A Narrative Exploration of an EFL Teacher's Practicing Professional Identity in a Japanese Socio-Educational Context

Submitted by Keith Graham Ford to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education in TESOL, March 2012.

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Abstract

This study explores an EFL practitioner's *teaching life story*, with a focus on the development of personal and professional identities, and on the rationale for teaching principles and practices within a Japanese socio-educational context. The study is grounded firmly in the belief that "in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is" (Goodson, 1992, p. 234). As a single participant study this thesis places particular emphasis on the importance of subjective and interpretive insights and understandings as opposed to the generalizability and objectivity of knowledge claims embodied in more traditional approaches to research in the field of TESOL.

To elicit the participant's teaching life story I used a *taped monologue* technique, whereby the speaker, without the presence of an interviewer, is in complete control of topic selection and has the freedom to determine the temporal and sequential course of their narrative. The resulting two-hour monologue is the primary data for the study, and working within a narrative research framework I analyzed the story for critical incidents and teaching perspectives that can be interpreted as having informed the participant's *practicing professional identity,* which can be defined as a set of values, principles and practices which guide an individual's present teaching philosophy and future directions.

Through the lens of the Japanese socio-educational context I focus on the unifying themes of teacher development and education, critical cultural knowledge, humanism, and second language (L2) only classroom policy. Furthermore, I explore the *narrative thread* that runs through the participant's story, connecting past and present

experiences with future teaching life directions and goals as the narrator takes the opportunity to articulate the rationale behind her main principles and practices, and in so doing underscores her practicing professional identity in a way that demonstrates a strong sense of the narrator's purpose, values, efficacy and self-worth. As such, this process engages the narrator not only in a meaningful and coherent narrative account of professional development, but also in the process itself of professional development as it demonstrates potentialities for self-revelation, affirmation, and even transformation.

This thesis offers a distinctive contribution to the field of TESOL educational research in three particular ways. First, in exploring the sources of a teacher's beliefs and practicing professional identity, it offers an exemplar of how to undertake interpretive research as reflective practice and professional development. Secondly, it widens our understanding of conducting single participant case studies in TESOL education. This thesis also points the way forward to possible research using an innovative taped monologue technique with other individual teacher case studies that can then contribute to building a body of knowledge in the field.

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First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Rachael, the sole participant of this piece of research. It is her personal and professional commitment that has made this kind of single case study possible. As colleague and friend, our discussions during this project have been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement, both in my research and teaching.

I thank my supervisors, Wendy Robinson and Yongcan Liu, whose comments and guidance have been invaluable. I also thank my initial supervisors, Malcolm MacDonald and Martin Levinson, for their early input prior to my change in research methodology.

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Chapter One: The Research Journey

A Vignette

All twenty-six students registered are here on time, and even as I enter there is a rather unnerving silence. After passing round the questionnaire, I stand at the front of the class for the first five minutes, trying not to make myself too much of an intimidating presence as they seem to be engaged diligently in trying to express their concerns in response to questions about previous learning experiences, preferences for having native or non-native speaker teachers, and about the demands of having to listen to and speak only English in class. But then I go out of the classroom and leave them to it. Ten minutes later, when I return to collect the questionnaires, this time Rachael is waiting at the closed door. "Ready for your big entrance?" I ask. "Time for the real thing," she replies. Then, I go in, leave the door open with Rachael at the threshold, and I collect the questionnaires. It is still uncomfortably silent with these tense-looking first-year university students mostly sitting at a distance from each other. First class nerves perhaps? Just not familiar with each other yet? Contemplating what their class and their teacher might be like? Is there a good chance, I wonder, of Rachael turning this class into a dynamic group of communicators in English? I glance at my familiar handwriting on the board again before erasing it: "Good morning. My name is Keith Ford. I am doing research about English education at Japanese universities. Your teacher Rachael has said she is happy for you to complete a short questionnaire if that is OK. It will take only about 15 minutes. Thank you for your time. Please write your answers in Japanese." Having collected all the questionnaires, and on leaving the room, I thank them in English and then, perhaps out of courtesy, in Japanese: "Arigatoo gozaimashita." Rachael, still in the doorway waiting to make her entrance - this is the first sight of her for these students - is down on me like a ton of bricks, but with a tone of playful and exaggerated admonition: "You used Japanese!" But this brief, unplanned scenario may well work nicely for things to come: Rachael's agenda of imposing a very strict English only classroom policy, while at the same time managing to maintain a positive, friendly and dynamic learning environment. It is what she refers to as a "benefic authoritarian" approach to classroom language policy, or something that might be paraphrased as "I know what's best for you."

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My research story

This study has developed out of an ongoing interest in EFL teachers' classroom language policies. Prior to this doctoral thesis I undertook a research project that investigated how teachers approach the issue of L1 use specifically in Japanese

university English classrooms (Ford, 2008), which is the setting and context for my own teaching practice. Indeed, this research is partly a result of my own self-reflection as a teacher at Japanese universities who has tended to be an advocate and practitioner of strict English only use by both teachers and students. More recently, however, this is an approach I have begun to question, *problematized* partly through taking an interest in critical pedagogy and its practical implications for the democratization of the language classroom (Edge, 2006; Holliday, 2005; Pennycook, 1994), one principle of which is encouraging students to feel free to use their L1 (Auerbach, 1993). Also, in the context of Japan, strict L2 only use is a policy that may be questioned in practical terms due to the country's changing demographics and falling student enrollment, resulting in many Japanese universities lowering entrance standards, including those for English.

While this research interest may have developed partly out of my own self-reflection, more importantly the research journey I describe here has become a process of *reflective practice* (Schon, 1983) for its participant, Rachael, whose teaching life story is the focus of this study. I should state clearly at this point that Rachael wishes to have her real name used in the writing up of this thesis, and this is an issue I will address in Chapter Two, along with other ethical considerations. She had also taken part in the earlier study mentioned above (Ford, 2008), research into the classroom language policies of ten teachers based on semi-structured interviews. Given that the study had reflected a general trend towards use of L1 in varying degrees by teachers, and more specifically by students, I became particularly interested in how Rachael stood out in continuing to follow a very strict and demanding English only approach, a policy applied to all student communication in the classroom to the extent where students could not use any L1 until she left the room. At first impression this may

seem a rather outdated, authoritarian approach clinging to the direct method of teaching. However, I became interested in such questions as: Why does she continue to follow this policy? What principles and beliefs is it grounded in? How does she maintain it? How does this policy affect classroom atmosphere? How do students respond to it?

I had discovered from an analysis of Rachael's interview for the earlier study (Ford, 2008) that her classroom policy of "benefic authoritarianism," a phrase she used to describe her pedagogical approach, was a highly rational and justifiable means of achieving a clear pedagogical goal, and one that reflects a real sense of mission to change students' attitudes to English: getting them to appreciate and engage with English for the purpose of real communication, and as Rachael had described, to recognize English as "a living wonderful organic whole," as a second language that they can really come to enjoy using and make their own. It should be kept in mind that this is a major challenge in the context of Japanese university English education, where high school language learning experiences have been so overwhelmingly dictated by the demands of passing university entrance examinations. It became clear from her passion in talking about her strict English only policy that it was a fundamental part of what I shall refer to as Rachael's *practicing professional identity*, a construct that I have developed and will be using throughout this thesis to refer to a set of teaching and learning values, beliefs, principles, and practices, as well as being related to a strong sense of purpose and futurity.

What started out as a general interest in Rachael's principles and policy, based on one semi-structured interview, then snowballed into a classroom ethnography: further interviews; classroom observations giving me a first-hand account of the nature of her

classroom practices, teaching style, and student adaptation, involvement and L2 interaction; class questionnaires focusing on previous learning experiences at high school, their expectations and concerns about their university English class, and their response to Rachael's approach; a teacher journal in which Rachael kept detailed notes about all classes; tape recordings of classes. All this added up to create a clearer picture as I sought to gain an understanding of how she uses her policy to establish a dynamic English-speaking classroom environment. Furthermore, I discovered that she achieves this while maintaining a friendly atmosphere through her strong sense of humor and evident interest in her students as individuals.

Yet, over the period of an academic semester, as this data collection process was under way, I began to feel that through this approach I could only ever really scratch the surface of understanding and insight. While I might get an appreciation of what takes place in Rachael's classroom, how her approach works, and of students' reactions and adaptation to what was a very different language learning style and experience, I would not get to understand the individual person-making process that lay behind it, and it was this that was starting to fascinate me as I got to know her better through our conversations about my research and about her teaching principles and practices. From my perspective, it became a need as researcher for a depth of personal understanding and engagement as opposed to being a peripheral, objective witness to events.

As I began narrowing down my approach, from a study of establishing a classroom culture and interactive learning community, to one aiming to get at an understanding of the personal conflicts, identity issues, and the critical moments that shaped Rachael's teaching principles and practices, it became evident that I needed to focus

on a *retrospective* rather than a *contemporaneous* account of her experience (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). Therefore, in order to get a free-flowing account of her teaching life experiences, I decided on asking Rachael to do a *taped monologue*, a data collection technique that I had used to good effect in a previous research project (Ford, 2009). This technique again provided rich data that liberated the present study from the confines of the classroom and objective observation. The monologue engaged the speaker in a process of reflective practice, in that as she looked back on some of the critical incidents in her teaching life story she began to consider their effect on her present teaching approach and practices and on her own teacher identity. Consequently, as I became increasingly interested in the person herself, her background, her teaching and life experiences, and in exploring the process of her professional development rather than a study of her classroom, I moved towards employing a narrative analytical approach (e. g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Golombek, 2002) to gaining understandings and insights into one individual's teaching journey.

Making this change from a traditional, classroom ethnography to single participant narrative research was not at first encouraged as a positive step by my initial supervisors. It was only after being assigned a supervisor at Exeter in the general field of education, one who had invaluable experience of life story research, that I became confident of working within a narrative research mode. Focusing on a single participant's narrative had been questioned on the basis that such a study could not meet the criteria of *generalizability* and comparison that are considered so important in evaluating many types of educational research, principles founded on positivist/postpositivist paradigms, but often applied to interpretive studies. In the qualitative/interpretive studies in the Exeter TESOL thesis canon, the common

approach appears to be to employ a number of participants, using a cross-case analysis and comparing participants' experiences and beliefs across common categories and themes (e. g., Burden, 2006; Cripps, 2008; Mora Vazquez, 2008). With such an approach the language of *generalizations* used in large sample studies is replaced by that of cross-case *commonalities* among a few participants. As a result, the significant experiences and perspectives of unique individuals still may well be passed over as they do not fit into the convenience of cross-case categorization.

This raises the issue of what kind of criteria can be used to evaluate single participant narrative research of the kind I am presenting in this thesis. Later, I will discuss appropriate valuative criteria after highlighting the ethical and procedural issues involved in researching a single teaching life story and after discussing issues of identity formation. I hope that if this study does not meet the demands of more typical research outcomes and valuative criteria of a positivist/postpositivist nature, then it offers more in terms of in-depth interpretive analysis, personal understanding and insights, and space for researcher and participant to reflect on experiences, research processes and outcomes.

Another issue that I feel I should address briefly in this introduction concerns the life story data that is presented to the reader. Detailed attention to the story of one individual, as is the case in this study, allows their own voice to be present and provides an opportunity for self-representation, which of course involves presenting extensive data (as I do in Chapters Six and Seven of this thesis). This is a dilemma that faces many narrative researchers who aim to get their work into journal publications, where space is limited in terms of actually presenting stories in the words of their participants. Within the scope of this thesis, however, I feel the

presentation of a substantial part of Rachael's teaching life story is justified as essential to giving the reader a genuine appreciation of its content and for allowing Rachael's own voice to be represented.

While narrative research has been common in the field of general education (e. g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Munro, 1998), there appears to have been much less interest in taking this approach within the field of TESOL, and certainly not to the extent of single participant studies. However, in recent years there have been two examples of such studies in the flagship journal *TESOL Quarterly*, one the story of a Chinese learner/teacher's resistance to the feelings of marginalization within the demands of conforming to a Communicative Language Teaching paradigm (Tsui, 2007), and the other an exploration of a Chinese EFL teacher's assessment practices (Xu & Liu, 2009) drawing on the *sacred* and *secret* stories framework (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995; Crites, 1971). Neither of these individual stories of *resistance* focused on comparison with other cases, and yet inevitably what was offered to the reader in the actual words of the participant was still limited. Furthermore, like most of the journal's research articles they were restricted to the rather formulaic, traditional template and section headings of Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Discussion, and Conclusion.

However, more recently still, at the time of revising this thesis, an entire issue of *TESOL Quarterly* (Barkhuizen, 2011a) on narrative research in TESOL appeared, with contributions drawing on the use of narrative data to explore issues such as appropriate research methodologies, and teacher identity and education. For example, in terms of focusing on teachers' professional development, Johnson and Golombek (2011) provide an example of using previously published teacher-authored reflective

journals as narratives to demonstrate the application of a Vygotskyian socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), and they explore the transformative potential of narrative and how it can act as a *meditational tool* for the externalization, verbalization, and systematic examination of teacher experience and teacher development.

This timely publication for narrative researchers comes about fifteen years after the then editor of *TESOL Quarterly*, Suresh Canagarajah (1996), pointed out that researchers working within interpretive fields should not feel restricted to presenting research in a format typical of scientific methods and should consider creative ways of both doing and reporting research. This view was supported by Holliday (2004) and Shohamy (2004) in responding to what they considered restrictive *TESOL Quarterly* Submission Guidelines (Chapelle & Duff, 2003). In calling for greater flexibility and less prescription, Shohamy (2004, p. 728) observed that "in an era when research is opening up to a variety of options, well beyond those included in the guidelines, such a prescription may be perceived as an imposition or a dogma of how research should be done." These observations could equally, of course, be applied to styles of reporting thesis work.

Indeed, I would suggest that in the same way that it is inappropriate to use traditional scientific criteria for judging non-scientific research, for example *validity*, *reliability*, *generalizability* (an issue I shall deal with in detail in Chapter Three), narrative researchers should also resist using a research report writing paradigm designed for reporting scientific research. This may mean rejecting the more exacting, traditional formats and structures such as the Introduction-Literature-Methods-Discussion paradigm, embodied in the use of formulaic and numerically defined headings,

something that seems to be the accepted norm within the Exeter TESOL thesis canon, but one that feels inappropriate for reporting narrative research. Also, in considering knowledge contributions I prefer to avoid the use of the traditional language of *findings* and *results* in favor of the more interpretive and open language of *insights* and *understandings*.

However, it is not only a question of form in rejecting scientific-sounding terminology but also of substance in terms of how I perceive and value the outcome of this study and the nature of the participant's involvement. I hope I am reflecting the in-depth personal involvement of the participant and researcher, valuing a focus on one individual's unique experiences, emphasizing a greater role and reflective space for the participant, and highlighting the collaborative nature of this study. For example, the final chapter of this study includes Rachael's own reflections on her teaching life story, on how it was recorded and presented, and on my own analysis of it. In this way, I hope the study is making a contribution to the field in terms of expanding ways of conducting and presenting research.

