Chapter 4
Narrative Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Orientation to the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of "Other" Languages) Profession

I first heard about opportunities for native-speakers to teach in Japan from a friend who had just come back from one year of doing it. I was only a couple months away from graduating with two Bachelor's degrees that were not guaranteed to secure any fast employment (Creative Writing and the History of Science), not that I was ready to end my partying years, and my friend assured me that, aside from being a "native English speaker," no further qualifications were necessary. He described his own time there as an incredible experience. He said the work was "easy," the night-life was great, the girls were beautiful. I could not believe that schools in Japan would hire "teachers" without experience, so that evening I researched some *eikaiwa* (large, chain, Japanese conversation "schools") on the internet and ended up filling out a few online applications. The way my friend, and the websites I checked, explained it: the demand to learn English in Japan was high, "native-English speakers" spoke English, ergo: "Native-English speakers" were in high-demand for teaching positions. It seemed like a foregone conclusion and I certainly did not question it at the time.

Within days, I was contacted by a recruiter who invited me to Chicago for a two-day application/orientation process with around ten other applicants. The first day was spent eating free snacks and watching a PowerPoint presentation on appropriate behavior in Japan. The recruiter stressed professionalism in Japan, told us we would be "ambassadors of our country," and taught us that Japanese workplaces were very different, culturally, than workplaces at home. Whenever somebody asked a question about what the "teaching" part of the job actually entailed, he deferred, said it was "easy to learn," and that it only entailed very basic conversation. Likewise when someone expressed that they were nervous about living in a new country without knowing the language – he told us it was very "easy to adapt" and that there was no need to speak the language. He was far more interested in discussing appropriate workplace conduct. At the end of the day, we were each interviewed individually for about ten minutes.

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At the end of my interview, which went pleasantly enough ("What would you say is your biggest weakness?" – "Sometimes I just work too much!"), I met some of the other applicants in the lobby of the hotel for coffee. We talked about our excitement and compared stories of how our interviews had gone and where in Japan we would most like to be placed, and as the other applicants finished their interviews and came downstairs, we would invite them to join us. The last two applicants to come downstairs were both visibly shaken. One was a middle-aged woman who told us, in passing, that she had not been invited back for the second day because the company did not hire anyone over thirty-five. She did not stay to chat. The second was a South-African who spoke English as a "native language" but with an accent. He sat with us for awhile and told us that during his interview, the recruiter had plainly told him that the companies in Japan were looking for native-speakers with a very specific "look," and that he did not match the profile. He was near tears and when he stood up to leave, he told us to "enjoy your white-man's paradise."

These were the first two acts of blatant discrimination that I witnessed perpetuated from within the field of English-teaching and I had not even finished the application process. I was taken aback by the situation but I was not surprised. I had been told by the friend who had recommended the experience to me that he had been one of the few African-Americans working for the company. He had laughed about the sort of oblivious but good-natured fascination that some students had with his skin color, and how they would often ask to feel his hair. This application process, first in demanding only "native english speakers," is of course guilty of Phillipson's native-speaker fallacy (1992) and Holliday's *native-speakerism* (2005). But the rejection of these two specific applicants was *not* an example of either, because both of the rejected applicants *were* native-speakers! Rather this was a discrimination against those who did not resemble the "imagined ideal native-speaker." The school/company's were selling chats with NESs to their customers/students, so the image of the teacher was a large part of the product. Once in Japan, it was not terribly unusual to see recruitment ads specifically asking for blonde hair or blue eyes. Mizuta argues that this "strong attachment to white native speakers" is a consequence of *gaikokujin-complex* ("a sense of inferiority toward Western foreigners") (2009, p. 44) which has been discussed in Japan for decades (Tsuda, 1990; Nakajima, 1993). Mizuta also cites the President and Chief Executive of McDonald's Japan, Fujita, as saying "If we eat McDonald's hamburgers and potatoes for a thousand years, we will become taller, our skin will become white, and our hair blonde" (2009, p. 45) as an example of *gaikokujin-complex*. Seargeant likewise argues that "the advertising tactics of many commercial English schools [in Japan] rely on superficialities to attract customers (images of 'foreign' blue-eyed and blonde women or smiling, well-dressed, and handsome men). Some commercial schools literally hire non-Japanese off the streets on racial appearances alone… Such superficialities and images of the

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English learning business are confused with genuine learning activities in the classroom" (2009, p. 96).

At the time, although it did register as discrimination, it did not bother me terribly. My friend had prepared me too well. I believed that English-teaching was an international scam that I was in on, and I never expected to see fair hiring policies. I did not mind being "used" by a company so long as I could "use" them too, for the fun and adventure and freedom I imagined I would have in Japan.

4.1.1 Early Teaching Observations: Prescriptive Teaching

One year later, I was enjoying my time in Japan immensely and had decided to stay for another year. However, I was becoming increasingly frustrated with the company/school that I worked for. Since the day I had arrived, my branch had been missing a "Head Teacher," so my only training had been experience and, because our classrooms were small glass cubicles without ceilings and located very near each other (the maximum class-size was four students), I was also able to often observe other teachers and learn from them. There were rumors circulating that a Head Teacher would be appointed soon so, despite my frustrations, I was still trying to be a model employee. I had decided (idiotically in hind-sight) that performing many of the duties and roles that usually fell to Head Teachers voluntarily would eventually pay off. So I organized files, I was often picked for more difficult lessons (such as our TOEFL-English lessons, which were difficult primarily because I knew nothing whatsoever about the structure of the TOEFL exam), and I volunteered to take all the classes with students who had developmental disabilities and had been told that language-learning could prove helpful (n.b. this happened surprisingly often, and I am sure it could be helpful, but I was certainly not trained to do it) – hell, I took out the garbage and watered plants and brought coffee up for the Japanese staff, managers and receptionists. Though it was not official, the other teachers and the Japanese staff alike treated me as a Head Teacher, and though I had only been there for a year, that was currently longer than any of the other teachers had been there.

So why was I frustrated? Because the nervousness of having a new job in a strange place had worn off, the novelty of waking up in Japan was gone, and the school/company was rigidly restrictive toward its teachers. We had mandated resources (sold to the students in the lobby) and could not bring in our own materials. The lesson books included actual scripts that we were encouraged to use which often included inane or even nonsensical banter like in our lesson on "Seasons" – "**Teacher:** Do you know what seasons are? Who can name the seasons? Do you like seasons?" (and the scripts, though only included in the teacher's copy of the lesson

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book, presumptuously included replies from the students too) "**Students:** *(in unison):* Yes! We like Spring!" Visiting regional-managers or Head Teachers from other branches or administrators often judged lesson quality by our adherence to these scripts.

