



## **MONITORING SELF-DEVELOPMENT AS A TEACHER: A COMPARISON OF THREE TEACHER DIARY STUDIES**

**David McLachlan Jeffrey**  
 jeffreyd@asia-u.ac.jp

### **Abstract**

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Teacher diaries have wide-ranging applications for professional development, as they give teachers an increased sense of responsibility and seek new ways of improving their teaching. This article shares my personal experience of undertaking three teacher diary studies at two-year intervals and reveals how my teaching methodologies and philosophies have changed over time. These diaries helped me pause and reflect upon my personal assumptions of classroom activities, myself as a teacher and the syllabus I was implementing. They reveal how I initially based my interpretations on intuition rather than on insight. This led me to embark on a journey of personal self-reflection that led from an awareness of the practical impact of my teaching style and principles to finally redesigning and developing a syllabus to support my changing ideas on fostering an awareness of the need to promote and internalize the ownership of International English.

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### **Introduction**

Teacher diaries are personal accounts of classroom experiences with the aim of finding new personal insights as a teacher. They generate a self-awareness which is beneficial for the personal-professional development of teachers. As such, they involve an inwardly reflective procedure of writing about what happened in the classroom, and then analyzing the entries for deeper insights. This paper is an account of the procedures and the personal insights I gained as a result of undertaking three teacher diary studies at two-year intervals (2002, 2004 and 2006).

### **The First Teacher Diary Study – 2002**

This study took place in the Niigata University of International and Information Study's Communicative English Program (CEP) in Japan, a semi-intensive communicative program that encouraged students to speak English in a relaxed, confident manner (Jeffrey and Hadley: 2002).

Although I had taught before in English language schools, this was the first time that I was teaching at university level and I had difficulties adjusting to the coordinated curriculum of the program and how to relate to university students. I often worried that the students perceived my classes negatively because they were extremely passive. I wondered if things were really the

way they appeared to be. I therefore decided that a diary study, based on honest reflections, seemed an interesting avenue of inquiry.

Perhaps a less time-consuming method, such as videotaping, to look at my teaching would have been appropriate, but I also wanted to take a thorough route and truly begin to understand more about my teaching environment and myself.

Before undertaking the study, I did my own research on what teacher diaries are and what is the best way to approach them. Baily noted that teaching experiences are best “...*documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analysed for recurring patterns or salient events*” (1990: 215). In this way they form a basis upon which to build self-awareness, responsibility and a confidence in one’s own teaching ability, all of which create “...*an enthusiasm for change*” (Jarvis 1992: 142).

The exploration of self-awareness in turn leads to new professional frontiers and the courage to take the risks to explore new adventures. It is easy for teachers to reach a professional plateau or a comfort niche, and thus they serve in “...*overcoming a resistance to new techniques in teaching*” (Hundleby and Breet 1988: 62). Therefore, a teacher diary could also be referred to as an instrument for transformation by laying the foundation for further professional development. To optimize their benefit, it is imperative that teachers substantiate their written assertions fully, using specific examples, and to be “...*systematic, thorough and honest*” (Bailey 1990: 221). The entries have to be thorough because “...*simply writing diary entries do not yield the maximum potential benefit of the process*” (Bailey 1990: 224).

Diaries can be time-consuming because of the need for consistency and writers must be dedicated to thoroughly completing the study. This is a possible drawback given that teachers are very busy people, but without dedication teachers would “...*probably not complete them thoroughly, if at all*” (Bell 1993: 23). Supporting this Bailey (1990: 218) points out that “...*the procedures for keeping a diary are relatively simple, technologically speaking, but the process does require discipline and patience*”. I therefore committed myself to writing thorough and frank entries.

I had morning classes and free afternoons so I typed the diary entries in the afternoons while the thoughts of what happened in the classes were still fresh. After two weeks I felt that I had written enough entries, and that the time had come for analysis. This is the most difficult part of the study because of the sheer volume of writing that needs to be examined.

