

Initial teacher training in Japan: Trainees' perspectives of language teacher expertise development

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Using a qualitative method approach, this empirical study examined perspectives and in-depth experiences of pre-service student teachers in initial teacher education in Japan on their teacher expertise development and tentatively indicates that cognitive apprenticeship, not traditional apprenticeship, may have a major impact on pre-service students' expertise development, especially with the use of intentional observation and emulation¹⁾. The purposes of the study were mainly twofold: 1) to explore trainees' in-depth experiences and perceptions of professional expertise development in ITT in a Japanese context, and 2) to investigate what factors trigger development in their professional expertise and how they reconstruct their expertise.

TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

The Central Council on Education in Japan (2006) states that professional expertise development is one of the three goals that pre-service teacher trainees should aim for²⁾. However, the term, "professional expertise," is not clearly defined by the Council. In the teacher education literature, as Borg (2006) mentions, there are overwhelmingly various terms and concepts used in describing teachers' professional expertise. In addition, both the content that

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- 1) This was conducted as a pilot study in order to examine the feasibility of a larger project.
 - 2) The other two goals are 'passion for teaching' and 'a well-rounded character'.

teachers need to acquire and the process of how that knowledge is acquired have been researched simultaneously (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997) and what and how teacher trainees necessarily acquire during initial teacher training (ITT, hereafter) in order to become good teachers has not yet been clarified or agreed upon among teacher educators and researchers, at least in a Japanese context. It seems that there is value in differentiating among content, structure and process of teachers' professional expertise.

In terms of content, however, there are some constructs that recurrently appear in the teacher expertise research, such as pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1981), and personal beliefs and perspectives (Pajares, 1992). For example, Shulman (1987) criticizes the mere use of the lists of observable teacher behaviours and competences as the measurement of professional expertise. Rather, he asserts that the central feature of teachers' knowledge base with which they make choices and actions in classrooms must be the blending of subject matter knowledge and teaching strategies. Elbaz (1981), on the other hand, adds the elements of understanding of the self and that of teaching contexts to Shulman's knowledge base insofar as one's knowledge base is likely to change by being screened by personal perspectives and tested out through practice. This latter contextual and experiential knowledge has obtained the approbation of many researchers (S. Borg, 2003; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Roberts, 1998; Wallace, 1991), while understanding the self is further explained by Pajares (1992), who argues that differences exist between knowledge systems and beliefs. The beliefs are personal and intuitive but act as a filter when new information or knowledge is taken in. Thus, understanding the self or personal beliefs and theories (Almarza, 1996; Richards, 1998) is another vital element of teachers' professional expertise.

In this study, professional expertise, particularly that of a foreign language teacher, will be tentatively defined as: 1) conceptual knowledge (e.g., subject matter, the system of the target language, curricula, materials development, instruction, classroom management, teacher development, learner development, child development); 2) contextual knowledge (e.g., classroom experiences,

school culture and environments, classroom environments, workplace environments, relevant legal frameworks, specific group of students); and 3) personal theory (e.g., personal values or attitudes).

Regarding the process of acquiring the necessary content of professional expertise, Wallace (1991) has identified three models: the craft model (i.e., learning by imitation of the experts' skills), the applied science model (i.e., learning by theories), and the reflective model. Borg (2006) claims that teachers' professional expertise, which he refers to as "teacher cognition," is often tacit and unobservable, especially that of expert teachers. Thus, the teacher education literature often advocates that *reflection* should play a vital role in teacher development. Through reflection, a tacit and unobservable element of professional expertise is made explicit; thus, it is easier to reflect upon and modify, if necessary (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Tsui, 2003; Wallace, 1991). However, one frequent criticism in pre-service teacher training research is that reflection may be challenging for novice teachers, as they may not have enough of a knowledge base upon which to draw (Kennedy, 1993); additionally, they are often more concerned with self-image and acquiring routines (Akbari, 2007). Thus, although reflection may be a significant tool in teacher development process in the long run, in this study, whether other processes of learning to teach are more feasible in a Japanese context will be investigated.

Cognitive apprenticeship, originally advocated by Collins, Brown & Newman (1989), may be considered as one of such possible processes of learning to teach. In order to examine whether cognitive apprenticeship may be influential on trainees' expertise development, the following terms need to be differentiated and elaborated on what they imply in this particular study: modelling and emulation. First of all, modelling in teacher education research is often defined as "the early and repetitive demonstration of complex, holistic, and goal-centered activities, as situated in their actual contexts of use" (Atkinson, 1997). It is an intentional act by teacher trainers of choosing certain teaching behaviours of what *they* expect their trainees to learn during the initial stage of teacher development (Loughran & Berry, 2005; Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007). Therefore, a model is explicitly offered for trainees to take

in into their own teaching. The notion of emulation, on the other hand, will be used in this study in the sense of trainees' self-motivated and explicit acts of observation and imitation of teaching behaviours with effort to equal or surpass more experienced teachers. The degrees of explicitness in emulation may vary and change accordingly and the target of emulation may include more than teacher trainers and mentors, such as their peers as suggested in a "near-peer role model" (Murphey & Arao, 2001) in which people may find it more comfortable and positive to emulate a model who is similar to themselves in terms of, for example, age or life experiences.