Moreover, I had come to Japan for fun, not to be a teacher – being a teacher just happened to be the easiest way to come to Japan. I desperately wanted to see Japan, learn Japanese, be the white guy I imagined exploring exotic lands and learning their quaint customs, but alas, I knew other "teachers" who had stayed for years and lacked even the survival-Japanese necessary to ask where the toilet was. It certainly was not necessary to know anything about Japan or teaching in Japan (nor to have any work experience whatsoever). In fact, my company/school, which was the largest of its kind at the time, and seemed to set the benchmark for the other *eikaiwa*, actually preferred for teachers to *not* understand Japanese, in order to insure that its use would be restricted in the classroom. It was a de-stimulating environment.

They also provided lodging (one of their largest sources of overall income), so we were all staying in the same apartments and rooms as each other, instead of within more Japanese neighborhoods. Recent reports on a blog about the mistreatment of teachers at my company had revealed that our rents (paid to the company rather than to the actual owners of the building) were inflated relative to the normal costs. I had also become recently aware that, though I had been paying for the company's insurance, it was worthless. I had been punched by a student in a kid's class on my left ear and was promptly unable to hear anything from it. I left the class straightaway, to the dismay of the Japanese staff, and went to see a doctor, who was baffled when I presented him my company's insurance card. I phoned the company's insurance department on the spot and was told to pay out of my pocket and that they would reimburse me later. They failed to respond to any future correspondence. The teachers at my branch later became aware that Japan had a mandatory national insurance and that by not having it, as full-time workers, we were all breaking the law unknowingly. When pressed by the government to stop selling phony insurance to their employees, the company/school fixed the problem by dropping all of their employees' hours to just beneath full-time (a neat trick accomplished by halting our payment during the ten-minute breaks we had between each lesson).

The students themselves came on their own schedules, were assigned random teachers, and were given "levels" ranking from 7 – the lowest, and defined as understanding no English – up to 2, the highest, and defined as "near-native speaker." Each student had a folder which contained their original applications to the school, their stated goals for learning English, and consisted of little more than their most recent teacher's impression of their English capabilities as indicated by 5 ranked categories: Communicative Ability, Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Listening, and a following circled number from 1 to 5. We could also see which scripted lessons they had already taken, indicated by check marks. However, because our students

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consisted of children supplementing their educations, bored housewives or English-enthusiasts, businessmen who were being forced by their companies to keep their TOEIC scores at a certain level – often awkwardly grouped together by some random system of scheduling – we would have been unable to tailor lessons to our students *even if* it had been allowed.

I knew it was not a satisfying job but until seeing alternatives and reading more about education theory in my TESOL MA program, I would not have been able to articulate why. It was the "McDonaldization" of English teaching. McDonaldization, as coined by Ritzer (1993) refers to the emulation of fast-food restaurants within other corporate domains, with the intended results of (1) efficiency, (2) calculability (i.e. quantifiable), (3) predictability (i.e. standardized), and (4) control (i.e. the teachers had none, not even in our company-owned lodging, nor did the students). Ritzer argued, however, that this over-rationalization can lead to dehumanization, deskilling, and a bland product (1993; 1998). This four-pronged approach to business greatly resembles Kincheloe's six-pronged model of positivistic knowledge-production, FIDUROD, discussed in Chapter 2, and shares the result of obfuscating subjectivities and homogenizing processes. The system likewise echoes Illich's critique of education in general by creating a model of perpetual consumption that ultimately teaches the student little aside from that they had better buy more lessons. Capping the highest student ranking at "level 2" not only set NES-identity as a goal, it insured a student could never "graduate". In 2004, the year I first moved to Japan, the Japan Times ran an article making the same comparison, "*McEnglish for the masses*," and reports "The largest eikaiwa school has a staff turnover of 70 percent a year," (ahem, this was my school they are talking about) and "teachers have a grueling schedule of eight lessons a day, with a 10-minute break between each. It's worse than a factory" and "Lessons have morphed into sleek, bite-sized delivery systems staffed by teachers who are being transformed into the pedagogic equivalent of burger flippers" (McNeill, 2004: The Japan Times,).

Much as their recruiting process played off our eager *desire* to change our lives, their advertisements to students implied a transformation into a *kokusaijin* (an international person). Mizuta's exploration of *eikaiwa* advertisements finds that they reflect "the ideology that any white English speakers (*gaikokujin*) have the ability to turn the Japanese into a *kokusaijin*" (2009, p. 47). My own company's promotional literature also relied on pseudo-science which plays equally off the discourse of the *gaikokujin-complex* (Japanese inferiority complex) and *nihonjinron* (the idea that the Japanese are uniquely special), saying: "The truth is that the English and Japanese languages exist on different wave lengths. For this reason, a normal Japanese person's brain cannot distinguish English which is on the non-Japanese wave length from noise, and thus can't catch what is spoken in English… It is important to listen repeatedly to and speak with native-speakers in order to activate the language field[1] within our brain" (Seargeant, 2009, p. 97).

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4.2 Interacting with Mayumi/Challenging the commercialization of TESOL and bringing change into practice

I was due for my one-year evaluation, and these evaluations were usually conducted by one's Head Teacher subtly observing a random lesson from the next-door glass cubicle. Outcomes of such evaluations ranged from promotions to decisions made by administrators to not sponsor the "teacher's" work visa for another year, and I had witnessed both of these outcomes take place with colleagues (and former colleagues). Because our school did not currently have a Head Teacher, a proxy from another branch, an Australian girl a couple years older than me who I had never met before, was sitting in the glass cubicle behind me, pretending to read a book while actually taking notes about *me*.

During my ten-minute unpaid break, I had checked the roster and pulled the files. My upcoming class was to have two students, both middle-aged housewives who recreationally attended classes and who I had established a good rapport with, so I was not feeling particularly nervous about my evaluator sitting on the other side of the glass (this would not have been the case if I had gotten unlucky and my class was composed of awkward teenagers, surly businessmen, or odd groupings which we would sometimes get like a fourteen-year-old girl and a fifty-year old man together). The lesson I chose to teach was about having polite arguments, introduced language like "I see your point, but did you consider…" and "Yeah, I understand what you are saying, however I feel that…" and presented vocabulary related to South American deforestation, racial segregation in the US, and other possibly contentious political situations that significantly had nothing to do with Japan (in other words, our schools did not want to encourage meaningful debate about topics our students might feel something about, the only aim was to memorize the target phrases).

However, when the bell rang, only one woman entered my classroom. The other had canceled at the last-minute (they got 25% of the cost refunded if they called in). It was Mayumi – and we had already had many lessons together, we got along very well, and she was always chatty – so even if the lesson was not as I had "planned" it (during those ten free minutes), I still was not worried about the evaluation. In fact, it seemed an incredible stroke of good luck.

Then, after saying hello and opening my teacher's copy of the lesson book, she reached across the table and shut it on my hand. "Since I am the only student, can we just chat for awhile before we begin the lesson?" she asked.