There are many ways to examine the entries, but the most effective was the WordSmith Tools program (Scott, 1997). This program is normally utilized in creating concordances as an aid to studying corpora, and is effective given its user-friendly nature and simplicity. For example, the main screen of the WordSmith Tools Controller has four menu options (File, Settings, Utilities and Help), three buttons for main tools (Concord, Keywords and Wordlist) and tabs (Main, Progress, Ideas, Accents and Previous lists). Finding key words within concordances were especially helpful and some concordance examples of the word “feel” looked like this:

1. What I "wanted" to see becomes "what I actually" saw and what I "wanted" to **feel** becomes "what I actually" **felt**...
2. Yes, that is how I wanted to **feel!** I wanted to **feel** good all the way, but with a certain amount of reserve because of the low level...
3. Yes, what a mixture, so although I want to feel good I'm not ever sure what to expect. I wanted to **feel** good, and the first couple of minutes in the class usually set the tone of my mood consequently.

Also, the wordlists displaying the frequency significant concepts in diary data was helpful and looked like this:

| Word            | Freq. | %    |
|-----------------|-------|------|
| 1. ME           | 31    | 1.01 |
| 2. <b>FEEL</b>  | 25    | 0.81 |
| 3. GOOD         | 24    | 0.78 |
| 4. STUDENTS     | 23    | 0.75 |
| 5. CONVERSATION | 20    | 0.65 |

Looking at concordances of sentences and paragraphs where these most frequent words occurred paved the way for several insights into my teaching and interaction with my students. They confirmed that there was indeed a good atmosphere in the classes, and that much of my negative perceptions existed more in my mind than in reality. There seems to be a common human tendency to focus in on the negative things that happen and to overlook that which is positive. The diary entries covered everything, the good and the bad, and when examining them it became clear that there was much more of the good than bad going on. Because of the bulk of information generated by a diary study, space will allow for only a few excerpts:

*“I saw this class face quite a hurdle today, with the new challenge to allow for even more conversation time...I was very impressed to see their determination to succeed...It was good to see them enjoying what they were doing too – lots of smiles and laughter, but with all the necessary discipline.”*

I started to realize that teachers and students, far from being separate entities, have a more synergistic relationship than I had previously thought. As one excerpt reveals:

*“I really noticed today how many students speak much better English now than they did at the beginning of the year, and with the necessary confidence too...I’m always smiling, encouraging them and behave in a happy and confident manner, and it seems to motivate the students...We have grown together in confidence through this experience.”*

The diary also highlighted room for improvement on the practical side of my teaching by bringing to my attention the need to concentrate more on the management of activities in the classroom:

*“I concentrated a lot on my technique, especially the transitions between activities. I’ve noticed that I can cut down a lot on time here too, and especially on my talking time, but it is a hard thing to achieve in practice and I suppose it takes time to get it right. Easy in theory, but hard in practice! So I want to concentrate on trying to refine these activities more and more in the next lesson and in the lessons that follow after that.”*

Not only did I realize the need to cut back on the amount of time I spent in explaining tasks to students, but I also needed to become more of a facilitator during class activities. I realized that my style of teaching was very teacher-centered but that this was because of the very passive nature of the students. Upon further reflection, I also accepted the fact that to become a

really good teacher something that is acquired over time, and that I needed to be patient and focus more on the good that was happening rather than on the bad.

### **The Second Teacher Diary Study – 2004**

Two years later when I undertook the second diary I was working at Asia University (hereafter AU) in Tokyo and I was interested to know if I had gained further experience that I may not have been aware of but could be usefully applied (Jeffrey, 2004). I was also interested to know if how I was perceived had changed and how I was coping with the new teaching environment in which I had found myself. I had never taught in such a large teaching program, the Centre for English Language Education (hereafter CELE), and in a city as large and fast-paced as Tokyo before. It is important to note that I was teaching students on the second lowest proficiency level of the CELE program, whereas in Niigata I was teaching students at all proficiency levels and as a result my students were very passive in CELE.