Specifically, this thesis demonstrates how an EFL practitioner embraces the opportunity to narrate her teaching life experiences in a meaningful and coherent way that underscores her pedagogical beliefs and practices. In so doing, the study explores the origins and development of her "benefic authoritarian" approach to language education within a Japanese university EFL environment, an approach that combines a strong belief in L2 only pedagogy with a strong sense of humanistic values. Furthermore, this thesis shows how the participant's narrative construction follows a *needs for meaning* framework (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996), whereby a *practicing professional identity* is voiced by demonstrating important concerns for establishing a

sense of purpose and futurity, personal efficacy and self-worth, and has moral and ethical dimensions. Additionally, with the use of the taped monologue technique of narrative data collection this thesis makes a distinctive contribution to methods for undertaking future research into the study of teachers' life stories and identity formation.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that this thesis is partly about my own research journey and about exploring what is an appropriate methodology and research process that match the purpose of the study: that is, exploring a teacher's life experiences and identity and how they may have impacted on that teacher's style and pedagogical approach. This journey is reflected initially in my move from classroom ethnography of teaching practice, its rationale and principles, to a focus on the development of personal and professional identity, with a concomitant shift in method to using an extensive personal narrative.

In this opening chapter I have outlined my research journey and the rationale for this study. In Chapter Two I describe a narrative research design and the methodology used. Chapter Three considers issues related to studies of identity formation and narrative research. Chapter Four discusses critical cultural knowledge and the Japanese socio-educational context, and Chapter Five reviews the L1/L2 only debate about classroom language policy and the role of humanism in language teaching, issues which are central to the analysis of Rachael's narrative.

In Chapters Six and Seven I present Rachael's teaching life story, allowing its critical episodes and perspectives to be related as much as possible in her own words, and so giving voice to her self-representation as well as offering my own analysis and

interpretations. In Chapter Seven, while I am concerned with a narrative psychological analysis and what I refer to as the *narrative thread* running through Rachael's teaching life story, in Chapter Six I have also maintained a strong TESOL aspect to the study by focusing on classroom language policy issues within the Japanese socio-educational context, and specifically on the L2 only paradigm, a principle which is such a fundamental part of Rachael's practicing professional identity. Other prominent related themes highlighted in Chapter Six are critical cultural knowledge, humanism, control and discipline.

The concluding Chapter Eight provides space for researcher and participant to co-reflect on the research process, outcomes and roles in the study. This chapter is framed partly by two closing interviews carried out after Rachael had read her story and my analysis as presented in Chapters Six and Seven. The chapter also makes concluding comments focusing on research outcomes and potential contribution to knowledge in the TESOL field of education.

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Chapter Two: A Narrative Research Design

In this chapter I chart the design, procedural, methodological and ethical issues and choices involved in undertaking this narrative study. Following a definition of *narrative* and outlining the process of doing narrative research, I briefly frame my research orientation in epistemological and ontological terms. I then focus on the importance of the relationship between the participant and researcher involved in this study. Finally, I describe the processes of data collection, transcription and analysis.

Research orientation

In conducting this study within the field of narrative research, I am taking a humanist perspective on education (e.g., Bruner, 1960; Dewey, 1933), viewing it primarily in terms of emotional development and personal growth. From this perspective, educational research involves not only investigations into teaching, classroom practices and educational policies, but also into lifelong learning, the process of self-discovery, teachers' reflective practice as professional development, and the study of both the personal and the professional aspects of their lives as having impacted on the other. Using life story data, the aim of this study is to seek an understanding and interpretation of an individual's unique experiences, values and emotions, and how they have contributed to a professional teaching identity working within a Japanese socio-educational context.

Cortazzi (1993) explains that the development of narrative research in the area of teaching and education has resulted from a growing interest in teachers' reflection and their knowledge related to classroom decision-making and the process of professional development. It is also influenced strongly by the idea of giving teachers a voice

through empowering them to relate their experiences. These factors are influential in my choice of working within this research approach, supported by the fundamental belief in the importance of the interrelationship between the personal and the professional, and so following Goodson's (1980, 1992) view that in order to understand teachers and teaching it is necessary to understand teachers' personal lives. For the purpose of this thesis, then, I see the study of a teaching life narrative as an ideal way to analyze an individual's personal and professional growth.

Before detailing the research design involved in this study, I would like to outline a basic definition of *narrative*. Fowler (1973, p. 122) defines *narrative* as "the recounting of a series of facts or events and the establishing of some connection between them." Here, narrative implies a sense of structure, sequence and plot. Furthermore, he sees narrative as having two fundamental overlapping aspects: one of *content* (how connections are implied) and the other of a *rhetorical* nature (how the narrative is presented). Pavlenko (2002, p. 213) outlines narrative as "the central means by which people give their lives meaning across time" and cites Hardy (1968, p. 5) to demonstrate the all-encompassing nature and ever present use of narrative in our day-to-day lives: "We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, plan, revise, criticize, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative." In contemporary society the term *narrative* is commonly used in popular discourse and culture to suggest insight into or concealment of biographical information or social background (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008, pp. 2-3).

In terms of research, there are various distinctions made about the kinds of narratives one works with, and about how one analyzes them. One important distinction is between the *event-* or *experience*-centered narrative (Squire et al., 2008, p. 5).

Event-centered narrative research focuses on a particular event or episode, with a tendency to attend to the linguistic, formal, or structural properties of the narrative. This is typified by the Labovian tradition of analysis (Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). On the other hand, experience-centered narrative research takes a more holistic, content-oriented approach, usually looking at extensive narratives or life stories. I shall explore this distinction in more detail later in this chapter when I focus on how I will be analyzing Rachael's teaching life story.

Linked to the event- or experience-centered distinction is that of the more recent distinction between *small* and *big* stories (Bamberg, 2004, 2006). Here small stories analysis involves detailed explorations of "the micro-linguistic and social structure of the everyday, small narrative phenomena that occur 'naturally' between people" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 7), or what Phoenix (2008, p. 64) has referred to as "fine-grain analyses of the ways in which people 'do' narratives in the context of interactions." As such, an emphasis on small stories "tends to prioritize 'event' over experience and socially-oriented over individually-oriented narrative research" (Phoenix, 2008, p. 7). Those who are interested more in the autobiographical, extended personal narratives inherent in life story research tend to point to the "experiential richness and reflectiveness" (Phoenix, 2008, p. 8) involved by taking into account the *big* picture. In the analysis of identity issues, the autobiographical content of big stories becomes the unit of analysis. It is the big story, experience-centered approach that I adopt in this thesis.

Creswell (2007, pp. 512-525) highlights various aspects that characterize such holistic, experience-centered narrative research: the subject or participant is often a single individual; a traditional post-introduction literature section is not included, but

rather appropriate literature and research studies are incorporated into the final sections of the study; the researcher is present in the narrative report and underlines the importance of learning from participants in a particular setting; themes are discussed after presenting the story. He neatly summarizes the narrative research process as typically involving the following (Creswell, 2007, p. 512):

1) Understand and represent experiences through the stories individual(s) live and feel;
2) Minimize the use of literature and focus on the experience of the individual(s);
3) Explore the meaning of the individual(s) experiences as told through a story or stories;
4) Collect field texts that document the individual's story in his or her own words;
5) Analyze the stories by retelling the individual's story;
6) Analyze the stories by identifying themes or categories of information;
7) Situate the story within its place or setting;
8) Analyze the story for chronological information about the individual's past, present and future;
9) Collaborate with the participant when writing the research study;
10) Write the study in a flexible story-telling mode;
11) Evaluate the study based on the depth, accuracy, persuasiveness and realism of the account.

The narrative research stance I take in this study, of course, makes some fundamental philosophical assumptions about knowledge and reality, which place the study firmly within the interpretive mode of research. Its epistemological stance strongly rejects the objectivism inherent in the positivist paradigm in favour of viewing human knowledge and meaning as being personally and socially constructed. This epistemology, often termed *constructionism* (e. g., Crotty, 1998, p. 42; Pring, 2000, p. 44), is one which sees knowledge as "dependent on the knower and his/her context" (Ernest, 1994, p.

36), and is akin to *tacit* knowledge resulting from experience and understanding (Stake, 1978, p. 6). It is supported by a relativist view of ontology that recognises *multiple realities*, rejects the notion of absolute truths, and espouses a view of social reality as context dependent.

From a literary perspective, Bruner (1986) applies this paradigmatic distinction specifically to the analysis of stories, underlining the essential differences between the 'top-down' analysis based on hypothesis and the search for the right explanation, and the 'bottom-up' analysis of exploring the particular without the need for proving or disproving theory. Similarly, Polkinghorne (1995) makes a distinction between the *analysis of narratives* approach, resulting in categorisation, thematic coding, and generalizations, and the *narrative analysis* approach where the outcome of research is a focus on the particularities of a coherent life story. Bruner (1986) further highlights 'two modes of thought': the 'logico-scientific' or 'paradigmatic' mode and the 'narrative' mode. On the one hand, the "application of the paradigmatic mode leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, sound argument and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis" (Bruner, 1986, p. 13). On the other hand:

> The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily "true") historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience. (Bruner, 1986, p. 13)

As narrative researcher, in focussing on the particularity and uniqueness of an individual's experiences, I am embracing subjectivity, not only in terms of taking an epistemological standpoint, but also in terms of criteria for evaluating research (an issue to be addressed in Chapter Three) and my own positioning in the study as

co-participant in terms of reflexivity and professional development. But most importantly, in taking a narrative approach, I support Plummer's (1983, p. 1) view that "the researcher is there in the first instance to give 'voice' to other people." For the participant in this kind of study, telling their life story represents an opportunity to voice their experiences, feelings and views, and hopefully in doing so help them explore and understand their own values and personal and professional teaching identities. As Atkinson (1998, p. 7) points out, "telling our story enables us to be heard, recognized, and acknowledged by others. Story makes the implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear." This process inevitably involves a strong degree of trust between informant and researcher, between narrator and narrative analyst, and as such involves a relationship which goes well beyond the distance traditionally associated with more postpositivistic approaches to research.

The participant/researcher relationship

I argue that the nature of the personal relationship between participant and researcher is of fundamental importance in bringing to fruition this kind of narrative study, in enabling the effective use of life story method for gathering data, and of course for the quality and depth of that data. The researcher/participant relationship is especially significant in this study given that it involves a single participant, and which therefore depends so overwhelmingly on the generosity, willingness, and active involvement of one individual. It is appropriate therefore to give a detailed description of the participant's role and process of involvement in this study, and of the participant/researcher relationship.

Rachael, the sole participant in this study, is a 58 year-old, British teacher of English who has spent the last fifteen years teaching at universities and high schools in Japan.

As I stated in Chapter One, the participant's name used in this study is not a pseudonym. This is because Rachael wishes to have her real name used. Though this raises the issue of ethical anonymity, and challenges traditional methods of research where anonymity is the norm, I would argue that as researcher I must not only respect and adhere to her right to make this choice in ethical terms, but it is a decision I also feel comfortable with: names do represent an essential part of a person's particular identity and personality, despite, in most cases, us having had no choice in the matter. Furthermore, as I explore and then write about Rachael's experiences, being able to use her real name further allows me a greater sense of connectedness, shared reality, and above all, responsibility and mutual trust.

Rachael's involvement in this study can be described using Goodson and Sikes' (2001, p. 25) criterion of *extreme case*, where the research participant stands out in some way as having particular attributes or experiences when compared to others. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rachael was initially one of ten teachers who took part in a previous study (Ford, 2008) regarding classroom language policy, and she stood out as being a teacher who had a very strong commitment to establishing a strict English only classroom environment. As a university teaching colleague, we have often spent time talking about our various classroom issues and approaches, and I became particularly interested in Rachael's strict approach, given that there seemed among most teachers to be a growing trend toward making use of students' L1 in their classes.

As a participant in this research Rachael has been extremely generous with her time, never hesitated in sharing her life experiences, and always willing to discuss the whole research process with me, while at the same time recognizing that she is getting

benefit from it herself as it encourages her to reflect further on her teaching practices. In fact, this is an issue Rachael raised herself early on when I asked her if she would take part in the study and outlined the individual commitment it would involve, she suggesting it was a timely period in her life to reflect where she was going, recognizing it as a genuine opportunity for active engagement in her own professional development. This early sense of understanding the mutual benefits of the research process is significant given that as researchers of people's lives and personal experiences we need to be careful about entering into a potentially one-sided and exploitative relationship, which has led Measor and Sikes (1992) to highlight such negative metaphors used as the researcher engaging participants in "social striptease" (Ball, 1983, p. 95), requiring participants to "lift away every fig leaf" (Campbell, 1988, p. 59), and indulge in a "rape model" of conducting research (Lather, 1986, p. 263). As such, I am particularly aware of trying to work within a collaborative research paradigm and "a mode that fully incorporates teachers into the research design" (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p. 220). The sense of mutual benefit is something I shall draw attention to later in the concluding chapter as I reflect on evaluating a contribution of knowledge to the field that this study makes.

As I explained to Rachael my intended research direction, first as a classroom ethnography and then as a personal life narrative approach, I felt very conscious of the need to emphasize that she could withdraw at any time, especially given the kind of lengthy commitment it was going to involve, and despite the fact she was the only participant. In fact, our informal 'research bargain,' that can be described as the "understanding reached by the researcher and the participant, regarding what the nature of their relationship is" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1979, p. 116), was never formalized in writing, probably because of the sense of trust, mutual confidence, and

of mutual commitment to the project that we attained early on in the process and that we have maintained throughout, establishing what can be termed as a "sense of common ground and rapport" (Roach, 2005, p. 129).

Rachael has been unhesitating in expressing her sense of commitment to this project, something which has taken the pressure off on my part as a researcher being constantly aware of demands being made on a single participant. For example, at moments when I felt the need to yet again thank Rachael for her time, her response would be "No, thank *you*!" When I needed to organize some extra time together for clarifying something in the data or arrange another interview, her response would be "Now, when's good for *you*." And, if, as I did, on various occasions point to the personal and perhaps sensitive nature of some of the things she had revealed in her taped monologue life story, suggesting that she may wish not to have some of it used, she would state emphatically and with humor, "Look, whatever is in there feel free to use as you wish. I've been through my therapy." And, indeed, Rachael's openness, willingness to share her life, and her overriding sense of humor, are also an integral part of her classroom, despite being a strict disciplinarian concerning her demanding classroom language policy.

In fact, I felt Rachael's openness and sharing demanded a sense of equality, so that the roles of 'giver' and 'taker' were not completely exclusive to one person. This has resulted in establishing a mutually beneficial ongoing professional dialogue that has involved us talking about various issues in my own teaching life during the few years of this study and its writing up period, as well as other aspects of Rachael's life that have not been directly relevant to this study. In addition, Rachael has been listener and adviser at times when I have felt I was struggling with the project. In essence, as

mutual confidants, our relationship has gone well beyond the demands of research. Yet this characteristic, termed variously as "self-disclosure" and "reciprocity" on the part of the researcher has been emphasized as a very important one in terms of ethical issues in using life stories, and one that has been described as a tactic that "involves a kind of mutual baring of the soul and psyche, which diminishes the distance between 'taker' and 'giver'" (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p. 215).

Furthermore, from my own perspective I am also cognizant of the self-reflexive nature of this study and of always being present in the text. It is a study which has partly resulted from a critical questioning of my own teaching values and practices, and I feel I am constantly learning from the participant's experiences, beliefs, and knowledge, something that Creswell (2007, p. 515) has emphasized as an important value and outcome of narrative research. But, whatever my role and positioning in this study, it is Rachael's character, flexibility, and commitment to this project that have made the following type of data collection possible.

The taped monologue

To get Rachael to give her teaching life story I used a technique that I had employed previously in a study about the critical experiences of Japanese returnee students (Ford, 2009), the *taped monologue*. It involved giving Rachael a small portable tape recorder and asking her to find some quiet time one evening, turn it on, keep it running and tell me her *teaching life story,* an open prompt similar to those used in previous research using life stories (e. g., Casey, 1993; Osler, 1997; Roach, 2005). For some, the taped monologue may sound rather challenging and unnerving: talking aloud in solitude about important, personal experiences and emotions. As such, I recognize the importance of having the right kind of participant for this research. The

taped monologue technique depends on having a participant who can talk extensively, and Rachael certainly has an expansive and talkative nature. Even in the relatively restricted framework of the earlier semi-structured interview scenario (Ford, 2008) she had needed no prompting as she expanded easily on structured questions, whereas some of the other participants' responses were rather limited. In addition, she is someone who is constantly self-critical and questioning about her life values and choices, and about her teaching practices.