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I was conflicted. To appease the customer/student, I would normally have agreed. But as I was being evaluated with an available promotion to Head Teacher on the line, I wanted this to be a perfect cookie-cutter lesson. I tried to respond as diplomatically as possible, in a way which hopefully would not negatively impact either party: "I suppose we can chat for five minutes," I said, "and see if the other student turns up. What do you want to chat about?"

"Your style," she said.

"My *style*?"

"Like, what is your style of girl?"

Now, at my school/company, as one can probably already imagine based on the rigid summary I have already provided, a big fuss was made about bringing up inappropriate topics with students, let alone having inappropriate relationships. A colleague of mine was once reprimanded because a student followed him outside the building and into the nearby convenience store where he bought a sandwich to eat back upstairs in the teacher's room. His final lesson of the day had been canceled so that the regional manager could come to our branch and have a fifty-minute meeting with him, because of an uncontrollable five-minute interaction. His words: "I asked [the regional manager] 'What was I supposed to say to her? She just followed me,' and he told me 'Next time, you should just tell them you are not allowed to talk to students outside of class,'" (Brian, 2009).

Because of this strict policy about appropriateness with students, I knew that talking flirtatiously, even in a joking way, would be written up by the silent evaluator behind me, who I could see making notes while Mayumi continued to ask me questions about whether I preferred Japanese girls or White girls, younger girls or older girls. I tried opening the lesson book again and she again reached over the table to shut it. "I have to ask you a favor," she said. "It's a little embarrassing. I forgot to bring my purse with me today and I have to wait near the station for my daughter, but I do not have enough money to eat lunch."

I lent her the money, handing it to her across the table without saying anything, hoping that my evaluator did not see, or did not imagine my relationship with Mayumi was always this casual. When Mayumi next said, "We should have lunch together sometime," and suggested a restaurant, my evaluator stood up, closed her notes, and went back to the teacher's room. I was finally able to coerce Mayumi into opening her lesson book and going through the script with me ("Yeah, I see your point about [...] but I still feel that [...]") though I was no longer being observed. When the lesson was over, my evaluator, the head-teacher proxy of the hour, had already gone back to her own school. My report had already been filed.

By Mayumi's own recollection:

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> "Oh yeah haha, I remember it but its funny because I didn't know you were observed. I was happy because you were my favorite teacher and it was first time we had a class just one-to-one. Of course not serious about girl questions, I just liked to be happy always in those times. I only kind of went to [the school] because I wanted to have fun and not be boring all day. You were the most fun teacher for me." (Mayumi, 2010)

When the regional manager came the following week to have my one-year review with me, he spoke at great lengths about the negative observation. They renewed my contract and sponsored my new visa, I was given a perfunctory raise (about $25/month), but I was also reprimanded for inappropriateness, told to stick to the lesson plans, never lend money to students, never talk about girls or getting lunch with students, etc. Needless to say, I was not given the promotion I believed I deserved.

I assured him that Mayumi had been joking but I was also torn. I knew that nothing "inappropriate" had happened, that I was a perfect candidate for Head Teacher, and being scolded on top of that was infuriating. I had always been a loyal employee, even at the cost of giving dull lessons to students like Mayumi who were far friendlier to me than this guy had ever been, and who deserved better.

Shortly after, two of my colleagues, both boys about the same age as me who had also recently undergone their one-year reviews (similarly negative), went to a bar after work where we often vented about the students, the staff, the regional manager, etc. But on this particular night, our complaints took a constructive turn. We agreed that our company was not worth the loyalty and that, from this point on, we would devise a way to provide better lessons for our students, regardless of the consequences. We started brainstorming about what would be required to actually transform the school into the sort of place where students would actually be able to learn practical English, suitable to their own unique needs. We wrote our ideas down on napkins, which have of course been lost, but my friend remembers it like this:

> "We decided first that we could make change to the environment to create a more unique environment for the students, so we started encouraging students to take photos of lessons and of ourselves, and of their trips abroad, that we could hang on the walls. Trent hung pictures and photos all over the walls of the kids' room. We decided that we would start working harder to take more meaningful notes on our students [since we had no control over who would end up teaching whom or when] so we attached extra pages to all the files. We also decided to start giving out homework when students wanted it, and we started giving them our email addresses too, so they could ask us questions whenever they wanted. [...] Good times, valiant effort!" (Gary, 2010).

And for a month or two, it felt like it was succeeding. We brought in outside resources and started teaching with English we had found on advertisements or products outside the classroom, or from books from our own libraries. We lent books to students and told them if they wanted to write comments, we would review them. We gave out our email addresses. We also attached empty sheets to each student's file and started, in our unpaid time, writing thoughtful notes about aspects the students seemed encouraged by, or seemed to be struggling with. The other teachers at our school were unanimously on board with the project and participated more than we had expected. In only a few days, we had decorated all of the walls with fun photos which could also be used as referents during class, and one teacher in particular spent hours changing the sterile kids' room into a genuinely entertaining place to be, replete with cartoon posters, an alphabet in large-size that stretched across three walls, and even a new cabinet filled with toys and props – all purchased by himself. Teaching became a more fulfilling experience, students noticeably started having more fun as we discontinued our recitations from the "scripted" lessons, and amazingly the mood at our school, in our unpaid ten-minutes between classes, in our relationships with the staff and with the students and with each other, became more positive and uplifting. We were even told by new students that they had transferred from nearby branches, because they had heard of our "fun school."

In retrospect, though it was good practice at nearly every aspect of curriculum design, the institution itself was always the problem, not the teachers, and we must have known that it was not going to last. We wanted to be the "good teachers" and show-off how fun we were to the students, and we wanted revenge on the administrators and the regional manager for making us feel like machines. I am sure we wanted the students to have a good time too, but it seems too easy to liken this to the development of a critical pedagogy, when really we were just kids demonstrating resistance to what we perceived as oppression. And not even a *critical* resistance at that – we *were* still cashing our checks and even generating new business for our company/school, and we *were* sticking around for our own desires to experience an imaginary Japan and be imaginary "fun teacher" types. From a Critical Pedagogy perspective, I believe this could be likened to the "false generosity" which, according to Freire, can be revealed "as a dimension […] of guilt. With this false generosity, he attempts not only to preserve an unjust and necrophilic order [our school], but to "buy" peace for himself." (Freire, 2005, p. 146). But perhaps that's being too harsh in a corporatized context where "the oppressed" are not starving or being brutalized, only misguided into purchasing more and more.

When a Head Teacher, a woman from New Zealand about ten years older than the average teacher at our school (we were all about 25), was sent over from another branch to straighten us out, everything changed back overnight. The photos were

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removed from the walls, the notes removed from student files, the kids' room re-sterilized (the new cabinet and the new toys disappeared), and the disciplinary actions for straying from our scripted lessons commenced in full-force.