I did this diary in much the same way as I did the first diary study, using the WordSmith Tools program (Scott, 1997) and spent two weeks writing the entries. I also had morning classes, so I wrote the entries in the afternoons while they were still fresh in my mind as I had done in my first diary study in Niigata. There were a number of things I noticed when I analysed my journal entries which made me realize that I was changing as a teacher in certain ways.

For example, I realized that my focus was shifting away from issues that a new teacher would be concerned with such as nervousness, class atmosphere and concern for activity sequencing. Although I was still concerned about them, they were less prominent in my mind than before. I believed this to be an indication that I was becoming more experienced, and possibly more mature as a teacher.

I felt much more confident at this time than I had felt two years earlier, even though the program was larger and the challenges were greater. The study confirmed that I felt confident with managing activities in the classroom, such as beginning and closing lessons, as well as with transitions between activities. These were things that were very challenging for me when I first started teaching. I felt increasingly comfortable playing the role of facilitator once I had initiated tasks whereas I had not felt at all so before. It was easier to stand back somewhat and let students try things for themselves, even if they remained silent for some time because the silence would not bother me as much as it had two years ago.

I also felt that the technical side of my teaching had also improved over the previous two years. They ranged from creating new materials such as making crosswords as vocabulary building exercises through exploring with new computer software, cue cards as well as rearranging activity sequencing in a way that begins with accuracy-based tasks and ends with fluency-based tasks (i.e. grammar and vocabulary, then reading, then listening, then speaking). For the first time, I was able to make additional lessons myself rather than relying solely on the textbook. Again, because of the bulk of information generated by a diary study, space will allow for only a few excerpts:

*“I’m no longer so worried about whether I’m doing the right thing. Well, I am still concerned but not like it was before. I felt calm this morning, even when time was running out on covering what I had set out to do. Yes, I do feel confident, and much more than before.”*

The students seemed to be enjoying the classes despite still being passive, but I could see that many were making more of an effort to communicate as time passed. I was also able to increasingly focus more on the good than the bad which was very heartening.

They had also become somewhat less inhibited than they used to be about making mistakes, especially during conversation activities. I felt that they respected me as their teacher, and that they were simultaneously not afraid of me. As another excerpt reveals:

*“The students, whilst somewhat reserved in the grammar activities, improved when it came to talking time. I remember how passive they all were at the start of the year. This pleases me, and makes me feel that teaching, despite its challenges, is worthwhile.”*

I realised that, contrary to my expectations, that there was very little difference in the passivity levels between students from Tokyo and students from Niigata – but both do improve somewhat with encouragement. The following excerpt highlights this:

*“I’ve lowered my expectations of their communicative performances. I thought Tokyo students would be much more outgoing, but they’re just like the Niigata students. I wonder if it’s the same in other parts of Japan. Progress is being made, albeit slow, but I do need to help them in the art of conversation, especially keeping to a subject and ending off nicely because they often leave things up in the air at the end.”*

Therefore, whilst feeling that my students had improved I also noticed that my expectations had also become moderated in terms of having acquainted myself to their low proficiency. More students were succeeding in initiating and maintaining conversations for longer periods of time, as well as asking and answering more questions. However, the diary showed that more attention needed to be paid to helping students stay on topic and properly open and close conversations.

I noticed that my approach to teaching had changed in other ways too. When I first began teaching in Japan, I used to give passive and low proficiency students fairly big tasks all at once. The diary showed that I had changed my teaching approach towards breaking tasks down more and more into their respective components, and these components down even further into sub-components:

*“How did they manage with that big task now, when it would have been beyond their grasp before? I know why, it’s because I break it into little, easily digestible pieces, and they could do each part. If I gave them this whole task in one piece there would be a complete breakdown. I learned this the hard way and will never forget it.”*

Japanese students feel the need to fully understand each step before proceeding to the next step along a process, and I had not been aware of this before undertaking the study. I used to simply give those tasks with little preparation beforehand, but now I had come to do a number of consciousness-raising tasks beforehand (such as vocabulary and grammar exercises). This is a type of scaffolding process which includes making the initial tasks of the activity easy so that all students can assimilate it, and then it gets progressively more difficult until I feel that the students have reached a level of maximum understanding, and can perform what is intended. One has to be careful and attentive as to where to draw the line, because going over and making

things too difficult for most students produces a significant de-motivational impact and a possible breakdown in the process of the lesson. The diary made me realize that I had changed in this way, and that I had grown much more conscious of such issues.