A fundamental principle of the taped monologue is that, as the researcher is not present, the speaker/teller is in complete control of topic selection, and it gives them the freedom to determine the temporal and sequential course of their narrative. The method also helps avoid imposing, consciously or subconsciously, any limitations in terms of content orientation on the participant. At moments of hesitation or silence, perhaps at a moment of silent recall or reflection, the speaker remains in control, whereas an interviewer may be tempted to jump in with a question that moves the speaker on, wary of fulfilling an agenda governed by a set of predetermined research questions. While it is demanding for the participant, feedback on this taped monologue process suggests that it does have a certain liberating and even therapeutic quality of experience, allowing the speaker to talk freely about their experiences without constraints of questioning or interruptions from an interviewer, and in a relaxing environment and at a time that really suits them and their mood, as of course it does not depend on any prearranged time or place.

In fact, it was not until Rachael gave me her near two-hour monologue, a fascinating account of her teaching journey, that I began to see a clear narrative methodological direction for this study emerging. For as I listened, I began to reflect particularly on

the importance of life experiences and critical episodes and how they can impact on our teaching values and practices, and indeed how teaching experiences may impact upon the very nature of the kind of people we become in our day-to-day lives, leading me to support the conviction that "understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is" (Goodson, 1992, p. 234).

While Rachael's taped monologue covered many aspects of the teaching side of her life from her late twenties on, I also wished to get some background information about her life, such as where she was born and grew up, her family, and early education. This would help me give a brief biographical outline providing general context for her teaching life story. This kind of information is often gained in narrative and life story research by participants providing a written *timeline*, which can also act as mental and emotional preparation for the interviewee, and act as a prompt during the interview itself (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 30; Roach, 2005, p. 145). However, in my case, as Rachael had already done her teaching life story monologue, I did a short interview with her which focused on getting her to provide this background information (see Appendix One for a list of questions which guided the interview).

Again, I am somewhat reluctant to use the term 'interview' in Rachael's case given that my role was predominantly listener, as the value again of having a participant who is a great talker and storyteller about their life was apparent: during a 45-minute period Rachael weaved together effortlessly a reflection on her childhood, early schooling, parents, conflicts with her mother, and love of reading, bringing me right up to date with her life and her growing interest in future teaching work with the Voluntary Services Organization (VSO). Again, from this 'interview' I have learnt the

importance of trying to lessen the formality of these moments of personal sharing as much as possible by choosing an appropriate setting and atmosphere: we preceded her story by having a relaxing lunch at a quiet restaurant as an informal location. The interview was recorded using a portable cassette recorder, but I did not transcribe this interview but rather made notes about the key points of her biography. The content of this interview has been summarized as a brief biographical profile at the beginning of Chapter Seven, where I move on to discussing the main narrative thread of her teaching life story.

In addition to the taped monologue and the biographical profile, the final data came from two closing interviews with Rachael which took place following her reading of how I presented her story and my analysis of it. Her reflections in these interviews helped shape the final chapter of this thesis and some of her comments are incorporated into that chapter as I discuss the outcomes of this study (see Appendix Two for a list of questions which guided these interviews).

As the primary data source for this study was Rachael's lengthy taped monologue, I will now describe the process of transcribing, representing and analyzing life story/personal narrative data.

Life story transcription and analysis

Once a life story has been told (and recorded by the researcher), the researcher/analyst needs to determine how they should best go about representing these experiences as text, and how they should be transcribed. Do we try to transcribe every word, every pause, hesitation, silence, every change in intonation? Do we eliminate what we may interpret as false starts and repetitions, focusing on producing

a coherent and fluent text, or would such a process not be a faithful reflection/representation of the storyteller's experience?

In transcribing Rachael's story myself, I was very much aware of the desire to respect the entirety of her story as told and to value the spontaneity of language used. As a flowing, spontaneous taped monologue her story had jumps back and forward in time, false starts, and hesitation markers, though she proved a remarkable teller and talker in leaving only very short silences during the 116 minutes of her monologue, throughout which the tape was running continuously. As well as being aware of the importance of considering ethical issues, such as preserving trust and confidentiality, I also realized that when researchers do their own transcribing, it acts as a rigorous exercise in paying attention to every detail of language and content. It is an essential part of gaining insights that otherwise may have been missed and of getting in touch with the data. In fact, before undertaking transcription, I listened through Rachael's monologue a few times to get a general understanding and to make a kind of emotional connection with her experiences. As I have mentioned previously, it was only at this point that I began to recognize the real value, potential, and possible benefits of the study of teachers' life story experiences and a realization of the direction that this study would take.

At about 17,000 words the transcription process was a lengthy one. I transcribed as accurately and in as much detail as possible to try and give a genuine reflection of Rachael's actual choice of words and language used. I used the same tape cassette player/recorder that Rachael had used for recording the monologue, which had a counter, an essential function for referencing various parts of the story. I made a mini disc copy recording, editing in numbered sections, and so marking divisions to

facilitate accessing specific episodes of the life story. Then, focusing on content orientation I extracted hesitation markers (e. g., *erm*, *err*, *you know*), false starts, and any overt or extended repetition (e. g., "They, they were, they were, you know, I don't know") from the original transcript where I thought they did not affect meaning. I verified these choices with Rachael. The complete transcript - excluding the various names of real persons, institutions, and places - is accessible to the readers of this thesis by email request (see Appendix Three). This full transcription acts not only as a genuine reflection of Rachael's original monologue, but also as evidence of how I have gone from this original transcription to the story as presented in Chapters Six and Seven. In addition, it fulfills a criterion for evaluating this kind of life story research, that is *pragmatic use*, which along with other evaluation criteria, will be discussed in Chapter Three. In effect, with decisions regarding transcription of a personal narrative the process of analysis has already begun, as the main decision at the stage of analysis is whether to focus on the content or on the form and structure of the narrative, or perhaps on both.

Probably the most influential structural approach to narrative analysis has been Labov's seminal model (Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967), discussed and applied by a range of narrative scholars (e. g., Langellier, 1989; Riessman, 1993; Toolan, 2001). Focusing on the analysis of narrative episodes, the model consists of six essential structural components: *abstract*, *orientation*, *complicating action*, *evaluation*, *resolution* and *coda*. The *abstract* and the *coda* represent an opening and closure to the narrative episode. While the *abstract* is a kind of stage setting for the story to be told or brief summary, the *coda* shows us the story is over and that we are returning to a present perspective. The term *orientation* clarifies time, place, circumstances and participants. The narrative core, what actually happens, following

temporal and sequential rules, is referred to as the *complicating action*, with the *resolution* telling what finally happened. The *evaluation* shows why the story was told, why it is significant, or in Labov's (1972, p. 366) words, it is "the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its *raison d'etre*." Some researchers (e. g., Gee, 1985; Riessman, 1990) have used this influential model as a starting point for analyzing narrative episodes, focusing on how the story is put together structurally and linguistically, emphasizing that the language and structure used become essential in interpreting content.

However, in a typical life story approach (Atkinson, 1998) content takes strong precedence over form, and what is told is considered of greater interest to the researcher than how it is told or how it is structured. Furthermore, the archetypal life story method presents the narrator's experiences using a combination of direct quotation and extensive summaries or commentaries. Of course, this balance between summary/comment and the narrator's actual words can vary, with Atkinson (1998, p. 4) defining life story method in terms of being "as close to 100% in the words of the insider-story teller as it can be." But what all life story approaches have in common is a focus on the content of the experiences as opposed to how they are structured or on the language, though of course inevitably these formal properties do require a certain degree of attention.

Also, in analyzing a narrative, it is not just the story itself and the way it is put together that might come under scrutiny. Pointing to its *dual* nature, Toolan (2001, p. 1) notes that when reading a narrative "part of the experience is the activity of 'reading' or scrutinizing the character of the teller" as well as attending to the events or the story itself. Furthermore, narrators may well embed their own ideological

perspectives and interests into their personal life stories (Langellier, 1989). As such, with narrative analysis, as Josselson (2004, p. 3) observes, "the epistemological praxis relies on hermeneutics, a disciplined form of moving from text to meaning." For Ricoeur (1981) this interpretive process involves taking either a *restoration* or *demystification* approach. The first of these - *restoration* - can also be described as a hermeneutics of *faith* in that the researcher's role is one of "distilling, elucidating, and illuminating the intended meanings of the informant" (Josselson, 2004, p. 5). Conversely, the *demystification* approach can also be seen as a hermeneutics of *suspicion*, whereby the researcher's attention is focused on "the omissions, disjunctions, inconsistencies, and contradictions in an account" (Josselson, 2004, pp. 14-15).

This leads us to consider, as we analyze life stories, how information is revealed. Faced with extensive narrative data like Rachael's monologue, the process of analysis can seem an overwhelming undertaking, being "susceptible to endless interpretation, by turns inconsequential and deeply meaningful" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 1). Clearly, in disentangling this wealth of data narrative research needs to focus on the analysis of main themes around which the life story is constructed (Plummer, 2001), and particularly we need to attend to recurrent themes or motifs, which may be embedded in different episodes (Phoenix, 2008, p. 67).

de St. Aubin, Wandrei, Skerven, and Coppolillo (2006, p. 233) have pointed to three main ways in which information is revealed in life stories, from the more explicit revelations to the more implicit. Using the example of expressing anger, they highlight: *conscious and direct self-referencing* ("I have a lot of anger in my life"); *unstated but recurrent*, which involves talking about relationships and life episodes

that are rife with mentions of anger; *tacit*, where anger is revealed in examples of the hostile treatment of others. In close reading and analysis of a life story text it is important to keep such ways of communicating in mind, ranging from the more explicit to more implicit ways that reveal something about the narrator and/or the issue or theme in question. Riessman (2008, p. 153) emphasizes the need for the kind of "close reading" of the literary scholar, the kind of attention to detail that might illicit irony, ambiguity, foretelling, symbol and metaphor, like signs and signposting inserted by the narrator, either at a conscious or subconscious level as a means of aiding our interpretation. That is we attend to a life narrative on the basis of it being like a literary text which "has a sense of structure and order because the elements and events making up the story have been 'put there' by the author" (Barthes cited in Crossley, 2002, p. 7).

Another important consideration in transcribing and analyzing life story data is how best to represent the participant's story as text. Eisner (1982) distinguishes between analyzing narratives in a *demonstrative* or *inductive* mode. Some researchers use the data to reflect their thoughts and theories (demonstrative), whereas those writing in the inductive mode try to let the data, the personal narrative, speak for itself. The demonstrative mode will require organizing material to reflect thematic categories, whereas the inductive mode will be more faithful to the chronology of the teller. Riessman (1993, p. 4), in supporting the inductive perspective, argues that "precisely because they are meaning-making structures, narratives must be preserved, not fractured, by investigators, who must respect respondents' ways of constructing meaning." One of the main dilemmas, then, facing the narrative/life story researcher as they approach issues of transcription and analysis is what part of the life story is presented in the teller's own words and to what extent the story retains the narrator's

chronology and structure. The demonstrative and inductive modes of analysis need not, however, be exclusive.

As I moved from transcribed text to interpreting meaning, and in applying the theoretical and hermeneutical processes I have outlined above, I analyzed the data of Rachael's teaching life story being open to the complexities and possible contradictions in her narrative while being sensitive to the fact that it is a reflection of a narrator's "natural voice" (Kelchtermans, 2000). In so doing I wanted to keep in mind that "the point of a life story is to give people the opportunity to tell their story the way they choose to tell it" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 9). This involved being open to looking for the experience-centered *big* story (Bamberg, 2004, 2006), what I have termed as the *narrative thread* of Rachael's story, and attending to the values, recurring themes and motifs that she had embedded in her narrative. My approach is representative of what Polkinghorne (1995) has termed as *narrative analysis*, where the aim is to produce a coherent whole, rather than *analysis of narratives*, which involves classifying and coding for the purpose of finding cross-case similarities and commonalities in order to justify findings through generalizability.

This analytical process resulted in selecting narrative episodes and critical incidents which I interpreted as times of transition, revelation, epiphanies, and conflicts within the narrative thread. Furthermore, in analyzing issues of personal identity, and following Baumeister and Wilson's (1996) framework for *needs of meaning* (which I shall discuss in Chapter Three), I looked for those parts of Rachael's narrative that underlined her sense of future purpose, moral values, efficacy and self-worth. This resulted in focusing on the emergence of her interest in working for the Voluntary Services Organization (VSO). This analysis of the holistic developmental process of

Rachael's professionality and teaching identity is presented in Chapter Seven.

Furthermore, in relation to the Japanese socio-educational context and relevant critical cultural knowledge, I analyzed Rachael's story in terms of her "benefic authoritarian" approach, which incorporates a strong commitment to L2 only classroom policy, humanism, discipline and control. These comprise fundamental aspects of Rachael's professional teaching principles and practices. This part of the analysis is presented in Chapter Six.

Having outlined a narrative research design in this chapter, I discussed issues of analysis and I stated the process by which I transcribed and analyzed Rachael's story. In the next chapter, I shall now focus on issues concerning the use of life narrative as an exploration of personal and professional identity. In the chapter I discuss issues of narrative coherence, subjectivity, the analytical framework of *needs for meaning* in relating personal narratives (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996), and appropriate valuative criteria, all of which support the narrative analysis in Chapters Six and Seven.

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Chapter Three: Narrative as an Exploration of Identity

This thesis takes the position that the study of an extended narrative - in this case a reflective monologue - as a teaching life story is an ideal way of exploring the issues relating to a teacher's professional development and their *practicing professional identity*, a construct which I have defined as a set of values, principles and practices which guide an individual's present teaching philosophy and future directions. In taking the view that the stories we tell "are the means by which identities may be fashioned" (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p. 1), and that our personal stories help define and shape our individuality and show how we differ from others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kanno, 2000), my position therefore assumes that the life story incidents and personal stories that a participant chooses to relate about themselves, and the perspectives that they offer, are a reflection on and of their professional development and identity.

As teachers engage with narrative as *reflective practice* (Schon, 1983), the process provides opportunity for them to "explore and understand how different social, cultural, historical, and personal factors influence their educational values and practices and their professional and personal identity" (Gill & Pryor, 2006, p. 288). Furthermore, it is the telling and retelling of a life story that helps our understanding of connecting past experiences with our ever changing present perspectives on life, as the plot may be constantly revised as experiences and events occur that enlighten our understanding of past episodes (Kanno, 2003; Linde, 1993). Thus, seeing the self as an ongoing narrative, whereby "events or selves, in order to exist, must be encoded as story elements" (Munro, 1998, p. 6), rather than as a substance or product, reveals the temporal, developmental and fluid nature of human existence (Polkinghorne, 1988),

and as such, in the voicing of their experiences and stories teacher narrators may well go through a process of change and transition, self-revelation, or even reaffirmation of the principles and practices which are a basis of their professional identity.

In this chapter, I discuss key aspects involved in the study of identity, such as the issue of coherence, the postmodern perspective, and the importance of a *needs for meaning* framework (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996), leading to a closing discussion on the valuative criteria used in life narrative research.

