and Mathematics teacher in the Chinese public school system for four years, and then began her English language studies and undergraduate degree in English Education because she thought there would be professional opportunities in China for teachers who spoke English. After graduation, she worked as a translator for three years and then began teaching academic EFL courses, first at the university where she had studied, and then at another university in southern China. During this time, she began thinking about pursuing graduate studies abroad, and eventually immigrated to Canada with her son to pursue this goal. After arriving here, she worked in the cafeteria at her son's high school, and finally began her graduate program two years later.

The most predominant theme that emerged from Catherine's story was the role of self-confidence in her personal history as an English language learner and teacher. Despite over twenty years of studying English, high scores on numerous high-stakes English-

language proficiency tests, and over a decade of experience teaching English at the university level, she has struggled with insecurities concerning her English language skills – particularly her pronunciation –and this struggle continues in her present context. Yet Catherine's story also seemed to suggest a certain degree of resolve concerning her struggles with self doubt, and while partial, she seems to feel more confident about her English skills and her abilities to improve as she looks forward to her new life with her son in Canada.

In contrast to her earlier teaching role as a dispenser of knowledge and authority figure, Catherine now sees herself as a 'helper' – a teacher with a deep empathy for her students and for the challenges that they face in and outside the classroom. Over time, she has come to believe that the most important thing that language teachers can do is to encourage their students to develop self-confidence in themselves as language learners.

CHAPTER FIVE: MICHAEL

> What I really remember about learning Spanish as a teenager was being in Spain and trying to communicate, and I didn't really do a lot of work by writing anything down or anything like that. For me, learning Spanish at that time was more, "Oh - this seems to work for me," and whatever that was I knew it wouldn't necessarily work for someone else, because different things work for different people. I think it was quite Krashenistic – you know, natural language learning and sort of unconscious learning. But I have come to realize that this purely natural language learning doesn't work either. I mean maybe it can, but it only got me so far, and then it was important to focus on form as well. As an adult, my language learning was much more concrete and structured.
>
> - Michael

4.1 Introduction and Interview Context

Michael grew up in England and traveled to Spain each year as an adolescent exchange student where he reached an intermediate level in Spanish. As an adult, he lived in Canada for four years, and then spent another four years in Japan as an EFL teacher. During this time, he reached an intermediate level in Japanese, and then returned to Spain again for advanced Spanish language studies. At the time of the interview, he had been back in Vancouver for two years, where in addition to his graduate studies in Linguistics, he was working as a teaching assistant in the department where he studied. He was 34 years of age, single, and without children.

I first met Michael at a graduate students' research conference in linguistics in the fall of 2000, where we were both presenting initial research findings from our respective graduate theses. During his presentation, he mentioned that he was originally from Britain and had lived in Japan and studied Japanese during his time there. In the introduction to my own presentation (a pilot study for this one), I mentioned that I had lived in Spain and had taught English there for several years. During a break, Michael approached me and mentioned that he had also spent time in Spain, and we shared some

of our experiences of living in Spain and of learning Spanish. I was pleasantly surprised when he volunteered to participate in my study and gratefully accepted his offer. Several months after the conference, I contacted Michael by email and we arranged to meet for an interview at his home in Vancouver.

4.2 Biographical Profile: Michael's Story

Growing Up in England

Michael grew up in a small town in north-Eastern England in an upper middle-class family with two brothers and sisters. His father attended technical college, and his mother is a nurse. Although he had difficulties learning to read in English due to mild dyslexia, he remembers reading quite a lot as a boy, and he started remedial reading classes at the age of seven at the school where he studied. Michael also recalls that even though there wasn't much language variation his high school, he did notice that his parents spoke different variants of English at home - his father is Scottish and his mother is English – and from an early age, he used different variants of the language in different family situations:

> I went to a regular high school where most of the kids spoke the same language and grew up in the same town. I knew people in school who were ethic minorities, but most of them were born in the U.K. and I don't remember much dialect or accent variation. Having family on both sides of the border however, I always felt somewhat bi-dialectic as a youngster, and I used to switch and use words that were familiar in one place but not in the other within our extended family.

Michael began his foreign language studies at an early age at his school while he was growing up, starting out with French but changing to Spanish after a few years:

> I started French in school when I was eleven and studied it for three years, but I gave it up because I decided I wanted to study Spanish. I'm not sure why I decided to switch from French to Spanish. I think my initial reason was simply because it was offered at the school. Maybe there was a perception that it was easier than French, or perhaps it was because I just liked being different. I had no interest in going to live in France, but I thought maybe I'd like to go and live in Spain and that sounded more interesting.

Learning Spanish as an Adolescent Exchange Student in Spain

In addition to his foreign languages studies, Michael also participated in a language exchange program organized by his high school, and he traveled to southern Spain almost every summer from the time he was fourteen until the age of twenty-one. These annual visits lasted from two to six weeks, and he stayed with the same host family in a small town in southern Spain where he eventually reached an intermediate level in Spanish as a teenager:

> Academically, I didn't do very well in Spanish, but I could communicate. When I went on these exchanges for the first couple of times, I noticed that the other English speaking kids used to hang out together and I didn't. My tactic was hey – I'm in Spain for six weeks or whatever, and I'm not going to speak English and basically it worked, because I leaned how to communicate - although I didn't really learn the grammatical rules or anything like that.
>
> I remember I made some interesting errors with the Spanish family I always stayed with. I used to mix up letters like I did in English and I would say things like say "*Es no importante*" to say "It isn't important". The family would correct me and say "*No...NO es importante*", and I took that as meaning "No, it *is* important, and so of course I would keep trying. The point is that I was ready to give up and but then I would think "No, I really need to tell you this" and I did, and I think that really helped.

Michael's annual visits to Spain stopped after he completed high school. He attended university for several years in England and completed an undergraduate degree in Science. After graduation, he decided he wanted to return to Spain to live and work. Teaching English seemed like a good way to do that, and so he completed a well-known

four-week, pre-service TEFL certificate program in southern England before returning to Spain to look for work.

Pre-service TEFL Training in England

Michael characterizes his teacher training experience as extremely negative, and he left the course feeling dissatisfied and discouraged for a number of reasons. As a starting point, he found there was a sharp contrast concerning his own conceptions of the English language and those that he observed on the part of the trainers who taught the course, particularly regarding pronunciation. Having grown up the U.K with parents on "both sides of the border" Michael came to the course with an understanding that the English language had multiple correct forms, yet he found his trainers emphasized a different perspective of the language he was being trained to teach:

> I had a really bad experience doing the four-week course. Besides myself, there was only one other person who wasn't from southern England on the course. He was from Trinidad, and had lived in Canada for several years. He had a lot of experience and had been teaching for several years in the Middle East, and he also had a hard time on the course. Part of the problem was that our concept of the English language was rather different from the instructors on the course.
>
> Their view of the English language - though they didn't really say this - was that their southeast-English language was the language you were supposed to teach. I remember during one of the observation sessions I was teaching, and the students got the word "clerk". The student volunteered the word in describing a picture of a store, and pronounced it using the usual Canadian and US pronunciation (mid-central vowel and 'r'). I used the same pronunciation the student had used, which was different from the RP pronunciation (low back unrounded vowel, not 'r'). Pronunciation was not the focus of the lesson, but both the student and I pronounced the word differently from the listening materials we were using.
>
> And it was different from the model, but from my perspective they had said it right, and they were doing something good. But the teacher trainers were watching me, and I knew they were all sitting there thinking it was wrong. I mean, I don't think they were doing it deliberately, but there was that unspoken criticism that I felt, and I thought that the students were doing it right.

Michael also struggled with some of the pedagogical aspects of the course, including the course's approach to training teachers and the methods they advocated for teaching English. In the first case, he found he wanted more direction in terms of how to approach language teaching. In the second, he found that a structured methodological approach to language teaching and learning bore little resemblance to his own experience as a second language learner:

> The trainers on the course also had different ideas about education and teaching. The course was very touchy-feely, and that was very different from my background which was hard science. They would throw us into a classroom and say "Teach!", and this was very traumatic for me. I wanted more theory as to what I was supposed to be doing and why before I actually started trying to do it, and that actually discouraged me from teaching. I remember they kept asking me "How do you feel about that", and I felt I wanted more direction in terms of what I supposed to be doing as a teacher. The other thing was that their concept of teaching was very structured – you know the present, controlled practice and then freer practice - but I knew that wasn't how I had learned my second language.

After completing his teacher training course, Michael went to Spain to find work as an EFL teacher. However, he arrived in Spain during the month of August, finding the language schools completely shut down for the summer and, unable to find a job as an English teacher, he returned to England.

Moving to Canada and Graduate Studies

Michael's negative experience in his training course and failed attempt at teaching in Spain had left him turned off the idea of teaching. However, he had applied for a graduate program in Theology in Canada before leaving for Spain, and when he returned home to the U.K., he found a letter of acceptance from the university. So, he left England to continue his education in Canada. During his four years as a graduate student here, he

met a Japanese woman who would become later become his wife. After completing their studies they moved to Tokyo, and Michael began working as an EFL teacher in Japan.

Teaching English in Japan for Four Years

Michael taught a range of EFL courses during the four years he lived in Japan, including conversational English and English for academic and business purposes. Initially, he worked at several private language schools, but eventually became an EFL teacher at a large university in Tokyo.

Despite his negative response to his pre-service teacher training, Michael started out emphasizing a communicative approach to language teaching in his classes, one that he believes characterized his prior experiences as a Spanish language learner. It was also a sharp contrast to the approaches and methods that he was required to use in his classes at the private Japanese schools where he taught, and he sometimes faced resistance from both his employers and students:

> Once I started teaching in Japan, they made me use the Direct and Audio-Lingual methods, and my contract even stated that I was supposed to use the methods they told me to use. Even though I didn't particularly enjoy my teacher training, the communicative approach I had read about, as well as my own experience, had convinced me that I was going to take a communicative approach to my teaching regardless of what the contract said.
>
> But it was tough for me; in Japan you can't just stand at the front of the class and ask people to volunteer answers, because nobody is going to give that to you. They are not used to speaking in class and are afraid of making mistakes.

Over time however, Michael found he found he was able to integrate communicative teaching into his practice, and that his students appreciated his efforts:

> So I figured out techniques to get them to speak – things like walking around the room and speaking to one other person at a time. This was less intimidating for them than having to speak when the whole class could hear, and I think it worked quite well.
>
> I used a lot of group work and got people to analyze the language and to compare differences between the languages. Rather than giving them answers, I would try to get people to think critically and to compare the way native speakers say things with the way the students said things, so that they could see these differences themselves. I think I always tried to be aware of my own language as an English speaker and to expose people to other accents and pronunciation and to give people a sense of that. I tried to include language learning tips for my students and told them about the things that had worked for me as a language learner. I tried to encourage them to think about how their learning styles might be different and to write about what worked for them and what didn't, and this was a new way of looking at language learning for most of them.

Learning Japanese in Tokyo

In addition to working as an English language teacher in Japan, Michael studied Japanese in Tokyo, and was able to reach an intermediate level in the language during his four years there. Prior to leaving Canada he had taken some introductory Japanese classes in Vancouver and had learned some basic vocabulary and structures, but his command of the language was very basic when he and his wife arrived in Tokyo. He also took some Japanese classes shortly after arriving in Japan, but these were soon discontinued because he didn't find them especially helpful. Instead, Michael says he studied Japanese on his own and with the help of his wife:

> After arriving in Japan, my wife and I would speak different languages on different days, since I wanted to learn Japanese and she wanted to keep using her English, and that's mostly how I learned the language. We actually made a calendar because we would forget which language we were supposed to use on a particular day. Learning together was a really efficient way to learn because I was at a level where I really couldn't communicate in Japanese, and she was willing to spend the time and to help me. It was also real communication because the things we were trying to say were real, and I believe that was important.
>
> I went to a couple of Japanese language classes but they were really bad. I had done my EFL teacher training by then, and was teaching English in Japan. The Japanese courses I took used the Audio-Lingual method. I decided that was waste of time very quickly, and so I started doing other things to learn the language on my own.

But Michael found he didn't have a lot of time for studying Japanese in Tokyo, since he was teaching full-time and working primarily in English. Outside his home, he took notes and studied Japanese on the train while he was going to and from work:

> I did other stuff to deliberately learn. I kept a vocabulary book and wrote down words and phrases. I would write down whole phrases with a gap in it or a particular word I learned and then read it and try to remember it that way using gaps. But I was pretty flexible in my note-taking and just wrote down whatever seemed to help or be useful at the time.
>
> I had a particular methodology for learning vocabulary which involved making up and having stories and using them to relate to different parts of the word. I remember there was this kind of Japanese restaurant that sells bar food called an *izakaya*. This was a new word for me, so to remember it I broke it down into "it sounds a bit like this…" and then I broke it down into smaller Japanese words. I mean, etymologically this is gibberish, but *iza* sounds a bit like *hiza* which is Japanese for "knee" and *kai* as in "meeting" and *ya* is a "shop" so *izakaya* sounds a bit like *hiza, kai,* and *ya*. And that would be a "knee-meeting shop", where everybody's sitting around the table and their knees are having a meeting under the table. And that's the story I would use as a memory technique when I needed to remember that word. I used this technique a lot to remember new words particularly at the beginning, when there was so much new Japanese vocabulary and it was all so strange-sounding to me. The stranger the story was, the easier it was to remember the word.
>
> I had a similar method for learning *kanji* where you break down characters into parts and each part has a meaning. So if you make up a story you can hold the parts of the meaning together and the story somehow relates to the whole meaning of the character, which is really the same thing – you've got a bizarre story which helps you remember the *kanji*. And I would make up these stories using Japanese words I knew, or English or Spanish words. I did a lot of this on the train going to and from work and it was good because I could do it on the train for an hour every day. I think if I had actually set myself out on studying *kanji* I would have given it up because I'm not very good at brute force memory.

Struggling with Japanese Culture

Even though Michael was able to make progress in his Japanese language studies, he says what he struggled most with were the social and cultural aspects of his life in Tokyo. He says he spent most of his time socializing with other English speakers and teachers, and

his attempts at using the language he was learning to interact with Japanese speakers were often unsuccessful and frustrating. Ultimately, he stopped trying:

> I think I had more difficulty with Japanese culture than with learning the language. I didn't really make any Japanese friends in Tokyo and I socialized mostly with other foreigners, which is pretty typical in big Japanese cities I think. My feeling was that the Japanese didn't expect foreigners to be able to learn Japanese, and they weren't used to dealing with people who were learning the language or speaking to foreigners. I had people talk baby talk to me, and I knew it was baby talk, and that was really insulting to me, because that's not how you talk to an adult who doesn't speak your language very well.
>
> But I guess probably the greater problem was that I wasn't prepared to do the things that are required to make friends in Japan. I remember I joined a volleyball club at one point and they never played for fun. All they ever did was practice – serious practice, like they would spend half an hour practicing spiking. And it was all very organized around serious practice and that was all you did for half an hour and they were very serious and for me it wasn't fun. I just wanted to go meet some people, get some exercise, and have some fun.
>
> And nobody worked that way. So if you wanted to get to know people, you had to spend time doing these kinds of things and they were very serious about it. Relationships there seemed very superficial to me, at the beginning stages anyway. I mean, maybe it's different once you get to know someone, but I've always liked to go beyond that with the people I meet, and I just couldn't bring myself to go through all that before I could have a real conversation with someone.

Overall, Michael says he didn't particularly enjoy his time living and working in Japan. Toward the end of their four years there, Michael and his wife had separated, and he decided to quit his teaching job and to return to Spain to continue his Spanish language studies at an advanced level:

> Towards the end of my four years in Japan, I was really fed up because I felt I had gone as far as I could there. I had been working too much and my wife and I had separated, so I decided to take a break and go to the Basque Country in Spain to try to learn Spanish to the most advanced level I could.

Revisiting Spain: Advanced Spanish Language Studies for a Year

Michael spent a year in Spain, taking Spanish classes for six months and then some linguistics courses in Spanish at a university. In addition to his formal Spanish classes, he studied on his own to improve his accuracy in the language, an aspect of his Spanish studies that was increasingly important to him. And while he says he found it easier to interact with native speakers in Spain than he had in Japan, he found that his accuracy didn't improve simply by speaking with native Spanish speakers:

> The Spanish classes I took during those months weren't very good either, because it seemed most of the teachers were philology students with no training in language teaching. I studied grammar on my own and learned the morphology for all the tenses. I deliberately studied the stuff I needed for grammatical accuracy, and I think that really helped. I read a lot and tried to learn vocabulary and write down sentences. I remember I watched TV a lot too, and soap operas were pretty good. I had Spanish flatmates during that year, but we didn't spend a lot of time together.
>
> I also joined a paragliding club and we met every week even if the weather was bad to eat a meal, and that was very helpful. I also made a good friend there who was Russian, and we spent a lot of time together helping and correcting each other. He was a paraglider and we always spoke Spanish together, since it was the only language we had in common. I remember he corrected my mistakes whilst the Spanish/Basque speakers ignored them if they understood the meaning.

A year later, Michael returned to Vancouver again to begin graduate studies in the area of Linguistics. He has been back for two years.