Things about my teaching and my relations with the students became clearer. For example, I realised that I am a better teacher when I am no longer over-concerned about the successes or failures of the lesson, but focus more on the tasks at hand. There was a time when I expected each lesson to be a success, but I came to the realization that sometimes things do not turn out as intended, and that this should be accepted as going with the territory of teaching:

*“I felt apprehensive before that class, because we had to cover quite a bit. Things were not even going well in the first half of the class. The students seemed to be missing the point. So I thought that I’d just let things take their natural course, and if things didn’t go as I expected them to I wouldn’t feel upset about it from an emotional point of view.”*

When I’m relaxed, the students are more relaxed too, and success comes of its own accord. I realised that I had once agonised over my self-perceived limitations and that the students had interpreted this subconsciously as incompetence on my part:

*“I used to persevere in such classes with the same thing, being afraid to change course should that lead to even more problems. Now, if things are not working out, I can change to a different task with relative ease. Perhaps such things come only from experience. I was once a risk averter, but now have enough confidence to take risks in the classroom, but within reason of course.”*

I came to appreciate as a result of the diary that I have been making progress as a teacher, but perhaps the routine and the deadlines, and the many other activities that keep me busy all the time, did not give me the chance to reflect on my personal development objectively. This was a very positive aspect of the diary study and it gave me much encouragement.

However, I was somewhat bothered with other things. The main one was a general lack of students wanting to go beyond merely fulfilling my expectations and to really take up the challenge of communicating in English seriously. I really wanted to write in my diary that I had at least one or two high achievers who were seriously committed to become as proficient as possible in English in the space of a year. I found that I was subconsciously keeping myself satisfied by lowering my expectations of the students, rather than by succeeding in having the students achieve something more than what could be considered standard for the level that I was teaching. I found this to be a very draining aspect of teaching, both emotionally and physically. Retrospectively, this is one of the main reasons why I had worried that the students had perceived my classes negatively and prompted the first diary study. I had blamed myself for their passivity, but I had come to realize that it was not me personally but it seemed that the answer lay more in the lack of motivation on the part of the students. For example:

*“Yes, what they did was fine. But what do I mean by “fine”? Do I mean “fine” to be what I have come to expect from what I have grown used to? Or does “fine” mean they surpassed my expectations and challenged things more? It’s the former. It would be nice to have a few real stars in the class.”*

This contribution, which could be referred to the “darker side” actually turned out to be a “blessing in disguise” since it contributed to deeper and more profound insights which led to improvements in my overall teaching approach. I feel that had I not done the diary study I may have merely accepted “fine” as something that is part of teaching and that I had to accept, but the introspective nature of the study made me delve deeper into aspects of my teaching and look for possibilities of changing things for the better. The following excerpt was very revealing in this regard:

*“I guess I could go on teaching like this, the university will be happy and most of my students will be happy, but there is something missing. I really have to do something to help my students see more meaning in learning English. I really need to have them think beyond the tasks at hand. I think the key is in motivation, but how do I successfully motivate them? I want them to take responsibility for learning English. I want them to take a sense of ownership of English, and I want them all to say “I am Japanese and I can speak English” rather than “I am Japanese so I can’t speak English”. How do I do this?”*

The study thereby raised my awareness of the need for ownership of International English and program philosophy internalisation among my students, especially in terms of its importance on the one hand and the challenges involved in its realization on the other. As a result of this finding in the diary, I decided to do further research on ownership and internalisation, and the findings in the third diary study, became the result of the needs that the second diary study identified.