Defining a coherent sense of self

As the stories we tell define our sense of self both at a personal level and for others, and are a reflection of our attitudes, beliefs, behavior and values, various writers have come to describe them metaphorically as the "stories we live by" (e. g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Heilbrun, 1988; McAdams, 1993). This metaphor lies at the heart of narrative research, in that research in this field is firmly grounded in the assumption of the storied nature of human conduct and experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Sarbin, 1986), and on the view that "we employ narrative truth in our attempt to structure reality and our lives" (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p. 225). The notion of *continuity* in narrative is based firmly on the view that our lived experiences are interrelated and that one experience has developed from another (Dewey, 1961).

Life story tellers tend to produce relatively coherent narratives, what Geertz (1995, p. 2) describes as "hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seemed to have happened: pieced together patternings." This view of the connectedness of experiences leads Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 2) to observe that "wherever one positions oneself in that continuum - the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined

future - each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future." As such, what can be considered as distinct events and defining moments in one's life can only be assigned greater significance when they are taken as part of the whole story, as significant episodes in the big picture, for example a *teaching life story*. And, the way a teller structures a narrative and the way they create this sense of continuity, the order they give it, what they include and what they do not tell us, are essential to the individual's meaning-making process. In psychological terms, we provide our lives with *thematic unity* (Taylor, 1989), for some a false coherence that can be described as a *biographical illusion* (Bourdieu, 1986), whereby "any coherence that a life has is imposed by the larger culture, by the researcher, and by the subject's belief that his or her life should have coherence" (Denzin, 1989, p. 61). However, more important than establishing whether biographical coherence is illusory or not is the consideration of "how individuals give coherence to their lives when they write or talk self-autobiographies" (Denzin, 1989, p. 62).

There is disagreement, then, as to what extent personal narratives may actually reflect a genuine sense of coherent identity. While interest in identity issues is more recent in TESOL and the field of education in general, it has, of course, a long history in the field of psychology and sociology. Perhaps the most influential early work in identity studies is Erik Erikson's (1963, 1968) 'synthetic' model of identity formation which underlines the importance of resolution of personal conflicts in youth as being an essential part of attaining psychological well being and wholeness in adulthood. From this perspective, relating personal narratives and storytelling therefore has an integrative function in personality development, resulting in what some psychologists would view as the construction of a self-defining life story that reflects a sense of coherent identity (McAdams, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1988). However, McAdams,

Josselson, and Lieblich (2006) highlight three main dilemmas in the study of personal narratives that need close consideration: whether they can really show evidence of unity or multiplicity of the self; the degree to which they are determined by self agency or society and social context; and thirdly, how they are evidence of stability and continuity of self or show growth and change in identity development.

Echoing Laing's (1969/1990) seminal work in the field of psychology, where psychological and emotional well being does not necessitate the resolution of conflicting parts of personality, some narrative theorists argue that life stories can express multiple, co-existing selves (Gergen, 1991; Hermans, 1996; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995; Raggat, 2006). This has led to taking a *dialogical exchange* approach to the study of narrative, which holds that "the multi-voiced self-narrative is organized around "valuations"" (de St. Aubin et al., 2006, p. 232) that can be interpreted as assigning particular importance to aspects of a person's identity. In this light the life story narrative can be seen as an opportunity for an individual to engage in *imaginal polyphonic dialogue* (Hermans, 1996; Hermans & Kempen, 1993), with the constant reevaluation, revision, and reassessment of one's life and work values, principles, and directions. As such, we are engaging in an essentially therapeutic dialogue between our conflicting selves. Indeed, embracing such conflict and contradiction is a key principle and a rationale behind the undertaking of narrative research:

> …we frame our research in terms of narrative because we believe that by doing
> so we are able to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to
> bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about
> individual and social change. (Squire et al., 2008, p. 1)

Highlighting themes of complexity and difference, leading to an acceptance of

multiplicity and unresolved tensions, both in personal and professional life, reflects taking a postmodern perspective. Indeed, the postmodern condition can be seen as "a continuous inquiry into self-definition" (Hassan, 2001, p. 6). It represents a viewpoint that rejects convenient categorization and classification, embraces subjectivity, freeing us from "the dilemma of being either for or against" (Foucault, 1988, p. 154). Taking a postmodern perspective recognizes we are complex human beings, open to flux and change, leading us to constantly reflect on such questions as:

> Who are you? What are you? Why are you? Why do you think, believe, do, make sense of the world and the things that happen to you, as you do? Why have these particular things happened to you? Why has your life taken the course that it has? Where is it likely to go? (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 1)

And these are some of the major questions that researchers interested in employing a narrative approach and life story method may seek to explore and interpret with their participants in seeking to define those influences that have impacted on professional teaching identities. In terms of my own research perspective, invoking postmodernism not only theoretically supports the possibility of viewing identity as fragmentary and as an expression of multiple voices but also represents the fundamental rejection of modernist, rationalist, and postpositivist ways of undertaking research in TESOL and education, as I referred to in the introductory chapter. That is, in taking a single case approach to the study of teacher identity and narrative analysis of teaching experience, I am not attending to similarities and differences, commonalities across classifications and categories between participants in the quest for generalization and predictability as research outcomes.

To take a purely postmodernist/poststructuralist approach to the study of a life story, however, assumes that the production of narratives results from multiple, disunified

subjectivities, whereby "the storyteller does not tell the story, so much as she/he is told by it" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 3). Consequently, embracing subjectivity and the conflicts inherent in the multiple voices evident in an individual's life story gives full reign to an individual's unique character and personality, and allows the researcher to remain faithful to the story as lived and told by the individual participant. However, I wish to come closer to a more traditional, humanist perspective on narrative which places greater emphasis on the narrator's agency and self-determination. It is a more eclectic approach that may be termed as a "synthesis" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 4) of the humanist and postmodern views, or as a "narrative psychological approach" (Crossley, 2002, p. 9). As such my approach to narrative analysis will involve the "maintenance of a humanist conception of a singular, unified subject, at the same time as the promotion of an idea of narrative as always multiple, socially constructed and constructing, reinterpreted and reinterpretable" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 4).

Taking such a *narrative psychological approach* provides an alternative to "postmodernist approaches which have considerably overplayed the disorderly, chaotic, and variable nature of contemporary human experience" (Crossley, 2002, p. 9). Squire (2008, pp. 53-54) observes that "the experience-oriented approach initially suggests that experience is rooted in a 'subject' of those experiences, which has some unity and agency. This position is now sometimes asserted 'against' postmodernism's preoccupations with an entirely fragmented and socially determined subject." As such, while we may recognize oppositions and personal conflicts, at the heart of a narrative "a certain kind of unity of selfhood can be discerned…narrative identity can sometimes be seen as expressing multiplicity in unity, and unity in multiplicity" (McAdams et al., 2006, p. 6). Taking this view of presenting a coherent sense of identity, in what may otherwise seem a chaotic world full of contradictions, allows us

to perceive a *narrative thread* running through a life story.

The 'Needs for meaning' framework

In analyzing the narrative thread in Rachael's story, I use Baumeister and Wilson's (1996) four *needs for meaning* framework. In doing so, I highlight the connections of past and present events with future directions in her professional teaching life, leading to a focus on her intended involvement in VSO work. Following Rosenthal (1993), and others, I explore the view that a life story narrated in the present is a construction of both past and future anticipated life directions. As such the incidents and events related "are always embedded in a coherent, meaningful context, a biographical construct" (pp. 62-63):

> The present perspective determines what the subject considers biographically relevant, how she or he develops thematic and temporal links between various experiences, and how past, present or anticipated future realities influence the personal interpretation of the meaning of life. (Rosenthal, 1993, pp. 62-63)

As Taylor (1989, p. 42) comments, we need to feel engaged in that which "constitutes a rich, meaningful life, as against an empty, meaningless one." Following McAdams' (1996) approach to thinking about self and identity in narrative terms, Baumeister and Wilson (1996) put forward the notion of *needs for meaning* as an analytical framework for elaborating on the view that life stories act as a way of making sense of our lives in a world where we may otherwise succumb to postmodern chaos and limitless conflict and contradiction. In requiring a narrative structure, the projection of a coherent sense of narrative identity incorporates various interpretive needs. It is these needs which guide the construction of life stories. Specifically, Baumeister and Wilson (1996) highlight four needs that narrators develop in relating their life as meaningful: purpose, value/justification, efficacy and self-worth.

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Finding purpose, as expressed implicitly through the events, beliefs and perspectives related in a life story, is perhaps the main challenge in communicating one's personal present identity. It involves telling a life story where past events and present activities can be seen as in some way influential or causal in future outcomes. For the narrator critical incidents in their lives can be valued based on how they have brought about some positive link to their present identity and how they see themselves in the future. Of course, these experiences or events may be essentially positive or negative at the time of living them, but it is how we interpret them in terms of future outcomes which give them value. In studying narratives as examples of *the redemptive self*, McAdams (1996, 2006a, 2006b) has emphasized the importance of thinking about purpose in terms of *generativity*, that is the extent to which people relate bad experiences as contributing to positive outcomes, connecting to present learning and the achievement of future life goals.

A life narrative reflects one of the fundamental concerns as a human being: that we can perceive, and invest in, a positive future for ourselves. And, as we reach the latter parts of our professional lives, perhaps there is a strong tendency to decide to engage only with those opportunities and potential experiences on the basis that we can perceive some relevance for where we wish to go in the future, asking ourselves such questions as "Why am I doing this? Where will it take me? Where do I go from here?" (Crossley, 2002, p. 7). We can take this idea of evaluating present experiences in terms of how they fit with our present goals and identity a step further by taking a retrospective view, whereby the narrator has taken a particularly proactive role at the time of engaging in past actions as present experience by already evaluating them in the light of investment in her or his future. This view is essentially that incorporated

in Husserl's theory of time consciousness: of *protention* (how we value events based on their significance for the future) and *retention* (how we retain memory of those past events we see as significant for our present). As Crossley (2002, p. 4) observes, "we cannot even experience anything as happening, as present, except against the background of what it succeeds and we anticipate will succeed it."

We are, then, constantly aware of building on our past experiences and of projecting into the future as we engage with the present. In motivational terms, like the language learner who may be highly motivated by a potential visit to the L2 target country, or by the increased possibility of a desired job, engagement with experience and learning is highly dependent on our perceptions of the value of these opportunities in terms of our future. In applying this notion to the expression of a life quest or mission, Goodson (2006) refers to the concepts of *primal learning* and *narrative capital*, where primal learning is "the kind of learning that goes on in the elaboration and ongoing maintenance of a life narrative or identity project" (p. 16). We also reflect back on our past and select those incidents, actions, and experiences which accrue as a kind of narrative capital for justifying how we wish to present ourselves in the present. Furthermore, we may push aside any reference to those experiences which do not fit with our projected persona.

As narrators tell their life experiences, giving them structure and shape, and attaching significance to them in a way that explains lives being lived in the present, narrative researchers need to accept that they may not be dealing in absolute truths but interpretations and self-constructions about individuals' lives and experiences. And, of course in many cases life stories cover an extended period of time, and are told at some distance, with memory and its fallibility playing an important role. We therefore

need to acknowledge that we are interpreting social reality as "the product of individual consciousness" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 5) and assuming a view of knowledge as being "personal, subjective and unique" (p. 6). In telling their own personal stories participants make choices, perhaps subconsciously, about what experiences to suppress and what experiences to bring to the fore or even embellish. As such, the researcher needs to be aware of the possibility that participants can create or project a self image of how they would like to be seen through the eyes of others or one that matches their own and others' expectations rather than reality.

Indeed, could it be that at times in telling our life stories, and in generating and maintaining a sense of purpose, we may even relate a version of our experience that is closer to what our ideal person would have done rather than what we actually did in any given situation or time in our life? To a certain extent, could we be indulging in self myth-making in that we tend to relate, and interpret as significant, those events and personal experiences that support our idea of the person we want to be seen as in the present? Do we therefore avoid mention of those experiences and actions that do not reflect this persona, self-image and preferred identity? Regarding this issue, Crossley (2002, p. 8) compares a life story narrator to the author of the literary text in that "we partially determine the course of our own lives by selecting and omitting certain elements and events." As we highlight, expound upon and expand those experiences which we feel demonstrate what we most value about ourselves and that we see as most significant in forming our present identity, our past experiences can then be seen as constructions, and in the process of selecting certain experiences in relating our life stories we are *constructing a narrative identity* (Ricoeur, 1984), in which we can express a clear sense of purpose and generativity.

In addition to establishing a clear sense of purpose, life narratives may also demonstrate a strong moral dimension. They can reveal "belief-based opinions, convictions, and assumptions one might hold - including what one believes to be correct in the domain of morality" (de St. Aubin et al., 2006, pp. 223-224). Life stories underpinning identity are a reflection of what we value most because they encourage the self-interpretation and evaluation of our moral and ethical standpoints. This has led Taylor (1988) to refer to narrative as *a moral topography of self*. As well as highlighting the purposive aspect of life narratives, Baumeister and Wilson (1996) also underline the significance of a moral dimension, as we assign value and justification to our actions. They observe that "if purpose gives meaning to specific events by linking them with subsequent positive outcomes, the second need endows events with meaning by linking them with abstract standards of right and wrong" (p. 323). This demonstration of a strong sense of morality may be particularly relevant for those life stories that show some kind of redemption or atonement for past actions, or requiring the transformation from bad to good. Connecting our sense of morality and sense of self results from the basic assumption of the need to feel connected with what we see as 'good' or of crucial importance to us and our community (Taylor, 1989, p. 42). This may be reflected in trying to show how past actions, bad and good, have led to the narrator's involvement in positive outcomes, such as doing something that can be seen as for the "general good of community" or that have contributed to the "realization of broad ideals" (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996, p. 324).

The third need for meaning is that of reflecting efficacy in one's life story. That is, as we relate our experiences and what has happened to us, we wish to demonstrate our own agency, and our control over these events. It is not enough to see positive outcomes as being accidental, fortuitous or resulting from a twist of fate. Rather,

people want their stories to show "that the positive outcomes were to some degree a product of their own efforts and actions" (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996, p. 324). This may be particularly significant in overcoming major dilemmas in one's life or the limitations society imposes on us due to social background, class, gender or lack of educational opportunities.

Riessman (1993) focuses on this sense of dilemma when she considers the personal narrative as speech that is organized around those *consequential* events where individuals "narrativize particular experiences in their lives, often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society" (p. 3). Such dilemmas, breaches or conflicts are often at the very heart of good narrative, both from a literary and personal perspective. Using the Joycean concept of *epiphanies of the ordinary*, Denzin (1988, 1989) considers such moments of revelation as occurring when an individual has to deal with, resolve, and make sense of personal dilemmas. As such, in terms of developing identity they are some of the defining moments in our lives, and an extended life story narrative tends to knit together these various narrative episodes or strands that represent illuminating experiences and times of self-discovery.

Telling a life narrative is essentially a question of reflecting a proactive rather than passive role in one's own development, and is consequently an empowering act, allowing us to take full possession and control of how we wish to project ourselves to others. This idea has led to the use of a *grasping* of our lives metaphor: for example, building on Ricoeur's (1984) theory of *narrative identity* construction as resulting out of the narration of selective experience, Carr (1986, p. 62) observes that we try to "dominate the flow of events by gathering them together in the forward-backward

grasp of the narrative act," and Taylor (1989, p. 47) suggests that "we grasp our lives in a *narrative*."