Disciplinary reports were being distributed to everyone constantly. Gary was reported one day for not buttoning his top-button beneath his tie. The next day, he came in wearing sandals deliberately to be inflammatory and was fired. The rest of us stopped doing anything that could be considered "extra" work, including using the ten unpaid minutes between lessons for planning. We were given constant "warnings" for every possible slight (I once received a "warning" for not having a crease ironed into my trousers), and when they brought a punch-clock into the room to insure that we could not leave early (in the event of having no scheduled class during our last lesson shift), we made them regret it by punching in and out at the beginning and end of every fifty-minute lesson, since we were not getting paid for the time between (this required them to buy more blank punch-cards pretty quickly, and then issue all the subsequent warnings, etc.) Then there was the day where we all wore bow-ties…

However, one form of resistance which they could not control was whatever took place outside of the school. We had given many students our email addresses and I had met Mayumi outside of class several times. In fact, she had begun paying me for private lessons conducted usually at coffee shops, for a fraction of what she would normally have to pay at our "school," but for more money than I would typically make per lesson. It was certainly an offense that would have resulted in my employment being terminated, but because we were never discovered, it worked out well for both of us. This would be my first genuine exercise as a critical pedagogue, and because neither of us were reliant on the standards and policies and resources of our restrictive school/company, we were forced, by necessity, to construct our own meaningful curriculum. This was my first opportunity to have *control* over an educational experience, to speak to a student with my own (unscripted) voice, to create something.

4.3 Mayumi's early Imagining Identities/My Attempts to construct an alternate pedagogy: A Dialogue

Our relationship, though still clearly a teacher/student relationship, also became more personal. The lesson-process we developed impromptu (neither of us had any knowledge of education theory or methodology) could be described as process-oriented. We would have a discussion about something that would generally last about an hour – usually on the topic of a TV show or movie or book that we would both agree to watch during the week – and we would make an audio-recording

of the discussion which she would take home. Her "homework," (aside from watching an English movie or TV show which she always chose herself) was to listen to the audio-recording carefully, find one point, any point during the discussion, where she felt she had not articulated precisely what she had meant, and then to submit in written form, usually via email, an explanation of what she had actually been trying to say. Her written submissions varied in length from a paragraph or two, to lengthy 5-page essays – it was up to her. My "homework" was to find a few structural or recurring errors she was making in her writing, and to make "corrections." It was my thinking at the time that this process addressed the five "categories" which our "school" rated students by – Communicative Ability, Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency, Listening. I was unaware, at the time, that it was also process-oriented in contrast to the memorization of specific phrases within our school (product-oriented) or socially-constructed in the sense that I did not prescribe what she learn and when – our discussions were free to wander and flow into topics of interest.

Because she chose the topics for our discussions, she was given some degree of autonomy over her own learning, and several months into our outside-lessons, the process also became what you might call full-blown critical pedagogy. Instead of discussing a movie, Mayumi wanted to discuss her life. My recollection is that Mayumi admitted to me that she could only discuss this topic with me, because she felt free to express herself in English, but that using the Japanese language she needed to comport herself in a more conservative manner. Her confession was that she was in a loveless marriage, wanted to get divorced, but was afraid of both the stigma of divorce, and of whether she would be able to support herself. She also confessed to me that she believed English might be her "way out," both because it was what she was most skilled in, and because of her perception that western identities were strong and independent, and could get jobs or divorces without much suffering. But I have recently asked Mayumi to email me her recollection of our discussion that day, so here are her own words in two separate emails, one from 2007, one from 2014:

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First Excerpt (2007):

"In English we have the idea – freedom idea! I can say what I want and be so strong. In Japanese I can't say even same. I need to small voice or high voice like if I talk to Japanese. I like all foreigner but you are my favorite! So I like talk to you, my favorite teacher! When you ask me write personal topic like about my feeling or thinking or anything[,] I am sometimes sad when I can't express myself very well. I wish I were a native speaker," (Mayumi, 2007)

Second Excerpt (2014):

"Do I have to [tell the story]? Haha. It's embarrassing now to think about this. But I remember I told you my kind of sad story. In those days I was kind of a

sad girl and asked for you to help me too much. I thought my husband he was cheating on me and it wasn't even surprise, but the surprise was I didn't care, not a little bit. I wanted to cheat too haha. I told you about that and I told you I never loved him but our marriage was a kind of pressure from my parents and we had two kids so divorce seemed so severe but that day I was thinking I would like to get a divorce. I told you about my sad story from my background. When I was young girl still I had the love of my life. In those days I worked as a bank teller and was studying English at university and I loved [him] so much but my family and his family couldn't agree and he married another girl. They came to my bank to open mutual account and I had to service them! Haha it is nostalgia today but when I told to you in Japan I was crying I know. So now we were planning what kind of thing I could do in my life and we talked about maybe divorce I remember, and I was serious, and we talked about maybe I could get a job teaching English. Really I should thank you Zaku-*sensei* because your encouragement! You are still my best teacher but now never teach me. [...] Did I say I could articulate my idea only in English? I don't remember saying that." (Mayumi, 2014)

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If we deconstruct Mayumi's first email, she seems to be saying that English *affords* her the "freedom" to say her "strong" ideas, which she feels unable to say in Japanese. Likewise, when she is unable to express her "personal topic," it makes her feel sad. If she were a NES, she would be able to express herself, and *be* herself, completely. By contrast, in her second email she expresses embarrassment over these feelings and says she may have asked too much of me, she laughs (types "haha") while recounting the story that once made her cry. She does remember it as a serious conversation and as the first step in her plan to get a job of teaching. This aligns with Kelsky's findings of "professionally ambitious Japanese women" and how "they deploy discourses of the modern, or 'narratives of internationalism,' to construct an 'emancipatory' turn to the foreign/West in opposition to gender-stratified corporate and family structures in Japan" (Kelsky, 1999, p. 229). In Norton and Pavlenko's framework, she is *invested* in joining the freedom/Western community, which she, at least in her first email, views as actual.

To provide a little context concerning Mayumi's marriage, though not strictly "arranged" in the traditional sense, it was nevertheless heavily influenced by her parents and she rather plainly would state, sometimes even during lessons, that she had never had feelings for her husband. Social norms in Japan do not particularly condemn marriages arranged for financial or familial reasons – and though this norm is showing some signs of change within recent years, especially for women, research

indicates that the main motivation for Japanese men to get married remains other than for reasons of love. Due to stricter gender roles, divorce itself is unusual in Japan, a society where marriage is still the norm (Tokuhiro, 2010). Ogasawara agrees, saying: "the majority of young women in Japan still hold marriage and full-time motherhood as their primary life goal (1998, p. 62-63).