The diary thus made me more imaginative and inspired me to do more research into the issues that were raised. However, I still had only a vague notion of ownership and internalisation. I had merely assumed that ownership and internalisation would take place on its own accord, but now realize that it takes considerable effort and application. I therefore embarked on doing further research on ownership of International English and internalization of a teaching philosophy based on it, in order to more fully understand and implement what the diary study was leading me towards.

### **The Third Teacher Diary Study – 2006**

By the time I undertook the third teacher diary study I had moved from teaching low proficiency students to teaching at the highest proficiency students at AU. This diary was done in a similar way to the first two diaries in the sense of writing up the entries and using the WordSmith Tools program (Scott, 1997).

By this time, and prior to doing the diary study, I had also done a fair amount of research into the concepts of ownership and internalization, which will be explained later. I also examined the type of syllabus that I was using in my classes and how it had changed over the years and whether it is appropriate or otherwise for my students.

This was also the first time that I gave serious thought to finding and implementing a syllabus that is supportive to my teaching philosophy based on ownership and internalization and how to implement. Thus I did some research on syllabi and I realized that there are many ways of looking at what a syllabus is. The following are just a few of the many that definitions that exist.

For example, Nunan (1988: 159) defines a syllabus as “...a specification of what is to be taught in a language program and the order in which it is to be taught”. Similarly, Rodgers

(1989: 28) defines a syllabus as “...*the selection and organization of linguistic content to be taught...the process by which linguistic content – vocabulary, grammar, notions, functions – is selected and organized*”.

Ultimately I concluded that there was no “right” or “wrong” way to define a syllabus, as they are widely used concepts. However, it is generally agreed that all syllabi share certain characteristics. Hence, it could be said that they represent a specification of work, are time-related, specify sequences of events, exist for “*administrative convenience, and will only be partially justified on theoretical grounds and so is negotiable and adjustable*”, can “*specify only what is taught; it cannot organize what is learnt*”, and it is a “*public document and an expression of accountability*” (Brumfit 1984: 75).

However, I also concluded that it need not necessarily be a “*public document and expression of accountability*” because of one definition that made a considerable impression on me, especially in terms of teaching English in Japan, by Hadley (2001a, 18) who defines a syllabus as:

*“...an endorsement of a specific set of socio-linguistic and philosophical beliefs regarding power, education and cognition... (and) differs significantly from the popular understanding of the term as it is used in Japanese schools and universities. A syllabus is not something written on a sheet of paper for students at the beginning of a semester; rather, it is the adherence to values and assumptions that guide a teacher to structure his or her class in a particular way.”*

This quotation, referring to the way in which an English syllabus differs from the “*popular understanding of the term as it is used in Japanese schools and universities*” and is rather “*the adherence to values and assumptions that guide a teacher to structure his or her class in a particular way*” made sense in terms of the way I went about structuring my own syllabus because an important factor that will influence the nature of a syllabus is a view of what teaching should be, as Stern (1992: 24) clarifies:

*“Some methods imply a specific teaching approach. For example, in an audio-lingual program the teacher is firmly in command, directing the class step by step in a benevolent but authoritarian manner. This view of teaching is in contrast to an approach in which the teacher and students are viewed as participants in a joint enterprise, democratically negotiating with each other about what to learn and how to learn it.”*

Similarly, White (1988) identified “*Type A*” and “*Type B*” syllabuses as two extremes within the teaching spectrum. On the one extreme, he referred to the “*Type A*” syllabus as focusing on content in terms of discreet items and the “*Type B*” syllabus on the other extreme as being holistic. As White (1988: 91) explains “...*what Type A syllabuses have in common is a basis in content. In this respect they conform to the traditional definition of a syllabus as an organized statement of content of things to be learnt*”. Thereafter White (1988: 94) refers to a “*Type B*” syllabuses as “...*a move...from content to process of learning and procedures of teaching – in other words, to methodology*”. Hence, the “*Type A*” syllabus demands that students do not challenge underlying educational assumptions, fit in with an imposed learning system and regard the teacher as authority and foundation of knowledge. The “*Type B*” syllabus however allows students to challenge underlying educational assumptions, develop as individuals, and regard the teacher as a facilitator or a consultant in the learning process.