This brings us back to Bruner's (1986) view that the imaginative application of the narrative mode of thought deals in human intentions as well as action. Furthermore, we might make particular life directions the result of self-determination and individual agency, reflecting personal control over matters rather than being the result of chance occurrences or the intervention of others, or of societal pressures and influences. It is a way, after all, of showing, through self-affirmation, that we are in control of our lives, and that we are proactive in our identity formation. As Denzin (1989, p. 74) has observed, "many times a person will act as if he or she made his or her own history when, in fact, he or she was forced to make the history he or she lived." Also, Bruner (1987, p. 13) has pointed out that the personal and reflexive nature of narrative inevitably creates certain dilemmas, not least "the autobiographical narrator's irresistible error in accounting for his acts in terms of intentions when, in fact, they might have been quite otherwise determined." Thus, as Fowler (1973, pp. 123-124) has remarked, like Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* we can question "the nature of the assumed connections between narrated events…assumptions about cause and effect, or the relation between thought and action."

The way we relate our life story may also reflect the need for demonstrating a sense of self-worth, and this is the final need for meaning highlighted by Baumeister and Wilson (1996). Whereas efficacy implies making a difference through a sense of being in control of one's life directions and subsequent outcomes, self-worth suggests that the narrator is in some way privileged or superior. Baumeister and Wilson (1996) suggest self-worth is based on stable attributes of personality and self, properties that

are seen to elevate the narrator above others. While this may be done explicitly, it is usually communicated in an implicit way, through incidents or comments that can be easily interpreted as demonstrating personal success or a belonging to an elite or privileged group. This may, of course, be extended to one's reflections on the influence and affect we are able to have on others, on making a difference to the lives of others, those around us, socially or in the workplace.

It is the interlinking of these four needs (purpose, morality, efficacy, self-worth) in creating a coherent narrative thread that gives meaningful self-interpretation to one's life. As such, "life stories will presumably be constructed so as to suggest that goals and fulfillments were achieved, actions were justifiable and good, efficacy was high, and self-worth was affirmed" (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996, p. 325). Also, while a life story may include various episodes that perhaps show the narrator in a negative light, these episodes will ultimately be placed within the big picture of the main thread of the life narrative, and as such be seen as contributing to a positive outcome and to one's present goals and life's directions.

In discussing the formation of narrative identity, and relating it to the expression of needs for meaning, I have raised such issues as ambiguity, credibility, and intentionality. With these in mind, how do narrative researchers go about justifying research outcomes? What kind of criteria do they use that value and give significance to knowledge claims from the study of life story experiences?

Valuative criteria for life narrative research

In justifying research outcomes researchers need to make clear the criteria by which that research can be judged. Clearly, a piece of research where the knowledge claims

are based on establishing generalizations and using statistical inference will not deal with the same values for justification as research which aims at getting an in-depth understanding of the experiences, emotions or beliefs of individuals. However, the pressure to be able to *generalize* research outcomes is undoubtedly great, especially among budding researchers. Peshkin (1993, p. 23), though, cautions against the need of qualitative researchers to try and defend their research in terms of quantitative values or through a sense of the inferiority of qualitative outcomes. He places emphasis on the immense generative potential of qualitative research, and in surveying various qualitative research papers, cites a range of possible interpretive outcomes, such as providing insights that change behaviour or identify problems.

One traditional way suggested for giving greater weight to qualitative research findings is that they be based on multiple methods or *triangulation* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; van Lier, 1988), for example combining questionnaire, interview and observation data. This variety of data can not only provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon and participants being investigated, but also adds a considerable sense of rigor to the process and can mitigate against the possible fallibility of a single type of data source. In this way, "triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4). However, Peshkin (1993) suggests that this is playing the scientific game, that is trying to justify interpretive research from a scientific viewpoint, and while triangulation is an essential consideration for ethnographic studies, it is not particularly significant for narrative or life story research.

In rejecting reliability and validity as inappropriate standards for evaluating life story outcomes, Atkinson (1998, p. 60) emphasizes that "historical truth is not the main

issue in narrative; telling a story implies a certain, and maybe, unique point of view." In addressing the question "How are we to evaluate a narrative analysis?" Riessman (1993, pp. 64-68) points to reconceptualizing validity and offers four criteria for the validation of narrative research, focusing on *trustworthiness* rather than scientific *truth*. They are: *persuasiveness*, *correspondence*, *coherence* and *pragmatic use*. Taking such criteria into account allows researchers to demonstrate the quality of knowledge outcomes and a rigorous research process (Quinlan, 1996). I shall use these criteria as a basis for a framework for discussing validation issues.

One criterion for evaluating narrative and life story research, *persuasiveness*, requires us to reflect on the plausibility of the story and the experiences related. Readers should be able to assess whether both the story told and the interpretations given, by participant and researcher, seem reasonable and convincing. The researcher's own ability in instilling trustworthiness becomes an important part of this. For example, Gergen (1985, p. 272) suggests that whether readers are convinced of the value of a narrative analysis depends on the "analyst's capacity to invite, compel, stimulate, or delight the audience." Furthermore, as Riessman (1993, p. 66) notes, it is the researcher's writing practices and style in communicating effectively and rigorously that will ultimately determine whether readers are persuaded of the significance of the participant's experiences, and of the researcher's interpretations.

Keeping in mind that the narrator/participant is offering what they consider to be "a truthful and thorough representation" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 59), then that person should be given the opportunity to comment on the researcher's representations and interpretations of their life story. This leads narrative researchers to consider the valuative criterion of *correspondence*, also referred to as *corroboration* (Atkinson,

1998, p. 61) and *respondent validation* (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p. 219). Exercising the criterion of correspondence involves checking back with the narrator to verify their story, its events, its significance, and its interpretations. Providing the narrator/participant with complete and accurate transcripts, examples of report writing in progress for approval, as well as getting them to reflect on the researcher's analysis of their experiences, will all inevitably aid the corroboration and collaborative process. First, involving the participant in this process has significance for determining the quality of knowledge. It also meets research requirements in terms of paying attention to ethical considerations, which I have outlined in the previous chapter. Furthermore, a participant's responses during this process can further generate data, widen the analysis, and provide further insights and understandings.

There is also the question of a narrative demonstrating an *internal consistency* (Atkinson, 1998, p. 60), or the criterion that Riessman (1993) terms *themal coherence*. This means that the narrative, the story told, makes sense, that it is logical and that it reflects the participant's interpretation of how "the past, the experienced present and the anticipated future is presently understood by that person" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 60), and whereby there are "recurrent themes that unify the text" (Riessman, 1993, p. 67). As we seek to make meaning of our lives by finding connections or relating past experiences to the present and future, the stories we tell should also reflect this interconnectedness. As such, the various emerging and unifying themes of the narrative should provide an internal consistency to the life story.

Finally, another essential criterion of setting valuative standards for life story research is *pragmatic use* (Riessman, 1993, p. 68) which is closely related to the concept of *transparency*. That is, as much as is practically possible within research writing

limitations, narrative researchers should try to make their research processes, purposes and agendas as visible as possible to the reader, and I hope I have demonstrated this process in earlier chapters. This will involve giving whatever information seems appropriate in assisting the reader to assess the trustworthiness of a study, including how interpretations of the data are reached, and even making primary data available. For example, the researcher can make it clear that full transcripts are available for access by readers if requested, as I did when describing the process of transcription in Chapter Two. Quinlan (1996) points to other important aspects of providing transparency, such as the researcher making explicit the nature of the researcher/participant relationship, the purpose of the study, and the stories the researcher is living at the time of writing up the study.

To summarize, in this chapter I focused on issues of narrative coherence, as well as the postmodern embrace of conflict and of a taking a subjective research positioning. In outlining a compromise "synthesis" or "narrative psychological" approach, I raised the issue of narratives as journeys of *the redemptive self* and highlighted a *needs for meaning* framework, whereby narrators purposefully structure their narrative identity based on a strong sense of *generativity* underpinned by efficacy, self-worth, and a moral dimension. Finally, in addressing issues of ambiguity, credibility and intentionality, I discussed valuative criteria (*persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence* and *pragmatic use*) that focused on trustworthiness rather than truth, and on which this and other narrative research can be judged.

Before analyzing Rachael's teaching life story, in the next two chapters I address the fundamental issues that are central to understanding and interpreting her narrative: firstly, critical cultural knowledge of the Japanese socio-educational context, and

secondly, issues concerning the L1/L2 only debate over classroom language policy.

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Chapter Four: Critical Cultural Knowledge and the Japanese Socio-Educational Context

Later, in Chapter Six, I will be analyzing Rachael's teaching life story partly from the perspective of the Japanese socio-educational context in which she presently teaches and where she has developed her approach to university English classes. This will include focusing on the key principles of her "benefic authoritarian" pedagogic standpoint which includes a strong L2 only commitment involving discipline and control while also incorporating a humanistic attitude to creating a positive and friendly learning environment.

This chapter contributes to an understanding of Rachael's narrative by discussing the main historical background and issues concerning the Japanese socio-educational context. This involves considering the significance of *critical cultural knowledge* and what this kind of knowledge means in terms of the Japanese socio-educational context and the teaching of English in Japanese university classrooms. For example, it becomes important to have an in-depth appreciation of the nature of the English language learning experiences of high school students, of the examination-dominated schooling culture, and of the major limitations imposed in terms of actual communicative opportunities to use the language.

It is also necessary to understand the real paradox that exists concerning the official policy toward developing the English proficiency of the Japanese. On one hand, there are regular government and Education Ministry demands for greater internationalization and the recognition and use of English as a global language, as well as a call for more communicative teaching of English. At the same time, however,

there is a failure to commit to this policy in terms of practice, pedagogy, and the training of teachers. Highlighting these issues in this chapter not only helps to contextualize Rachael's narrative but also establishes a clear TESOL framework as a basis for analysis.

Critical cultural knowledge

I begin by considering the question of what should an EFL teacher's knowledge base comprise, and I focus specifically on what various TESOL educators have come to term as having *critical cultural knowledge* of teaching contexts. Traditionally, teacher education has emphasized linguistic knowledge and an understanding of and ability to follow various methods and standard practices, such as the typical textbook-driven Present/Practice/Produce paradigm. It has also emphasized an understanding of how languages are learned and having knowledge of second language acquisition and research. Traditional second language teacher education often shows characteristics of "banking education" (Crookes & Lehner 1998, p. 321), in that it is primarily a transmission of knowledge from teacher trainer to novice teachers.

In addition to concerns over the methodology used in teacher education programs, Freeman and Johnson (1998), and Johnson (2000), have emphasized the importance of teachers' knowledge of the specific context where they teach and of related socio-cultural factors. Troudi (2005) expands on what EFL teachers' 'content' knowledge should involve. In following Pennycook's (1999, 2000) view that teachers should be constantly questioning assumptions and "problematizing the given" (Pennycook, 1999, p. 329), Troudi (2005) considers content knowledge should involve a process of raising awareness concerning the political and social implications of teaching English, such as the global power of English and its negative affects on

cultural and linguistic diversity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999), and the socio-economic benefits resulting from proficiency in English. Furthermore, in emphasizing the need for having *critical cultural knowledge*, Troudi (2005) goes on to highlight the importance of understanding the educational, socio-cultural and religious principles specific to a particular teaching context, and of how these affect student behaviors and attitudes, particularly to the learning of English.

Consequently, it can be argued that teacher training and education programs should be context specific, with workshops and seminars being conducted by those who have extensive experience and knowledge of that particular context and its culture. For example, the learning styles and classroom experiences of Japanese learners of English prior to coming to university may be very different from English education in other countries, and cultural norms and culture-influenced attitudes can have a tremendous affect on classroom dynamics and the degree to which students need orienting toward a participatory classroom environment. Knowledge of this learning context and environment can therefore be seen as an essential component of teacher education. However, some critics have pointed out that emphasizing distinctive socio-cultural traits, for example when presenting information about particular international contexts to teachers who may be planning to work there, can amount to 'othering' or simplistic and misleading stereotyping.

Holliday (2005) criticized a TESOL conference presenter and the participants for engaging in negative stereotyping and *essentializing* by explaining an East Asian culture in terms of differences from their own culture. In debating this example in an issue of *ELT Journal*, Waters (2007) criticized the political correctness (PC) stance as a trend in TESOL, suggesting that a more positive motive be ascribed to the

presentation participants, such as "I am working in a culture that is unfamiliar to me. I feel it might help if I got some basic information about it, in order to begin to get to know it better" (p. 357), and "in the light of this knowledge, what can I do…to limit culturally inappropriate behaviour on my part" (p. 358). In response, Holliday (2007) reiterates the naivety of Western native-speaker teachers in reducing complex, multidimensional societies to a "generalized other to suit their own preoccupations" (p. 361), and reminds us of learning from taking a postmodern perspective that "traditional truths are mediated by ideology" (p. 363).

How one gains *a priori* critical cultural knowledge of a future EFL teaching context is then a sensitive issue and involves establishing a fine balance between recognizing cultural sensitivities and differences while trying to avoid simplistic 'us and them' negative stereotyping. If having critical cultural knowledge is an essential component of a teacher's knowledge base, then what should an understanding and appreciation of, and sensitivity to working within the Japanese socio-educational and cultural context involve?

The Japanese socio-educational context and 'Nihonjinron'

I focus here particularly on the kind of knowledge and understanding that teachers need to have for working in the higher education teaching context of Japanese universities. In this context it is often observed that getting students to actively use the language for genuine communication can be a demanding and frustrating process, leading to numerous articles offering advice and using such metaphors as "breaking the silence" (e.g., Helgesen, 1993; Shimura & Ralph, 2009).

While accepting that it can be discouraging for language teachers to get Japanese

students speaking in English, Torikai (2000) points to the importance of understanding the attitudes of Japanese learners of English towards language, especially towards English, and she considers that having "a holistic view of the English language education in this country is vital, with a historical overview as well as cultural and social implications, and to be aware of problems and issues vis-a-vis English" (p. 11). That historical overview involves awareness of the traditional reliance on Grammar Translation Method for the objective of reading and comprehending foreign texts as a primary means of understanding foreign culture and civilization, and a tendency for Japanese to value written language much more than spoken language. Furthermore, it is important to understand that no emphasis has been placed on "communicative competence" (Canale & Swain, 1980).

As well as having a basic historical overview of English education in Japan, critical cultural knowledge would also include an understanding of some of the fundamental principles and values on which Japanese society and culture is grounded and the ideology around which it functions. For example, it is a commonly held view among many Japanese that their culture and society is unique and homogeneous, reflecting values of conformity and harmony. This has led to a plethora in academia of theories of Japaneseness (*Nihonjinron*) (see Sugimoto, 2003, pp. 2-5). For example, one aspect of this is a particularly strong sense of group orientation, emphasized by such claims as "once the individuals with different attributes become members of a group, the group exerts lasting pressure on them to conform to its orientation" (Shimahara, 1979, p. 21), and "individuality is subordinated by feelings of group consciousness" (Fukue, 1991, p. 70). The proverb "Deru kui wa utareru" ("The nail that sticks up gets pounded down") is frequently cited (e. g., Anderson, 1993, p. 103; Gibson, 2002, p. 103), often perhaps as if merely to give some kind of validation to this view. Putting

aside individual differences in favor of group harmony, as transmitted by parental and educational models, is regarded as a core value of Japan's social system. Sugimoto (2003, p. xi), however, has described this process of emphasizing groupism and uniqueness as "ideological manipulation." Such an emphasis goes a long way toward explaining the social exclusion of those that are different in some way, and the high levels of bullying, by both teachers and students, that have been seen as a major social problem in Japanese schools (Murakami, 1985).