I believe TESOL participates in the dissemination of these discourses through their preference for native (western) instructors, their discriminatory hiring of young and exotic-looking (blonde hair and blue eyes) teachers, and their obfuscation of anything remotely resembling multi-cultural contact occurring during the meetings that take place within their classrooms. In other words, when teachers are required to follow an innocuous script that decontextualizes the very participants reading it, the Japanese women whom Kelsky discusses are not given a chance to reconsider their construction of "the West as a site of emancipation for Japanese women whose ambitions and abilities are thwarted in Japan" (1999, p. 232).

Japan is also a country where the greatest career opportunities are affected by age, university of graduation, and gender – rather than on language proficiency or indeed any other qualifications – so while a high TOEIC score is cultural capital in a very real sense, its potential application is mitigated by other social labels (Kobayashi 2007, p. 63). Kobayashi finds then that the reason for a disproportionate number of otherwise well-off, already-employed Japanese women to sacrifice their careers to travel abroad or study English owes in large part to the desire to find and explore themselves, rather than integrating into another community (Kobayashi, 2007). As one of Mayumi's stated motivations now was to divorce her husband and become an independent woman, her ability to identify herself in a professional and gendered sense seems, at this time, to have been on her mind.

Both because of gender and age, Mayumi expected to face a great amount of social pressure as she attempted to transform her life. As Kobayashi puts it, "The life span as 'eligible women' is short in Japan where being young is accorded the utmost value for women and ageing is expected to be accompanied by family accomplishments such as marriage, housekeeping, pregnancy, child rearing and care of ageing parents-in-law" (2007, p. 68). These expectations make it difficult for females and for anyone past college-graduate age to secure a new career, and yet despite this difficulty, it would seem that many Japanese females in particular seek to use English-learning as a means for somehow transforming their lives. Kobayashi's research found that statistics from 22 Japanese females, asked about their reasons for quitting their former jobs and enrolling in English language programmes, found that 15 responded positively to the statement "I wanted to change my personality or personal values," and 17 to "I thought life in Japan lacked opportunities for me to grow as an independent individual" (Kobayashi, p. 67). "What is remarkable about these narratives is their almost religious faith in a redemptive West and their insistence that the very marks of gender discrimination—cultural marginality and

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professional exclusion—instantiate a natural female 'flexibility' that frees Japanese women from oppressive and outdated laws of nation and race" (Kelsky, 1999, p. 232).

After this critical lesson, we rarely went back to discussing movies. She had made a plan to find work teaching English, which would require a TOEIC score of over 900, and to then fund her divorce and independence with the money she would make teaching. We now spent equal time training for the TOEIC and limiting our discussions to personal topics rather than movies or TV shows. She told me many times how much she wanted to live in America after her divorce.

In the meanwhile, my company/school ended up going bankrupt after failing to pay some of its teachers for months and likewise failing to reimburse many of its customers/students for package deals bought years in advance at discounted prices. After this widely-discussed bankruptcy (in fact, it is probably impossible now to conceal this school's anonymity for any interested party with access to Google), the franchise was sponsored and subsumed by one of its competitors, and continues to thrive today albeit in a lesser capacity, and sometimes under a different name. However, after two months without pay and a visa that was about to expire, I had decided to go back to the US for awhile. Mayumi drove me to the airport.

4.4 Standardizing and Commoditizing the Construction of Imagined Identities

As I spoke about in Chapter 1, even after seeing the over-commercialized, standardized, and de-skilling characteristics of at least one specific ESL school, I did not really feel any guilt or complicity about the privilege that this line of work afforded me. I found that my years spent "teaching" at a "school" in Japan qualified me to score a certain, popular standardized exam which many universities worldwide require their NNES-applicants to take. The job consisted of reading sometimes intimate, personal essays written by anonymous students all over the world – then assigning them a number between 0 and 5 and moving to the next essay. The score that raters give to each essay is then averaged with the score given to the same essay by e-Rater, a software which somehow, supposedly, analyzes essays and rates them. It seems amazing to me that I did not, even then, critically reflect on the dehumanizing nature of this often compulsory standardized test because during the same year I was scoring it, I continued to help Mayumi study for TOEIC – a similar test by the same company, ETS, but marketed more heavily in Japan and employed more often by businesses (For those interested, McCrostie has published several articles highly critical of ETS and TOEIC (McCrostie, 2010)). I had known and taught her for three

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years in Japan, two within our school/company, and one in a far more active way. For a fourth year I taught her via Skype, following our same format of personal discussions, writings, and equal time prepping her for the TOEIC.

Just before taking the exam, she sent me this email:

"I am leaving now. Ganbaru! [I'll try my best!] This will maybe be my big chance! I will email you when I finish!" (Mayumi, 2008).

After finally taking the exam:

"I took toeic today. Actually I sometimes couldn't concentrate and saw different choices as correct often. I feel so exhausted. I'll take it again in March. I feel like I am different from usual and my mind is worn out right now. The Mayumi in Japanese is so friendly but in English I have very dark and ugly part. I can't accept myself right now." (Mayumi, 2008).

After she got her results:

"Zak!!! I got 900 score so job in university is possible! Thank you so much help me!! [...] I am so happy but so upset!!! WHY I got 900? If I tell my score to people they would think my english is almost perfect. I am upset because I know my English skill itself is not very very very high! I don't want to study TOEIC again. I don't want to study again. Can you tell me my weak points one more time? I need to think about my study from now. Tell me as a teacher, not as a friend. OUCH!!" (Mayumi, 2008).

These emails are interesting for a few reasons. Mayumi had been studying for the TOEIC for over a year and had symbolically conflated a TOEIC score of over 900 with her wish to become a native-speaker and be granted access to all the imaginary freedom that this status would bestow. Before she leaves, she seems optimistic – "This will maybe be my big chance" – but afterwards, obviously feels as if she's failed and already makes plans to re-take it soon. This alone speaks volumes for the destructive and dehumanizing forces such standardized, impersonalized, products of FIDUROD have on a learner's motivation and very being (even when they turned out to have performed exceptionally well!) but Mayumi's expressing something even deeper than despair at having failed when she says "The Mayumi in Japanese is so friendly but in English I have very dark and ugly part. I can't accept myself right now." With her language, she has literally bifurcated her identity, stating plainly that there are two distinct Mayumis, an English-Mayumi and a Japanese-Mayumi. English-Mayumi *may* have just failed her heavily-invested transformation into an

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imaginary being of freedom, so she has become dark and ugly. Japanese-Mayumi remains friendly because she has not risked anything and will always be there waiting. How do we interpret this simultaneous bipolarity? It is as if her "being" has become stuck in the space between her two identities until she can see the results of the TOEIC. The test has already been taken and the score can't be changed, she's ***already*** either become English/Freedom Mayumi or remained Oppressed/Japanese Mayumi, but like Schrödinger's cat, for the moment, her identity is in a state of entanglement. It simultaneously exists in multiple states of indeterminacy. She's left the ecological perspective and entered the quantum-mechanics perspective.