The Present Context and Looking Forward

In the present context, the nature of Michael's professional life has shifted from teaching English language to working part-time as an assistant linguistics teacher in the department where he is completing his graduate degree, and he says he probably won't go back to teaching English. Instead, he would like to pursue a Ph.D. after he completes

his graduate program in Linguistics, and that his professional future is most likely in the areas of applied linguistics and technology:

> But I don't think I'm ever going to go back to teaching English. Basically, I feel like I've been there; I worked very hard at it, and I got a lot out of it when I did it, but now I'm working in applied linguistics and I'm more interested in working with technology. I just wouldn't have the motivation to do it again because when I did the first time around I was learning and I was interested, and going back now would be dealing with all the problems but without the excitement and challenges and learning.
>
> It's also been a while and my head's in a different space these days and it's not a thing that appeals to me anymore. Maybe if somebody offered me a job teaching Spanish in Canada, that would be different and interesting - I actually think it would be a lot of fun to teach Spanish in Japan. Really though, I plan on doing a Ph.D. in cross-language speech perception and technology after I finish my M.A. What I want is a job I can have fun doing, and I don't think that's changed much at all for me over the years.

5.3 Interpretation and Discussion

5.3.1 Michael's Reflections on Language Learning: Adolescent and Adult Language Learning

In reflecting on his experiences as a learner of two other languages, Michael highlighted two major differences that he has observed between learning Spanish as an adolescent exchange student and learning Japanese as an adult EFL teacher in Japan. First, he found that he had to put a lot more effort into learning Japanese as an adult, since he was working full-time teaching English. Consequently, he had to make the most of the little time he did have for language study, and his approach to learning as an adult also seems to emphasize grammatical accuracy, both as a learner of Japanese and of Spanish:

> What I really remember about learning Spanish as a teenager was being in Spain and trying to communicate, and I didn't really do a lot of work by writing anything down or anything like that. For me, language Spanish at that time was more, "Oh - this seems to work for me," and whatever that was I knew it wouldn't necessarily work for someone else, because different things work for different people. I think it was quite Krashenistic – you know, natural language learning and sort of unconscious learning. But I have come to

> realize that this purely natural language learning doesn't work either. I mean maybe it can, but it only got me so far, and then it was important to focus on form as well. As an adult, my language learning was much more concrete and structured.

The second major difference seems to focus on the cross- cultural aspects of Michael's experiences as a language learner. As an EFL teacher in Tokyo, Michael was able to make progress in the language, but he struggled with Japanese culture and was never really able to socialize with Japanese speakers. In Spain however, he didn't have any problems, although he did find that his contact with Spanish speakers wasn't enough to help him improve his accuracy in the language. Over time however, Michael's perceptions of Japan and of his cultural struggles there appear to have changed:

> In Japan, my time for studying was limited to when I wasn't working - full time and in English as well. I deliberately went to Spain as an adult to learn Spanish, and this had priority over working. I also had more difficulties with Japanese culture, and the way they perceived me there as a foreigner, whereas in Spain people were more used to dealing with foreigners and I felt more comfortable there because they were more patient. I didn't really enjoy my time in Japan, but now I appreciate the country and I miss certain things there more. I think that if somebody offered me the right job I would go back there for a year or something.

The theme of family also emerged from Michael's history as a learner of two other languages. As an adolescent learner of Spanish, he made regular reference to the time he spent with his host family in Spain. During his four years in Tokyo, his self-directed language studies were supplemented by speaking Japanese with his wife on alternating days in their home.

Interestingly, Michael also made regular reference to the many years that he has spent living in Canada as a British-English speaker and landed immigrant, and that all of these experiences have contributed to his understandings of himself and others:

> I have an unusual accent in my *first* language because I've lived in the U.K. and Canada now for many years and it's a bit of a mixture. People meet me and they try to guess where I'm from - South Africa seems to be quite popular, but sometimes Australia - somebody once thought I was from Guyana. This is further complicated by the fact that I find the other languages I've learned over the years sometimes surface in this mixture as well. For example, sometimes I'm in the middle of saying something in English, and suddenly a phrase in Japanese or Spanish will come into my head. This is usually because there is a very straightforward way to express a particular idea in one of those languages which is more complicated in English, or doesn't have quite the same meaning. So I find I have to think about how I can make the sentence less complicated in English, so that it will make as much sense to me as the Japanese or Spanish one in my head. And then after I say it in English, I wish I could have used Japanese or Spanish, because what I've said in English isn't what I really wanted to say – it's ambiguous. But if I'd used a Spanish subjunctive for example, it wouldn't have been ambiguous because I would have used a subjunctive, but in English I can't do that. So I think that maybe I'm much more aware of that ambiguity.
>
> Culturally, I think I am a Generation X Canadian, even though I am not originally from Canada. But I'm also someone who has lived in the U.K. and Japan and Spain and speaks different languages, and all of this is important to my self-identification. I think that living in different cultures has led me to have a better understanding of people, and that I can see things from somebody else's point of view and understand better where they're coming from. Before, I didn't do that. Basically, I thought from my own perspective, and I didn't have the insight into other peoples' backgrounds or understand why they did the things they were doing or why they behaved they way they did.
>
> But I also see certain things tend to be quite universal, like what people are interested in in life - they're interested in certain basic things they need, like having enough money to live on and they're interested in having a family. I think it's because I've seen the same sorts of things in different contexts but with just different weights on them, and how important they are in your life is just different. Like in Japan, the most important thing is to have financial security and if you understand that's where they're coming from, then you see why they do a lot of things they do. People in Japan for example, don't quit their jobs and go to Spain to learn Spanish.

Finally, Michael also noted that even though he struggled with Japanese culture in Tokyo, his most difficult cross-cultural experience came when he returned to England after living in Canada for several years. In the present context, he believes his self-identification as a British-born Canadian resident also seems to be changing:

> The worst culture shock I have ever had was when I went back to the U.K. after living in Canada for a year. I was expecting Canada to be different when I went there, but when I went back to the U.K I wasn't prepared for the fact that things were going to be so different. You know - you're going to what you think is home and then you get there and

> then no, this isn't home - this is a strange foreign country. I really hated it there at first and I got used to it as time went on but I really wanted to go back to Canada. Since then I've been back a few times for holidays and that kind of thing and it's really a foreign country to me.
>
> For a long time I never wanted to go back to the UK because I didn't see any future there, but that's changed for me. I think there are a lot of opportunities there related to my work and I'm actually thinking that I might go back to live there at some point, although I haven't yet decided to do that. I could probably live in just about any developed country and adapt.

5.3.2 Michael's Reflections on Language Teaching: Real Conversations about Language

Michaels' interest in language teaching first came about because he wanted to return to Spain, and since teaching English seemed like a way to finance this adventure, he signed up for his pre-service teacher training course. Michael struggled with a number of aspects of the course, and after a failed attempt at finding work in Spain, he didn't actually begin language teaching many years later when he moved to Japan.

During his time in Tokyo, Michael says he started out as a communicative language teacher, but that his practice increasingly focused on form during his four years there. He says he came struggle what he felt was the "artificial" nature of the fluency activities he associated with a communicative approach, since the type of communication they offered provided little to his student in terms of providing them with an opportunity for genuine communication using the language. In response, his practice came to focus on form and on developing his students' awareness about language:

> But while I started out as a natural-approach language teacher, I think I got more focused on form over time, and it was mostly from my experience as a teacher of what worked or what didn't work in a classroom. I mean, with a natural approach, the things you do in the classroom are supposed to be real and the conversations you have are real, and I think that is important and there are times when classroom language teaching can be pretty

> real. But I became conscious of the fact that I was engineering all of this, and putting all this energy into creating these "real" situations and basically, well - they often weren't real, and that there was a bit of a Machiavellian side to this approach. Sometimes people try to dress that up, and make it more communicative, but you're still dressing it up. I don't think that this is really bad, just that it is limited. For low levels, anything that gets people speaking is probably good. At higher levels, students have done it all before - they know it is contrived, and they aren't motivated by it.

He came to see his classroom role as an 'analyst', whose goal was to analyze where his students were at in terms of their English language studies and from there, to help them further develop their knowledge about language and their analytical skills as language learners. These 'authentic' discussions about language and learning could also take place in Japanese:

> So maybe I was an analyst; maybe that was my role. I analyzed where the student was, I analyzed how a native English speaker did something, and I tried to bridge the gap as efficiently as possible, and maybe that meant just giving them the answers sometimes. I think it's important that second language learners learn to analyze how they use their first language, because most of the time they have no idea, and learning to spot the differences between the two is really important.
>
> Obviously, it depends on what you're teaching of course and the level, but I think there are cases where it's perfectly legitimate to say "This isn't real, but we're going to try this anyway because you need to learn it", because it's just more efficient for everybody. There are also times when it can be *meta*-real, especially at advanced levels because you're actually using the language to discuss it at a very sophisticated level, so the content of the lesson might be unreal, but the conversation is real.
>
> Particularly at beginning levels, I also came to see a lot of value in the use of L1 in a classroom where everyone speaks the same first language. I mean, in my own experience as a language learner in a classroom as well as outside, you can wave your arms and use mime and I might understand what you're talking about after half an hour. But if you can tell me what the word means in a language I can understand, then it will make sense to me in a fraction of a second. Developing language learning skills is also very important, especially when students are just starting to learn the language, but the problem is that this kind of work isn't as useful as it could be because the beginners are struggling so much with the language itself at this point. I'm completely comfortable with a place in the classroom for L1 discussions about language learning.

Another aspect of Michael's evolving practice seems to be his increasing emphasis on what he calls 'focused study', since he found that learners at all levels need to make a conscious effort to improve their accuracy in the language they are learning:

> I think that there needs to be a balance between real language use and focused study in language learning and teaching. At the beginner level focused study is especially important, because you need to learn some basic vocabulary and grammar and develop skills in language learning. After someone's at a high-beginner to intermediate level, I don't see a lot of use in a language classroom. You know, once you're at the point where you can communicate, then you need to get out there make some friends. Of course the problem is that you have to be in the right social situation where people are going to accommodate you to do that, and I think most people don't find that. Even if you do, you still need some accuracy training because you're not learning from your mistakes and nobody's correcting you because they can understand you.
>
> I also think focused study is important to get from an intermediate to an advanced level, because a lot of people get to that level where you can communicate, but they just stay there. Maybe some people can, but that's been the case for me and for a lot of others I know. At that point, your communication is really clear and the grammar might even be okay, but you're not moving forward with the language. The best way to get to a really advanced level is that deliberate choice, and the best way to do it is through focused study.

Finally, Michael pointed to his increasing emphasis on pronunciation in language learning and teaching. As a language learner, he believes he developed good pronunciation in Spanish as an exchange student in Spain and that because of this, it was easier for him to interact with Spanish speakers and to make progress in the language:

> Something else I came to see as very important is pronunciation – something which I believe is really undervalued in language teaching and learning. I remember when I was studying Spanish I could understand the teachers but I couldn't understand most of the other students. It was easier with the other native English speakers, because I knew that they were making the mistakes that English speakers often do, but I just didn't understand what the other students were talking about because of their accents. I think that from very early on, my Spanish accent was good because I learned it living in Spain and as a teenager I found that if you have good pronunciation, people accept you a lot faster because they think your language skills are better than what they actually are. People are more willing to accept you if you have a good accent, and they are much more interested in talking to you.

5.4 Summary of the Chapter

Michael was 34 years of age at the time of the interview. He grew up in England and reached an intermediate level in Spanish during his annual visits to Spain as an adolescent exchange student. After high school, he completed an undergraduate degree in Science in the U.K., and then took a pre-service EFL teacher training course with the goal of returning to Spain to live and teach English. This plan didn't work out the way he expected however, and after returning to England, he moved to Canada to pursue a graduate degree in Theology. Michael spent four years as a graduate student in Canada, where he met a Japanese woman who would eventually become his wife. After completing their studies, they moved to Japan together and Michael worked as an EFL teacher, first at a number of private language schools, and eventually at a Japanese university. He also reached an intermediate level of Japanese during his four years in Tokyo and, following a separation from his wife, he returned to Spain for a year to continue his Spanish language studies at an advanced level. He returned again to Canada two years ago, and is presently a Linguistics graduate student and assistant teacher in the department where he studies.

The major theme that emerged from Michael's story concerned differences he has observed between learning Spanish as an adolescent in Spain and learning Japanese as an adult in Tokyo. As an adolescent learner, he feels he developed good communicative skills in Spanish without too much effort. In Japan however, he found that his Japanese language learning was much more concrete and structured - particularly since he was working full-time and didn't have a lot of extra time to study the language. Michael also

struggled with the social and cultural aspects of living in Tokyo, and he left Japan feeling frustrated and fed up. Both as an adolescent and adult learner however, family emerged as an important aspect of his language study, since he spent a lot of time as an adolescent with his host family in Spain, and because he practiced Japanese at home with his Japanese wife. After many years of living in Canada, Michael came to distance himself from his British heritage. Recently however, he has begun to feel that he might like to return to England again to live at some future point.

As an EFL teacher in Japan, Michael started out as a communicative language teacher, but he says he became more focused on form in his practice over time. He came to struggle with what he felt was the artificial nature of many communicative language practice activities, and this shift in his practice appears to be related to his personal experience as an adult language learner, since he found that he needed to make a concentrated effort to make progress in Japanese. Over time, Michael came to struggle with the artificial nature of his language classroom, ultimately concluding that the most 'authentic' language he could give his students were 'real' conversations about language.

CHAPTER SIX: JULIA

> I've never had trouble with the English language itself - I've always liked to learn it, and I've always loved English literature, even more than German. Having said that, I suppose pronunciation has probably been the most difficult, because sometimes there are sounds I don't like, you know? In Spanish however, I had no psychological barriers at all. I loved Mexico from the very second I got there so I think it was much easier to learn the language and to accept everything that has to do with the language. The grammar was the most difficult for me, but after a while I got it by listening and that sort of thing.
>
> - Julia

4.1 Introduction and Interview Context

Julia grew up in Germany and had reached advanced levels in both English and Spanish languages while living, studying, and working in the United States, Spain, Mexico, and Canada. In addition to her advanced qualifications as a teacher of both languages and her many years of professional experience, she had also been involved in the training of German language teachers at the university level. At the time of the interview, she had been in Vancouver for two years pursuing a Ph.D. program in Modern Languages, and teaching German language courses in the department where she studied. She was 47 years of age, married, and had three adult children.

I first Julia in a graduate course during the 2000 Fall Term at the university where we both study, and we exchanged initial introductions on the first day of the class. As the term and the course progressed, we continued to meet together in class and around the campus. I remember feeling elated at the opportunity of hearing her story when she agreed to participate in this study, and we arranged to meet for an interview at her office in the department of Modern Languages.

4.2 Biographical Profile: Julia's Story

Growing Up in Germany

Julia grew up in a middle class family with three siblings in a small town in central Germany, and her mother had training as a foreign language teacher. Julia began studying several foreign language studies at an early age in her regular school program, and her first foreign language was English. She did well in her studies and enjoyed reading stories, expressing herself in the language, and doing grammar practice activities:

> I started learning English as my first foreign language at the age of ten, and studied it throughout school while I was growing up in Germany. I had to study it because it was a required course, and I don't remember having any preconceptions about language learning – you just learned it and took it for granted. But I was always interested in languages, and I liked reading from a very early age. I always enjoyed short stories, literature, and expressing myself about what I was reading, either through writing or conversation. My mother had training as a language teacher in Czech and Russian, but because of health reasons she never worked as a teacher and that was traumatic for her I think. But I think she probably instilled in us an interest in languages and gave us, I don't know – maybe talent?
>
> The method I remember for learning English at the time was you read a little story - I remember animal stories - and you had to read the story and then answer questions to show you understood the story and then we'd fill in gaps and do translation. It was very traditional from our point of view now, but I enjoyed it. I didn't know it was traditional. We had grammar tests as well, and I liked those…I always did like the grammar.

Julia's second foreign language was French, and she went on summer language exchanges to France as a teenager. During her last year of high school, she also started taking Spanish language classes after school:

> I also took extra workshops in Spanish once a week for an hour or two during my last year. It wasn't part of the regular program, so we had classes after school from a German teacher who had just came back from Peru and thought it was great and he was very enthusiastic. I remember I didn't learn a lot, but he was very fascinating and I enjoyed his classes and wanted to learn more. I don't know – maybe I did learn more than I think.

Julia specialized in English Language and Literature during her final years of high school, and it was during this time that she traveled to the Midwestern United States as an exchange student to spend a year at an American high school.

Visiting the United States as an Exchange Student and Assistant German Teacher

Even though Julia had been studying English for many years before she arrived in the United States, she found her year as an exchange student a difficult one, and feels that her English didn't improve much during her time there. In Germany, her English language classes had always focused on British English, and she ultimately came to resist the American English and culture that she encountered in the United States:

> As soon as I got there though, I realized that the English they spoke there was very different from the language I had been studying for nine years in Germany. I had learned British English, and of course the English I heard in the States was quite different. There were also a lot of idioms and little ironic things that I didn't understand at first, and that was quite a shock for me. Living in the States was also a cultural shock, and I didn't particularly like it there…I mean some things I did – but there were also many things I didn't. I think I had a certain resistance against really learning the language during my first visit there.
>
> I mean, I think my language skills improved, but I remember thinking at the end of that year that my English wasn't as good as it could have been, and that I still had a very strong German accent. But I also remember realizing that I didn't really want to integrate there, and I became aware that that might have been one of the reasons my English didn't improve so much.

Julia also recalls that she had trouble re-adjusting to life in Germany when she returned home after her year in the United States:

> Going back to Germany after that first visit was difficult. Even though I didn't feel all that great in the States because there were things there that I did not like very much and just couldn't accept, I found there were lots of things that I had actually adopted from the U.S. way of life when I came back to Germany; a more pragmatic view of life and things like that. And I couldn't really explain that to the people in Germany. I tried to do this, but they were not particularly interested, I found.