White's identification of extreme syllabus paradigms are similar to those of Wilkins (1976: 2-13), who more than ten years earlier, referred to "synthetic" and "analytic" syllabuses (with synthetic being similar to "Type A", and analytic being similar to "Type B"). With regard to which extreme is superior or otherwise Hadley (2001b: 19) notes that:

*"These two viewpoints move in opposite directions, although one should not be seen as inherently better than the other (and that) ...over the past one hundred years, the ELT community has periodically swayed back and forth between the synthetic and analytic perspective."*

Hadley's point that one should not inherently be seen as better was an important consideration because of circumstances, especially student attitudes and proficiencies, as well as a teacher's preferred teaching style.

This is because, as White (1988: 45) elaborates:

*"An approach that emphasizes process, while giving attention to socially desirable behavior and the formation of approved attitudes, may lose sight of culturally valuable content, while an approach which stresses the acquisition of approved content may be orientating learners towards conformity rather than divergence and independence."*

I felt that my syllabus that I implemented at AU had shifted from being predominantly "Type A" to "Type B" and the main reason for this was the changed proficiency levels of the students that I was teaching.

I had found that I was becoming even less teacher-centered and more of a facilitator given the higher proficiency and motivation levels of my students. I noticed that most students were much more positive about acquiring a spoken ability of English rather than merely studying it because the University required it.

I still had my share of de-motivated students but they were in the minority. I also noticed that de-motivated students used to rebellious in the classroom among the lower-proficiency levels, whereas they tended to be quieter and more reserved in the higher-proficiency levels, and would not disturb the class (but would not make much attempt at speaking English either), as the following excerpt from the diary states:

*"It is important to note that, as in all classes, I do have a share of those who lack motivation and have high absences or have dropped out altogether among the higher proficiency students, but the point being made is that they are in the minority as opposed to the lower proficiency students where they are in the majority."*

With regard to my research into ownership and internalization I used the CELE Website at <http://www.asia-u.ac.jp/cele>, which is part of the AU Website, as a starting point where it is stated:

*"CELE was started by former AU President Professor Shinkichi Eto. Professor Eto believed students' communicative ability in foreign languages was integral to their internationalization. He considered internationalism and cultural awareness to the most important aspect of an education at AU."*

It is important to note the emphasis on “*communicative ability, internationalization and cultural awareness*” in the above statement.

The following is thus a personal explanation of what these terms mean to me as a teacher and how they can, or could be achieved in terms of ownership and internalization.

Regarding “*communicative ability*”, Collins (1999: 2) describes the communicative approach as:

*“... a view which sees language as continuously evolving, with the consequent freeing up of judgmental attitudes of what is ‘wrong’ and ‘right’...”*

Gray (1990: 22) adds:

*“...the prime focus of a ‘communicative approach’ is on meaningful social interaction achieved through a series of communicative activities which are evaluated in terms of their communicative effectiveness rather than their grammatical accuracy”*

The communicative approach has moved the application from structure to meaning, from accuracy to fluency, and from a structural syllabus (based on mainly grammatical aspects) to a functional syllabus (such as asking for directions or for opinions).

In terms of my syllabus, my students engage in communicative tasks for most of classroom time, and less time on studying language structures with the objective being comprehensible communication. Comprehensibility, as opposed to structure and form, is important. Pearse (1983) notes an important distinction between realistic and real language. These are related to conscious learning and subconscious acquisition.

In Japan, many students seem to be stuck in the learning phase, applying English as a realistic language, and while the “communicative approach” is a popular term in Japan, it is very hard to apply successfully, given the general passivity of Japanese students.