Emulation may also take place not only in the initial stage of teacher development but also its later stages, as indicated in some of prior research studies on continuing professional development in a Japanese context (Shimahara, 1998; Shimahara & Sakai, 1992). Since trainees are explicitly aware of emulation in this case, emulation is likely to lead to critical examination of behaviours emulated, unlike a model of apprenticeship of observation, used by Lortie (1975) which describes *students'* unexamined experiences. Lortie asserts that trainees are likely to be influenced by strong preconceptions based upon intuitive observation of their former teachers as a student, which often leads to mere imitation of former teachers' behaviours without probing against pedagogical principles. What motivates trainees to emulate and which behaviours they choose to emulate or not to emulate need more probing in this study, however.

Finally, the structure of teachers' professional expertise is the area which is still ignored in many teacher education research and literature. Borg (2006) maintains that teachers' professional expertise development is equivalent to restructuring in content, which deserves more attention. In order to examine the structure and restructuring process of teacher expertise development, a card sorting exercise was conducted in this study, which will be described in a later section.

METHOD

The Context

Under the current situation in Japan, in order to become a secondary school

teacher, students need to attend an ITT programme offered at the undergraduate-level at higher education institutions (HEIs) and acquire a teacher's qualification upon graduation³⁾. Although the contents of ITT programmes are at the discretion of each HEI due to the principle as an open system, students in the third year of the four-year ITT programme typically enrol in a course called Methods of Teaching English I/II. Some key objectives of this course are usually to explore various teaching principles and theories, to reflect on their own learning and teaching, and to practice teaching. A variety of learning experiences and tasks are provided to enable students to attain these objectives, which may include observing experienced teachers' lessons, reflective writing, as well as micro teaching in small or large groups. Trainees also often collaborate in planning and revising a lesson and giving feedback to each other.

Between November 2008 to January 2009, the data was mainly collected at a private university in Japan, where the researcher teaches as a full-time faculty member and as a teacher trainer. At this institution, teacher training for five subjects of secondary school teaching licenses are provided: English, French, German, social sciences and ICT. This institution is considered as one of the top universities that annually produce aspiring English teachers in the area.

The Informants

At this institution, Methods of Teaching English courses are offered by four lecturers, one of whom is the researcher. The informants for the study were recruited based on the open invitation in the researcher's Methods of Teaching English course II in the fall semester of the academic year 2008. For this particular study, eight students⁴⁾ initially expressed their interest in participating in the study. Two of the students, one male and one female, were

3) See Asaoka (2008) for the detailed description of ITT in a Japanese context.

4) They consisted of three English-major third-year students who did hope to become teachers, two English major third-year students who were not sure yet about becoming teachers, and three fourth-year students.

chosen for the study based on a self-selection process and the principal criterion was their availability to meet with the researcher. Both of them were English-major third-year students. Ken⁵⁾, aged 21, was a would-be English teacher with a three-year teaching experience as a cram school teacher in the community. Misa, on the other hand, was a 21-year-old female student who remained ambivalent about becoming a secondary school teacher. Both appeared keen to participate, partly to assist in the research, but also they saw this as an opportunity to improve their own teaching. The ambivalence of Misa's attitude towards becoming a teacher, however, seemed to have affected the data, which will be discussed later in this study.

Participation in this study was based on the informed consent, with the understanding that participants could withdraw at any time of the study. The participants were recruited from the researcher's own courses; therefore, the researcher needed to be very cautious in interpreting and generalizing the data since this teacher-student power relationship may have influenced the participants' reactivity toward the study and as a result, might have invalidated the data. In order to minimize this influence, the researcher clearly explained to the participants and assured that their decision whether or not to participate as well as their participation would not affect the researcher's assessment of their coursework, their current or future relations with the university as well as the school they were based in at the second stage. What was also important was to create an open and trusting relationship between the participants and the researcher by guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality as well as an access to their data after being transcribed.

Methodology

Since the purpose of this study was to explore trainees' in-depth *experiences* and *perceptions* of their own development, the methods used to collect and analyze data were based on the principles of qualitative studies (Brown & Dowling, 1998; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Silverman, 2000), loosely

5) A pseudonym was given to each participant in order to protect their privacy.

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informed by grounded theory approaches (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This methodology was selected because it enabled the researcher to understand the trainees' perspectives and make generalizations among the emerging themes commonly observed among them, while it also allowed the researcher to explore the sense-making processes of their individual contexts and experiences. In addition, there have been very limited qualitative research studies in teacher education in Japan, particularly in the area of ITT (Collinson & Ono, 2001; LeTendre, 1999); thus, the researcher regarded this approach as worth further pursuing. The timeline of the study is delineated in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
The Timeline of the Study

Time	In-class tasks	Tasks for the study
Oct 08	three reflective essays	1 st semi-structured interview, daily journals
Nov 08	micro teaching 1 self-evaluation	daily journals
Dec 08	micro teaching 2 & 3 self-evaluation	daily journals, 2 nd semi-structured interview
Jan 09		daily journals, peer evaluation of micro teaching
Feb 09		card-sorting exercise & 3 rd semi-structured interview

Interviews

The specific qualitative methods used in this study were mainly twofold: semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. As many researchers argue (Brown & Dowling, 1998; Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2000; Silverman, 2000), qualitative interviews, particularly semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, enable interviewees to investigate their own thoughts, beliefs and perspectives of the world in which they live for greater depth and to reconstruct events they experience. On the part of the interviewer, this approach leads to

deeper understanding and richer descriptions of interviewees' experiences and contexts. Therefore, this method is commonly found in ITT research studies (Almarza, 1996; M. Borg, 2005; Johnson, 1994; Lim & Chan, 2007).