> I think that's pretty common – you know you go away and people ask you what it was like but they don't really want to know about the experience and they don't really want to know what happened to you. You know you talk for five minutes and then they don't want to hear much more for whatever reasons. That was frustrating, because I couldn't really talk about the experience and really integrate it or adjust to being back in Germany again.

Several months later, Julia began an undergraduate program in English Education in Germany. During her final year of the program, she returned again to the United States, this time to work as an assistant German teacher at an American high school for another year. She says she felt more comfortable there during her second visit because she had already decided that she wanted to continue her studies and to become an English language teacher:

> During my second visit to the States as an assistant teacher, I still had certain resistances to the language and to living there, but it wasn't as difficult as the first time. I think I was older and more mature. I was also more interested in learning the language well, because by then I knew I wanted to be was going to be an English language teacher. I was also teaching German, so I think I was a little more aware of language and language learning. While I was teaching conversation classes at the high school, I picked up a few teaching tricks from my supervisor, but I was just a student teacher, and it was very unstructured.

After her second visit to the United States, Julia returned to Germany to complete her undergraduate studies and then to continue her education by pursuing an M.A. in English Literature and Linguistics. It was also during this time that she began working as an English language teacher in Germany.

Graduate Studies, TEFL Teacher Training, & Teaching English in Germany

Julia recalls that one of the most important turning points for her as a language teacher was the pre-service TEFL training course that she took following her M.A. program in

Germany. For one thing, the program emphasized a communicative approach to language teaching, something that Julia felt mirrored her own experiences as a language learner:

> I did my teacher training in TEFL after my M.A., as part of my program in Germany and my supervisor was really good – she was into the communicative approach and it was a terrific experience for me. Probably what I liked most about the communicative approach was that students were able to talk about their own experiences in the second language rather than just doing grammar exercises. That sort of confirmed for me what I had always done as a language learner.
>
> Before then, I was much more focused on grammar and structure. A lot of that changed for me when I did my teacher training after my M.A., because it was there that I found out about communicative language teaching. After that, I started using more dialogues and everyday language and idiomatic expressions and contractions and things that weren't mentioned in the standard course books.

It was also during this time that Julia began teaching English in the public school system as well as evening English classes for adults, and she found that as she looked forward to her career as a language teacher, she began to think more about teaching English to adults rather than to children:

> There was a lot of supervised teaching and I taught English in the public high school system. One of the challenges I remember was that the students I was teaching, especially the younger ones, didn't have much interest in learning the language, and that was very difficult for me. I didn't like the idea of having to bring lots of extra teaching materials and putting on a big show just to keep them interested. I mean, I've always tried to include extra materials in my teaching and to make it as interesting as possible, but you can only do so much of that, and I realized that I didn't want to teach children and that I wanted to teach adults.
>
> When I started teaching in Germany I also taught English language night classes for adults, and there my students weren't very academically trained – you know secretaries and other professionals, who took English at night. And it was difficult for them so it took a while to get across structural things and all that, but they were enthused about it and they would talk a lot. It was nice you know, and so I was very patient.

After completing her M.A. and teacher training program, Julia had expected to begin teaching English in the public school system, but shortly after completing the program

she was unexpectedly offered a scholarship to attend a university in Spain. She accepted the offer, and moved to Spain to do another M.A. in Hispanic Studies for nine months.

A Second M.A. and Learning Spanish in Spain

While Julia's English studies had involved years of formal language classes as well as two visits to the United States, her Spanish language studies had not been as extensive, and she didn't take any formal Spanish language classes during her time in Spain. Instead, the Spanish that she learned during this time came about through living with Spanish roommates while taking content-based Spanish-language linguistics courses at the university there:

> Learning Spanish was very different experience from learning English. The chance to go to Spain just sort of presented itself to me, and I wanted to go abroad. It seemed like a good opportunity, so I just went. Even though I had studied the language in high school, I didn't have much of a base in the language before I went to Spain. I didn't take language classes while I was there either; it wasn't expected of me, because the people who gave me the grant thought I already knew the language, which I did only to a certain degree. So I pretty much learned what I did during that time doing the content- courses in Hispanic Studies at the university. I also lived with two Spanish girls and we talked and cooked together.

Julia also taught German to adult learners at a private language school while she was studying at the university in Spain, and she began to consider the possibility of teaching German to adult immigrants when she returned home. After returning to Germany, she decided to take some further teacher training rather than to look for work in the public school system, and took a one-year teacher training program for teaching German as a foreign language at a well-known institute there.

Teacher Training in Germany for Teaching German as a Foreign Language

As with her pre-service training program in TEFL, Julia found the communicative approach that the German-language teacher trainers emphasized as an especially important part of the program and for her development as a teacher:

> I think my teacher training program had been a real turning point for me as a teacher. Of course, this was at the end of the 70s, and it was the height of the communicative approach in English language teaching. Some of the new professors at the Institute had adopted the ideas of Widdowson and these people in England, and I thought it was very new and exciting. Before that, my approach to teaching was more grammar-based and structured, which is the way I personally like to learn languages, but during my training, I guess my professors convinced me, and then I tried to incorporate that in my teaching since I had always liked pragmatics in linguistics.
>
> I was one of the few that liked it actually – most of the other students thought it was too stressful because the trainers were always observing you and taking notes and that kind of thing. But that didn't bother me so much – I didn't have stage fright, and I enjoyed being with the class and the feedback and conversations about teaching.

After completing the program, Julia was offered a position as a visiting faculty member at a university in Mexico. She accepted and moved to Mexico, where she eventually lived and worked for a total of eleven years.

Learning Spanish in Mexico

Julia had reached an intermediate level of Spanish by the time arrived in Mexico, but she found that her busy teaching schedule didn't leave her much time to study Spanish. Initially, she purchased commercially-produced self-study materials, but she soon discarded them and began to study the language on her own:

> My Spanish was at an intermediate level I guess by the time I got to Mexico, and I wanted to take language courses, but I was too busy working. I bought a book, and I tried to follow it and do everything very systematically like vocabulary lists - I do that every time I get to a place – and listening to the radio and writing down ten words a day or something like that. I did that for a few weeks, and then I stopped with the book

> altogether because I got so bored. I wanted to do it, but I didn't because it turned out to be so boring.
>
> The lists worked better. I did maybe ten words a day. I would write down the Spanish and the German. It was rote learning I guess, but there was always a context. I would listen to the radio or the newspaper or literature that I was reading, and just pick out the words I wanted to learn. I knew by then that it was not a good idea to write everything down, and I would go through them every day and remember them by the context and check off the ones I knew. And that helped because I recognized the words and the grammar by remembering where they came from. And it wasn't just hard work - it was fun.

Teaching at a Mexican University

Julia taught a range of courses at the Mexican university where she worked, including German language, applied linguistics, and German language teacher education courses. Her first visit lasted for five years, and after a two-year return to Germany to conduct research, she returned again to Mexico as a regular faculty member at the same university for another six years.

Julia says she enjoyed teaching German in Mexico, and took a communicative approach to her practice as language teacher. She found that the university classes she taught were more formal than the night-school classes that she had taught in Germany, but she also found that like her night-school students, her adult Mexican students were also genuinely interested in the language she was teaching:

> I also enjoyed teaching German in Mexico a lot, and it was very different from what I had experienced teaching night-school classes in Germany. For one thing, it was a lot more formal since I was teaching at a university, so I had to grade the students and everything. The other thing was that as a teacher in Mexico you are seen as an authority figure, so you tend to slip into a more traditional teaching role. The students were very well-suited to a communicative approach, because they were very talkative and they liked learning the language very much. I could ask them questions and they would just start talking and they loved it. So it was the perfect mix, because they would talk a lot in class, but there was still this understanding that I was an authority figure, and that I would give them tests, and that was fine with me. Teaching there is great because they're so genuinely interested in the other culture.

> Maybe this is because it is difficult for Mexican students to go to Europe, but they have read about it and so they ask questions and they listen to every single thing you tell them about Europe. They respond to little jokes and they play with the language – they like to do that. I remember they would find out something in the language that sounds like Mexican and then they would talk about it and then kind of change it, and make little jokes abut it. They love to make little poems in German, and things like that you know - little play on words on what they find out about it, or little ironies and word plays. I like doing that too, and I use it a lot as a learner…any kind of humour or irony in language.

After five years, Julia returned to Germany to work on a research project, but she missed Mexico. After two years, she accepted a faculty member position at the same Mexican university, and returned for another six years. She was glad to be back.

The Present Context and Looking Forward

Two years ago, Julia moved to Canada with her family and began her Ph.D. program in Modern Languages. Her academic interests vary, but she is especially interested in the use of the Internet in language teaching and how computers enhance the learning process and autonomy of learning. In addition to her academic studies, she teaches introductory and intermediate-level German courses in the department where she studies.

Looking forward, she says that she plans to continue her Ph.D. studies, and that she would like to have a full-time position at a university gain one day. She would also like to become involved in language teacher training again at some point, though she believes she will always stay in language teaching.

6.3 Interpretation and Discussion

6.3.1 Julia's Reflections on Language Learning: A Lifelong Love for Languages and Learning

The most predominant theme that emerged from Julia's story as a learner of English and Spanish was her love for the two languages she has learned, and she spoke at length about the pleasure she associates with learning both languages. During her early formal studies of English, she recalls the fun she had reading stories, expressing herself, and doing grammar exercises in English, and many of these same activities can be seen in her recollections of her self-directed Spanish studies as an adult in Mexico, where she recalls discarding commercially-produced self-study materials and instead having fun by listening to the radio, reading books, and making up her own vocabulary lists. Yet while the theme of love appeared as the most overarching element of her experiences learning these other languages, the nature of the nature of her love for each language was sometimes quite different.

With English for example, Julia's passion for literature has always been an important part of her language study, but that the most difficult challenges for her as an English language learner have been North American culture and pronunciation. In the present context, she continues to study the language in her academic work:

> I've never had trouble with the English language itself - I've always liked to learn it, and I've always loved English literature, even more than German. Having said that, I suppose pronunciation has probably been the most difficult, because sometimes there are sounds I don't like, you know? I have also found that sometimes my tongue gets kind of mixed up in my mouth. Speaking English has been difficult at times – during my first visit to the States in particular. Obviously, I express myself better and with more ease in German and I'm at a higher level academically than in English, but I'm learning to do it in English

> right now. It's interesting because I used to have more of an everyday type of English, and now I am learning to use a more academic style.

With Spanish, Julia's love for language seems to focus on her love for the country in which most of her Spanish language learning took place, and this love for Mexico continues in the present context:

> In Spanish however, I had no psychological barriers at all. I loved Mexico from the very second I got there so I think it was much easier to learn the language and to accept everything that has to do with the language. The grammar was the most difficult for me, but after a while I got it by listening and that sort of thing. I taught graduate courses in Spanish in Mexico so my level of academic Spanish had to be fairly high. Mexico is still the greatest country I know, and I have very strong positive emotional ties there.

Julia's reflections on her cross-cultural experiences and as a learner of two other languages also pointed to her years living away from the country in which she was born, and to her changing perceptions of Germany and of her German heritage over the years:

> I went abroad to get away from what I felt were narrow ways of thinking. You have a number of things you have to carry around with you when you're German and it makes it difficult to identify with being German in the first place and I think that's why so many Germans go abroad. But over the years my relationship with Germany has become better. As I said before, I went back again after my first five years in Mexico and that was very difficult. I just didn't like Germany any more. I liked the Mexican culture so much better, because they were warmer and friendlier and all that – you know. But now I know as I grow older, I have kind of re-discovered Germany and the good sides, so now I don't have some of the hang –ups that I was maybe brought up with as a German.

Finally, Julia's reflections suggest that her language learning and cross-cultural experiences have made an important contribution to how she has come to see herself, others, and the world:

> I think language learning teaches you to put everything much more into a perspective; everything becomes much more relative and you don't believe in absolute truths anymore. Probably as you learn languages and you move between different cultures you realize that every person is made up and defined by their experiences. I mean, I cannot believe anymore - as I may have at one time - that you have a self that develops in some

> pre-determined way no matter what. This is not true. And I've experienced it myself - everything that you live and with which you communicate changes you, so I see myself very much defined by all this. But it's also different for each individual person.

6.3.2 Julia's Reflections on Language Teaching: Supplementary Materials

In reflecting on her current practice as a German language teacher, Julia pointed out that many aspects of her practice have not changed much over the years. She continues to value a balance between the study of grammar (an element of language learning that she has always enjoyed), and communicative fluency activities in her classes, as well as emphasizing as much L1 use in the classroom as possible to develop these skills:

> I don't think my practice as a teacher has changed much over the years. I still value structure in my teaching, but I also believe in pragmatics. I don't believe that everything you say in a classroom has to be grammatically correct and you don't have to speak in complete sentences either. It's almost a Krashen approach because I try to give them a little more than what they already know. I'm a firm believer in using L2 as much as possible, and I talk to a lot of teachers these days that think it's alright to use L1 for activities for talking about language and I struggle with that.

Another aspect of her practice involves the use of supplementary learning materials, which she believes are especially important in the language classroom. And while she recognizes that finding and developing these materials can be time-consuming for teachers, she tries to provide her students with materials that supplement her course textbooks such as short texts, stories, videos, and grammar exercises:

> I think one of the most important things in language teaching is to introduce new material and not stick with just the textbook. A lot of teachers - myself included - don't always have the time to do that, but just using the course book makes the course very narrow. Teachers need to bring new material – lots of it. For me, because I like to read, I bring lots of short texts. Other people might bring songs and use those, but things like stories and videos are good too. I think in that sense I agree with Krashen, you know, giving your students lots of input - because something always sticks. Students also need to talk about it. Of course this is to develop fluency. In terms of accuracy, I still think grammar exercises are the way to go. And I believe grammar is important in language learning.

Julia also pointed to some of her struggles as a teacher over the course of her career, particularly concerning her classroom role. Even though she prefers to see herself as a "helper" in the classroom, she has come to realize the difficulties associated with this role as a teacher of academic language courses:

> From the literature and from conviction I would say that my role is a "helper" as a language teacher rather than "teacher" and "authority figure", but at the same time, you have to be that because you have to grade and in a way it seems to be expected of you – you know, almost control what they're doing. It's expected by the institution because you have to assign grades, and you can't just give everybody an "A", so you actually have to control with what they are doing. And in a way, that is in conflict with just being a helper. As a helper, you would have to leave people free to do what they want with the language, and do as much as they can or want to do at any given moment, which would probably be the best way to learn – give them that freedom.
>
> But because of the constraints you are under institutionally, you cannot give them that freedom. And so you have to be a controller in the classroom to some degree, and I struggle with that personally sometimes. It's probably a conflict for every teacher. Lately there is a lot of talk about getting rid of grades all together. On the other hand, I realize that as a learner myself, I find a certain amount of control helpful, because otherwise I might go to the swimming pool instead of doing my homework. So if I have somebody that controls that, that helps me. So I'm in-between those two. I'm not completely of the conviction that students always know what they're doing, but I don't think I should be completely controlling them. It's a conflict.

Julia also contrasted her present students to those that she has had over the years, and she sometimes observes a lack of enthusiasm concerning language learning in her current teaching situation. This seems to be an especially difficult aspect of Julia's current working reality as a language teacher:

> Over the years I'm afraid I've been become a little less patient with my students. But I don't know if that's because of myself or the different contexts in which I've taught. When I started teaching in Germany I taught English language night classes for adults, and there my students weren't very academically trained – you know secretaries and other professionals, who took English at night. And it was difficult for them so it took a while to get across structural things and all that, but they were enthused about it and they would talk a lot. It was nice you know, and so I was very patient. It was also my first job as a teacher, and that probably had a lot to do with it as well. In Mexico as well, there was much enthusiasm, although there wasn't a lot

> of very structural work. But because of the enthusiasm it was easy to be patient. Here though, sometimes I get impatient because I feel that the students aren't interested and they really don't want to do what they are doing and they're just in a language class for credit.

In considering how she attempts to address this dilemma, Julia points again to the value of providing her students with supplementary materials that might help to make learning German more enjoyable for her students. And while she recognizes that this has always been at the centre of her own experience as a language learner, she has also come to recognize that learners are different:

> It's probably because it's expected and from what they are used to from MTV and all that – unless something's really happening and changing all the time they get bored. For example, if I show them a slow German movie, they get bored really quickly. And I really find that I need to use more audio-visual material. I use more videos, because I like movies, and I think that if I had to learn a language again now, I would like to do it with videos, so you can connect seeing and hearing and how people move with what they say. I used TV a lot when I was learning Spanish, and it was very helpful.
>
> One of the things I've learned over the years is that learners are very different. They're not all like me and at the beginning I think I kind of assumed that people learned the same way I did. You also need to adapt to different types of learners because everybody is different, and you need to vary the materials so everybody gets something out of it. I think my best classes have been when I have picked the right materials at the right time, and when I was in the right mood and because I believed in what I was teaching them. And because it was interesting, the students learned something.

6.4 Summary of the Chapter

Julia was 47 years of age at the time of the interview. She began studying several foreign languages at an early age as part of her formal education in while she was growing up in Germany. But English was always her favorite, and she traveled to the United States as an exchange student during her final year of high school, and again as an assistant German teacher during her undergraduate program in English Education at an American high school. Following her undergraduate studies, she completed an M.A. in English

Literature and Linguistics, a teacher training program in TEFL, and started teaching English in the German public school system as well as to adults in a community-based program. Next, Julia continued her academic studies in Spain for a year, where she studied Spanish and completed an additional M.A. in Hispanic Studies at a university there. After retuning to Germany, she completed a one-year teacher education program in teaching German as a foreign language, and then accepted a position as a visiting professor at a large university in Mexico. Julia lived and taught in Mexico for a total of eleven years before moving to Canada two years ago to begin her current Ph.D. program.