When the wait is over and she gets her results, her reaction is equally interesting. She is upset because she *knows* she has not become English-Mayumi yet, so why does the signifier show otherwise? Kelsky's project of interviewing Japanese women about their identifications with an emancipatory West found "informants' narratives were tentative, shifting, contradictory, and contingent. Women aligned themselves with internationalism at different points in their lives only to reject it later and did not at any time unproblematically accept all of its claims" (1999, p. 230).

There are bits of the imaginary-self which Mayumi positioned as her transformative goal left at this point, which surface more and more sparingly, but it seems to me that after achieving her first goal in reality, her imaginary goals became noticeably weaker.

Of course, I only see this through reflection. I did not see the imaginary aspect of her struggle as it occurred. I was happy for her, and I was waiting now for her to complete her transformation, get divorced, and end up with a Western guy her own age, living abroad somewhere.

4.5 Mayumi's experience in America: Dispelling imagined identities

The same year, Mayumi and her ten-year-old daughter Touko visited me in America. It was her first trip abroad. At the time, I was living in Madison, Wisconsin, near my sister, Marny, who lived in a very rural farm town outside Madison with a population under 1000. I met Mayumi and Touko in New York City, spent a week with them there, then brought them to see a very different part of America. Marny's son, Nick, was also ten, and so Mayumi and Marny arranged to bring Touko to school with Nick for a day. Apparently, after Marny had visited me in Japan for a week the year prior, she had also talked in Nick's class and shown photos, as the town's resident expert on all things Japan, I suppose. I am certain the arrangement was the teacher's attempt at broadening the minds of her students and introducing a multicultural element to a school that, some distance outside of town and in a very

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rural portion of middle-America, had little multiculturalism to brag about. At the end of the school day, the teacher left a half hour for Mayumi and Touko to answer questions from the students. I somehow had the prescience to record the whole question-and-answer segment of the class, but I have transcribed only the most cringe-worthy portion:

S= Student   M= Mayumi T= the teacher N= My sister, Marny

S1: What does Touko eat?
M: She eat same as you do. (laughing) She likes hamburgers, pizza…
S1: Does she eat anything *strange*?
M: No, no! (laughing) Her favorite food is pizza.
T: *(speaking very slowly to Mayumi)* But are there some stranger foods in Japan… that we might not eat in America?
M: Anno [the Japanese equivalent of "Uh"] Yes some Japanese people eat food but I don't think you will see anything strange. Even in America I have eat some Japanese food with Zak and Nick and Marny, right? You have seen sushi?
[the students collectively make a disgusted sound]
S2: I am never gonna eat that!
M: Anyway in Japan we eat almost same as you.
N: Well, when I was in Japan we saw horse meat on a menu. And some people eat whale, right?
M: No – no – only, only very –
S3: I think that's bad.
M: It – anno – Japanese culture, in Japanese culture, traditionally, yes – yes, some people eat that. But today, it's not so – anno – girls like Touko, she likes pizza and hamburgers, really.
S3: Do Japanese people kill dolphins?
T: *(reprimandingly) Brian.* Does anyone have another question?
S4: Does Touko like to play video games?
M: Yes! Yes, she plays same games you play. You know *Pokemon*? (laughing) She plays too much! [asks Touko, in Japanese, if she likes *Pokemon* – Touko nods vigorously]
[the students collectively laugh]

I found myself embarrassed by the teacher speaking to Mayumi so slowly, and by my sister's attempts to force Mayumi into describing Japan as some strange exotic

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place, but I was interested in Mayumi's eagerness to identify as "same." Why didn't she want to tell the kids about the differences of Japanese culture? As soon as she is goaded into admitting that horse meat (and very rarely whale) are indeed on the menu, she became nervous and defensive. Moreover, I had known Mayumi for a long time, and I could tell from her body language how uncomfortable she had become. I tried to discuss the situation with her before she left back for Japan but she shrugged it off and said it went fine.

However, a few days after she arrived back in Japan, I received the following email:

> "I really learn a lot about America. I always think everyone there is so free and can do anything, even if you tell me its not. But now I really want to ask you, why in New York the black people are working on the construction and the white people wearing suits and ties? Why in Wisconsin they don't like Japanese people? Why there are many poor people in the streets? Why many rich people? I think in america its ok to be gay but you say some people only don't like. Why I need to take american TOEIC to get job in Japan? Why even need english in Japan? I have a rude question. If Japanese try to teach English they have to study hard and usually people think they are cool in Japan because mastering English need ability. What kind of ability is needed when native speakers teach English? I feel like everyone can be English teachers without special ability or hard study." (Mayumi, 2008).

At the time, I thought she was being a little unfair to the experience, but now I realize that noticing some of the realities of America and American people had disrupted Mayumi's earlier idealistic perception of the freedom and tolerance and ability to be anybody and think anything. If scoring well on the TOEIC had made her take a step back from her English-self, this seemed to be her final withdrawal from the imagined identity she had first confessed to me when we had started our private lessons years ago. According to Kelsky's study of Japanese women who identified with the emancipatory discourse of the west, "I found that as women aged, they ceased to maintain allegiances to the more utopic and uncritical forms of internationalism. [...] According to different women, and at different times in their lives, disillusionments with Western governmental policy and the apparent failure or hypocrisy of liberal political rhetoric [...] experiences of racism and sexism at the hands of Western male superiors in foreign firms, a questioning of the merits of individualism [...] led to skepticism and a distancing from the enthusiasms of earlier years." (1999, p. 242). This compares quite closely with what I was seeing happen to Mayumi.

We kept in touch frequently in the following year, and we both began MA programs in TESOL around the same time so she would occasionally ask for help

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with homework and I had stopped charging her for the service. Far more often though, we were just keeping in touch for fun and chatting about personal things. We were good friends. She still talked to me as openly as ever, but she never mentioned wanting to get divorced or travelling to other countries. She never brought up ideas about becoming more "free" or "independent" again.

While attending her MA program, she started her first job: working part-time at an informal school, teaching English to children. In the beginning, she would occasionally consult with me about teaching strategies, but she typically found my ideas too "progressive" and settled for lessons more closely resembling traditional grammar drills.

A year into our respective MA programs, we still emailed occasionally but not nearly as frequently as before. I never "taught" her anymore and the last time I had offered to "correct" her papers for school I received the following email:

> "Why I need your correction? It's Japan class, Japan people, Japan program, it's Japan." (Mayumi, 2010).

I was taken aback, and rather snottily replied:

> "It should be 'Why [do] I need your correction[s]? It's [a Japanese] class, [Japanese] people, [Japanese] program [--] it's Japan." (Zak, 2010)

She did not reply to this and I felt guilty after sending it. I was not her teacher anymore, and she had specifically asked for me *not* to send corrections, so "correcting" her email was really just a demonstration of my symbolic power. It was me trying to remind her that my English was more valuable than hers. I was *prescribing*, in both the linguistic sense of the term, and in the sense that Freire speaks of whereby oppressors prescribe their values onto the oppressed. I apologized for it later.