In terms of “*internationalization*” English provides the link for socio-economic and political relationships. As Kaplan (1987: 144) indicated:

*“...the relative achievement of those [modernization] objectives is significantly tied to the availability of English because, for better or for worse, English is the language of science and technology.”*

Even in the ex-colonial and non-native English speaking countries of Nigeria (Omodiaogbe, 1992 and Bisong, 1995), the Philippines (Agana, 1998) and Singapore (Abbott, 1992) people are adopting English, and taking ownership of it to the extent that non-native speakers of English now represent more than two-thirds of English speakers in the world (Crystal, 1997). Contemporary globalization also no longer renders any sense in differentiating native speakers and non-native speakers of English (Swales, 1993), given that more exchanges take place between non-native speakers of English than between non-native speakers and native speakers of English (Walker, 2001). In most countries of the world, it is now possible to get by on English, except Japan where English is still largely regarded as an alien language.

“*Cultural awareness*” is about social identity where communication plays an important role (Podur, 2002). Culture can have different meanings, for example “*aesthetical, sociological, semantic and pragmatic*” (Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi, 1990: 3). From a Neo-Marxian perspective, culture is viewed as part of the “superstructure” of society, and is closely related to the economy, or “base” of society. According to Jorge (1983), the base represents the economic relations of production in society while the superstructure determines the social consciousness, which include all the cultural, social and ideological structures and its institutions such as education, and access to economic wealth is unequal and institutionally sustained in the interests of those in power. Thus while people identify and communicate with each other for many purposes, it would seem that the main purpose is for the economic sustenance of the society. Without an economy to sustain it, it would appear that language, society and culture could have no foundation, or purpose, to exist (Strickland, 2002). The role of English as an International Language is therefore significant in this respect in terms of national and global economic relations, and economic subsistence and survival in particular. As Hadley (2002: 1) said:

*“... more of Japan’s citizens will need to acquire a greater level of proficiency in the English language, if Japan is to maintain its place as the world’s second largest economy.”*

With regard to what Hadley says it is essential that students not only learn English for the sake of it being an international language, but also take a sense of ownership of it, and to internalize my teaching philosophy that promotes ownership. Again, it would seem that the answer could be found at what was hinted at earlier in this paper where the motivation and attitude of the students play an important role. As the following excerpt explains:

*“At the lower proficiency levels most students had difficulty in the conversion from the grammar-drilling approaches of high school to the communicative approach. Many could merely say the simplest things in English, such as what their names were, where they came from, their favorite foods and so on. Moreover, the vast majority stay at the same low proficiency level throughout the year, despite five forty-five intensive English classes per week. The situation is very different now among the higher proficiency students, and the seems to be an understanding of what ownership and internalization entails.”*

As well as:

*“It is with these students that elaboration on the conversation exercises often occurs, making it possible for me to take a step back and let their experimentation in speaking English unfold more naturally. Interestingly, their higher proficiency is not necessarily the result of having lived in a native-English speaking country for some time. Although some have, there are very proficient English speakers who have acquired their ability in Japan without ever having traveled abroad. When asked how they had acquired such proficiency the majority expressed a sincere interest in English, English culture, or have parents, relatives or friends who speak English.”*

I felt that many of my students had a sense of knowing why they were studying English and had clearer goals that involved the use of English, and thus they had a sense of transfer as an additional motivating factor. It is important to consider the role of transfer with regard to motivation, ownership and internalization. Brunner (1960: 31) said:

*“The best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which learning has occurred.”*

Transfer is the appliance of prior knowledge to fresh learning circumstances (McKeough, 1995), and is frequently viewed as the learning purpose, and the degree to which it takes place is a measure of accomplishment (Pea, 1987 and Perkins, 1991). Ngeow (1998: 1) says:

*“Research suggests that transfer and motivation are mutually supportive in creating an optimal learning environment. If the learner perceives what he is learning to be relevant and transferable to other situations, he will find learning meaningful, and his motivation to acquire the skill or knowledge will increase.”*

For transfer to take place, the student must be motivated to do two things: firstly, recognize opportunities for transfer, and secondly, possess motivation to take advantage of recognized opportunities (Prawat, 1989). I tried to build these into my syllabus as much as possible.