The major theme from Julia's story as learner of two additional languages was her lifelong love for languages and for learning, and she spoke of the pleasure she associates with classroom-based and self-directed language learning activities. Julia always enjoyed English literature, but she struggled with North American culture during her first visit to United States, and believes that pronunciation has been the most difficult part of learning English. In Spanish however, her love for the language focuses on her love for the country where she lived and worked for eleven years, and this love for Mexico continues in her present context. An advanced learner of two additional languages, Julia's life history has involved extensive periods of time in several different countries. She believes these experiences have been an important influence on her own evolving self-identification over the years. Over time, has begun to feel more comfortable with her German cultural heritage.

In her current practice as a German language teacher, Julia pointed out that many aspects of her practice have not changed much over the years. She continues to value a balance between grammatical accuracy (an element of language learning that she has always enjoyed) and communicative fluency activities. However, Julia also noted that she often struggles with her classroom role as a language teacher due to the institutional constraints under which she works, as well as with the indifference she sometimes observes in language students who are only taking her classes for academic credit. She has come to recognize that language learners are often very different, and that language teachers need to provide their students with plenty of supplementary materials to keep classroom-based learning and teaching interesting.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANNA

> I think that learning English has been something very practical for me. I knew from a very early age that I would probably become a professor at a university one day. I enjoyed my studies in English and I did well, so it made sense for me to focus my studies in this area.
>
> - Anna

7.1 Introduction and Interview Context

Anna was born in Russia and had moved to Vancouver two years prior to our interview to begin a Ph.D. program in TESL. She had studied English in high school, and went on to complete an undergraduate degree in English language and Literature. She spent the final term of her undergraduate program as an exchange student at a university in Alaska, and returned to the same university to complete her graduate program there a year later. In addition to her doctoral studies, she was working as a teaching assistant in a combined English-language and culture program at the university where she studied. She was 28 years of age, single and had no children.

I first met Anna in the spring of 2001 between presentations at a teacher research conference at the university where we both study. I had attended a presentation she had given earlier that morning, and had learned that we both studied in the same department. While we were both waiting for the next presentation to begin, I decided to compliment her on her presentation and to introduce myself. Over the next few weeks, we met by coincidence around the department and the university campus. We did not take any classes together, and I eventually contacted her via email to ask her to participate in my study. She agreed, and after several email exchanges we finally met for an interview at her office in the department where she studies.

7.2 Biographical Profile: Anna's Story

Growing Up in Russia

Anna grew up in a highly educated family in a small town in northern Russia. She has a younger brother, an older sister, and a big extended family of uncles and aunts. Both her parents, as well as her grandfather, are university professors, and her family shared two distinct languages and cultures – Russian from her father's side, and the local indigenous Yakut language and culture from her mother's side. Growing up in a bilingual and bicultural family that valued education and learning, Anna recalls that she began her English studies at an early age in an English language club:

> I was educated in a highly literate family of university teachers – both my parents and my grandfather as well. My mom teaches national literature and culture and my father teaches anatomy. My grandfather was in the social sciences and taught a range of subjects. He mostly focused on history, and wrote lots of books and articles.
>
> I was also entrenched in two distinct literacy practices from an early age. From my father's side of the family it was mainly mainstream Russian language and culture, but from my mother's side it was the local indigenous Yakut language and culture. Yakut was used in the villages in the surrounding countryside and also in many of the town's shops. Most of the family members from my mother's side of the family did not go to university, but I remember there was a strong oral traditional there that was an important part of my childhood. I spoke mostly Russian when I was growing up, but I also spoke some Yakut with my mother and her side of the family. At school we studied and learned Russian, but we also studied Yakut for a few hours each week.
>
> It seemed like everyone around me read a lot, and I was surrounded by books as a child so I read a lot too. I also watched T.V., listened to music, and went to an English language club where we learned plays and poems and songs in English.

Learning English in High School in Russia

Anna began her formal English language studies when she was in high school. She enjoyed her English classes and did well in her studies:

> I really liked English and it was one of my favorite subjects. I remember our English class was fun and our teacher was excellent. I think that she played a very important role in my positive attitude toward the language. Everybody respected her, and for me it seemed that she spoke the language perfectly. The classroom was really nice too. It was different from the other classrooms somehow; there were posters on the wall and it was visually appealing to me. I was one of the best students and the teacher liked me and it was fun. English was always associated with some kind of play or songs, but it wasn't so deep you know - it wasn't anything serious.

After completing high school, Anna had a very clear idea about where she was going in terms of her academic studies and future career: she wanted to be a university professor like her parents, and her family supported her in this decision. So, Anna began her undergraduate studies at the university in the town where she lived in the area of English Language and Literature:

> For me there was no hard decision-making about what to do after I graduated from high school. I knew that I would enter university and would most likely become a teacher at the university level like my parents and grandfather. My grandfather used to tell me that it was very important to speak at least three languages – Yakut to communicate with the local native people, Russian to communicate with mainstream Russian society, and English to communicate with people around the world. That was really neat idea, and it encouraged me to continue learning English and to continue with my studies in higher education. I decided to study English language and literature at the university and my family supported me.

Undergraduate Studies and a Semester Abroad as an Exchange Student in Alaska

Anna also did well in her undergraduate studies, and she spent her final semester of her program as an exchange student at a university in Alaska. Before arriving in Alaska, she had hoped that studying abroad would help her to improve and practice her English, but she found this not to be the case. Instead, she found that her academic studies didn't leave her much time for socializing, and that most of her English language use was limited to her academic studies. She lived on campus, and found that most of her socializing took place in Russian with other exchange students from Russia:

> I was very empathetic towards everyone and I wanted to make friends with Americans because I wanted to meet people and practice the language. But I was also very busy with my studies, so most of my English practice took place during classroom discussions and with the people I met there. There were also a lot of other Russian exchange students at the university so I spoke a lot of Russian during my time there. Eventually I made some American acquaintances but our conversations mostly took place on the "hi – bye" level.

After four months in Alaska, Anna completed the semester and retuned to Russia to complete her undergraduate program. Shortly afterward, she started teaching English language courses at the university where she had studied.

Starting Teaching English in Russia

Even though Anna's undergraduate program had included a teacher training component, she was anxious when she first starting teaching English at the university, and found that her teacher training had not really prepared her for the realities of her first teaching job. While her teacher education program had emphasized reading books about language teaching and methodology, she found that it did not prepare her for teaching:

> I started teaching at the university when I finished my undergraduate studies in Russia. I had graduated from department of Modern Languages and we were trained as teachers of English. But I think the training wasn't very good. There was a lot of reality missing - it was too bookish and outdated in terms of methods, and it didn't really prepare me for teaching.
>
> As it often happens, the reality is quite different from what we read and learned from the books - I found that real teaching was about different situations and that you had to somehow survive. I was very nervous when I started teaching but I got used to it and it seemed very natural to me. The teaching manuals were very helpful, as were student evaluations of my teaching.

During her first year of teaching English in Russia, Anna applied for graduate studies at the university where she had studied in Alaska, and after being accepted into the

program, packed her suitcase and left Russia to begin her M.A. program in Language, Literacy and Culture.

Re-Visiting Alaska as a Graduate Student in Language, Literacy and Culture

Anna spent two and a half years as a graduate student at the Alaskan university, and she characterizes her experiences there much in the same way as her first visit; her English was pretty much limited to her academic work, and the little time she had for socializing was mostly spent with other Russian students. Overall however, Anna says she enjoyed her time as a graduate student in Alaska, and she found the university environment relaxing. And while she observed some differences between American and Russian cultures during her time there, she never really struggled with these differences:

> As an English language learner and exchange student in Alaska, I found there were a lot of things about American culture that were very different from what I was used to in Russia, but it wasn't really a problem for me. I had seen foreigners and Americans at the university in Russia and you could tell they were foreigners as soon as you saw them by their appearance. I think it was mostly their clothing that identified them as foreigners but also the fact that they smiled more and their behavior seemed a lot more relaxed. I found this was true when I lived in Alaska, so there were no real surprises for me there.

After completing her graduate program Anna returned again to Russia, and began to apply for Ph.D. studies to continue her education. Two years ago she accepted an offer of admission at the university where she currently studies, and moved to Canada to begin her program.

The Present Context and Looking Forward

Anna's present academic interests include online learning in language education, and her dissertation is looking at the development of intercultural online knowledge communities.

She also she works as teaching assistant in an integrated language and culture program at the university where she studies. The program operates as part of an exchange program between the university and a university in Japan

Looking forward, Anna sees her future here in North America, and as she works toward completing her doctoral studies, she seems close to achieving her goal of becoming a university professor:

> I see my future as a researcher, and I would like to find a job at an American university after I complete my program here. I would return to Russia for holidays and sabbaticals of course, but I would prefer to work in the United States.

7.3 Interpretation and Discussion

7.3.1 Anna's Reflections on Language Learning: Academic and Professional Development

Anna pointed to the practical nature her personal history as an English language learner. She knew from an early age that she wanted to be a university professor like her parents, and since she enjoyed her early English language classes in Russia, it made sense for her to focus her academic studies in this area:

> I think that learning English has also been something very practical for me. I knew from a very early age that I would probably become a professor at a university one day. I enjoyed my studies in English and I did well, so it made sense for me to focus my studies in this area. And so learning English has always been a part of my plans for the future, and this is why I am here in Vancouver completing my PhD program.

And while she enjoyed her early English language studies, she adds that it hasn't always been easy. In the present context, she feels that she still needs to improve her English,

and she continues to study the language in her academic program. Looking forward, she feels that she will eventually become quite good in the language:

> I would say that the key to my success as an English language learner was motivation. I always enjoyed English and how instruction was carried out. Learning English for me was always associated with playing and enjoyment. Of course, it was not always easy – I had to memorize a lot of stuff. One of the things that worked for me was mnemonics - you know, if I wanted to learn a word in English I would try to find a word that sounded almost the same in Russian or Yakut – and that worked for me more than anything else. I didn't write things down very much because it is too much trouble for me and I like to keep things in my head.
>
> But I don't really think of myself as a successful English language learner considering I have been studying it for fifteen years. I have good control of the language and skills but there is still a lot of vocabulary that I still don't know. But I don't know - if you go into philosophy, you can see that this is also true in our native languages and there are always new words to learn. But I think I will continue to improve, and that eventually I will become very good in the English language. My advice for language learners would be to learn vocabulary, read books, listen to the language as much as you can, and write a lot. It takes time and you need to have a lot of self-discipline.

Anna feels that she has never really struggled with cross-cultural differences as an English language learner, neither during her visits to Alaska nor in her present context as a Ph.D. student in Canada. She says she had been exposed to North American culture during her academic studies in Russia, and there have been no real cultural surprises for her here. Instead, she has come to emphasize people over cultural backgrounds in her relationships with others, and she feels that she could live just about anywhere:

> As an English language learner and exchange student in Alaska, I found there were a lot of things about American culture that were very different from what I was used to in Russia, but it wasn't really a problem for me. I had seen foreigners and Americans at the university in Russia and you could tell they were foreigners as soon as you saw them by their appearance. I think it was mostly their clothing that identified them as foreigners but also the fact that they smiled more and their behavior seemed a lot more relaxed. I found this was true when I lived in Alaska, so there were no real surprises for me there. As I said, I think the things they say about culture shock are an exaggeration – I've never had a problem with that. I don't know – maybe I'm just lucky.

> For me it is not the place that is so important, but the people; the most important thing is human relations, no matter what culture someone is from. I feel that I can live anyplace and I can adjust to anything.

Anna also added that her Yakut heritage has become increasingly important to her personal self-identification over the years, and that she would like to revisit this aspect of her cultural and linguistic history at some point in the future:

> Russian is the language I was educated in and used mostly when I was growing up, but I have come to consider it second to my Yakut heritage, and even though I don't speak Yakut as well as I speak Russian, I consider Yakut to be my first mother tongue. I also identify myself as Yakut person. Physically I look like a Yakut person, and I would like to be able to speak the language better some day. I would like to study Yakut again at some point in the future, and I think I would probably do that just by spending time in a community in Russia where they use the language.

7.3.2 Anna's Reflections on Language Teaching: Academic Language Teaching and Student Success

In reflecting on her experience as a language teacher, Anna highlighted the academic nature of the two major contexts in which she has worked teaching English, and that what she has come to value most in her practice is her students' success in their own academic language studies.

Anna's first assignment teaching English came after she finished her undergraduate program and began teaching at the university where she had studied, and she struggled with several aspects of the job. While her teacher preparation seems to have focused on methodological approaches to language teaching, she found that "real teaching" was about "adapting to different situations" and she found teaching manuals and student evaluations most helpful to her as a beginning teacher.

Another aspect of her first assignment as an academic language teacher seems to focus on her struggles with student evaluation, and she recalls she wasn't sure how to grade her students because she was uncertain about whether she should reward their efforts at language learning or their proficiency in the language. Over time, she says she come to value a combination of both:

> When I first started teaching, I struggled with evaluation and with what grades to give to my students. I never knew whether I should evaluate their proficiency or their efforts, and I tried to do a combination both, which I still do today. I think it is important to reward effort - no matter how well a student does, if she or he tries hard and does his or her best, I usually give them a high grade.

Before beginning her present teaching position, Anna recalls that she had doubts about her English language skills and knowledge about North American culture, but adds that she has come to see her own academic, linguistic, and cross-cultural experiences as strengths that she can draw on as a language teacher:

> Right now I am teaching an integrated language and culture course to international students. This kind of teaching is very different from when I was teaching English in Russia because I had a lot more common ground with my students. I have had doubts about my own skills – about whether or not I know English well enough to teach it, but I think that over time I have come to see my first language and my own experiences as strengths that I can bring to my teaching, and I feel more confident about these things now. I know North American culture well enough to teach in this context. When I started teaching I relied mostly on books, but now I like to use a lot of multimedia, overheads, Internet resources, and WebCT in my classes.

Indeed, Anna's personal history as an academic English language learner seems to have informed her practice as an academic English language teacher, and she noted a dilemma that she sometimes encounters in her current practice. On one hand, she feels that as a teacher she should encourage effort and give her students a wide berth of freedom as learners. On the other, she also believes that one of the keys to her own academic success

has been her continued self-discipline, and she wants her students to succeed in their own academic studies as well:

> But the real dilemma for me is to be strict or to be permissive. I think I'm more likely to be permissive and to give people a chance, but in fact in the back of my mind, I sometimes think it's better to be strict and demanding. I guess it's human nature that you will not learn unless you have discipline. I also realize that this is how I was taught, and that my teachers were very strict and that I learned a lot from them. So I think that my top tip for language teachers is to be respectful and to be strict at the same time.

As Anna continues to develop her approach to teaching English in an academic context, she points to the important role of context in her practice, and to the deep respect that she has come to hold for the academic language learners in her classroom:

> And my approach to teaching is always changing, because I am always trying to figure out which approach will work best in the context that I am teaching. It all depends on the context and there are so many variables. But the most important thing is to establish trust with my students. I try to do that in different ways: by talking about topics that are interesting to them, showing empathy, showing an interest in their culture, and demonstrating a respect for different cultures.
>
> I think my perceptions of my students have changed a lot since I started teaching. I think that now I realize that they are all individuals who can make a whole lot of difference in the classroom. They are "agents" as it is now fashionable to say. This has come from my reading in my university courses and from my own personal experience. Personal communication with students is also very important in teaching, and when you make personal connections with students you start to see how special and unique each person is. Students need and deserve to be listened to and respected, and treated as a person with a valuable contribution to make.

7.4 Summary of the Chapter

Anna was 28 years of age at the time of the interview. She grew up in a small town in northern Russia in a highly educated family, and both her parents as well as her grandfather are university professors. Anna studied English in high school, and decided to focus her undergraduate studies in the area of English Language and Literature. During the final year of the program, she spent a term as an exchange student at a university in

Alaska, and after returning to Russia to teach at the university where she had studied, she returned again to Alaska to complete an M.A. in Language, Literacy, and Culture. Following another return to Russia, she moved to Vancouver two years ago to begin her present doctoral studies in TESL and her position as an academic English language and culture teaching assistant.

Anna enjoyed her early English language studies, and knew from an early age that she wanted to be a university professor like her parents, so she decided to focus her academic studies in this area with the goal of a career in academics. Prior to leaving Russia to study in Alaska as an undergraduate and graduate student, she thought that studying abroad would be a good opportunity for her to improve her English, but she found that she spent most of her time on her academic work, and the little time she did have for socializing was spent primarily with other Russian exchange students. While she was initially surprised by some of the differences she observed between Russian and American cultures, she says she never really struggled with the cross-cultural aspects of language learning. In the present context, she says she feels comfortable living in North America and continues to study English in her current Ph.D. program. Even though she doesn't consider herself to be a "successful" English language learner, Anna thinks that she will eventually become quite good in the language, adding that she would like to revisit her Yakut cultural and linguistic heritage as some point in the future. Looking forward, she sees her professional future as a professor at a North American university.