An interview was conducted on three separate occasions with each participant. The main purpose of the initial interview at the beginning of the fall semester was to explore the participants' experiences, knowledge and beliefs about learning and teaching, often influenced by their former teachers because of the long-term unexamined experiences of "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975). The following two interviews were taken place in the middle and at the end of the fall semester respectively. They were also semi-structured with some guiding questions in the researcher's mind based on their diary entries as well as on their micro lessons, but the researcher tried to be open to digressions, building some flexibility into the interviews and letting the participants take the directions (Hatch, 2002). These interviews were conducted in order to further examine the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding learning to teach and see what factors in ITT may influence their professional expertise development.

Furthermore, two tasks were conducted prior to the final interview: peer evaluation of micro teaching and a card sorting exercise. The two participants were first asked to view their filmed micro teaching together and give feedback to each other in order to further examine their perspectives on actions (Hatch, 2002, p.91). They were later asked to write a journal entry by reflecting on this video-viewing session. Peer assessment of micro teaching was conducted in order to raise the participants' awareness of the importance of reflection on learning to teach and the use of jargons effective in reflection.

A card sorting exercise was introduced in the manner described by Kettle & Sellars (1996) in conjunction with the final interview, in order to investigate more deeply the participants' perspectives on their expertise development, particularly the structure and reorganizing process of their expertise. The researcher first analyzed the data of their journal writing and interview, in terms of how they viewed a good English teacher was. As a result, seventeen principles were found in Ken's data, whereas sixteen principles were coded in

Misa's data. Twelve key principles (Table 2) of a good English teacher, which were commonly identified both in Ken's and Misa's data, were then placed on cards. Next, the participants were asked to look at the cards, eliminate unnecessary ones and add new ideas if necessary. Next, the participants were asked to prioritize, group and label them. As Kettle and Sellars insist, data from this exercise was expected to "allow the construction of a taxonomy graphically detailing the attributes of an individual's meaning system." (p. 4).

It is recognized, however, that qualitative interviews can be problematic in research term. For example, Silverman (1997, 2000, 2008) maintains that there may be a gap between what people do and what they think they do and suggests that the use of "naturally occurring data" (1997, p.352) through participant observations often gives researchers more direct access to informants' experiences. It needs to be understood, therefore, that interview responses are interviewees' interpretations of the reality and how to interpret interviewees' accounts may also be influenced by the researcher's bias and subjectivity

TABLE 2
Key Principles of A Good English Teacher

Theme	Details of theme
A good English teacher is who ...	Teaches in a learner-centred way Promotes communication with students Creates a good class atmosphere Effectively motivates learners Knows various teaching methods and activities Develops and uses materials effectively Constructs a lesson effectively Asks questions that elicit students' response Teaches or develops materials on a content theme that learners become interested in Gives clear explanation and instructions Appropriately reflects students' proficiency/attainment levels in teaching Effectively uses voice/eye contact/gestures in teaching Effectively uses classroom English Communicates well with parents

(Cohen et al., 2000). As Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that “context both determines and is determined by the researchers’ self-understanding” (p.33), as much as those researched are understood in relation to the context, those who research themselves are part of the context and their interpretations should be understood in relation to the context.

Diaries

In a qualitative study, participants may keep a diary in which they write accounts of events and activities in their everyday lives (Brown & Dowling, 1998). In writing things down, participants can “process and reflect on experiences in different ways than thinking about them or discussing them with others” (Hatch, 2002, p.140). Thus, diary entries may allow researchers to access participants’ first-hand experiences and voices and capture individual perspectives (Bailey, 1990; Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Tsang, 2003).

In this particular study, focused journals were used rather than free and open-ended writing. Focused journals imply that the participants were given a list of possible topics and they articulated their thoughts and views on these topics (Johnson, 1994).

During the first interview, each participant was provided with a prompt for keeping reflective journals. The topics offered in the prompt included factors which affect the participants’ notions of a good teacher and teacher expertise development, their thoughts and experiences of learning and teaching in courses in and outside the ITT programme, as well as their feelings and experiences with former teachers, current teachers, peers and mentors. The participants were sometimes invited to write about a particular task, such as reflecting on a peer video viewing session. The prompt also indicated that the participants were allowed to make entries at their leisure and the amount and frequency of their writing was left to their discretion. However, the diaries were collected weekly regardless of the amount of their diary entries so that the participants could plan their time accordingly (Hatch, 2000). The language choice (Japanese or English or Japanese and English) as well as methods of submitting a journal were offered during the first interview. Both of the participants chose to write

in Japanese by hand and submit a hard copy rather than via e-mail.

One significant point to be emphasized is that, in this study, journals were not used merely as a research tool but as a learning tool to enhance the participants' teacher development, similar to the approach in other studies on teachers' professional development (Bailey, 1990; Lee, 2007; Porter, Goldstein, Leatherman, & Conrad, 1990; Tsang, 2003); therefore, the data obtained from diary entries did not only provide insights into the participants' changes over a period of time but, at the same time, keeping diaries were expected to enable the participants to foster their critical reflective skills.