4.6 Interpreting Mayumi's Transformation: Mayumi's Reconstruction of self

I had already begun writing about Mayumi's putative transformation for my thesis, a longitudinal case-study with my oldest student, showcasing the miraculous ability of English-learning to save an oppressed housewife from a loveless marriage and culture wherein she could not be herself. It originally was going to attempt to be "objective" and to assume the disembodied narrator's voice. The problem I was now facing, while writing, was that Mayumi was no longer talking about divorce or the possibility of leaving Japan, she was no longer gushing about loving foreigners or the

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freedom that speaking in English afforded her. The following transcript is from a Skype interview that I had with Mayumi around this time:

Z: Would you say you've changed at all since you started studying English?
M: Started studying means… high school?
Z: Sure.
M: Yes, I think so. I am more serious these days maybe. [laughing] But still not so serious too! I don't know. Maybe if one thing changed most since high school it's my heart is colder now.
Z: How about the way you think about English? Has that changed?
M: [thinking for a moment] No, I don't think so. [laughing] See – it's not so interesting!
Z: You told me once that you wanted to be a native English speaker. Do you still wish you could be one?
M: Nani? [What?] I never wanted to be that. Did I say so? Oh…
Z: Well, you used to really like *gaijin* a lot, right?
M: [thinking again] Yes maybe. I think it was childish. [laughing] You know, many girls here – they like the foreigner because they think … maybe they think like the foreigner relationship – it can be love-love relationship.
Z: Love-love relationship?
M: Yes… as you know, I am married to my husband… and as you know, we never have had any love, never. And maybe young girls, they think like… it is possible maybe if… if… Zak, I don't think I've changed.
Z: Do you ever think about divorcing your husband now?
M: Zettai muri [absolutely impossible!] [laughing] Of course, no! I feel fine now. I don't think I changed very much.
Z: But you used to talk about wanting to get a divorce every day. So you *did* change, right?
M: I … it's not necessary now, because honestly, I can have a boyfriend if I want. And I have my job. And my friends. And my daughter and son. And he [the husband] can have a girlfriend. It's not the same as America.
Z: Do you still love English?
M: [laughing loudly] Maybe less! It's true. Maybe less. Because it's my work!
Z: Do you still study English?
M: Yes but only some point like grammar or something like learn new vocabulary, not about conversation. And if I study grammar points, I can do that alone.
Z: Do you enjoy teaching now?
M: Yes, it's a good job – pretty good. Sometimes very hard to talk for a long time but… it's good I think.

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Z: So how do you teach? What's your teaching style?
M: It's Japanese style. The students – if they want, ah, – I think they need to take the exam, and they think about their scores, and they don't need to talk so much. So maybe in my class we will go to the chapter together and I will read about the grammar point out loud, and then they can repeat after me.
Z: Didn't you say once you didn't trust TOEIC? And you didn't want to study for it anymore?
M: Yes, of course. But they must. It is necessary for most jobs in Japan. So I teach like that.
Z: So your style – nothing resembling [our old school]?
M: Absolutely not! [laughing] Honestly I don't think the teachers there were good! I *never* think so! I go just for fun!
Z: [mock indignation] Hey! You used to tell me I was your best teacher!
M: [laughing] Now just friends.

(Mayumi and Zak, 2013)

I still had not discovered the critical works of Freire or read anything on identity theory or narrative inquiry, much less reflected on my own experiences in a truly critical way. Given Mayumi's new attitude about English and her new seemingly domestic goals, I now imagined the case-study would paint Mayumi in a negative light by its end – demonstrate how her genuine feelings of "integrative motivation" had either been quashed by the evil TESOL industry, or else how she had simply abandoned her noble goals, "sold out," after getting her first job. And I began to interview other teachers, some in Thailand and some via Skype or email from Japan. Some of the teachers remembered Mayumi from our school, and some of them had only heard her story as I had told it to them. Here is how I reported the story to one of my friends during an interview, probably representative of how I would often tell it, presented with his reaction:

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Z= Me C= Chad (a teacher in Thailand who has also taught in Japan)

Z: We had this student at our school who, you know, unlike most of the other students, was really extroverted and chatty, always laughing, smiling…
C: *Genki*? [Japanese for good spirits/energetic]
Z: Very *genki* – and she would say in the middle of classes that she wanted to divorce her husband – the other students, you know, didn't know what to say.

That's why she even wanted to learn English! To become independent and get a job in English teaching so that she could afford to do that.

C: That's awesome.

Z: Yeah, and she'd sometimes talk about living abroad and it was just, like, very exciting to talk to her about it because it's, it's unusual for a Japanese woman, you know, and you really want to root for her, and –

C: Yeah, very awesome.

Z: And then of course, she gets a good score on TOEIC, gets a good job, and just completely abandons her goals and – doesn't want to get divorced, doesn't want to take lessons from farang, doesn't want any corrections on her English, she's just happy now being so…

C: So Japanese.

Z: Yeah.

C: Yeah, it's sad. I've seen something like that happen, couple times. There was one Japanese girl who got this study-abroad trip, all paid-for by her family, she got it all planned out…

Z: To where?

C: London, I think, and she got it all planned out, and literally like a week before she's supposed to've left, she decided not to go because she was too scared. [does an impression of a Japanese accent] 'London is danger city!' They're just *stuck*…

(Chad and Zak, 2012)

Here is another interview I had with a teacher in Thailand while discussing my case-study. He had just read some of the emails and transcripts from interviews with Mayumi that I had collected to include in my research:

Z= Me N= Nick

N: If you ask me, she's not even going to graduate.

Z: What, why? She already almost has. She's writing her thesis.

N: I would not call this 'advanced' English [indicating the transcripts and emails he had read]. I don't know how she could pass her classes if this is how her English is. Her grammar is terrible.

Z: At the school I worked at, she was in the highest level. It's different in Japan.

N: But is her [MA] program now an international program or a Japanese program?

Z: Japanese.

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N: *Oh*, well maybe none of them can speak English any better than her then so they don't even know. [laughing]
Z: I don't know. I think her English is great by Japanese standards. But she won't take corrections from *farang* anymore – she's very, uh…
N: Proud?
Z: Yeah, maybe.
N: Well, she's got a lot to learn. And she's going to have a hard time getting a job if she's competing with any native-speakers. The problem is, the schools, they don't probably speak English any better than her either – that's why it's so messed up.