In reflecting on her teaching practice, Anna noted that her professional experience as an English language teacher has taken place in an academic setting. She pointed to her

struggles with student evaluation and grading, and that while she often feels a desire to reward students for their efforts at language study, she recognizes that academic learners also need to develop self-discipline and to be able to perform well in order to get good grades. Initially, she had doubts about her English language skills and cultural knowledge about North America, but she has come to see her own academic, linguistic and cross-cultural experiences as strengths that she can draw upon as an English language teacher, adding that a flexible approach and respect for students are essential elements of teaching English in an academic context.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DAVID

> Having learned another language has made me see myself on the world map differently. I don't see myself exclusively as a member of this particular group or country anymore but I see myself as a member of the wider context, with a global identity. Learning another language has enabled me to interact and be in contact with a larger group of people and a larger community. It has been a big influence.
>
> - David

8.1 Introduction and Interview Context

Originally from El Salvador, David was a Canadian citizen and had lived in Canada for twelve years at the time of the interview. He left El Salvador as a young adult to escape the war, and lived in Los Angeles for two years where he began learning English as a young adult while working at a local community college. Two years later, David immigrated to Canada, where he started a family and a successful trucking business. Several years later, he returned to El Salvador with his family, and while he had initially hoped to start another business like the one he had operated in Canada, he instead attended university and began working as an English language teacher. A few years later, he decided to return again to Vancouver with his family, and had been back for two years at the time of the interview. He had recently completed a M.Ed. in TESL and was teaching in the same combined language and culture program as Anna at the university where he had studied. He was separated from his wife and three children and was 43 years of age.

David and I met during the fall and winter 2000-2001 terms at the university where we study and we shared a number of classes together. We collaborated on a number of assignments for our various courses, maintained contact via email, and also met socially a

few times. I visited his home in Vancouver twice; once for an informal visit and the second time for an interview for this study.

8.2 Biographical Profile: David's Story

Growing up in El Salvador

David was born in a small village in rural El Salvador into a family with seven siblings. His parents were farmers and made their living growing rice and corn. Like many of the other families in the village where he grew up, his father, aunts, and uncles couldn't read or write. Most of the children he grew up with never got past grade six, and they never got much encouragement from their families in terms of education. Even though David's mother only finished second grade, she was the most educated person in the family and always encouraged her children us to go as far as they could in school within the means that were available to them. David developed a dislike for farm work at an early age, and enjoyed school because he could wear clean clothes every day and not have to work in the field.

He did well in school, and left the village where he had grown up to attend a public high school in San Salvador at the age of fifteen. Even though he was glad to away from the farm and living in the city, the war in El Salvador had escalated by then, and the political situation in El Salvador was a significant backdrop to David's high school years in the country's capitol. After finishing high school David was eighteen, and his parents decided to help him to escape the war by going to the United States:

> I was glad to be away from working on the farm and I liked living in the city. But by then the war had turned really nasty and it was a dangerous time to be a young adult; people either took you for a rebel because of your age, or the army would capture you and take

> you off to fight. There were a lot of rebels that went to the school there and I remember a lot of the students carried guns with them. There were also a lot of interruptions because of this and the school got a pretty bad reputation. Every day after school there was fighting all over the place and a lot of my friends, at least four, were killed during this time. It was a dangerous place to be and that was why my parents decided to try to get me out of El Salvador and into the United States.

Two of David's sisters had already escaped the war and were living in Los Angeles, and David hoped to stay there after making his way to the United States. After several unsuccessful attempts, David eventually secured a legal permit to reside in the United States, and he went to live with one of his sisters in central Los Angeles:

> Of course, I wasn't able to get a visa or a visitors' permit, so they had to hire a *coyote* to smuggle me into the States. This is probably another story for another day, but it involved all kinds of things like going through Mexico and being robbed at gunpoint by Mexican police and immigration officers and being abandoned by different Mexican *coyotes* who took over in Mexico in a field in the middle of nowhere for a couple of days.
>
> Eventually, we tried to get across the border one night, but we got caught by the border patrol and put into this immigration camp. I really hated it there. They gave me this form to sign and I signed it and was deported. There was a week when my family didn't know what happened to me and had no idea where I was or if I was alive.
>
> The arrangement with the *coyotes* was for three attempts to smuggle me in, and I got caught the second time too and signed the form again. I got caught on the third try as well, but my family got me a lawyer and I was able to pay a bond to get me out of the immigration camp after over two months there, which gave me a special permit to stay in the country.

Learning English Working in a Los Angeles P.E. Department

Initially, David had hoped to continue his academic studies in the United States, but lack of money meant that he needed to work. He also didn't speak much English at this time, and so he worked at odd jobs cleaning and gardening during his first few months there. Eventually, he decided to register for some electronics courses at a local two-year college, but since he wasn't a native English-speaker, he also had to take ESL courses.

Like his previous ESL studies in El Salvador, David didn't find his English language courses very helpful:

> I had studied it as a subject in high school, but I didn't learn very much aside from a few words. I think that was the case for everyone. There was no incentive or motivation to learn it, and the methodology was basically translation. I had no idea that it was going to be useful to me in any way in the future and the way it was taught was just boring. There was no reality involved and it was just a subject. I hated it and I failed it in high school.
>
> By that time, my sister and her family spoke very good English and they helped me a lot when I first got there. After a few months, I decided to register at a two-year college to take some electronics courses but since I wasn't a native English-speaker, I also had to take ESL courses. I don't think the ESL classes at the college had much of an influence on my language learning either. They weren't really important to me and I can't remember learning very much in them.

One of the major turning points for David as an English language learner came when he applied for a job as a teacher's assistant in the Physical Education Department at the college where he was studying. Even though his English language skills were limited at the time, he ended up getting the job, and he recalls that observing the people and language around him in the gym where he worked was an important part of his early English language learning:

> I used to pay attention to everyone around me. I would listen to how native speakers spoke – how they said things in chunks, and the phrases they used when they spoke. That was one of my most important techniques I think; paying attention to chunks - you know, all those pre-fabricated chunks that native speakers use all the time like "You gotta be kidding" – stuff like that, and little phrases that people use all the time or cliches. Anything I heard on the bus or on the street or at work or at school or wherever - I would just pick them up and repeat them over and over in my mind and verbalize them over and over again. Even if I didn't know what they meant, I thought "Well, I'll figure that out later. I'll ask my sister or I'll just make a list".
>
> Every day I had a list of phrases and words, and I would go home and ask my sister and ask her what they meant and when I should use them, and if I was saying them right and all those things. And she would explain these things to me, and this was a major part of my language learning at that time. And I really paid attention to those things. I remember when I was at work and the kids were in classes and I had nothing to do; I would lean against the wall somewhere repeating my phrases – repeating my chunks - or sometimes just single words that I was having trouble with.

> I had some other strategies too, like listening to music. We didn't really have a stereo at home, but I had a niece that had a little plastic record player for kids. It was pink with flowers. I had some records that I would play on her turntable and listen to them and read the lyrics and follow along, and I remember I could tell that it was really helping me. I also remember that my niece had little stories on records that came with her record player and a book, and I listened to them. She had a lot of them, and there was a story and a record for each one. I learned those stories and those songs by heart, and I still know them today, like "There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly". I would just listen to the words and repeat them and that was my methodology.

David's social life also began to develop during his time on the job in the P.E. Department at the college, and he began to make friends and to practice his English with teachers and students there, eventually developing a multicultural group of friends from a range of social and cultural backgrounds:

> Once I started working there, I met more people, and the social circle I built for myself was a very multicultural one. I made a real effort to surround myself with people. I was very social and made friends with people who were from L.A. but also from other states and other countries as well. I made good friends with a teacher I met there at the school, who had just got divorced and was looking for friends to do things with I guess. We would hang out a lot together and go out with other people together, and I remember hearing a lot of English words and expressions from him. I still remember a lot of those things.

David learned through a friend that he met at the school that Canada had started a program that was granting landed immigrant status to people who were already living in the United States, including people from El Salvador. He thought this sounded interesting, so he visited the Canadian consulate and filled out an application for pre-approval. Six months later his application had been approved, so he quit his job at the school and moved to Vancouver. He didn't know anybody here, and had no idea of what he was going to do.

Living in Vancouver for Ten Years: Starting a Family and a Trucking Business

David lived in Vancouver for ten years. During this time, he got married, had three children with his wife, and sponsored his mother and brother to come to live with him here from El Salvador. Eventually he became a Canadian citizen and, together with his brother, ended up operating a successful trucking business in Vancouver. Although he returned to El Salvador several times for short holidays to visit his family, David had become comfortable with his life in Canada, and Vancouver came to be the place he called home. A decade later, he started thinking about leaving Vancouver and moving back to El Salvador with his family to start a trucking business there with his brother. Eventually this is what they did, and David packed up and moved back to El Salvador with his family.

The Return to El Salvador and a New Career Teaching English

But the return to El Salvador was difficult for David, and he says he had difficulty adjusting to life there after living in North America for so many years. He says he experienced severe struggles concerning El Salvadorean culture and his own self-identification as a Canadian citizen. In addition, he became frustrated with business practices and beaurocracy in El Salvador, finding that running a business there was very different from what he was used to back in Vancouver:

> Things were really tough, and I had a huge, huge culture shock when I got back to El Salvador. I had a hard time adjusting. I was so used to the way of life here, the way business is done here, the way you deal with workers and government agencies for paper work and that kind of thing. We had a lot of problems with our drivers and we had a lot of losses, and I think it was because we were doing business in El Salvador the way we did business in Canada and it just didn't work there.

After several years, he decided to give up his struggling trucking business and to go back to school so that he could change careers. David's family wanted him to study business administration, but he realized that there were also opportunities for English teachers in El Salvador. Even though he hadn't used the language much since returning to El Salvador, he felt he had an asset because of his high level of English, and so he decided to register for a B.A. TESL program at the local university so that be could become an English language teacher. He completed the program and did well in his studies:

> After a couple of years there, things weren't looking very good for us, and I was still thinking about going back to school. Everyone in the family wanted me to go into business administration, but I always had this idea about going into education. I knew that I had an asset because I spoke English so I decided to do a BA in TESL at the university there.
>
> By this time I had been living in El Salvador for two years, and I hadn't spoken any English the whole time I had been there. I knew I had lost some of it during that time, but it was something that I could still do well. I thought that since I had learned it, I could teach other people how to learn it. I also knew that my English was going to be better than most of the other students in the program, so it would be easy. Looking back, I remember that my English was even better than most of the professors', because they had never lived in an English-speaking country. So I had a huge advantage and sure enough, I finished the program and I did very well.

Beginning Language Teaching in El Salvador

After completing his program, David got hired at an American school as an English language teacher, and he recalls that the school's mandatory in-house teacher training program was very useful to him as a beginning teacher. He taught at the school for a few months and then was hired at the university where he had studied. He later taught at another university in El Salvador, but eventually decided to move back to Vancouver to raise his family and to pursue a graduate degree in TESL at the university here.

The Present Context and Looking Forward

Since returning to Vancouver two years ago, David has completed a TESOL in-service teaching program at a local community college, and has just completed his M.Ed. program in TESL. His academic areas of interest include language loss and maintenance, but he is also interested in on-line language learning and discussion, and would like to start a doctoral program in a year or so.

David was recently hired to teach an integrated language and culture program at the university where he studied here, and while he doesn't rule out a professional career in academics, he would be happy to continue working as an English language teacher. He expects to live in Vancouver for the next few years, but can also see himself living and working in Southeast Asia at some point.

8.3 Interpretation and Discussion

8.3.1 David's Reflections on Language Learning: Survival

Survival was the major theme that emerged from David's story as an English language learner. At an early age, David came to see education and learning as a way to get away from farming life in the rural countryside where he was born, and he came to the United States as a young adult to escape the war in El Salvador. After arriving in Los Angeles, he started learning English because he needed the language to continue his studies and to get a job.

Other than some initial English language classes, most of David's early language studies appear to have taken place while he was on the job as a teaching assistant in the college P.E. department. In reflecting on his two years in Los Angeles, he recalls that he was committed to learning because he had a clear goal for learning the language – employment – and he added that he also enjoyed learning the language this way:

> I have to say that learning English was a really great experience for me. It was something I enjoyed and really had fun with. Looking back, I don't think it was hard. It was interesting. It was fun. It was a challenge too, but not hard, not difficult, just --a goal – something that I knew I had to do, and I set out to do it. It was a little bit difficult at first because there was so much new vocabulary and it was difficult to use it and to put it into practice at first, but after working at it for a few months it started to come together for me. But I think the important thing was that I was really committed to learning -I had to because I needed the language to get a job and I wanted to do that, and I was totally committed to learning. I also wanted to go to school and to do well in school and that's how I was able to learn what I learned.

The theme of survival also appeared in David's reflections on his early observations of the Hispanic community where he was living in Los Angeles. He recalls that many people in the community hadn't developed English language skills despite having lived in the country for many years, and he remembers wanting to distance himself from his Hispanic heritage so that he could learn English and integrate into American culture:

> One of the major obstacles I observed with a lot of the other Spanish-speaking people I knew was that everyone lived in Spanish-speaking enclaves and didn't leave those communities. I had a cousin who had lived in L.A. for fifteen years, and after four months in the States I was asked to act as her interpreter. She had always stayed within the Spanish-speaking community and comfort zone, and had never learned more than a few phrases in English. I think that was a major obstacle for a lot of people. Somehow, I guess I had more opportunities than a lot of them, but I also took advantage of these opportunities I think. And I really looked up to people from El Salvador or Mexico and who had learned the language. I really looked up to them and tried to emulate them. But I remember I also really wanted to integrate, and I really didn't want to be Hispanic or El Salvadorean because there was a lot of discrimination at that time. So learning English and learning the American culture and the American way was a way of avoiding discrimination and belonging, and being part of the mainstream American culture.

After arriving as an immigrant to Canada, the theme of survival seems to shift to focus on supporting his new family as he operated his trucking business in Vancouver. During his ten years in Vancouver, David's self-identification became increasingly Canadian, and he recalls he became critical of other Hispanic immigrants in Vancouver who hadn't done the same:

> By this time I think I had become totally acculturated here; not only acculturated, but almost assimilated into the culture here. I didn't really see myself as a Latin or Hispanic person. Most of my friends were Canadian, but I had Spanish-speaking friends from El Salvador as well. I think I identified myself much more as a Canadian in terms of my values and things like that. This was my cultural identity. I criticized the ways of people who came from El Salvador because they acted and behaved differently from what the Canadian mainstream culture would expect. So I saw myself more as a Canadian than an El Salvadorean by this time, and I just couldn't buy into those other behaviors.
>
> I remember some Canadian friends of mine would tell me jokes about this, because Hispanics have a reputation for going out in big groups. You know like if you see seven or ten guys going to supermarket or to the bank to cash a cheque, and only one of them is cashing the cheque and the rest are hanging out and just standing around. I used to think to myself "What are you doing when you live here in this context, but in your mind you're still back home and you're still doing the same things the way you did them there?"

When David returned to El Salvador with his family to start a business with his brother, things didn't work out the way they expected and they were forced to abandon the venture, and he began his undergraduate studies so that he could find work as an English language teacher.

In the present context, David made a number of other observations concerning his experiences as an English language learner. First, he made reference to how learning English has influenced what he calls his "Spanish speaking self." As a boy growing up in El Salvador, he recalls that he was always quite shy, but this began to change for him when he started learning English:

> I had always been really shy as a boy because of my upbringing I guess, and because of my own personality but I think learning English really changed that for me. I remember that I found myself being able to interact freely and without anything holding me back, and starting conversations with people and taking the initiative and having conversations in a group in English. In Spanish, I always had trouble with that. My Spanish-speaking self – my real self I guess – was always pretty shy. Learning English gave me a second self that I could manipulate and use whatever way I wanted. Because after all, it wasn't my real self. So if this self made a fool out of himself, well, you know – it's wasn't...myself. And that was comforting, so I could experiment with this. It's kind of weird, kind of bizarre I guess. So when I moved to Vancouver I felt confident speaking English, and I was able to integrate that part of that self into my real self.

David also referred to his increased self-confidence in Spanish when he returned to El Salvador as an adult many years later, where he felt more sure of himself in his personal life and as he began his undergraduate studies in TESL:

> When I moved back to El Salvador, I felt a lot more confident in Spanish than I had been in the past. I found I was able to do the things and to say the things that I wanted, and that I was able to function better socially. And I attributed that to learning English, and then being able to transfer that to Spanish.
>
> When I started my B.A. program, we were required to do presentations in English and I also had to do presentations in Spanish in my Spanish courses. But while I was a nervous wreck doing presentations in Spanish, I was much more confident making them in English, because my English was as good or better than the professors'. But after some time I became aware of this, and my Spanish presentations got better.

But despite his increased self-confidence in himself as a Spanish speaker, David says he wasn't able to adjust the return to El Salvador during his time there, and he eventually left the country to return again to Vancouver and to begin his graduate studies here:

> I liked the people and being close to my family. I have a lot of friends there and the beaches and the food are great. But I have realized that the culture shock there was much more severe than what I experienced when I first moved to North America, and I was never able to adjust to that completely.

Since returning to Canada two years ago however, David says he has begun to feel more comfortable with his El Salvadorean heritage, adding that he has a developed a more

balanced cultural identity – one that acknowledges not only his history in Vancouver and his identity as a Canadian citizen but increasingly, his El Salvadorean heritage as well:

> Living in El Salvador again really shifted my cultural identity I think. Even though I decided to move back to Canada because I didn't like a lot of the things about my own culture, I believe I do have a stronger El Salvadorean identity now. I think that experience really reinforced my El Salvadorean identity and I feel like I have more of a balanced cultural identity now. I don't identify myself as primarily Canadian anymore, but more as a combination of both. That's been another change in how I see myself.
>
> One example is that prior to my move to El Salvador, I introduced myself using an Anglicized pronunciation of my name. And I think I did this because I wanted to make it easier for English speakers to understand my name because I felt it had to sound the way English speakers did, so I was *Da*vid. But after coming back to Canada, I noticed that I had unconsciously started to introduce myself using the Spanish pronunciation of my name with the stress on the last syllable, even with English speakers - Dav*id*. And so now at work, most of the people pronounce my name the way I do, using the Spanish pronunciation, and this is new for me. I think a lot of this came from my graduate studies, where we did a lot of reading about identity issues and language learning. And I guess I started thinking "Who am I trying to fool? No matter what I do, no matter what I am, I just have to be myself."