Furthermore, similar to interviews, the researcher needed to be aware of "observer effects" (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p. 65); since the participants may try to respond to the researcher's expectations and express only idealized stories of what they do and think. As Hatch (2002) suggests, making reflective journaling interactive by responding to the participants' diary entries may also change the nature of the data. Therefore, the researcher tried to avoid commenting on the participants' writing; however, the researcher tried to acknowledge their time and efforts in writing, and to ask questions during the interviews when there were unclear statements in their journals in order to understand their meaning-making processes. In addition, these potential drawbacks of journals "can be reduced by clearly communicating the expectation that the participants' genuine perspectives and reactions are what the researcher is interested in, that whatever level of reflexivity participants are capable of is just fine, and that entries do not have to be of a certain length" (Hatch, 2002, p. 142).

Documentation and observation

To supplement these two main qualitative research tools, all the related documents were collected. In addition, observation of their teaching was occasionally conducted throughout the study to gather naturally occurring data (Cohen & Manion, 2000; Silverman, 2000). To be more specific, as the course requirements, the participants wrote three reflective essays on language learning history, former teacher experiences, and apprenticeship of observation. The participants furthermore gave three micro lessons (5-/10-/40- minute-long

respectively), both individually and as a small group, during the course of Methods of Teaching English II, each of which was filmed for later self-evaluation as a coursework and used for the peer assessment in the study. These were, however, only used for reference and clarification of the participants' meanings, and the researcher did not intend to directly draw meanings from them.

Copies of all the written texts were made and kept for final data analysis. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The participants were already bombarded with their work as a full-time undergraduate student; thus, they may find it challenging to find time to write journals or respond in interviews; in order to reduce the participants' emotional burdens as much as possible, they were allowed to use their native language, Japanese, whenever possible. As a result, all the interviews in the study were conducted in Japanese as well as their diary entries. The participants wrote their reflective essays in English because it was a required element of the course.

FINDINGS

The framework of the analysis for this study was inspired by the framework of Borg's (2006) conceptualization of language teacher cognition (Figure 1). According to his conceptualization, language teachers have cognitions on

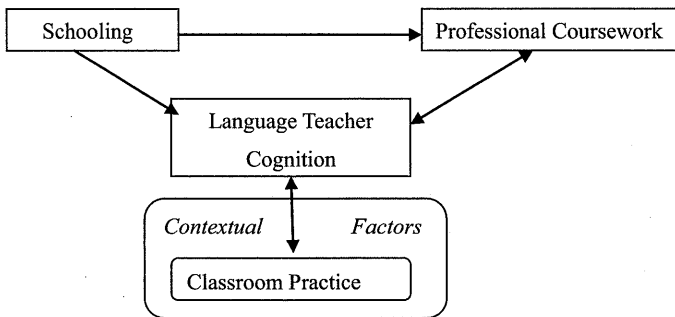


FIGURE 1
Borg's Language Teacher Cognition Framework (2006)

various issues (e.g., teaching, teachers, leaning, learners, subject matter, curricula, materials, assessment) which is placed at the centre of this framework. Language teacher cognitions also consist of various constructs (e.g., knowledge, beliefs, theories, attitudes, conceptions, principles, thinking), influenced by schooling, such as prior learning and teaching experiences, by professional coursework, such as ITT, as well as by contextual factors including classroom practice. Borg's teacher cognition, which is similar to what this study calls as teachers' professional expertise, is considered as consisting of three constructs: conceptual knowledge, contextual knowledge and personal theory.

Borg's conceptualization above was only a starting point for understanding the data obtained in this study, however. By way of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Silverman, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the data collected from each participant was continuously analyzed and compared in order to explore the development and reconstruction process of the participants' teacher expertise in depth.

Ken's Construction of Professional Expertise

Ken was very enthusiastic about becoming a teacher, mainly due to his positive experiences of teachers he had in secondary schools. Since he never went to English-speaking countries to learn English, which many Japanese students currently do, Ken considered himself less competent in communicative proficiency as a prospective English teacher. He was a student in the foreign languages division in a public upper-secondary school and one of the major reasons why he chose this school was to further work on his English skills. On entering into college, Ken enrolled in ITT without question. In addition, he started a part-time job as a cram school⁶⁾ teacher so that he could

6) A cram school, often called *juku* in Japanese, is a private tutoring school which many Japanese students go to after school for various purposes, such as improving academic ability in general, catching up with schoolwork, or preparing for entrance examinations.

have better understanding of actual classroom contexts of secondary schools and gain teaching experiences.

During the first interview, Ken described a good teacher as somebody with a good personality such as being friendly with students or enthusiastic about teaching, mainly based on his experiences as a student, consistent with other researchers in this field (Kagan, 1992). Ken seemed to believe that a good teacher was a person eager to interact with students, which in turn motivated students to learn English. A good teacher, according to Ken, needed to praise students when necessary and be capable of using various methods and tasks appropriate for students' interests and proficiency levels. Ken's simplistic view of a good teacher was reflected upon his assigned course essays as well in describing his language learning history and his former teacher experiences.