Here are excerpts from email conversations with a few colleagues who also knew Mayumi in Japan:

"Yeah, I always thought she'd escape from all that. You know, if any of our students was going to escape it would have been her," (Craig, 2010)

"It's sad to see the women there putting up with so much, even when they're so intelligent or ambitious and everything. It'll be a good case study. Mayumi wasn't like any of the other students there. It's weird to imagine her being happy staying in her situation but such is Japan." (Gary, 2010)

"After the school reopened [under a different name and nearly a year later] she came back a few times, but yeah, totally not the same. She didn't have any fun in the lessons. She just stopped liking English. I totally saw that too. But I also ran into her once at the train station and she was as friendly as she'd ever been. Maybe she just stopped liking school." (Stephanie, 2010)

"That's so sad to hear! I really wanted her to get her divorce, but you know Japan!" (Veronica, 2010)

"Mayumi was great! Can't imagine her being happy teaching in a formal setting. Maybe she'll snap out of it." (Trent, 2010)

"It's like she started to stand up for herself and then went too far in the other direction." (Jason, 2010)

And excerpts from emails sent by two of the other Japanese students at our school, who I have kept in touch with:

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"I really look up to Mayumi! When I met her at [the school] I thought she was so cool! I wanted to be like her! [...] She is my inspiration to study abroad [because] I want to be like the same. But I think she couldn't do it finally because it's too difficult." (Riku, 2010)

"Mayumi was also cheerful and so fun in our lessons. I think she worked really hard to learn English. I think she is very successful in studying English and I suppose her success was obtained by her positiveness, diligence and humility as well as her strong motivation to have a good command of English. Did you know that her last TOEIC score was 950? Mine was 935. At last we both achieved our goals of getting more than 900. Now our next goal is to pass the first grade of Eiken. She is a good rival. Most people regard Mayumi as talkative, cheerful, external, confident or sociable. Probably they aren't wrong but I see something more in her. People say she is so confident or cool but actually she never thinks she is better than others, let alone perfect. She is always worried about the weak points in her English. She is never content with her English skills and will always earnestly tries to improve them. I think she hasn't changed. If she changed, I think she just becomes less obsessed with foreigners." (Miyako, 2010)

And from Mayumi herself, after I initially told her about my idea for a thesis and asked for her permission to write it, she replied:

"Is it interesting? haha. Of course you can write it. You can say anything. But I don't understand if it's interesting to anybody. I think in Japan you cannot write a paper like that." (email, 2010)

During recent interviews, when I have attempted to question her about her prior infatuation with English and NESs and her previously stated goals of making foreign friends and traveling abroad, about divorcing her husband and being independent, she responded:

"Honestly, it's not so interesting to me anymore. I have seen Australia, and America twice. About friends – yeah, I like making new friends with everybody, I don't care gaijin [foreigner] or not, it doesn't matter to me totally. I don't think about divorce anymore because it's normal here and I am getting older. Many of my friends are the same. [...] And I never wanted to be a native [native-english speaker], I don't think I ever said anything like that. I

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don't know. I don't remember. Zak, it's not interesting to anybody maybe."
(Mayumi, 2013)

Because Mayumi did not complete her "transformation" as predicted by the emancipative narratives reproduced and distributed by discourses of English-learning and globalization and oppressed women of *other* countries – and likewise, because I had not yet come to critically question and reflect on such discourses and the structures which produced and sold them – I was disappointed by what I perceived to be a lack of transformation. As the above excerpts indicate, I was not alone in interpreting Mayumi's "story" as an unhappy ending. When she stopped asking for corrections – when I ceased to be her "teacher" – I felt like I had somehow failed her. She had not become the imagined Mayumi which she had positioned as her goal, and I could not see how she had actually transformed because I lacked a perspective which would have enabled me to. I should emphasize too that beginning to study TESOL at the postgraduate level did not signify that I took the field any more seriously just yet. My initial reason for pursuing a postgraduate degree was still that I liked living in Asia, and engaging with TESOL seemed like the easiest way to do it. I would always be able to get a job at the kind of school I had worked for in Japan just based on being a "NES," but if I got further qualifications, maybe I would be able to work for a school where the managers and administrators would harass me less. I was still scoring corporate standardized exams without compunction, still charging five-hundred baht when possible for hour-long chats in coffee shops, and I was doing the reading and the homework required by my courses without much genuine interest in the process of English education.

Mayumi finished her MA program before me, and ended up writing her thesis, in English and without my help, on "Attitudes of Japanese Teachers about Native-English Speaker Teachers in Japan." It would be fair to call her results and the subsequent discussion "critical." She argued for only Japanese teachers to teach English in Japan, with the eventual hope of standardizing a "Japanese English." If we conceive of Phillipson's linguistic imperialism as processes of Western capitalism penetrating and perpetuating destructive and oppressive discourses on Japan and the rest of the "NNES" world, then local practice, as argued by Canagarajah (2005) and the natural evolution and legitimization of local variants, would, if we ever allowed them to occur, complete the second and final stage of Freire's pedagogy, by removing the power structure altogether, leaving everybody, and everybody's language, equal.

It was finally through viewing Mayumi's "transformation" from a perspective grounded in Critical Pedagogy and a post-structural understanding of identity, as well as reflecting on the complicity of TESOL in helping to produce her original desires and imagined goals, which finally allowed me to frame Mayumi's development in a decidedly empowering way. To once more return to Kelsky's study on Japanese women's susceptibility to discourses of Western emancipation: "I would argue that

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rarely did these older informants "embrace" Japaneseness; rather, they "acquiesced" in it [...] Although they radically rejected claims that the West was 'better,' telling instead of their processes of rediscovery of their racial/national identity as Japanese, this identity comprised a subjectivity that could be described as not only but also Japanese." This also conforms to Mayumi's experience, who graduated with her MA in TESOL and now works full-time at a large university while simultaneously being a wife and mother to two children. This is a powerful and still relatively uncommon move for a Japanese woman, because of Japanese attitudes about the employment of women, especially older women who have household duties to attend (Tokuhiro, 2010). So while it may have seemed to me then that Mayumi had somehow "failed" in her efforts to "transform," she instead very realistically embraced the liberation and empowerment that she had originally conflated with internationalism, and successfully applied them while remaining in a Japanese context. Instead of remaining a traditional Japanese housewife, or of becoming the "free" divorced internationalized woman of her dreams, she had become inter-lingual, inter-cultural. It might even be overly-reductionist to position her in a "third place" (Kramsch, 1993) – Kramsch herself later qualified this concept, saying: "The spatial metaphor of third place now seems too static... I propose reframing the notion of third place as symbolic competence, an ability that is both theoretical and practical [...] A multilingual imagination opens up spaces of possibility not in abstract theories or in random flights of fancy, but in the particularity of day-to-day language practices (Kramsch, 2009, p. 200). Rather, Mayumi grew rhizomatically, in untimely and unpredictable directions, without clear entry or exit points (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Masny (2006).

In the next section, I will discuss my final thoughts both on how this experience changed me and how, by adopting Critical Pedagogy and a post-structural understanding of identity, TESOL could ideally be reshaped to better attend to the actual desires of its practitioners.

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