Finally, David suggested than in the present context, he no longer sees himself as an exclusive member of either community but instead, as a participant in a much larger one:

> Having learned another language has made me see myself on the world map differently. I don't see myself exclusively as a member of this particular group or country anymore but I see myself as a member of the wider context, with a global identity. Learning another language has enabled me to interact and be in contact with a larger group of people and a larger community. It has been a big influence.

8.3.2 David's Reflections on Language Teaching: Safe Spaces for Classroom-based Language Learning

In reflecting on his practice, it was the theme of safety that seemed to be at centre of David's approach as an English language teacher. He began his undergraduate program in TESL after realizing that his trucking business in El Salvador wasn't going to be as successful as the one he had operated in Vancouver. After living and learning English in

North America for twelve years, he decided to take an undergraduate degree in TESL was so that he could find employment as an English language teacher.

One of the influences that David mentioned from his training and education in language teaching was the training course that he took after his undergraduate program and before he started teaching at the American school in El Salvador. He appreciated the practical nature of the program and its emphasis on a communicative approach to language teaching. Since he had never studied grammar as an English language learner, the tips for teaching grammar that were included in the program helped to alleviate some of the anxiety he felt about beginning teaching. He also recalls that despite his excellent command of English, he was shy as a beginning teacher, and it was his teacher trainer that helped him to find self-confidence in himself as he began his new teaching job:

> I remember I put a lot of work into my lesson plans during the training course, and I was really worried about being in the classroom because I was a pretty shy person. I remember my trainer said she could sense that some us were a bit unsure about standing up in front of people and teaching. And I remember she said to us "Look at it this way: You have something that they want. Even if they are doctors and lawyers and engineers in your class – because that's the way it was in English classes there– they'll be intimidated, because you already have something that they don't have, and they want it. And so you have the advantage". And that gave me confidence and has always stayed with me. Even if I'm afraid inside, I can still pretend to be confident when I'm teaching. And that's what I did.
>
> At the end of the term, we had teacher evaluations, and mine came back pretty good. My students decided we should go out for pizza and beers, and I remember we were chatting and I remember they said to me "We've had a few teachers before this term, and we can tell when someone is really experienced and when someone really knows what he is doing. As soon as you started teaching this term, we knew you were really experienced". And little did they know that I was the one suffering the most, because I felt that I was really inexperienced. And no matter how sincere those comments were – I'll never know - I realized that no matter how you perceive yourself, the way that others perceive you can be really different.

After returning to Canada, David volunteered as an ESL teacher at a community college in Vancouver, and he remembers that his experience there was also a valuable one:

> I was a volunteer teacher at a local college here in Vancouver for a while and that experience was also very influential for me. Unlike the teaching I had done in El Salvador, there was no textbook for the program. Instead, the teacher I worked with focused on the students' needs and used materials from all kinds of different books and from authentic materials from the community as well. She used a very eclectic methodology and a very lively one, which was almost entertaining and kept the students interested and motivated. And that model and approach was also a real turning point for me.

David also spoke of his recent graduate studies in TESL, where course readings and class discussions have contributed to his understanding of language learning and teaching. He says that he is often able to see connections between what he reads in the literature and his own experiences as a second language learner:

> My graduate program was also very useful; lectures and readings and discussions and sharing ideas. So now that I'm working again, I think all of these things have shaped my teaching. I don't think I do it consciously; it's all been added to what I already brought to my teaching.
>
> Reading had also reinforced a lot of this as well. Krashen, for example, has had a big impact on my philosophy. I remember during my BA program, I read a lot of his work, and his ideas made a lot of sense to me. I'm not sure if all of them are accurate or correct or useful, but it' s a start. I remember when I read Krashen for the first time I could see a lot of what he said in my own experience as a second a language learner. A lot of this really reinforced my own personality and way of what's important in a language program.

In reflecting on his current practice in a combined English language and culture program, David noted that he strives to provide a classroom learning environment in which his students do not feel threatened, and he recognized that this aspect of his practice has a lot to do with his own experiences as language leaner:

> One thing that's always been important to me in my teaching is that people feel comfortable in my classroom. Students should not feel threatened, and you can threaten people in a lot of ways. You can intimidate people by making them feel stupid because they don't understand you, but you can also intimidate people through marking, and

> marking should never be used as an oppressive tool. Teachers need to make sure that the classroom atmosphere is friendly, fun, and non-threatening. And these are things that I always try to put into practice in my own teaching. Of course, that is what I want my classroom to be like when I'm a student.

David also observed that he has begun to depend less on teaching manuals and textbooks in his teaching, and now tries to emphasize flexibility in his classroom practice. In particular, he tries to address topics and issues that come up in his classes, and to make these spontaneous developments part of his lessons:

> I used to depend on my textbooks and lesson plans one hundred percent. Over the years however, I guess I have learned to be more flexible and not to depend on a particular textbook or lesson plan or script for the class. Instead, I try to let the class move wherever it goes naturally, and follow that flow and try to enrich it wherever it goes. I admit this is something I wouldn't have been able to do when I started teaching because I didn't have the experience, and with out that script I was lost. So I think that is a major change in my practice and it has happened gradually over the years.

Finally, as a language teacher in Canada who learned English while living in North American for a good part of his adult life, David spoke of the advice he gives to learners to help them to survive as they continue with their own language studies:

> I think that when I give advice to other people about language learning I tend to draw on my own experience rather than my experience as a teacher or my studies in TESL because it is something that I have lived and something that I continue to live every day. My advice is to love the language and the culture that you are trying to learn. I feel that if you can't do that, you can't make much progress beyond memorization. You can't learn much until you really learn to love the language and the culture and really have a strong desire to be part of that, and also to have access to that. That's the most important thing, and everything else just follows from there, because then you get creative, and then you start living it, and then everything you do helps you to achieve that goal.

8.4 Summary of the Chapter

David was 43 years of age at the time of the interview. He grew up in a large farming family in rural El Salvador, and was one of the few people from his village to complete a

high school education. He left El Salvador as a young adult to escape the war, and went to live with his sister in the United States. He started learning English in Los Angeles, where he lived and worked for two years before immigrating to Canada. David lived in Vancouver for ten years, and during that time he started a family, a successful trucking business, and became a Canadian citizen. After a decade in Vancouver, he decided to return to El Salvador with his family with the goal of starting another business like the one he had operated in Canada. The business was unsuccessful however, and so he decided to pursue an undergraduate program in TESL at the local university so that he could find work as an English teacher. After completing his studies and teaching English for several years in El Salvador, David decided to return to Vancouver again with his family so that his children could go to school here and so that he could continue his academic studies in TESL at the graduate level. He has been back now for two years, and is presently teaching in an integrated English language and culture program at the university where he completed his graduate program.

David started learning English in Los Angeles so that he could continue his education and get a job in the United States. Most of his study of English was informal, taking place during the two years he worked as a teacher's assistant in a gymnasium at a local community college. It was there that he began to study the language on his own and came to develop an active social life with the students and teachers he met in the department. Increasingly, he also came to identify with North American culture, rejecting his El Salvadorean heritage, and becoming increasingly critical of other Latin American immigrants that didn't so the same. When he returned to El Salvador however, David

found he struggled with El Salvadorean culture and his own self-identification as a Canadian citizen, and he feels he was never really able to adjust to life there after living in North America for so many years. Since returning to Vancouver two years ago however, David feels he has come to acknowledge and value his El Salvadorian heritage, and he thinks that he now has a more balanced cultural identity.

David began his academic studies in TESL when he returned to El Salvador so that he could find work as an English language teacher. He remembers feeling anxious when he first started teaching, but over time he has come to see his language learning and cross-cultural experiences as strengths that he brings to his language classroom. He feels he has been able to make some important personal connections between his academic studies in TESL and his own personal history as a language learner. In his present professional context, he tries to provide his students with a safe classroom learning environment that is fun, friendly, and non-threatening so that they can overcome obstacles and reach their own goals as second language learners.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

9.1 Emergent Themes

This study began with the aim of exploring teachers' reflections on their lives and experiences as advanced learners of other languages. Given the range of linguistic, social, cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds that the teachers brought to the research, it was hardly surprising that one of the overarching findings was the unique and personal nature of each life and story that contributed to the study (Britzman, 1986; Duff & Uchida, 1997). Having acknowledged this important finding first, five major themes did emerge relating to the questions that guided the study, each of which are presented and discussed in this chapter. The five themes were:

1. Teachers' stories of language learning were deeply embedded in their personal, social, cultural, educational, and professional histories.

2. A number of early influences and experiences in teachers' lives as children and adolescents appear to have contributed to their later adult language studies, cross-cultural encounters, and careers as language teachers.

3. As adults, teachers encountered other languages and cultures for a range of often overlapping personal, professional, and academic reasons, and their stories involved multiple educational, geographical and sociocultural contexts. All of the teachers saw their continued personal agency as the key element of their success at learning other languages, yet while they described much of this language study

as self-directed and informal, it seemed to take place at the peripheries of formal teaching and learning environments, as they pursued their academic studies and professional teaching careers. Teachers also seemed to associate enjoyment and play with language learning – not only as adolescents, but also as adult language learners, and pronunciation was often cited as an important and often problematic language skill. Family members played a central role in their stories, and other teachers were especially important, not only in their personal and professional lives, but often in their study of other languages as well.

4. All of the teachers felt that their language learning and cross-cultural experiences have been important influences on their developing sociocultural understandings and identities. They reported varying occurrences and degrees of culture shock, though all of their retrospective reflections on their lives suggested an emerging intercultural identity, characterized by an increased acceptance of difference and an awareness of the commonalities of humankind. The return to their countries and cultures of origin after living abroad for extended periods was an especially important life event, leading to a revision of teachers' subjectivities, an eventual acceptance of their first linguistic and cultural heritages, and an increased self-confidence in their abilities to adapt to future cross-cultural encounters.

5. Teachers acknowledged that their professional knowledge and practice had been informed by many influences in their personal and professional histories, yet all of them felt that language learning had been an especially important one. And

while the personal nature of each teacher's history had led to unique revisions in each teacher's practice, some common elements emerged. All of the teachers reported a revision concerning their knowledge and beliefs about their students, characterized by increased empathy and awareness of difference concerning their own approaches to language learning and those of their students. Teachers' own emphasis on personal agency seemed to inform their knowledge and beliefs about language learning, and all of them emphasized the importance of self-directedness on the part of their language students. Teachers' descriptions of their early approaches to practice often emphasized a commitment to specific pedagogical approaches and materials, often grounded in their personal histories. Yet over time, teachers came to emphasize the specific institutional contexts and constraints in which they work, and there was an increasing emphasis on flexibility, willingness, and ability to adapt their practice to the different educational contexts in which they teach.

9.2 Discussion

9.2.1 Teachers as Portfolio People

Teachers drew on a range of discourses and identities as they told their life stories, rarely referring to themselves exclusively as 'language learners,' 'language teachers,' or 'academic students.' Gee (2000) has suggested that people "see and define themselves as a flexibly rearranged portfolio of the skills, experiences, and achievements they have acquired" (p. 61), and this seemed to be the case as the teachers in this study told their stories.

Teachers not only saw and defined themselves as language learners, teachers, and students, but also as children, siblings, husbands, wives, parents, as international students and landed immigrants, and as friends and colleagues (Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000). And while some discourses and identities appeared to predominate more than others at different points in the narratives, there seemed to be more overlap than a singular dominance in any areas of their personal and professional lives. Teachers consistently referred to multiple - and often perfectly compatible (Ochs, 1993) – roles and identities as they reflected on their lives and experiences.

9.2.2 Early Influences

Teachers' stories revealed a number of influences from their early childhood and adolescent years that may have contributed to their later language studies, academic pursuits, and entry into language teaching. One example is that all of the teachers reported support and encouragement from their families during their early L1 literacy development and formal education, and most of them reported doing very well in their early academic studies.

Many of the teachers also reported having parents and relatives who were educated and/or worked as foreign language teachers. Catherine's father was a university graduate who taught high school English and Chinese in China. Julia's mother was educated as a Czech and Russian language teacher. Anna's parents and grandfather were all highly educated university professors in Russia. In addition, Michael and Anna reported

growing up in families that used different languages or dialects at home with their families because they had parents with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Some of the teachers reported early studies of other languages as well as cross-cultural encounters as international exchange students. Michael visited Spain annually as an exchange student for seven years during his high school years. Julia studied English, French, and Spanish in school and visited the United States for two one-year periods during her final year of high school and then as part of her undergraduate program. Anna attended an English language club as a youngster, and later studied English throughout her early school years. Catherine and David on the other hand, began their second language studies primarily as adults.

9.2.3 Teachers as Adult Language Learners

9.2.3.1 Overlapping Motives and Multiple Contexts

For the teachers who had studied languages as youngsters or had traveled abroad as exchange students, their reasons for doing so seemed primarily related to their academic studies. As adults however, teachers reported a range of often overlapping personal, professional, academic, and political reasons leading to their language studies and cross-cultural encounters. Catherine, for example, had already been working as a Chinese and Mathematics teacher in the Chinese public school system for several years before beginning her English language studies. She started learning English as an adult because of changing educational opportunities in post-Cultural Revolution China, and because she thought it might lead to a better job. Years later, she eventually realized her dream of

pursuing graduate studies in Canada following a divorce, the death of her father, and the coming of age of her son. Michael on the other hand, began his study of Japanese after meeting his Japanese wife in Canada and then moving to Tokyo to work as an EFL teacher. After four years they had separated, and Michael returned to Spain for a year to study Spanish again because he had become frustrated an "fed up" with life in Tokyo. Julia had studied English for many years as a child and had traveled abroad as a young adult, and her adult study of English seems closely related to her professional goal of teaching the language. In contrast, her Spanish language studies were mostly informal, taking place first while she was taking content-based courses in Hispanic Studies in Spain, and later while she was teaching German at a university in Mexico. Anna knew from an early age that she wanted to become a university professor like her parents, and her early enjoyment of English classes led her to pursue English language and educational studies at a university in Russia and later as an international exchange undergraduate and gradate student at an American university in Alaska. David started learning English as young adult in the United States after escaping the war in El Salvador, and he started learning English in Los Angeles so that he could continue his education and get a job.

Teachers' stories of language learning as adults also involved an impressive range of educational, geographical and sociocultural contexts. Most of the teachers did not simply leave their countries of origin and then move to another country. Rather, their lives have involved living, learning, and working in several countries, often for extended periods of time. It is also worth noting that at the time of the interviews, all of the teachers were

studying and working in Canada, either as visiting international students, landed immigrants, or new Canadian citizens.

9.2.3.2 Interrelated Personal and Professional Lives

Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 2000) and Goodson (1992) have pointed to the interrelated nature of teachers' personal and professional lives, and this seemed to be the case as teachers reflected on their adult lives as language learners. As with their descriptions of their childhood and adolescent years, other family members continued to be an important part of their lives as adult language learners (Goldstein, 1996), and there was an increasing emphasis on their changing marital status and roles as parents. Teachers' adult social lives also increasing came to include other language teachers and colleagues, and like Campbell (1996) and Zou (1998), these personal and professional relationships were often an important influence on their L2 or L3 development.

Catherine's self-confidence in English for example, began to emerge as she developed personal friendships with visiting international English teachers at the Chinese universities where they worked together, and she continues to develop her English skills by networking with professors and colleagues in her present context as an academic student and teacher.

As an EFL teacher in Tokyo, Michael found that he was unable to make friends with Japanese language speakers and he socialized mostly with other foreigners. He recalls that much of his self-directed Japanese studies took place on the train while traveling to

and from his work as an English teacher, and that he practiced his Japanese with his wife at home on alternating days.

Other than some early studies in Spanish, Julia never attended formal Spanish classes, and her self-directed Spanish studies took place while living with Spanish women and taking content-based Hispanic Studies courses at a university in Spain. In Mexico, she studied Spanish while teaching German at a Mexican university.

Anna thought that studying at the university in Alaska would be a good way for her to practice her English, but she found that most of her English use during both visits was limited to her academic studies and classroom-based discussions, and the little time she had for socializing was spent with other Russian exchange students.

Ironically, David recalls he didn't find the ESL courses he was required to take at the college very helpful to him, and he learned English working as a teachers' assistant in the college's gymnasium. It was here that he made friends with other teachers and eventually developed a multicultural social network. After immigrating to Canada, he started a successful trucking business and a family, eventually returning to El Salvador with his family and brother. After a few years, he returned to Canada again because he wanted his children to go to school here and because he wanted to pursue graduate studies.

9.2.3.3 Agency

All of the teachers cited their continued personal agency (Norton Peirce 1995, Norton, 2000; Thesen, 1997) as the key factor leading to their success at learning other languages, though they often framed this construct in different and interesting ways. Catherine for example, spoke of the important role of her continuing "dedication" to learning and to improving her English. Michael observed that as an adult learner of Japanese, his language learning was much more "concrete and structured" than it had been as an adolescent Spanish language learner, and that after leaving Japan he "deliberately went to Spain as an adult to learn Spanish". Julia's top tip for language learning was to "read, read, read, write, write, write," and Anna noted that language learning "takes time and you need a lot of self-discipline". David also cited personal agency as the most important aspect of his experience as a learner of English, since he was "totally committed" to learning and "took advantage" of opportunities to learn and practice the language. In all of the stories, teachers reported a range of language learning events and practices, but learning was never seen as accidental nor incidental.