Ken's personal perspectives of a good teacher at this stage as above was still very simplistic and were not probed yet either by conceptual knowledge, particularly subject matter knowledge, or practical experiences of teaching. Although Ken had already taught at a cram school for two years at the beginning of the study, his practical experiences as a cram school teacher did not seem to inform him much of whom a good English teacher should be. However, Ken mentioned the possible effectiveness of the use of emulation in one of his course essays. He depicted in the third reflective essay that he found it important for a teacher to emulate other teachers for learning new ideas and critically analyzing one's own teaching.

"After I joined the cram school, I was given some training and senior teachers showed me the model class. ...My way of teaching has been quite influenced by those senior teachers, and I try to come up with the new idea to improve my English class, but basic form of teaching is based on them: show the forms and their meanings, illustrate some examples and let the students work on the questions. This way of teaching is very easy for me because I was told to do so first, and I tried to carry it out and the way was fixed. But one day I wondered if my methods were good for my students as they were. I felt my English class was a little monotonous and thought that I had better change my way for progress of my

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students' English abilities. So I adopted some new ways: listening and reading aloud. In fact a lot of my students received higher grades and came to enjoy my class more and more." (third reflective essay)

Ken admitted in the interview that in the beginning, he tried to merely model how senior teachers taught; however, Ken found it rather "monotonous" to teach always with the same techniques and thus decided to alter his ways from time to time. Ken agreed that modelling other teachers was effective for learning teaching strategies that he was unaware of, but for him it was also significant to analyze them critically and modify the strategies accordingly, rather than conforming to a specific teaching context. In a way, even at the beginning stage, he seemed to be open to new ideas and aware of the importance of emulation for critical reflection.

Although Ken had a very simplistic view of a good teacher in the beginning, he started to develop more elaborate teacher expertise during the semester, more informed by emulation, pseudo-experiences of teaching in the method course, and conceptual knowledge acquired both in ITT and in other university courses on applied linguistics and education, with the help of critical reflection on his own. For example, during the second interview, Ken discussed the importance of time management as well as teaching content themes in a foreign language class, referring to comparison between teaching at a cram school and micro teaching, which he did not do much initially:

"In teaching English at school, you need to make students speak, while you need to be in a position to lead a class. You also need to be more careful about time management since you only have 50 minutes and are not supposed to extend a class unlike at a *juku*. ... at *juku*, you mainly teach grammar because of entrance exams, so you never have to teach about content themes. But, at school, content themes are dealt with in a textbook, such as pidgin Englishes that we studied in our seminar, so you need to be able to teach on content themes not only grammar. It is a big difference between school and *juku* teaching." (2nd interview)

The importance of teaching content themes in addition to language forms and

meanings was one of the emerging themes Ken repeatedly mentioned during the later interview and journal entries, because he was taking a course on materials development at the same time in which teaching cultural schema was emphasized in developing teaching materials, and because of one of the invited speakers, who was a textbook writer, to another course in ITT that he attended:

“Songs or famous speeches in foreign language teaching can motivate learners to learn, unlike a textbook-based lesson. ... Learners can learn about the historical and cultural background of the songs and speeches at the same time and thus they are effective to use and motivate students.” (journal entry, November, 12th, 2008)

“The guest speaker told us that English teachers from now on should be able to teach not only texts themselves in a textbook but also content themes and background knowledge of the texts. For example, content themes that we deal with in a materials development course such as wars, environmental issues, or Australia. We need to be able to teach these themes in order to win students’ confidence.” (2nd interview)

He also started to mention the importance of learner-centeredness in foreign language teaching. Although Ken explained in one of the journal entries regarding lesson construction in early November that he wanted to make his lesson not monotonous, not only reading comprehension and translation of a text, but did not provide other possible ways to activate students’ participation in class. However, towards the end of the semester, he became more expressive in encouraging students’ participation in a class. For example:

“English is a language, so students should use it in class rather than just listen quietly to a teacher in order to improve their English ability. I feel that I should make sure that the main characters of an English class are students and give a student-centred lesson where students read, listen to, speak and write in English.” (journal entry, December 2nd, 2008)

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However, Ken did not seem to fully understand what learner-centeredness should be like in foreign language teaching. On one hand, Ken insisted that in order to make an English class student-centred, students need to have ample opportunities to participate in activities, speak up and express their ideas, while he also explained that one way of encouraging students to speak in an English class was to have them read aloud textbooks or answers on the blackboard or repeat what a teacher says:

“I want to make more conscious efforts to make students speak up; for example, asking students to read aloud instructions of an activity on a handout or example sentences on the blackboard. Uttering even one word will increase student participation.”
(journal entry, December 22nd, 2008, p.8)

Another point which deserves continued attention was emulation as one factor which encouraged Ken’s expertise development. Ken was in general very positive about emulation, as was explained earlier, although he did not have enough chances yet to emulate in actual classroom contexts:

“In observing micro teaching by various students and groups, I always examined what I would do or why they taught in one way or another and it was a very good learning experience. Observing various activities or classroom English that my peers used, I tried to reflect on what was interesting and effective or how I would do differently.”
(2nd interview)

In addition, peer assessment of micro teaching with Misa seemed to allow Ken to further explore learning to teach and reflect on his own teaching.