There is indeed considerable criticism of *Nihonjinron* as a propagandist discourse within Japanese society. Based on Said's (1985) discourse of 'Orientalism,' Susser (1998, p. 50) has critiqued the "othering, stereotyping, representing, and essentialising" of Japan by many of those working in the field of Japanese studies, suggesting that the Japanese may be no more group-oriented than any other culture or society. Others have critiqued the *Nihonjinron* phenomenon (e.g., Dale, 1986; Kubota, 1998; McVeigh, 2003; Moeran, 1990), pointing to an ideology of promoting cultural nationalism and guarding against outside influences. Kubota (1998, p. 295) has emphasized the inherent contradiction between *Nihonjinron* and the government's policy of *Kokusaika* (internationalisation): "These discourses represent both resistance and accommodation to the hegemony of the West with a promotion of nationalistic values and learning a Western mode of communication, i.e., English." Joseph (2010), writing about the country's unfathomable culture leading to misunderstandings, has declared that "Japan still behaves with the insular mentality of the Asian backwater…they still behave as if they live in a world encased in a two-way mirror, allowing them the benefit of peering out when its suits them" (p. 14). An understanding of this situation, along with the obligatory requirement of English at university, may well explain students' ambiguous feelings towards English as the

language of globalization yet one which they are reluctant to be actively involved in using to communicate. It is having this kind of background knowledge and understanding of context that helps underpin a teacher's pedagogical approach, such as taking a "benefic authoritarian" view to the university language classroom, where strict demands are placed on students' attitudes, class participation and interaction, and dynamic language use.

An official ambivalence is also reflected in the call of successive Japanese governments for internationalization and international understanding, yet changes in the education system are slow to take place and any new official guidelines and goals set in terms of English high school education rarely implemented effectively or recognized by any realistic commitment from school administrators and teachers. Fundamentally, this means in the Japanese education system that there continues to be a secondary and tertiary level emphasis on test-orientation and transmission of knowledge. It is a system which reflects an archetype of Freire's (1972) 'banking' model, which he describes as a dehumanizing process reducing students to passive spectators rather than creators (pp. 45-59). As such, it is contrasted with characteristics of a more 'problem-posing education' where encouragement is given to the development of critical thinking skills, the questioning of the status quo, and a direction towards transformation.

Communicative Language Teaching and the Ministry of Education guidelines

While in recent years the Japanese education ministry has called for having a more communicative approach to English education, the tendency has been for form rather than content and for espousing vague guidelines rather than pushing for strict adherence to radical new teaching policies and much needed teacher retraining. For

example, to demonstrate some communicative intent MEXT (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology) in 1989 introduced into *The Course of Study* new optional courses called Oral Communication, and also increased the role of the JET (Japanese English Teachers) and provision of more ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers from English-speaking countries) in high schools, with the aim of getting Japanese teachers of English using English in daily interactions with native speakers, promoting an understanding of the L2 culture, and involvement in team teaching. While *The Course of Study* did not state explicitly that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) should be introduced (Nishino, 2008, p. 44), it underlined that the goal was "to foster the positive attitudes toward communicating in a foreign language" (MEXT, 1989).

However, in terms of bringing about a genuine mind shift towards communicative use of English success has been very limited. Hiramatsu (2004) conducted a study of a senior high school using teacher interviews and classroom observation to see to what extent Japanese teachers of English were adapting to the new requirements of teaching communicative English and how JET program teachers were being used. She found a reluctance to making a genuine commitment to CLT, based primarily on a lack of communicative proficiency of the teachers and a continued adherence to teaching to the demands of university entrance exams. In class there was a tendency for scripted interactions between the Japanese teacher and the ALT, who was often merely used in place of a tape recorder. A lack of spontaneous interaction also resulted because possible "embarrassing moments in class with an ALT can be felt as particularly threatening in a culture in which teachers are expected to know everything" (Hiramatsu, 2004, p. 121). Furthermore, in the situation where 40 students in each class is the norm, teachers said that smaller class sizes and more class

hours were needed to effectively incorporate CLT into high school programs (Nishino, 2008).

With further reform and guidelines needed, in 2003 MEXT introduced an ambitious five-year plan for cultivating "Japanese with English abilities" with the following statement of rationale:

> With the progress of globalization in the economy and in society, it is essential that our children acquire communication skills in English, which has become a common international language, in order for living in the 21st century. This has become an extremely important issue both in terms of the future of our children and the further development of Japan as a nation. At present, though, the English-speaking abilities of a large percentage of the population are inadequate, and this imposes restrictions on exchanges with foreigners and creates occasions when the ideas and opinions of Japanese people are not appropriately evaluated. However, it is not possible to state that Japanese people have sufficient ability to express their opinions based on a firm grasp of their own language. Accordingly, we have formulated a strategy to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities" in a concrete action plan with the aim of drastically improving the English education of Japanese people. In addition, we aim to make improvements to Japanese-language education. (MEXT, 2002, para. 1)

This plan aimed to cover all aspects of English education in Japan, such as teacher hiring and training, "super" English language high school programs, international exchanges, curriculum and textbooks. The revision focused on developing the ability to use English and on de-emphasizing grammar, translation and teacher-oriented classes (Fujimori, 2005, p. 15). Measures were to include improving teaching methods and teaching ability, particularly in terms of the ability to conduct classes in the language being taught (Iida, 2004, p. 13). The five-year plan was to be achieved by 2008, the goal being that after graduating from junior high school and senior high school students should be able to "conduct basic, daily-life communication in

English" and "college graduates be able to use English in their work" (Honna & Takeshita, 2005, p. 364). Unfortunately, it seems that in the last few years many universities have responded to this last dictate by placing greater emphasis on teaching TOEIC (a reading and listening-based test used primarily in Japan and Korea as evidence of English ability when job searching) at the expense of promoting an interest in communication and more content-oriented courses. This means that those university language teachers who have a principled approach to genuine communicative language classes find themselves needing to present a strong, authoritative rationale in order to engage students in establishing a dynamic, interactive L2 classroom environment.

In recent years the English education debate has focused on the issue of introducing English before junior high school, and the latest MEXT plan, 2008, which as well as furthering expectations for English to be taught in English, will now make English a compulsory part of primary education from 2011, with the stated future goal of making English part of Japanese daily life. However, this may all be too little too late, with almost all other Asian countries having introduced compulsory English classes into the state-run elementary schools by the year 2000 (Honna & Takeshita, 2005, p. 365). Iida (2004, p. 13) has suggested that "no detailed procedures for the innovation are provided" and that there are simply not enough teachers trained to teach English at elementary school, certainly not in terms of teaching communicative English.

The 2008 plan also includes offering high school courses called English Expression I and II which are aimed at developing impromptu speaking, presentation skills, critical thinking skills, expressing opinions and exchanging arguments (Yoshida, 2009),

something which many students cannot do in their first language. In reality this means *communication* remains primarily as having only a buzzword status (Stewart, 2009, p. 10). For despite various plans and guidelines from the Ministry of Education the reality is that the system of English education is maintaining an emphasis on grammar translation method and a cramming system at high school, leading to the so-called 'examination hell.' Textbooks predominate and head-down reading from texts tends to be the norm. This means after six years of high school study there is still a real lack of communicative ability. In addition, there is among many Japanese teachers a lack of true understanding of communicative methodology, interpreting it simply as teaching takes place in English in a teacher-fronted mode rather than students being genuinely engaged in using the language with each other.

It may be that younger Japanese English teachers with the desire, the learning and study background to bring about change are being held back by the old guard who maintain the status quo. Such teachers may have to work secretively and subversively if they wish to practice methods aiming to develop real communication-oriented classes. To get a first-hand impression of the possibilities of avoidance and resistance to change, Ford (2010) interviewed a high school teacher who had been working at the same prestigious private junior/senior high school for ten years, many of its students going on to some of the top universities. Qualified with an MA in Applied Linguistics, he was continuing to actively study in his spare time to improve his understanding of English teaching methodology and practices. Strongly committed to making communication skills a more important part of high school teaching, he was hoping to change the future direction of English language education in Japan. He described the implementation of the latest MEXT guidelines as being "far from the reality" and talked of having his own "hidden syllabus" where he was trying to introduce

communicative methods to the classroom while still making the students feel they were getting exam preparation. He confirmed that the official school program was still determined by placing too much emphasis on English for the purpose of passing university entrance examinations, and he perceived that there was a fear among many of the older teachers that their spoken English ability was inadequate for classroom use and that it would contradict their view of providing only 'correct' English as input. At committee meetings to decide textbook use, any communication-oriented texts were rejected in favor of those with a more traditional grammar orientation. Of course, it also needs to be appreciated that getting teachers to radically change their long-held beliefs and practices can be particularly threatening to their self-worth, especially when their approach is based firmly on their whole teaching ideology, training and previous experience.

Clearly, then, for students the transition from high school English classes to communication-oriented university English classes may be challenging and stressful. There may be a very different classroom environment for them to adapt to and a different set of expectations. While many of them will have experienced a native-speaker teacher of English at high school it will almost certainly be as part of the JET program where ALTs, without teacher training or prior experience, usually work in tandem and do pair teaching with a Japanese teacher who controls proceedings and where students communicative use is limited to copying model dialogues or having highly limited exchanges such as taking it in turn to do basic greetings with a native-speaker teacher. Students will probably not be used to a native-speaker teacher who is determining classroom policy, not used to real communication in English, and almost certainly never have been required to adhere to an English only classroom policy and the requirements of active classroom

participation. In terms of English proficiency, despite having studied grammar and vocabulary for six years many students are still unable to produce this in basic communication. Consequently, their considerable passive knowledge of English needs activating through real communicative L2 use.

In addition, there is also continued ambivalence among university students toward the need for English. Torikai (2000) raises key contradictions between a perceived need for English as a global language and the reality that the great majority of Japanese can get by without any real need to communicate in English, concluding "no wonder it is hard for some Japanese to be strongly motivated to study English" (p. 12). Also, one needs to have a fundamental understanding that for the vast majority of Japanese university students taking English is not something they choose to do, in that first-year English study is an obligatory course regardless of their chosen department. This may also apply in some cases to students majoring in English, who one might imagine have made a motivated choice to continue their English study. This is because at some universities the English department is considered as a catch-all department for students who were not able to get in with their first choice department. Consequently, university English teachers need to have the socio-cultural knowledge that helps them understand students' lack of motivation, purpose, and unwillingness to communicate in English, and to change this situation can involve taking an authoritative approach to training and orienting students to actively participate in the English university classroom.

Having focused on the socio-educational context and situation that EFL teachers need to appreciate when teaching English classes at Japanese universities, in the next chapter I will turn to other significant issues for discussing and analyzing Rachael's

narrative: classroom language policy and the L1/L2 only debate, and the influence of critical pedagogy and humanism in the language classroom.

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Chapter Five: Language Policy and the Role of Humanism

Our fundamental teaching beliefs, practices and principles are compounding factors in identity development, contributing to our sense of purpose, efficacy, self-worth, and value/justification (Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Wilson, 1996). In Rachael's case it is evident that a strong part of her practicing professional identity is her commitment to L2 only policy, as well as being the pedagogic rationale behind her "benefic authoritarian" approach to managing a participatory and communicative classroom.

In the previous chapter, in highlighting an understanding of Japanese high school students' language learning experiences as an important aspect of critical cultural knowledge, I have pointed to the basis of a strong rationale for maximizing opportunities for students to use English, orally and aurally, for real communication. As a belief in the L2 only principle is such an important part of Rachael's teaching practice, this chapter contributes to understanding her narrative by discussing issues which center on the debate concerning L1/L2 only classroom language policy, relating them to critical pedagogy and humanistic language teaching.

Many university teachers report making use of the L1 themselves and allowing or even encouraging students to use it in English classes when necessary (Ford, 2008), and though L1/L2 only use remains a hotly debated issue, the more recent trend is for not *whether* to use L1 but *when* to use it. A "backlash" (Stephens, 2006) against the L2 only approach in the EFL context like Japan is, however, rooted in ESL and has been particularly influenced by the discourse of *linguistic imperialism*.

Linguistic Imperialism and the L1/L2 only debate

Since the publication of Robert Phillipson's (1992) *Linguistic Imperialism* there has been a radical change in views regarding the issue of the use of L1 in the L2 classroom. This work has been particularly influential in critiquing various tenets of the dominant ELT paradigm, such as English being best taught monolingually and by native speakers. This "monolingual fallacy," Phillipson (1992, pp. 185-193) argues, is rooted in the maintenance of colonial power and in misguided and negative beliefs about bilingualism. In terms of classroom practices, the imposition of an English only approach can therefore be considered as authoritarian and reflecting a supposition of linguistic and cultural superiority. On the other hand, students' freedom to use their L1 represents a liberation and democratization of the L2 classroom.

In an ESL context, proponents of critical pedagogy have argued that learners' freedom to use their L1 in the second language classroom is nothing less than an expression of "linguistic human rights" (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999). In such a context, English only policy is seen as being representative of an ideology maintaining social injustice and existing unequal power relations (e.g., Auerbach, 1993; Corson, 1999). Indeed, Auerbach (1993) critiques the tradition of emphasizing *communicative competence* as a primary language goal, suggesting that the resulting practice of "survival English in an English-only classroom" (p. 13) restricts ESL students' participation in society and avoids classroom communication about the real concerns affecting their lives.

In an EFL context, Cook (2001) points out how a dominant English only agenda has led to the use of such pejorative language as *avoid*, *ban*, and *confess* to consistently

describe any L1 use. As a result, for many EFL teachers L1 use is rarely openly discussed, Prodromou (2002, p. 6) observing how it has become something of a "skeleton in the cupboard," a guilty secret. Indeed, some teachers may feel that openly resorting to L1 use represents a contradiction to their traditional direct method training.

There are, however, strong pedagogical arguments for using L1 in the FL classroom. For example, as Weschler (1997) observes, given the actual time needed to develop any real degree of fluency, limited class time could be better spent on using the L1 as a means of teaching L2 communication skills and strategies. The efficiency argument is further supported by Cook (2001), who suggests L1 use by teachers is more appropriate for task clarification and can lead to more effective learning. Furthermore, in terms of authenticity, Clanfield and Foord (2003) support the appropriate use of L1 in a range of activities, from conversation starters to practicing code-switching skills, suggesting that this "reflects the natural interplay of L1 and L2 which is inherent in second language acquisition" (para. 2).

Despite strong social, political, and indeed practical arguments for L1 use, caution is needed in simply applying principles of ESL critical pedagogy to EFL classroom contexts. For example, the motivation of an ESL learner who needs English to function in society on a day-to-day basis is likely to be very different to the motivation of an EFL student who is obliged to take an English credit regardless of interest or study major, as is the case at most Japanese universities. Also, it is often pointed out (e.g., Polio, 1994, p. 154) that in SL settings learners have various opportunities outside of the classroom to develop language proficiency, but in typical FL environments the amount of input is highly limited, with classroom time being

learners' only opportunity to actually use their L2 for developing speaking fluency.

One way to approach the L1/L2 only debate from a learner-centered perspective has been to find out what students themselves want in terms of L1 and L2 use. For example, in surveying 300 EFL students with Greek as L1, Prodromou (2002) found that while many agreed that the teacher should know and use the L1, paradoxically most "feel they should be hearing and using English" (p. 7), including for procedural uses. Despite encouraging teachers to take a sympathetic view of learners' language and culture, Prodromou (2002) concludes from his findings that teachers should not "waste any opportunity to provide students with natural, comprehensible input. Procedural language in the classroom is too good an opportunity for natural English to waste on the mother tongue" (p. 7).

Various university instructors in Japan have also offered results from closed-format student questionnaires to validate the use of Japanese (e.g., Burden, 2000; Critchley, 1999; Cullen & Morris, 2001). Critchley (1999) surveyed 160 university students and found that 91 per cent expressed "a preference for some degree of bilingual support in English classes" (p. 13), concluding that "the English-only paradigm may not be entirely appropriate for Japanese contexts" (p. 3). While Ryan (2002, p. 20) responds to Cullen and Morris (2001) by calling for caution against use of the L1 and emphasizing that we should "maximize the opportunities for students to engage meaningfully in the L2," McAulay (2002, p. 20) offers support for their findings calling for foreign instructors to be "displaying bilingual competence in the classroom, on campus and in the community at large." This leads us to consider the key issue of the L1 (i.e. Japanese) knowledge/ability of native-speaker English teachers.