9.2.3.3 Language Play

And while all of the teachers pointed to agency as a key feature in their histories as language learners, another theme that emerged from the stories was that all of them seem to associate language learning with some type of enjoyment or play (Cook, 2000). Often, this theme came up as teachers recalled their early second language studies as children or adolescents. Anna for example, began her early English studies as member of an English language club, where she learned plays, poems, and songs in English. After beginning

school, she continued to enjoy her English language studies as part of her formal education:

> I really liked English and it was one of my favorite subjects. I remember our English class was fun and our teacher was excellent. I think that she played a very important role in my positive attitude toward the language. Everybody respected her, and for me it seemed that she spoke the language perfectly. The classroom was really nice too. It was different from the other classrooms somehow; there were posters on the wall and it was visually appealing to me. I was one of the best students and the teacher liked me and it was fun. English was always associated with some kind of play or songs, but it wasn't so deep you know - it wasn't anything serious.

Like Anna, Julia also enjoyed stories, translation, and grammar activities while studying English as a girl in Germany:

> I enjoyed all of the languages I studied in school, and I did well in my courses. The method I remember for learning English at the time was you read a little story - I remember animal stories - and you had to read the story and then answer questions to show you understood the story and then we'd fill in gaps and do translation. It was very traditional from our point of view now, but I enjoyed it. I didn't know it was traditional. We had grammar tests as well, and I liked those. I always did like the grammar.

Yet play and enjoyment also came up regularly as teachers reflected on their self-directed experiences as adult second language learners (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Lantolf, 1997; Lo et al., 1998; Ohta, 1998). As an adult Spanish learner in Mexico, Julia stopped using commercially-produced self-study materials because they were "boring", and her adult study of Spanish involved listening to the radio, reading newspapers and books, and making vocabulary lists. While self-directed, these activities were also a lot of fun:

> The lists worked better. I did maybe ten words a day. I would write down the Spanish and the German. It was rote learning I guess, but there was always a context. I would listen to the radio or the newspaper or literature that I was reading, and just pick out the words I wanted to learn. I knew by then that it was not a good idea to write everything down, and I would go through them every day and remember them by the context and check off the ones I knew. And that helped because I recognized the words and the grammar by remembering where they came from. And it wasn't just hard work - it was fun.

Another example can be seen in Michael's reflections on studying Japanese, where a good part of his language study involved making up stories on the train while going to and from his job as an EFL teacher in Tokyo:

> I had a particular methodology for learning vocabulary which involved making up and having stories and using them to relate to different parts of the word. I remember there was this kind of Japanese restaurant that sells bar food called an *izakaya*. This was a new word for me, so to remember it I broke it down into "it sounds a bit like this..." and then I broke it down into smaller Japanese words. I mean, etymologically this is gibberish, but iza sounds a bit like *hiza* which is Japanese for "knee" and *kai* as in "meeting" and *ya* is a "shop" so *izakaya* sounds a bit like *hiza, kai,* and *ya*. And that would be a "knee-meeting shop", where everybody's sitting around the table and their knees are having a meeting under the table. And that's the story I would use as a memory technique when I needed to remember that word. I used this technique a lot to remember new words particularly at the beginning, when there was so much new Japanese vocabulary and it was all so strange-sounding to me. The stranger the story was, the easier it was to remember the word.

For Catherine, the lack of foreign language study materials in post-Cultural Revolution China meant that she needed to seek out alternate materials and methods for studying English so that she could pass the entrance examination and begin her undergraduate program. With the help of her family, she began listening to an English language radio program for several hours each day, and her enjoyment of tuning in to the program several times each week led her to continue this activity during her four years as an undergraduate student. In the present context, she continues to enjoy studying at home using her computer to improve her English skills.

David also remembers that an important part of his experience as an adult English language learner while working at the college gymnasium in Los Angeles was playing with the language he was learning:

> I used to pay attention to everyone around me. I would listen to how native speakers spoke – how they said things in chunks, and the phrases they used when they spoke. That was one of my most important techniques I think; paying attention to chunks - you know, all those pre-fabricated chunks that native speakers use all the time like "You gotta be kidding" – stuff like that, and little phrases that people use all the time or cliches. Anything I heard on the bus or on the street or at work or at school or wherever - I would just pick them up and repeat them over and over in my mind and verbalize them over and over again. Even if I didn't know what they meant, I thought "Well, I'll figure that out later. I'll ask my sister or I'll just make a list."
>
> I had some other strategies too, like listening to music. We didn't really have a stereo at home, but I had a niece that had a little plastic record player for kids. It was pink with flowers. I had some records that I would play on her turntable and listen to them and read the lyrics and follow along, and I remember I could tell that it was really helping me. I also remember that my niece had little stories on records that came with her record player and a book, and I listened to them. She had a lot of them, and there was a story and a record for each one. I learned those stories and those songs by heart, and I still know them today, like "There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly". I would just listen to the words and repeat them and that was my methodology.

9.2.3.4 Pronunciation

Many of the teachers pointed to pronunciation as an important – and often the most difficult - aspect of learning another language, and this language skill seemed to be connected to issues of self-confidence and identity (Morgan, 1997; Mawhinney & Xu, 1997). Catherine's struggle with self-doubt concerning her English skills have focused on her speaking and pronunciation skills, and while she seems to be making progress, she still feels that she still needs to improve her skills in these two areas:

> I think the biggest obstacle I have faced in learning English is that I don't have a lot of confidence in my language ability, especially my pronunciation. Pronunciation was never a part of my independent language learning or the formal classes I have taken, and I still have an accent that I try to reduce. I don't feel I am a successful language learner – I don't think that way. Maybe other people feel that I am, but compared to my struggle, I don't think that I am.

Julia also pointed to pronunciation as the most difficult skill for her as an English language learner. Even though she had studied English for many years in school before traveling to the United States, her studies had focused on British English. She not only

struggled with the linguistic and cultural differences that she found as an exchange student in the American Midwest, but much of this struggle seems connected to her feelings about her German accent in English:

> I've never had trouble with the English language itself - I've always liked to learn it, and I've always loved English literature, even more than German. Having said that, I suppose pronunciation has probably been the most difficult, because sometimes there are sounds I don't like, you know? I have also found that sometimes my tongue gets kind of mixed up in my mouth. Speaking English has been difficult at times – during my first visit to the States in particular. The first time I went to States I was seventeen or eighteen. As soon as I got there though, I realized that the English they spoke there was very different from the language I had been studying for nine years in Germany. I had learned British English, and of course the English I heard in the States was quite different.
>
> I think I had a certain resistance against really learning the language during my first visit there. I mean, I think my language skills improved, but I remember thinking at the end of that year that my English wasn't as good as it could have been, and that I still had a very strong German accent. But I also remember realizing that I didn't really want to integrate there, and I became aware that that might have been one of the reasons my English didn't improve so much.

Michael on the other hand, believes that his pronunciation in Spanish was always very good because he starting learning Spanish at an early age in Spain, and this made it easier for him to practice the language and to improve:

> Something else I came to see as very important is pronunciation – something which I believe is really undervalued in language teaching and learning. I remember when I was studying Spanish I could understand the teachers but I couldn't understand most of the other students. It was easier with the other native English speakers, because I knew that they were making the mistakes that English speakers often do, but I just didn't understand what the other students were talking about because of their accents. I think that from very early on, my Spanish accent was good because I learned it living in Spain and as a teenager I found that if you have good pronunciation, people accept you a lot faster because they think your language skills are better than what they actually are. People are more willing to accept you if you have a good accent, and they are much more interested in talking to you.

David in particular highlighted an important relationship between his pronunciation in English and his own shifting identities as a Hispanic Canadian after returning to Canada from El Salvador:

> But after coming back to Canada, I noticed that I had unconsciously started to introduce myself using the Spanish pronunciation of my name with the stress on the last syllable, even with English speakers - Dav*id*. And so now at work, most of the people pronounce my name the way I do, using the Spanish pronunciation, and this is new for me. I think a lot of this came from my graduate studies, where we did a lot of reading about identity issues and language learning. And I guess I started thinking "Who am I trying to fool? No matter what I do, no matter what I am, I just have to be myself."

9.2.4 Identities in Movement

9.2.4.1 Culture Shock?

One of the major themes from teachers' stories was the nature of their changing sociocultural understandings and identities over the course of their histories as language learners. Many of the teachers referred to 'culture shock' as an element of their cross-cultural experiences, either as adolescents or as adults. However this was not always the case, and much like the teachers in Jackson's (2000) study, their descriptions and reactions to this phenomenon varied considerably. Catherine for example, made no mention of cross-cultural struggles related to her experience as a new immigrant in Canada. Indeed, she feels that the people she has met during her two years here have been helpful and supportive to her and her son's new life here. Similarly, Michael didn't seem to have any trouble with the culture in which he found himself as an adolescent exchange student in Spain, nor when he returned to Spain as an adult. In Japan however, he struggled with Japanese culture significantly. His attempts at making friends with Japanese speakers were unsuccessful, and he eventually left the country feeling frustrated and "fed up". Julia struggled more with American culture during her early visits to the United States than she did with the English language, but she recalls that she loved Mexico from the moment she first arrived there and she continues to have strong positive emotional ties to the country in her present context. Anna was initially surprised by the

differences she observed between Russian and American cultures while studying in Alaska, but she soon felt comfortable there, and has concluded that "culture shock is an exaggeration." David on the other hand, saw learning English in the United States as a way of distancing himself from his El Salvadorean identity so that he could access the English language and American culture. After immigrating to Canada and becoming "totally acculturated" here, he became increasingly critical of other Latin American immigrants who didn't do the same.

9.2.4.2 Evolving Intercultural Identities and Understandings

And while the cross-cultural contexts and events from teachers' stories were unique, their reflections on their lives suggested an evolving intercultural identity over the course of their lives, characterized by a sense of shared belonging to a larger community, an increased acceptance of difference, and an awareness of the commonalities of humankind. This intercultural identity seems to be related to Norton's (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) 'multicultural citizen' and reminiscent of Kramsch's (1993) 'third space', since over time, none of the teachers saw themselves as exclusive members of any of the cultures in which they have lived, but rather as Catherine had suggested, as 'belonging to the world'. In many ways, Catherine's own emerging self-confidence as an English language user can be seen in her growing sense of confidence as a contributing member to a larger global community:

> I don't think my personality has changed much by learning another language, except that I am a more open person. I am more open to different people and cultures and different perspectives. As a newcomer I learned that everybody makes different contributions to this world. Maybe I am not important in other people's eyes, but I have made some contributions too. So if I see myself in this way, I have to see others in the same way as well.

> I am a landed immigrant here and I plan to apply for Canadian citizenship when I can. But I see myself as an international citizen - I belong to the world. And I want to do good for the world. I think that living here in Vancouver has influenced my plans for the future. I know what I can do and what I am interested in learning and what I need to learn to reach my goals.

Michael made reference to his experience as a British English language speaker who has not only learned two other languages while living abroad, but who has also lived in Canada for many years. He also believes that his cross-cultural and language learning experiences have given him a better understanding of himself and others:

> Culturally, I think I am a Generation X Canadian, even though I am not originally from Canada. But I'm also someone who has lived in the U.K. and Japan and Spain and speaks different languages, and all of this is important to my self-identification. I think that living in different cultures has led me to have a better understanding of people, and that I can see things from somebody else's point of view and understand better where they're coming from. Before, I didn't do that. Basically, I thought from my own perspective, and I didn't have the insight into other peoples' backgrounds or understand why they did the things they were doing or why they behaved they way they did.
>
> But I also see certain things tend to be quite universal, like what people are interested in in life - they're interested in certain basic things they need, like having enough money to live on and they're interested in having a family. I think it's because I've seen the same sorts of things in different contexts but with just different weights on them, and how important they are in your life is just different. Like in Japan, the most important thing is to have financial security and if you understand that's where they're coming from, then you see why they do a lot of things they do. People in Japan for example, don't quit their jobs and go to Spain to learn Spanish.

Julia's reflections on learning two additional languages and living in five countries for a good part of her adult life also pointed to a revision of how she has come to understand herself and others:

> I think language learning teaches you to put everything much more into a perspective; everything becomes much more relative and you don't believe in absolute truths anymore. Probably as you learn languages and you move between different cultures you realize that every person is made up and defined by their experiences. I mean, I cannot believe anymore - as I may have at one time - that you have a self that develops in some pre-determined way no matter what. This is not true. And I've experienced it myself - everything that you live and with which you communicate changes you, so I see myself very much defined by all this. But it's also different for each individual person.

Anna has come to emphasize personal relations over cultural heritage, and her emphasis on people over places has been accompanied by an increased self-assurance of her own cross-cultural abilities:

> As an English language learner and exchange student in Alaska, I found there were a lot of things about American culture that were very different from what I was used to in Russia, but it wasn't really a problem for me. I had seen foreigners and Americans at the university in Russia and you could tell they were foreigners as soon as you saw them by their appearance. I think it was mostly their clothing that identified them as foreigners but also the fact that they smiled more and their behavior seemed a lot more relaxed. I found this was true when I lived in Alaska, so there were no real surprises for me there.
>
> As I said, I think the things they say about culture shock are an exaggeration – I've never had a problem with that. I don't know – maybe I'm just lucky. Now I'm more used to the way things are here in North America, and I feel that I can live anyplace and I can adjust to anything. For me it is not the place that is so important, but the people; the most important thing is human relations, no matter what culture someone is from.

David in particular spoke at length about his own changing sociocultural identities as an English language learner in the United States and Canada:

> I had always been really shy as a boy because of my upbringing I guess, and because of my own personality but I think learning English really changed that for me. I remember that I found myself being able to interact freely and without anything holding me back, and starting conversations with people and taking the initiative and having conversations in a group in English. In Spanish, I always had trouble with that. My Spanish-speaking self – my real self I guess – was always pretty shy. Learning English gave me a second self that I could manipulate and use whatever way I wanted. Because after all, it wasn't my real self. So if this self made a fool out of himself, well, you know – it's wasn't...myself. And that was comforting, so I could experiment with this. It's kind of weird, kind of bizarre I guess. So when I moved to Vancouver I felt confident speaking English, and I was able to integrate that part of that self into my real self.
>
> Having learned another language has made me see myself on the world map differently. I don't see myself exclusively as a member of this particular group or country anymore but I see myself as a member of the wider context, with a global identity. Learning another language has enabled me to interact and be in contact with a larger group of people and a larger community. It has been a big influence. I have dual citizenship – Canadian and El Salvadorean and I am very proud of my Canadian citizenship. I decided to make Canada my home and I decided to become a Canadian citizen and it is still very important to me.

9.2.4.3 Re-entry

Another theme relating teachers' evolving sociocultural identities and understandings was the experience of returning to their countries of origin after living in other cultures for extended periods of time. Much like Kimoko (Uchida, 1995; Duff & Uchida, 1997), three of the teachers - Michael, Julia, and David – reported that the most difficult 'culture shock' for them was not living in different cultures, but instead returning to their countries and cultures of origin (Kanno, 2002; Storti, 1997), and all three reported that *re-entry* has resulted in a deeper appreciation of their first cultures and a more balanced cultural identity. For Michael, this involved returning to England after living in Canada for several years:

> The worst culture shock I have ever had was when I went back to the U.K. after living in Canada for a year. I was expecting Canada to be different when I went there, but when I went back to the U.K I wasn't prepared for the fact that things were going to be so different. You know - you're going to what you think is home and then you get there and then no, this isn't home - this is a strange foreign country. I really hated it there at first and I got used to it as time went on but I really wanted to go back to Canada. Since then I've been back a few times for holidays and that kind of thing and it's really a foreign country to me.
>
> For a long time I never wanted to go back to the UK because I didn't see any future there, but that's changed for me. I think there are a lot of opportunities there related to my work and I'm actually thinking that I might go back to live there at some point, although I haven't yet decided to do that. I could probably live in just about any developed country and adapt.

Julia also noted the difficulties she experienced when she returned to Germany after her first visit to United States, and again after living in Mexico for five years. Over time however, she has found that she has developed a deeper appreciation of Germany, and now feels more at ease with her German identity:

> Going back to Germany after that first visit was difficult. Even though I didn't feel all that great in the States because there were things there that I did not like very much and

> just couldn't accept, I found there were lots of things that I had actually adopted from the U.S. way of life when I came back to Germany; a more pragmatic view of life and things like that. And I couldn't really explain that to the people in Germany. I tried to do this, but they were not particularly interested, I found. I think that's pretty common – you know you go away and people ask you what it was like but they don't really want to know about the experience and they don't really want to know what happened to you. You know you talk for five minutes and then they don't want to hear much more for whatever reasons. That was frustrating, because I couldn't really talk about the experience and really integrate it or adjust to being back in Germany again.
>
> I went abroad to get away from what I felt were narrow ways of thinking. You have a number of things you have to carry around with you when you're German and it makes it difficult to identify with being German in the first place and I think that's why so many Germans go abroad. But over the years my relationship with Germany has become better. As I said before, I went back again after my first five years in Mexico and that was very difficult. I just didn't like Germany any more. I liked the Mexican culture so much better, because they were warmer and friendlier and all that – you know. But now I know as I grow older, I have kind of re-discovered Germany and the good sides, so now I don't have some of the hang –ups that I was maybe brought up with as a German.