“Misa and I watched each other’s micro teaching and gave feedback. There were many things I realized through looking at her teaching and my own teaching. In addition, by explaining that I wanted to teach this way or I should have taught that way, I became more assured of my belief that a teacher should let students speak up as much as possible.”
(journal entry, February 3rd, 2009, p.10)

In a card sorting exercise conducted during the final interview, three major themes were identified which Ken then considered as a “base” and precondition for good teaching: learner-centeredness, a positive learning environment, and students’ interests and motivation. Ken explained during the final interview that although he considered these three themes important in teaching even at the beginning stage, throughout the semester, he came to be more assured that they were essential elements in good language teaching. In other words, Ken was not so sure about his perspectives or maybe did not have appropriate vocabulary to articulate his thoughts on these themes in the beginning of the study:

“In the beginning of the semester, I vaguely thought that learner-centeredness and creating good class atmosphere were good; however, throughout this semester, including research papers I read for my seminar course I was able to confirm that these issues are very important in language teaching.” (third interview)

The other nine elements in Table 2 remained important to him as well; however, a classroom first has to meet these three preconditions; then, a teacher could consider the other nine themes in his teaching, according to Ken.

First of all, for Ken, learner-centeredness in a foreign language class meant that a teacher encourages learners to actively participate in a class and use the target language. Ken asserted that English was a language and thus learners should use it in order to acquire it rather than, for example, focusing on form. He also disclosed that what triggered a change in his cognition on this point was mainly former teacher experiences.

For Ken, a good learning environment could be created through interaction with students, which resonated with what Ken mentioned during the first interview. In the beginning, Ken commented that a good teacher was a person who was friendly and interacted with students, while he did not explicate why friendliness and interaction with students were essential in good teaching. During the final interview, however, Ken pointed out that a good learning environment implied that students paid attention to a teacher and felt

comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas. For him, creating this kind of atmosphere was a starting line for good English teaching; otherwise, students would be discouraged and lose interest in learning English. If there is a good learning environment in which students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, a classroom will become more learner-centred, whereas if a classroom is learner-centred, students will feel more comfortable expressing their ideas. Thus these two themes seemed to be mutually dependent. This idea was again mainly based on former teacher experiences as well as his practical teaching experiences at *juku*.

The third theme, which Ken labelled as “students’ interests in learning English”, also seemed to be closely linked with Ken’s first and second themes. For Ken, if learners are interested in learning English, English learning can actively take place, based on his experiences as a student as well as motivation theories he read for other courses of the university. Therefore, teachers need to promote their interests in learning English by developing materials or choosing appropriate content themes or activities.

In diary entries in November, Ken wrote in line with his thoughts during the final interview, saying that students should have a chance to express and present their ideas, rather than working on reading comprehension and text translation. However, in one of the diary entries in December, Ken reflected on his own micro teaching and commented, “I should have involved students more, let them speak up and use English more. English is a language; thus, students should use it. I should be more aware that students should take a central role and provide more chances for them to read, listen, speak and write” (journal entry, December 2nd, 2008). Thus, though he was aware that his cognition changed, he was not yet able to change his behaviours in practice (Borg, 2006). As Silverman (1997, 2000, 2008) maintains, a gap like this may be caused by the differences between what one can do and what one thinks one should do. In addition, although Ken considered learner-centeredness as an essential factor in good teaching, he was still not sure in concrete terms regarding what kind of activities were more appropriate in a learner-centred class, particularly at the upper-secondary school level. In addition, there seemed to be a gap between

Ken's thoughts on learner-centeredness and his words of describing learner-centeredness. For example, Ken mentioned in his diary in December as well as during the peer-video-viewing session that some examples of learner-centred activities included students' reading instructions/sentences on the blackboard or on a handout aloud, or repeating what a teacher says and so forth. Thus, for Ken, it seemed that an act of a student uttering what is provided as a model, rather than uttering his or her own thoughts, was included as a learner-centred class.

In terms of the process of Ken's teacher expertise development, in addition to prior learning experiences, professional coursework started to have more impact on Ken's language teacher expertise development, which seems similar to Borg's (2006) framework of teacher cognition of pre-service teachers. Furthermore, another element in his construction that seemed to trigger development in his teacher expertise was emulation, which was apparently different from his experiences as a student unconsciously observing his former teachers. From Ken's perspectives, he learned to teach through more intentional observation of experienced teachers' (at a cram school / filmed lessons as a part of the coursework) as well as peers' micro teaching, which he critically observed and try to examine his cognition at the moment. Accordingly his cognition seemed to change although these changes did not yet influence his behaviours. He agreed that, however, he will have to observe models more and need to critically examine the models and his own behaviours when he does practice teaching in the following year.

Misa's Construction of Professional Expertise

Upon entering into university, Misa joined ITT, although she confessed that her motive for registering for ITT was mainly for earning a teaching certificate, trying to live up to her parents' expectations. Both of her parents were school teachers and she was reluctant to become a teacher contrary to their expectations. Misa agreed, however, that learning in ITT was more nourishing, although demanding, than she had imagined. Thus, Misa became more interested in teaching due to the content of ITT and started to feel that teaching

might be one of possible career choices by which she could have an effect on people. Misa did not have any teaching experiences at the beginning of the study. She was fully aware that many of her peers worked as a part-time cram school teachers in order to gain practical experiences before practicum, but she kept on letting a chance slip by. Therefore, Misa's and Ken's motives for participating in this study were slightly different in the beginning. While Ken was more motivated to discover himself a whole new way to become a teacher, Misa's decision to participate in this study was initially inspired by one of the professors whose course Misa took in the previous semester. In this course, the teacher encouraged her to try new things and change herself. Consequently, Miwa was more interested in confidence building and self-development in general, rather than teacher expertise development.