Clearly, in a multilingual classroom setting the instructor cannot be expected to know the various languages of the students, and any use of a student's L1 by the teacher may be seen as exclusionary. However, in a monolingual setting like Japan the L1 can be used effectively. Indeed, the main forum for publications by practicing teachers in Japan, *The Language Teacher*, has published various articles addressing the issue of teachers needing a working knowledge of Japanese, including: the call for native-speaker teachers of English to make the effort to learn the L1 to empathize with learners (Barker, 2003); the need for preparing practical and instructional L1 phrase lists (Cole, 1998); the development of sufficient L1 knowledge to make contrastive study part of the language classroom (Yamamoto-Wilson, 1997); and the highlighting of communicative ability in Japanese as being increasingly required for jobs (Glick, 2002). It can also be argued that insistence on L2 only may be a direct result from a teacher's lack of proficiency in the students' L1.

Given these strong arguments for teachers developing L1 ability for classroom use, it is important to consider a rational and principled approach. Without establishing a set of clear guidelines as to how and when L1 is used it may be difficult for a teacher to monitor not only their students' use but also their own. This has resulted in calls for: the deliberate and systematic use of L1 (Cook, 2001); having "the pedagogical framework" in place to support L1 use (Prodromou, 2002, p. 6); finding a balance that suits one's teaching philosophy (Bawcom, 2002); teachers to be "explicit with regard to activity, purpose, mode and group configuration" (Polio, 1994, p. 153); and the selective use of L1 "based on critical analysis of their own contexts" (Auerbach, 1994, p. 158).

Despite there being a growing tendency toward recognizing not *whether* to use L1 but *when* to use it, the L1/L2 only issue continues to be hotly debated. For some, freedom to use the L1 remains an ideological issue based on assumptions about existing power relations, reflected in such anecdotal examples of classroom teacher discourse as this one from Weschler (1997): "Class. We are here to learn English. As of today, you are not to use any Japanese in this room. This is an 'English-only' class" (para. 1). Such enforcement of an English only policy may even extend to such extremes as fining students for talking in the L1 and demanding they use only monolingual dictionaries. In some cases, a dictatorial attitude to classroom language use may be governed by institutional requirements, in others by individuals' pedagogical principles based on pragmatism and sound SLA theory that underline the importance of meaning negotiation and maximizing L2 input.

Critical pedagogy and humanistic language teaching

Critical pedagogues would argue that measures demanding L2 only use reflect an agenda of establishing unquestioned control over learners, and directly conflict with their freedom of choice and individual learning preferences. For example, it can be argued that "some teachers try to control their students through power…By using their right to grade their students as a weapon, they are forgetting basic human values and needs" (Kohyama, Stephenson, & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 239). In contrast, some teachers are very conscious of their position of power. For example, in the study of teachers' approaches to classroom language policy (Ford, 2008) that I referred to in the introduction to this study, during their interviews some teachers used such guarded language as "I'm not an English imperialist" and "I nearly used the word control there, didn't I?" One teacher cited his principles as non-imposition, and the freedom of students to speak, with the freedom to communicate in the L1 extended

to group project work and preparation ("I don't really mind how they get there"). One teacher criticized L2 only policy as "another imposition of I am the boss, I am the one with your grade" and a reflection of how "the power situation is made very clear, who is in charge and who isn't."

Some writers consider that taking this critical view a step further has led to an over emphasis on focusing on the socio-political content in language classrooms at the expense of actual L2 use. For example, Waters (2010) cited the example of Fabricio & Santos (2006) where 10-11 year olds on a course in a Brazilian secondary school discussed the socio-political dimensions of English with all communication carried out in the L1. Waters (2010) criticized this approach for turning the language classroom into a place where no meaningful L2 communication takes place.

For some teachers an agenda of L2 only authoritarianism must be rejected on the basis that it conflicts with the principles of *humanistic* language teaching. To take a classic definition, Stevick (1990, pp. 23-24) considers a humanistic approach takes into account students' personal feelings, emotions and esthetic appreciation. Humanism also encourages positive, supportive social relations between teachers and students, and between students, as an essential part of the classroom culture. Each individual is seen as unique, and a humanistic classroom should be a place where students can realize their needs of individual expression within a framework of cooperation and mutual support.

However, taking a humanistic approach may also involve establishing a new classroom culture to make students feel at ease and confident in their language use; for Japanese university students this is about breaking away from previous schooling

routines and changing study/learning habits which have been previously molded based on conformity and passivity in a transmission mode of education. Bringing about a humanistic classroom involves imagination, creativity and discipline on the teacher's part, as well as honesty, transparency and sharing about the classroom relations and the direction that the class is going in.

As such, in practical terms, taking a person-centered view of education, and relating to a classroom of students with individual needs, means, of course, that the humanistic teacher is setting themselves very high standards. Attaining a humanistic classroom is also a goal teachers should recognize as part and parcel of their personal as well as professional growth, and they should be keenly aware of the importance of affective factors in learning. For as teachers confront any classroom dilemma, "they confront their emotions, their moral beliefs, and the consequences of their teaching practices on the students they teach" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 5).

In this chapter I have discussed issues concerning L1/L2 only classroom language policy and related them to critical pedagogy and humanistic language teaching. In discussing and analyzing Rachael's teaching life story in the next chapter I focus on how she takes the opportunity to reflect on a real sense of mission to change students' attitudes to English and getting them to appreciate and engage with English for the purpose of real living communication through employing a strong L2 only policy combined with a humanistic approach, aspects which are fundamental to her practicing professional identity.

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Chapter Six: Rachael's Teaching Rationale, Principles and Practices

In this chapter I explore Rachael's narrative in terms of how she articulates the pedagogic principles and practices that underpin her "benefic authoritarian" approach to TESOL education, and how she takes the opportunity to story her teaching life partly as a rationalization and justification of her present practicing professional identity. Following the *needs for meaning* framework (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996), as examined in Chapter Three, I will show how in undertaking a meaningful self-interpretation of her teaching life, experiences and values, Rachael's narrative is embedded with a strong sense of purpose, moral justification, efficacy, and self-worth. She articulates an affirmation of her strict L2 only pedagogic stance as a fundamental part of her teaching mission that is driven by a belief in engaging Japanese university students in an appreciation of English as a "living organic whole" and as a language that they can start to use for a genuine communication. Furthermore, at the same time, she underscores the humanistic aspects of her teaching identity.

Early on in her teaching life story Rachael reveals how her belief in the principle of establishing a strict L2 only classroom environment is firmly rooted in experience. In talking about her first teaching experience in Amsterdam after living there for about ten years and becoming a fluent speaker of Dutch, she demonstrates an example of a teaching principle's emergence from intuitive understanding rather than the result of an education in teaching methodology. This experience took place on her houseboat in Amsterdam when she was persuaded by a group of English expatriate women to teach them Dutch:

> And my first rule from the first day, somehow I'd known that English was not going
> to work, it was going to be Dutch. Only Dutch, and it was instinctive. Gosh, it's

amazing to me now looking back on it. From the first lesson, from the first moment I said "Gooie middag dammes" and I refused to understand a word of English. And if they asked me something in English, I would answer them in Dutch "I don't understand. Please explain. Please use the dictionary." And of course my understanding of English did help because I could steer them in the right direction, but in Dutch. And it created a Dutch environment. And I remember the lesson when I did a class outing. It was only about six weeks into this. And we were doing two hours a week by now. But they were incredible. They were running out. They were leaving the boat speaking Dutch and we went off and we went to a bar, and I said the same rule applies. Dutch only. And we went to this bar if I remember correctly, and, well, they asked for drinks in Dutch. And the bar tender answered, could hear their accents, and answered them in English. And I was furious with him. I just leant across the bar and "No. How dare you speak English to my students? These people are learning Dutch." He laughed and he agreed with it. He said "Hold on. This is cool." And we continued and we sat down. And they continued speaking Dutch in the bar and on the street going back to the boat.

We can see how Rachael articulates a strong sense of self-worth and satisfaction in that through taking firm control of the classroom culture and setting "rules" of language use she was able to make a difference to these people's lives by making language learning a truly experiential and dynamic process. In relating the emergence of her central pedagogic principle as intuitive ("somehow I'd known"), we can interpret that she takes the opportunity to assign a highly positive valuation ("Gosh, it's amazing to me now looking back on it") as impacting on her present teaching identity. Furthermore, this incident affords her the chance to present herself as being very much in control: her admonition of the barman ("How dare you speak English to my students?") may have humorous overtones but it is significant as a tacit self-representation of her identity and sense of agency.

Soon after beginning her teaching life, Rachael left Amsterdam, aged 28, and then spent ten years living and teaching in the Dominican Republic, a period in her life I

shall return to later in Chapter Seven when I discuss the main narrative thread of her story. She returned to Amsterdam briefly to take an RSA Teaching certificate, and then aged 37 she returned to the UK and took a BA Degree in Education (TESOL) at the University of Stirling, which she completed at the age of 39. Rachael then went to Japan for the first time and she began teaching in a language school, giving classes to a range of levels and ages. Later, she got a position at a private girls' high school, which gave her the sense of being "a real teacher in a real high school." Her first day there has left a lasting impression: she reflects on an episode which shows the students she was given were clearly more used to a permissive breakdown in classroom behavior associated with the so-called 'classroom collapse' phenomenon rather than to Rachael's high expectations of discipline and respect:

> I was knocked off my pedestal in my first lesson. I walked in and I had this image of a Japanese high school with all of these students in absolute awe of their teacher. I mean already to commit suicide if they failed their lessons. Cowed abjectly. Fearful of any twitch of the eyebrow of disapproval. And I walked into the classroom and they were just sitting around. And I thought first of all they didn't realize who I was. And I thought oh my gosh they're going to be so embarrassed when they realize that this is their teacher. They were plucking eyebrows, they were reading. This was before cell phones so they had like these desk diaries, organizer diary things that were in fashion at the time. Sort of filofax things. They were leafing through these things and chatting with each other and plucking eyebrows and checking their hair in mirrors. The body language, draped over chairs, shoulder to the front of the room. And so I walked to the dais and "good morning ladies" and they sort of sneered at me and I just stood there for a moment totally perplexed.

This represents one of those critical moments in a teacher's career when she or he makes a key decision about the future direction of a class, and indeed about fundamental guiding pedagogic principles. In Rachael's case, rather than trying to appease the girls by presenting a friendly, perhaps cajoling approach, she takes a hard line, and as a result is able to completely change the established negative classroom

culture. At the moment when she finds herself "totally perplexed" by the students' behavior, and is desperate to find a positive response to these girls' disillusionment with what an English class is supposed to be like, Rachael draws on her own past schooling experiences to get her through. Many teachers are inevitably influenced consciously or unconsciously by their own teachers and by their own prior learning experiences and classroom environments. For example, when asked to name the teacher who influenced us most when we were young, we may have very different reasons for choosing those educators that we do. For some it may be a sense of freedom and independence that they encouraged; for others a sense of control and disciplined learning behavior that they instilled. In the following section of her narrative, Rachael paints a very visual image of her influential former secondary school teachers hovering around her almost ghost-like as she stamps her authority on the class:

> I'd gone to a, and this is where it's lucky again, secondary modern school but it was a damn good one. Clacton secondary school for girls. We wore uniforms and we stood up when people entered the class and we listened to our teachers and we were basically a very old-fashioned school and we had a pretty good academic record in those days. And so I came to this classroom with my experience of what a group of uniformed girls does, how they act, what their culture's like, and it came to my rescue. I think another person might have been cowed by it or tried something else. I just looked at them and a phalanx of Clacton secondary school for girls' teachers behind me, Mrs Hamilton and Olive Eveline, Jayne Lawrence, were sort of echoing around behind me and just without thinking I came down from the front and I walked up to the girls and to the first girl who had a filofax and I just picked it up and the next girl I took away her eyebrow tweezers and by the time I'd reached the end of the first row the other six rows had all put away their stuff. They'd gathered this woman is confiscating items and I went back to the front of the classroom and I piled the things on the desk and I said good morning ladies and suddenly they all turned around and they sort of sat up. Because to me this is what you should do in a classroom. You sit up, you sit up straight. You're gonna learn. You don't slouch. I know this sounds like I'm a sergeant major at heart. At forty years old I sat up straight for my teachers. And I certainly wasn't going

to have it, and I certainly will not have it, that I have young people slouching in front of me. Anyway, so they all snapped to and once I got them all sitting up straight I took attendance and I put out some class rules, and this is how we act and this is how we do things. And we have English only in our classroom and we are going to do this, this and this.

From her very early teaching experiences when Rachael felt instinctively that having all communication in the second language was of fundamental importance for learning effectively, her strict L2 only principle comes to her rescue as a means of establishing authority and control but with clear pedagogic purpose. It is at this moment when her principle of L2 only use becomes strongly linked to her "benefic authoritarian" approach within an EFL context, a level of discipline strongly impacted by her own schooling experience. While admitting to sounding "like a sergeant major at heart," laying down class rules and getting these Japanese teenagers to "sit up straight," the episode also reiterates her authoritarian stance on L2 only policy, as she states categorically "we have English only in our classroom and we are going to do this, this and this." From then on, Rachael began to develop some key principles in her approach to her teaching and classroom practice concerning discipline, parameters for classroom behavior, as well as the importance of providing a clear rational explanation to students for her approach:

Anyway. So I had these kids and they reacted unbelievably. Obviously it must have been the first day they were trying me out and it spread round to all the classes I think very quickly. This woman is very serious, and if you're nice to her and you listen, you can have fun lessons. But if you don't, she's a monster. You know which is a pretty useful thing to be having around. I think it's something I still use, in my classrooms, it's that I'm the coordinator here. I'm setting the boundaries that you want to be set. They want to speak English but in Japan especially they've also got this cool street cred thing we can't speak English, we don't want to speak English and speaking English is stupid. But if you give them a reason. I say you have to because if you don't oh god she really is strict about it. So we have to and they're delighted to go along with this sort of game. And even then you know the ones who say it's not cool

to speak English end up speaking English and they feel good about themselves. And at the end of the year they all speak English. But it only works if the teacher creates an environment in which the students have an excuse to say oh I speak English because I have to. And I'm very clear with them from the beginning, from that time I was very clear, I talk to my students, and I talked to them and I explain to them why I was in the classroom. I talk to them very clearly about the fact that I don't have to be here for money. I don't have to be here for any reason. I'm here because I'm a teacher and I want to teach you and I want you to learn English and learning English, learning anything, is wonderful.

Rachael's view on target language use involves requiring student discipline and the teacher taking authoritarian control of the classroom. While accepting that she is clearly making unilateral decisions regarding her classroom language policy, she sees taking control of establishing an English only classroom culture as a question of taking responsibility as a trained, professional language instructor for her students' learning. As such, demanding and imposing English only use is about maximizing the use of English and benefiting students' communicative proficiency. For Rachael, relinquishing that control could be seen as a failure to teach students in a responsible and professional way. In rationalizing and justifying her approach from the students' perspective, she interprets that she is "setting the boundaries that they want to be set," boundaries that represent the parameters within which her strict L2 only policy can operate effectively.