David provided a rich description of his rejection of his El Salvadorean identity while living in the United States and later in Canada. Eventually however, he returned to El Salvador with the family he had started in Canada, but feels he was never able to fully readjust during his time there. After completing a university degree in TESL and working as an English teacher there, he eventually returned to Canada. In the present context, he has come to value his El Salvadorean heritage, and now sees himself a person with a more balanced cultural identity:

> Living in El Salvador again really shifted my cultural identity I think. Even though I decided to move back to Canada because I didn't like a lot of the things about my own culture, I believe I do have a stronger El Salvadorean identity now. I think that experience really reinforced my El Salvadorean identity and I feel like I have more of a balanced cultural identity now. I don't identify myself as primarily Canadian anymore, but more as a combination of both.
>
> Most likely, this is my home now, but this has changed both ways. During the eighties and the early nineties, I thought that this was my home for the rest of my life. And then I decided I wanted to try El Salvador. Some things changed, I started to feel at home there, but some things were not the way I wanted them to be so I came back here and I think that has reinforced my commitment to make this my home, although living there again

> was a valuable experience. I usually show my Canadian Passport when I travel but I make it clear that I live in Canada but am originally from El Salvador.

9.2.5 Teachers' Reflections on Practice

9.2.5.1 Teachers' Professional Histories

Freeman and Johnson (1998) have suggested that language teachers bring with them a range of prior experiences and resources that shape their professional lives, knowledge and practice, and this was certainly the case in this study. As mentioned, all of the teachers reported success in their early academic studies, and many had traveled abroad as adolescents before continuing their language studies as adults. All of the teachers cited their experiences as language learners as an important motive for their decision to pursue education and employment in language teaching (Bailey et al., 1996; Johnson, 1996), and all of them had completed an undergraduate degree or a language teaching certificate before entering teaching.

One of the most striking aspects of teachers' professional histories – as in their personal ones - was the vast range of contexts that emerged as they talked about their lives in language teaching. Several reported studies and employment in areas other than language teaching (Porter, 1990; Johnston, 1997) and many have moved from teaching one language to another. They have worked teaching children and adults, in informal as well as academic teaching and learning environments, and they have taught a range of language skill-specific courses in at least two countries, but as many as five over the course of their careers. Most added that they anticipate working in even different language teaching and academic contexts as they look forward in their careers.

The teachers all seemed to feel that learning other languages has been an important influence on their developing professional knowledge and practice, though not the only one – teachers also cited their education and training in language teaching, their mentors, trainers, professors, and colleagues as important influences as well. Most didn't find their undergraduate programs particularly helpful to them, though pre-service training courses or programs were seen as an important part of their preparation for language teaching. All of the teachers reported that reading and their graduate studies here in Canada have been especially helpful to them in their developing professional knowledge and practice.

9.2.5.2 Personal Histories, Personal Practices

As mentioned, the teachers in this study acknowledged that their professional knowledge and practice have been informed by a range of personal and professional influences, and their stories point to the unique nature of each teacher's life. However, unique themes did emerge in each of the narratives, suggesting how each individual teacher's practice seems to have been informed through language learning.

Catherine's own struggles with self-confidence as an English language learner appear to be related to the shift of her classroom role from "boss" to "helper' and her conviction that the most important thing language teachers can do is to encourage their students to develop self-confidence in themselves as language learners.

Michael on the other hand, found that as an adult his study of Japanese as an EFL teacher in Tokyo was much more "concrete and structured" than his "naturalistic" experiences learning Spanish as an adolescent in Spain. Over time, his practice came to emphasize

"focused study" and "real conversations about language" over "artificial" communicative fluency activities.

As an English and Spanish learner, Julia's love for literature and grammar activities can be seen in her emphasis on supplementary learning materials to keep classroom-based learning fun and interesting, as well as in her struggles with students who only take her language classes for academic credit.

Anna's own success as an academic English language learner seems to have led to her belief that there is a place for discipline in academic language teaching, since that was how she was taught and also how she has learned.

David's experience with learning English after escaping the war in El Salvador seems to have led to his emphasis as a teacher on providing his students with a safe classroom learning environment.

9.2.5.3 Knowledge and Beliefs about Students

Yet a number of common themes also emerged from teachers' stories in terms of how they believe language learning has informed their practice. One of these seems to concern how teachers understand and relate to their students. They spoke at length about their students, and how their own histories as language learners have led to a deep respect and empathy that they feel for their students as fellow language learners. In reflecting on her current teaching assignment, Catherine pointed to the knowledge she holds about her

students and of the challenges that that face as language learners studying English in Canada:

> I think that I know the kinds of problems that students have when they are learning another language and a lot of this comes from my own experience. They feel frustrated and anxious. They stay up all night studying and making progress takes time and it can be frustrating. And when I see this in my students I feel that I have to help them with these sorts of things. A lot of this is very familiar to me because I have experienced it myself as a language learner and newcomer.

Yet teachers' empathy for their students was also accompanied by regular reference to an awareness of difference concerning their own approaches and preferences toward language learning and those of their students, and the emphasis on difference also seems to be related to their own histories and self-conceptions as language learners. Julia pointed to this shift in her knowledge about her students over the years:

> One of the things I've learned over the years is that learners are very different. They're not all like me and at the beginning I think I kind of assumed that people learned the same way I did. You also need to adapt to different types of learners because everybody is different, and you need to vary the materials so everybody gets something out of it.

Anna also spoke of the respect, and of the importance she has come to give to making personal connections with her students. Over time, she has come to see her students as 'agents' who can make an important contribution to her classes:

> I think my perceptions of my students have changed a lot since I started teaching. I think that now I realize that they are all individuals who can make a whole lot of difference in the classroom. They are "agents" as it is now fashionable to say. This has come from my reading in my university courses and from my own personal experience. Personal communication with students is also very important in teaching, and when you make personal connections with students you start to see how special and unique each person is. Students need and deserve to be listened to and respected, and treated as a person with a valuable contribution to make.

David's empathy for his students and his emphasis on classroom safety seem to guide his practice, not only in terms of physical dangers, but also regarding his own classroom behaviors and the potential of his approach to assessment to intimidate his students:

> One thing that's always been important to me in my teaching is that people feel comfortable in my classroom. Students should not feel threatened, and you can threaten people in a lot of ways. You can intimidate people by making them feel stupid because they don't understand you, but you can also intimidate people through marking, and marking should never be used as an oppressive tool. Teachers need to make sure that the classroom atmosphere is friendly, fun, and non-threatening. And these are things that I always try to put into practice in my own teaching. Of course, that is what I want my classroom to be like when I'm a student.

9.2.5.4 The Importance of Self-Directedness

Another influence from teachers' histories as language learners seems to be related to their knowledge about the nature of language learning. All of the teachers noted that the key to their success at learning other languages has been their continued personal agency as language learners, and this seems to have influenced their emphasis on the importance of self-directedness on the part of their language students. As a 'dedicated' language learner, Catherine has come to believe that language learning requires encouragement and self-confidence, but also a concentrated effort on the part of the learner:

> My advice for someone who wants to learn another language is to study the language systematically. Study the basic four skills. There are different strategies and approaches to learning because people are different, but you have to dedicate yourself to learning because that is how you learn. Students who are unsuccessful are usually unsuccessful because they don't have the motivation. I think the first thing is that you need to have an interest in learning and then you need to build confidence.

Michael also emphasized the importance of self-directedness as students at different levels of language study, and much of this seems to come from his own self-directed language learning and "focused" studies:

> I think that there needs to be a balance between real language use and focused study in language learning and teaching. At the beginner level focused study is especially important, because you need to learn some basic vocabulary and grammar and develop skills in language learning. After someone's at a high-beginner to intermediate level, I don't see a lot of use in a language classroom. You know, once you're at the point where you can communicate, then you need to get out there make some friends. Of course the problem is that you have to be in the right social situation where people are going to accommodate you to do that, and I think most people don't find that. Even if you do, you still need some accuracy training because you're not learning from your mistakes and nobody's correcting you because they can understand you.
>
> I also think focused study is important to get from an intermediate to an advanced level, because a lot of people get to that level where you can communicate, but they just stay there. Maybe some people can, but that's been the case for me and for a lot of others I know. At that point, your communication is really clear and the grammar might even be okay, but you're not moving forward with the language. The best way to get to a really advanced level is that deliberate choice, and the best way to do it is through focused study.

As an adult leaner of Spanish, most of Julia's language study was self-directed, and she noted that while classroom instruction can play an important role in language learning, language learners need to take control of their language study:

> I think the best way to learn another language is to read, read, read, listen, listen, listen, and speak, speak, speak. Obviously, it depends on whether it's a foreign or second language situation. But you certainly don't have to do it in a classroom – I mean, I learned Spanish without any language classes at all. But learning a foreign language in a country where it is not spoken, a language class is of course necessary, and speeds up learning.

In reflecting on her dilemma with whether to be "strict" or "permissive" as a language teacher, Anna seems to make reference to her own self-directed language studies over the years, and that a good deal of her learning of English has come about because of her own efforts:

> The real dilemma for me is to be strict or to be permissive. I think I'm more likely to be permissive and to give people a chance, but in fact in the back of my mind, I sometimes think it's better to be strict and demanding. I guess it's human nature that you will not learn unless you have discipline. I also realize that this is how I was taught, and that my

> teachers were very strict and that I learned a lot from them. So I think that my top tip for language teachers is to be respectful and to be strict at the same time.

David's emphasis of self-directedness seems to be closely related to his own desire as a language learner to gain access to North American culture, and that his personal goals of cultural integration and employment were an important influence on his own self-directed language studies:

> I think that when I give advice to other people about language learning I tend to draw on my own experience rather than my experience as a teacher or my studies in TESL because it is something that I have lived and something that I continue to live every day. My advice is to love the language and the culture that you are trying to learn. I feel that if you can't do that, you can't make much progress beyond memorization. You can't learn much until you really learn to love the language and the culture and really have a strong desire to be part of that, and also to have access to that. That's the most important thing, and everything else just follows from there, because then you get creative, and then you start living it, and then everything you do helps you to achieve that goal.

9.2.5.5 Navigating Institutional Contexts and Constraints

Teachers' reflections on their practice also included regular reference to the influence of where they work on what they do in the classroom. Most of the teachers are presently teaching language in an academic context, and while issues concerning institutional constraints and control (Duff & Uchida, 1997) were recurring themes throughout the stories, there also seemed to be an increasing emphasis on diversity concerning their approach to language teaching. Often, teachers' reflections on their practice as beginning language teachers emphasized a commitment to specific pedagogical approaches and materials for language teaching, usually grounded in their personal experience as language learners. Over time however, their evolving knowledge, self-confidence, and emphasis on context and students seem to have moved them toward emphasizing flexibility to their approach to teaching.

In the present context, none of the teachers referred to language teaching in terms of exclusive pedagogies, approaches or materials – instead, they seemed to emphasize variety, flexibility, and an increasing willingness and ability to adapt these pedagogical tools to the unique and often vastly different teaching contexts in which they work. And while this shift in perspective has no doubt been influenced by their classroom and institutional experiences as teachers, these professional revisions concerning their knowledge and practice seem to echo the personal revisions they have observed in themselves as learners of other languages.

CHAPTER TEN: IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

10.1 Implications of the Study

The main implications of this study concern the possibilities of narrative research and pedagogy in the training and education of language teachers. Certainly, a reflective approach (Schön, 1987) to language teacher education can be useful for beginning and practicing teachers to examine their prior experiences, knowledge and assumptions regarding practice, and can be seen in many of the recent publications to assist in the training of language teachers (e.g. Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Gebhard, 1996; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999). However, as first-person narratives authored by practicing teachers begin to appear in the literature, there is perhaps a danger that these stories will not be shared with the people to whom they might be most useful – other language teachers (Crookes, 1998). The reading and interpreting of 'lessons learned' by experienced teachers might make a useful contribution to the continuing education of language teachers.

Many of the teachers in this study found their initial training programs helpful to them because of the practical nature of learning about various approaches, methods, and materials in the teaching of languages. At the same time, they also made regular reference to how the institutional contexts in which they later worked were important influences on their evolving understanding and use of these pedagogical tools. Stories such as these might be helpful points of reference for student teachers in their study of methodology in language teaching, since the 'realities' of teaching and the role of context emerged as a significant element of experienced teachers' evolving pedagogical knowledge and

practice (Jackson, 2000). In addition, first-person narratives authored by language learners from a range of backgrounds might be helpful supplements to student teachers' studies of more traditional theory and research in the area of second language acquisition.

Teachers also made regular reference to the sociocultural aspects of language teaching, and to their interpretations of these influences on their personal and professional lives. Retrospective accounts by teachers of living, working, and learning other languages while teaching abroad might be particularly helpful in TESOL, where a good deal of teachers end up working after they complete their training (Govardhan et al, 1999).

10.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Given the small number of participants in this study, one suggestion for future research in this area would be more narrative studies with teachers who have learned other languages. Future studies might include other participant profiles (e.g. other than the languages and cultures represented in this study), as well participants who share similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds and have learned the same language.

Another direction for future research could be longitudinal studies of cross-cultural encounters and language learning by language teachers, similar to Duff and Uchida's (1997) study of EFL teachers in Japan and Kanno's (2002) study of Japanese students who lived in Canada and then returned to Japan. This approach might provide some interesting insights into how teachers' lives and understandings are shaped over time as

they complete their training programs and then travel abroad to live, teach, and learn other languages.

Finally, research seems to be suggesting that over time, many language learners come to develop an intercultural identity, yet little is known about nature of this 'third space' (Kramsch, 1993) nor of the meaning that advanced learners of other languages might give to 'multicultural' citizenships (Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2000). This is a significant research agenda for both SLA and language teacher researchers.

Recently, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) called for a legitimacy of first-person narratives as data in second language acquisition research, suggesting the metaphor of *participation* to complement the existing metaphor of language *acquisition*. The authors do not argue that personal narratives should replace observational/experimental research, but rather that "stories can bring to the surface aspects of human activity, including SLA, that cannot be captured in the more traditional approach to research". (p. 158).

I would like to conclude this study by suggesting that the metaphor of participation might be equally useful in guiding future narrative studies concerning the lives of language teachers. As the knowledge base of language teacher education moves from describing the discrete behaviors and skills of 'expert' teachers to attempting to understand what language teachers actually know, how this knowledge shapes what they do, and what the natural course of their professional development is over time (Freeman & Johnson 1998, p. 398), perhaps language teachers and their stories can make a contribution.

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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Please note that the following questions are intended as suggestions. Feel free to address as many or as few questions as you like. The goal is to compose a language learning/teaching narrative that would help to better understand language learning and teaching from the perspective of experienced language learner/teachers.

Pre-Departure

1. How would you describe the education and literate/cultural activities of your family when you were growing up?
2. What role did your L1 and other languages play in your family, social, and/or educational lives during this time?
3. Did you travel much (internationally or otherwise) before you went abroad?
4. What were your motives for going abroad?
5. Did you have any preconceptions about language learning before you actually started learning your L2? About the country or people where you were going?

The Language Learning Life Story

6. How did you learn your second language and what was that like?
7. What would you say were the major obstacles you faced as a language learner and as an expatriate? What would you say were the major keys to your success?
8. Do you think there have been any significant turning points and/or life events that were responsible for your success in learning another language?
9. Did your earlier preconceptions about the country and people change at all during your time abroad?

The Present Situation / Reflections on Language Learning

10. Do you think your initial beliefs and attitudes about language learning have changed at all over the years?
11. How would you compare your L1 and L2 literacies today?
12. Do you think learning a second language has influenced the use of your first language at all?
13. What is the role of your second language in your life today? Do you still use/study the language?
14. Do you think the language(s) you have learned and your experiences abroad have affected the way you perceive yourself, others and the world? How much do they define who you are, if at all? Consider:
    - Your experiences as a language learner abroad
    - Returning to your country of birth after living abroad
    - Going back to your host country
15. How would you describe your relationship with these places now?
16. Do you think learning another language and your experiences abroad have influenced your current day to day life in any way?
17. Do you think these experiences have influenced your plans for the future at all?
18. Do you have plans to learn any other languages? If so, would you do anything differently?
19. What advice would you give to learners who want to achieve advanced fluency in another language?

Language Teaching

Pre-Service Training

20. How did you get into language teaching? What were your motives for teaching abroad?
21. What kind of professional training and/or experience did you have before you started teaching and before you went abroad? How would you characterize this training and/or experience?
22. Did you have any particular orientation to language teaching before you started?
23. What about any other training or education?

The Language Teaching Life Story

24. What are your most vivid memories of your early days in the classroom as a beginning language teacher?
25. How did these experiences compare with any previous expectations you may have had?
26. What were the major challenges you faced and how did you deal with them?
27. How would you compare your early years as a language teacher to your teaching after you had been at it for a few years? Had your approach to language teaching changed at all? If so, how and why do think that was?

The Present Situation/Reflections on Language Teaching

28. Who are your students now and how do they compare to others you have had over the years?
29. What, if any, do you think have been the major **changes** in your practice over the years in terms of:
    - The teaching strategies, materials and activities you associate with successful learning and teaching?
    - The language you use, present and encourage in your classroom?
    - How you see your students?
    - How you see your role in the language classroom?
    - Physical changes in your classroom

30. How do you think these developments might be related to:
    - Your training
    - Your classroom experience as a language teacher
    - Your personal experiences as a language learner

31. Are you involved in any professional development or extracurricular activities related to your practice?
32. What ambitions and plans do you have for the future as a language teacher?
33. What are the most important things language teachers can do in their planning and in their classrooms to help language learners learn another language?

THANK YOU!