Similar to Ken, Misa's initial comments on learning to teach was mainly influenced by her language-learning experiences as a student, and thus very simplistic without probing against either her own teaching experiences or subject matter knowledge. For example, Misa commented:

“When I was a third-year student, my English teacher taught English by involving students, rather than in a one-sided way, and we had a lot of fun. I guess students usually like to participate in class activities rather than listen to a teacher's talk.”

(1st interview)

One of Misa's former teachers “gave every student chance to speak in class” (reflective essay 2, October, 2008), which seemed to have a major impact on Misa's personal theory then. Misa explained that students' active participation was a key in foreign language learning; however, she was not able to elaborate on why a good English teacher had to encourage active participation by every student at the initial stage. It may be linked with her concerns about lower-proficiency-level students. It seemed that Misa believed that lower-proficiency-level students may be left out and lose interests in learning English easily unless a teacher gives full attention to them as well. Misa continued to express this concern throughout the study.

Another theme Misa brought up during the initial stage was the power of the

words by teachers. As was explained earlier, there was one professor by whom she was greatly influenced in a previous semester. Referring to this professor, Misa commented as follows;

“... a good teacher is somebody who can utter words that stir students’ emotions. A teacher’s good words will make students feel something, and they will remain in students’ minds. Students may remember them later in their life. I think it is important how much teachers can convey words that move and resonate with students’ heart.”
(journal, November 6th, 2009, p.1)

However, when asked, Misa was not able to provide concrete examples of how students could develop their English abilities due to teachers’ powerful words; Misa’s conceptualization of learning to teach at this stage was still very simplistic and did not fully explain the complexities of language teachers’ professional expertise yet.

With group collaboration in lesson construction and peer observation in a teaching methodology course, Misa seemed to get stimulated by her peers and started to express her own personal theory more on learning to teach.

“I learned a lot from every group’s micro lessons since they tried various kinds of things. Providing many chances for students to speak up or incorporating various activities, their lessons were very well planned in the eyes of students. Also, another thing which was of some help was their facial expressions. They had a variety of expressions and I felt teachers’ smiles somehow made me motivated to learn. I tend to become rock-faced with tension so I should emulate their ways of delivery.”
(journal, Nov. 11, 2008, p.2)

Furthermore, Misa became more expressive while collaborating with her peers. For example, she said during the second interview that she persuaded her peers to use Japanese in giving instructions in consideration of lower-proficiency students.

“Although we tried to conduct a lesson in an all-English approach, I thought that

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there must be some students who do not understand grammatical explanation in English or do not understand anything at all if a teacher keeps talking only in English, so I suggested to my group members that we should explain at least grammatical points in Japanese and they agreed with me.” (2nd interview)

However, Misa could not explain why the use of the learners’ language was more effective than the use of the target language in grammar explanation. Misa’s ideas on learning to teach was based on her personal theory, not underpinned by either conceptual knowledge or contextual knowledge yet.

In addition to group collaboration, Misa explained during the second interview the effects of explicit observation of peers and more experienced teachers in her teacher expertise development.

“I was thinking about a good lesson all by myself, and thus, I only had a very simple idea; but, through group work and peer observation, I found out more approaches and techniques. I also came to think that I want to try their approaches and techniques in my own micro teaching or practice teaching during the practicum. This has become one of the main impetuses for my own growth.” (2nd interview)

Misa seemed to learn from observing her peers’ teaching, as Misa explained in one of the journal entries quoted above (November, 11, 2008), which led to her firmer conviction of the importance of learner-centredness in a language class. According to Misa, she learned from peer observation that creating a good class atmosphere was a key in successful language learning, while she regretted during self observation of her own filmed micro lesson that she spoke much more than her students during micro teaching and therefore the students did not have many chances to speak up. In a way, her cognition changed due to her practical teaching experiences and observation, but her practical experiences were not long enough to change her behaviours in a classroom. She did not have enough chances to emulate her peers’ teaching yet either.

Misa’s personal theory in student-centred teaching was strengthened while viewing a filmed experienced teacher’s lesson in another ITT course.

“I saw an experienced primary school teacher’s lesson in another course. The teacher was successful in eliciting pupils’ ideas and answers because he was good at asking questions. Such a way of asking questions makes students express their ideas actively, which will create a good class atmosphere. This will lead to becoming a good teacher as well.” (2nd interview)

She became more convinced that a good class should be student-centred in which students could express their ideas and answers; thus, in her opinion, a good English teacher needs to ask questions effectively and use various activities in which students could actively participate.