As mentioned, my syllabus with these higher proficiency students leans predominantly towards “*Type B*”, where I can act as facilitator and they can formulate their own study goals and techniques with help and encouragement from me, rather than direct intervention. Feedback is very easy to attain with the majority of these higher proficiency students, since it is verbal and instant, and most are open with me about the things they like and dislike. They like the conversation activities most, and since they understand tasks first time around, therefore time spent in conversation is optimized. Most importantly perhaps is the fact that I can have discussions with these students too. Hence I can explain my teaching philosophy based on ownership of English as an international language and their agreement with this suggests that they have internalized my teaching philosophy without much difficulty and most students seem to understand it or have idea of what I am trying to put across to them in terms of ownership and internalization.

### **Conclusion and Final Thoughts**

This paper has shown how I realized through my three teacher diary studies my syllabus has shifted over the years from being predominantly teacher centered, or “*Type A*”, to student-centered, or “*Type B*”, and that the major cause for this has been the level of proficiency and motivation of the students that I have taught and currently teach. Another reason for this is that I have changed and matured as a teacher from being benevolently authoritarian to one whom is more a facilitator allowing the students to lead the way in terms of how and what they want to learn and acquire English speaking skills. Perhaps most importantly, with higher proficiency students, it is possible to relate my teaching philosophy of ownership and internalization to some extent. It does seem to be those circumstances, and primarily the proficiency and intrinsic motivation level of the students that determines this. With lower proficiency students, my expectations are now lower and I do not try to make them aware of ownership and internalization whereas when I was a new teacher I may have tried to do so. The diary studies have helped me realize the realities of teaching, what works with what types of students and what does not, whereas when I was a new teacher I was very idealistic and believed that I could achieve

anything with any student. I am more realistic now and have a better understanding of my own abilities and limitations and those of the students.

One important aspect that I did not cover in the diary studies was the impact of external factors or the outside world of the university and the classroom. For example, during the time I was doing the second diary we had our first baby, which is a truly wonderful experience, and yet the many sleepless nights and learning how to be a father did impact on my teaching. When one is tired it is difficult to teach, but it did teach me that life is precious and that all my students were sweet little babies not so recently. In other words, it made me see them more as people than as objects. It made me see them in a more positive light, and it was nice to share what it was like to be a parent with them. It is good to be honest with students and when one is tired I believe it is good to tell them and why.

Finally, I believe teaching is both an art and a gift. Some people seem to be born with a special gift of being able to impart knowledge in a way that is interesting and that students genuinely benefit from. However, like any gift that is not nurtured it will fade and become ineffective. That is the reason why professional self-development and introspective teacher diary studies are important. Even those who are not born with the gift of teaching can learn to become good teachers through serious introspection, but it is important to enjoy teaching as even those who are gifted will not become good teachers if they do not enjoy it and see it merely as a “job”. Anybody can become a teacher, but it takes much dedication to become a good teacher. I hope to reach that ideal in my teaching career.

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David Jeffrey was born in South Africa and has lived in Japan for several years. He has an MA in Development Studies (University of Natal, South Africa) and an MA in TEFL/TESL (University of Birmingham, UK). He is currently teaching at the Center for English Language Education at Asia University in Tokyo. In addition to teaching English, his working activities entail journal editing, researching and writing. His research interests concern the connection between linguistics and economic development, sociolinguistics, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), teacher diary studies, student motivation and teaching methodologies.

David McLachlan Jeffrey  
Center for English Language Education  
Asia University  
5-24-10 Sakai  
Musashino-shi  
Tokyo  
180-8629  
Japan  
e-mail: [jeffreyd@asia-u.ac.jp](mailto:jeffreyd@asia-u.ac.jp)  
Tel: (+81) 422-36-2471