“I am sure that students will get bored if they only have to listen to a teacher, so a teacher has to encourage students to move and get involved. In an activity, students can enjoy working with peers without being afraid of making mistakes. They can also communicate in English with their classmates, which is a merit of using an activity. When I was a student, I thought so and my classmates said the same thing as well.” (2nd interview)

Similar to Ken’s conceptualization of learner-centeredness, however, Misa’s idea on learner-centeredness seemed to be very limited. Whereas Misa mentioned that a learner-centred class was a class in which students could actively participate in activities and communicate with each other, in Misa’s idea, a teacher needed to lead the class and elicit students’ responses in order to make a class learner-centred. In other words, students may not take control of their own tasks and expressions, but instead, an English teacher is the one who provides appropriate activities for students to engage in and who elicits students’ utterances.

During the card-sorting exercise, Misa confirmed, after adding new elements (understanding low-proficiency-level students) to the twelve principles and deleting one (communicating well with parents), that five themes were more essential as a good English teacher and labelled them as the “content of a lesson”: namely, learner-centredness, a good class atmosphere, constructing a

good lesson, giving clear explanation and instructions, and understanding lower-level students.

First, Misa believed that a student-centred class was the most ideal for a foreign language class where students have many chances to express their thoughts. In order to make a class student-centred, a teacher needs to create a good class atmosphere and provide opportunities for students to speak up, which will raise students' motivation to learn in turn. This was based on her experiences as a student, micro teaching as well as peer observation. Once a good class atmosphere was established in which students were motivated to learn English, then a teacher could focus on studying teaching materials and preparing for various activities which would suit the goals of a lesson unit and the levels of students. These five themes Misa chose were very closely linked with each other. However, even at this point, Misa confessed she had never read, for example, about motivation theories in any of ITT courses. Her assertion was basically resulted from her own experiences of learning and teaching, not from conceptual knowledge, which was different from Ken's construction of teacher expertise development.

Similar to Ken, however, Misa mentioned a few times over six months the importance of explicit observation and emulation. It seemed that she emphasized the importance of observation because she was lacking practical experiences of teaching.

"I would like to observe others' teaching a lot. Since I have no idea what kind of lessons I should give, so I want to draw upon others' teaching." (1st interview)

Although Misa only referred to her former teachers' experiences in the initial interview as a model, in the later interview and journal entries, she described more about how her observation of peers' and experienced teacher's teaching as well as her teachers outside ITT at the university influenced her in learning to teach.

Restructuring Teacher Expertise

From the analysis of Ken's and Misa's data, it can be tentatively concluded

that observation has two purposes, 1) mere emulation without critical reflection, and 2) intentional emulation with critical reflection for improvement. Trainees' observation of models, when it is intentional, will lead to reflection on trainees' personal theories. This reflection will often result in cognitive changes in their expertise and trainees will be likely to emulate good models in their teaching. Once emulation is successful, their behaviours may be improved.

Ken's and Misa's overall teacher expertise development can be described using some constructs indicated in the diagram below (Figure 2). In this model of professional expertise development, constructs that may impact trainees include intentional observation and emulation in addition to Borg's (2006) constructs of schooling which allows unintentional observation of former school teachers, professional coursework as well as contextual factors (see Figure 1).

Intentional observation may take place both in ITT and in school-based training, although this study was not able to examine trainees' expertise development during school-based training. After intentional observation, trainees may reflect on their own thoughts and actions. When trainees find a good model, they may try to emulate how a model taught in their own teaching.

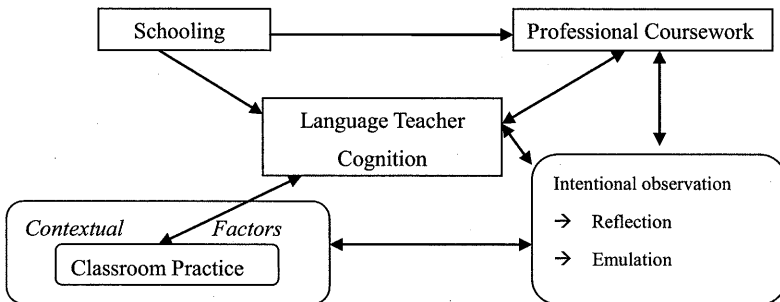


FIGURE 2
Elements in Language Teacher Expertise Development

Therefore, emulation may lead to behavioural as well as cognitive changes. However, how exactly emulation influenced the participants' expertise development was not clearly proved, partly because they did not have ample chances to practice teaching yet.

CONCLUSION

The current study examined perspectives and in-depth experiences of pre-service student teachers on their teacher expertise development in ITT in a Japanese context.

The results indicate that the use of intentional observation and emulation seems to have a major impact on pre-service student teachers' expertise development. The study did not examine the trainees' experiences during school-based training, however; in order to further investigate trainees' teacher expertise development, the impact of observation/emulation during classroom practice needs to be examined. With a prolonged period and a larger size of the participants, it is hoped that student teachers' experiences and perspectives of their expertise development will be delineated more in depth.

This study makes a contribution to our understanding of English teachers' professional expertise development, particularly, at a novice stage. Without enough practical experiences and concrete situations, teacher trainees may have no alternative but to depend on unexamined experiences and beliefs as a student. Without enough conceptual knowledge and vocabulary, trainees may find it challenging to reflect on the process of teacher expertise development. Instead, teacher trainees should be encouraged to observe and emulate models of both experienced teachers and peers; emulation may fill the gap between novice teachers and expert teachers who understand contextual factors well and can make decisions intuitively and accordingly.

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