Many teachers, however, are not comfortable with taking such control, considering that it may affect their sense of establishing friendliness in their classroom and cause conflict with their students. This is one reason, of course, why many teachers may avoid the enforcement of an L2 only policy, which is so central to Rachael's principles and practices. Furthermore, Rachael's language of control, enforcement, and imposition would be certainly unacceptable to many teachers, especially to those who

take a more 'critical' approach to language pedagogy, and in particular to those who promote the freedom to use L1 in class.

It was while teaching at the high school, and developing a pedagogical platform for her classroom approach, that Rachael began studying part time for her Masters degree at Temple University in Tokyo. It was during her studies that Rachael was able to get her first university position and she subsequently left the high school. At this point in her story she focuses on the transition for students from high school English classes to university English classes, reflecting her critical cultural knowledge of learning background and context, and in so doing she expands on her teaching philosophy and understanding of student psychology:

> We're moving students in Japanese universities from high school where they don't do any real speaking and they've been demoralized. So I think we have to look at the psychology of basically some quite damaged people coming into the class with this feeling of if I don't speak English, it's my fault, I'm not good. And so many of them have been in situations where they've only answered questions to grammar formats. And we're saying OK now you're in university, so for me we have to say OK let's look at the psychological level you're at. Most of you are survivors, victims from high schools. And they laugh about this.

Here we can see how Rachael is setting out to justify and rationalize her pedagogical approach, and at the same time reflecting her understanding of the Japanese socio-educational context, of the student and teaching psychology at high schools, and of the affective factors involved in students' attitude to learning English. By using the language of suffering, like being "damaged," demoralized" and "victims," Rachael is verbalizing a moral justification for her approach and the classroom demands she is going to make, indeed suggesting that she represents the high ground position of righter of wrongs, of savior (a metaphor I shall return to discussing in detail in Chapter Seven).

There is then a clear sense of efficacy and self-worth being projected here in a reaffirmation of her strict language policy as a key principle in her teaching career at Japanese universities. Furthermore, she begins to relate her policy to a humanistic perspective:

> And then I say there will be English only in my classrooms. And then we do the easiest topic in the world. What did you do yesterday? And do you know what, after one minute, sixty seconds, there were students who could look at you and say "Finished." You know this is the extent of my speaking ability. Their concept of speaking is pass the information over like in exercise one, do you like bananas, yes I do, finished. The concept of speaking further isn't there. The concept of enjoying, of communicating, of using English as a tool, for chatting, for being, is not there. And the idea of everything is at the end of the semester you are going to feel at home in this language, in this target language. You're going to feel more of a complete human being in this area of your life. It works. It's amazing. Anyway, so I don't accept it if you just do one minute about talking what you did yesterday. It's like oh you guys, let's change partners and let's go on and ask questions and talk longer. And by the time they have changed partners two or three times they've really got this that they can chat away a bit more. The aim of this class is that when you leave here, you can feel confident about going on to another class. This is what I tell them. I'm very clear about this. I'm very competitive. I want my students to have the edge. I laugh and say you know you're my kids and I want my ones to feel confident when they go on. I want my ones to know they can be as good as anyone else or better. I suppose that goes against the Buddhist principle, the competition thing, but you're the people in my charge and if other teachers don't care so much about what happens to you when you go on, I do. I put the competition thing in there because it makes them smile and feel confident. If every teacher were doing the same thing, it would all come out at the same thing. It seems to work with Japanese students, though yes I must look at any karmic implications of my sowing the seeds of competition there.

Rachael's maintenance of her strict L2 only policy is rooted in her understanding of the profound communicative limitations imposed on students by their prior study experience, and of how "the concept of enjoying, of communicating, of using English as a tool, for chatting, for being, is not there." In emphasizing the potential for her

students' confidence in second language use and proficiency as being concomitant with an actuation of their own sense of self-worth, she is demonstrating the humanistic values that underpin her pedagogical approach ("You're going to feel more of a complete human being in this area of your life").

Also, it is in this critical passage that Rachael first states the impact of Buddhist philosophy on her life and teaching. However, in so doing she explicitly voices a sense of personal conflict. While viewing herself as being "very competitive" and wanting her students to "have the edge," representing a genuine sense of purpose, she realizes in the act of narration that this may challenge her Buddhist beliefs, leading her to conclude, "I must look at any karmic implications of my sowing the seeds of competition there." This realization can be seen in terms of narrative acting as an opportunity to verbalize what may be previously internalized and suppressed issues, thus revealing teaching life story engagement as a process of professional development, and therefore underlining its transformative as well as evaluative potential. Rachael expands on how her humanistic approach is strongly founded on Buddhist meditation and philosophy, which gives a strong sense of purpose to her teaching life, influencing her own classroom philosophy and her relationships and interactions with students:

> I think this is a good point to put in. In the intervening years I'd been going to AA of course a lot. And I'd been getting more interested in Buddhism. And this has informed and added to my classroom performance. I'd always looked upon the students as individuals but still there was an element there of my own pride. And I am the teacher and through the meditation and through reading Buddhist literature I've become more and more aware especially in the big classes that I'm fortunate to be allowed to do what I do. I'm fortunate to be there. And every single person in that room is a valuable human being. This is difficult to deal with in universities or even in the high school. You will have the students who keep their heads down and don't show their face and

if I'm practicing Buddhist principles I have to understand that every single human being in that room is a soul that wants to be happy. A human being that wants to be happy. But we all share the same fears. We all share the same joys. We all have the same need for reassurance. And some of us have more need than others and it's actually the ones who have the most need who are often the frightened ones or the angry ones or the ones that put up a certain front. Now my job isn't to be milk and kindness. To tell you the truth it annoys the Jesus out of me when I see that. I don't know why. I think that's another psychological issue we can deal with but I'm full of energy and I want my students to be happy and one of the concerns that I'm still working on is how to make sure that each person in the class feels good. That no one feels overlooked and ignored. I'm trying to remember each day before I go in that my job as a teacher is to teach English but also recognize the human being who is there. The human beings who are there in front of me. For me as an English teacher it's really important that they learn English but now more and more in my life it's also important I look into someone's face and can see what's happening inside them. That I open myself up to them and they open themselves up to me. Now I know that academically speaking this is a load of bosh but it's part of my truth. It's part of the joy I have in teaching. It's part of what happens in my classrooms. We exchange energy. I walk into the classroom. I've jumped ahead of myself again.

In recognizing the importance of personal relationships and of making personal connections with each and every student, Rachael observes that "every single person in that room is a valuable human being...a soul that wants to be happy." Taking into account individual needs is particularly challenging in a teaching context like Rachael's, that of the Japanese university language classroom, where average class size is around 25-30 students. Rachael's practicing professional identity is strongly founded on her humanistic approach through her practice of Buddhist meditation and trying to apply Buddhist principles to her classroom. In what can be seen as an explicit revelation, she observes how it "has informed and added to my classroom performance," and while recognizing that "my job isn't to be milk and kindness," she is strongly aware of the importance of teachers and students to "open themselves up" to each other. In explicitly verbalizing and assigning such human values as being "part

of my truth" she is taking the opportunity to underline a strong sense of purpose here as well as offering a high level of self- reflexivity in theorizing about the essence of her practicing professional identity.

Rachael's belief in the importance of relating to her students as individuals was particularly underlined to her when she realized at one time that she was teaching too many classes, and that therefore there were some students that she felt she really was not getting to know or even recognize their faces:

> Last year I took on too much work. Part of this thing of wanting to go off and join the voluntary services. I wanted to do that quickly so I took on too much work and one of the things I lost at that point was I had so many students that I started to not know who they were. I was tired. At some point the brain stops. I could see the students who stood out, especially the ones who were good at English, the ones who were more lively or cheerful or cheeky or had the worst attitude. They stood out in my head. But I think there was a number of students in each class towards the end of the year I was thinking I don't know who you are. And that shocked me. That really, really shocked me. I thought what am I doing? I've lost my way as a teacher. And this year the great joy is I cut back on just two lessons a week but it's brought it back into perspective again, and again I'm seeing faces and this is a really, really important part of what's happening. We're learning English but we're also being there as human beings. Recognizing who you are is incredibly important to me and I think it's part of what makes the classroom life wonderful. Not to say every class is as successful as others. I'm sure there are some students who are like oh god here she is again. But this is how I approach it and it's a continuum. I'm working on it. And something to aim for is that I can be open and sharing and knowing and caring with every single student who is in front of me. Not in as I say a soft milksop way but in a lively way and with a good sense of humor and a lot of laughter.

This passage demonstrates how Rachael's narrative provides her with the opportunity to engage in a high level of self-reflexivity and self-critique, so important to the developmental process and so evident throughout her narrative, for example revealed in the statement "I thought what am I doing? I've lost my way as a teacher." Rachael's

goals here are clearly set very high, as through using a sense of humor, liveliness and laughter, she aims "to be open and sharing and knowing and caring with every single student," while at the same time demanding they meet the expectations of her strict language policy. Incorporated into her humanistic approach is a strong sense of valuing the kind of interactions with students that go beyond purely teacher/student formal relationships, to showing interest and concern in their welfare, and she reflects on a particular example of this:

> Like Aya. She's of one the students I'd see twice a week, so I really get to know them that bit better. She's one of the quieter ones, one of the ones who keeps their head down so you tend to know the top of the head and you don't see the eyes. But as the semester went on all of the eyes did come up to me and I could see one day that she was looking sad. So I went up, and come on, what's wrong, you're meant to be smiling, you're meant to be an active listener. And it turns out that she just had a terrible break up with her boyfriend. And then in English we could discuss this and I could reassure her, and with some other students, we agreed he was a total fool because she was pretty and she was intelligent and she was lovely and that any guy who didn't fall in love with her and propose marriage was an absolute loser so she was better off without him. That to me is an important part of being a teacher. It was good for her. It was good for everyone around her. And we had a bonding moment. It was very interesting. After that she was a different human being in class. Her head was never down anymore. She was one of the last names I learned because of her head down but after that the eye contact was there. And she felt she was a valuable human being. She feels comfortable about speaking English now and I think she feels comfortable about herself as a human being. And this is the kind of thing that the Buddhist input brings. It's an added dimension to the teaching. I know you don't have to be a Buddhist for this, but just for me it is what has influenced where I'm going, even though I've been teaching for years. And I think I'm becoming more concerned with them and less concerned with my own dignity or my own ego. I'm becoming more comfortable with myself so that becomes less and less important.

Here Rachael relates a specific example that reflects how she is "becoming more concerned with them and less concerned with my own dignity or my own ego," again highlighting the importance of the "Buddhist input." In recognizing that one of the

girls in her class was unusually head down during the class, rather than let it pass as perhaps many teachers would, she took a high risk humanistic strategy of concern and addressed the issue of how the student had just broken up with her boyfriend. It is high risk, of course, because it is opening up the class to emotions and demanding other students' support in participating in a humanistic bonding moment. It is an opportunity to make a difference to students' lives in a way that many teachers may not even consider or be willing to broach. It is an episode that helps us understand how despite the strong disciplinarian aspect of her very strictly controlling language use, she is able to establish a friendly and supportive classroom environment where she has attained a level of authenticity, self awareness and relaxation:

> So it means that I can laugh more and I can joke more, and take the Mickey out of myself more, and relax the students more, and be more concerned with their dignity or their joy or their fears and I'm sure that any good humanist would have the same motivation but for me the work is such an important part of my life and the meditation that they feed on each other. A day with incredible students means that I come home and I meditate in a different way and the meditation means I approach the lessons in a different way.

In this chapter I have focused on how within her narrative Rachael takes the opportunity to articulate in the telling of her teaching life story the rationale behind her main principles and practices. In so doing, she underscores her practicing professional identity in way that demonstrates a strong sense of the narrator's purpose, values, efficacy and self-worth (Baumeister & Wilson, 1996). Combining humanist and Buddhist perspectives as the pillars of her professional belief system and teaching identity, she documents how she achieves a friendly and caring classroom environment while maintaining high standards and expectations in demanding the maximum use of the second language. In demonstrating a high level of reflexivity her narrative shows how this process engages the narrator not only in a meaningful and

coherent narrative of professional development, but how the telling in itself can be a process of professional development, and so pointing towards the reaffirming and even transformative potential of narrative.

In the next chapter I extend my analysis of Rachael's narrative to look at it more closely regarding the past and present connections with her future goals, and so focusing on what I have termed the *narrative thread* of her teaching life story, embodied in her desire to become a VSO teacher trainer.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Chapter Seven: Rachael's Story to Live By and the Narrative Thread

Twenty minutes into this I was in love with teaching. I was totally blown away. It was amazing. These women were learning something. They were happy. This energy was there…it was something which was happening for them, and that somehow I was part of this. It was just amazing…I'd been converted. I was Paulina on the road to Damascus.

In this thesis I take the view that telling a life narrative involves a selection of incidents and experiences, selected consciously or unconsciously, whereby the connection between them can be seen in their relevance to the narrator's present and future goals. In this way, the narrator takes the opportunity to provide evidence of satisfying outcomes of past experiences, which may have been positive or negative events at the time of experiencing them. In the act of relating a life story a narrator is making a kind of "declaration of intent" (Fowler, 1973, p. 122), so that from the outset there is a linking of past experiences to rationalize present and future directions. This might be reflected by a narrator's agenda of *this is what I intend to do with the rest of my life and this is how I got here*. For example, in Rachael's case there is a clear commitment to future work with the Voluntary Services Organization (VSO), and therefore an analysis of her teaching life story needs to pay close attention to how the past incidents and episodes that she relates seem to explain her personal and professional development toward this direction, towards attaining what we might describe as her teaching life "quest" or "mission" (Goodson, 2006).

In following a narrative psychological approach to analysis I employ a *narrative thread* metaphor, which while recognizing possible ambivalence, ambiguities, and

potential conflicts, is a reflection of bringing together the various strands of experience into a unified life direction, one that reflects the narrator's agency and self-determination, reflecting also "a teleology of life" - "the hopes, desires, intentions that frame the sense of future" (Josselson, 2004, p. 21). As I indicated in Chapter Three, this represents the recognition of a compromise theoretical standpoint between viewing coherence or chaos in life narratives. Before presenting and analyzing episodes and perspectives from Rachael's teaching life story in terms of the *narrative thread* metaphor and the Baumeister and Wilson (1996) framework I highlighted in Chapter Three, I will give a brief description of her personal biography leading up to the beginnings of her teaching life story, which relates to her childhood, family and educational background.

Rachael was born in London in 1953 of Jewish/Irish Catholic parents. From a working-class background, and brought up initially by her single-parent mother, her stepfather was a plumber and her mother a cleaner. At primary school she had difficulty learning to read, but then as a youngster became a voracious reader, describing herself as "a total bookworm." This was something which was the basis of major conflict with her mother, who had certain limited expectations for her daughter in terms of education, based on the view that a working-class girl who read too much would not get a husband, and even complaining to her daughter's head teacher by saying "I can't control her, she won't stop reading." When she was eleven, Rachael moved with her family to Clacton, where she attended a secondary comprehensive school. As a result of increasing conflict with her mother, Rachael left home at fifteen, returning to live in London, first with Catholic sisters and then on her own. At sixteen Rachael was working in London as a telephone operator. On and off for the next twelve years she was living and working in Holland, mainly in Amsterdam, and

getting involved in the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. It was in Amsterdam, at the age of 28, where she had her first experience of teaching, and it is here that Rachael's teaching life story, as told in her taped monologue, begins. In the previous chapter I discussed her first teaching experience in relation to the intuitive emergence of her L2 only principle.

Rachael has spent the last fifteen years teaching at universities and high schools in Japan. She has an MA in TESOL from Temple University, which she studied for in Tokyo over a period of three years as she was working part time at a high school. Now working at various universities throughout the Tokyo region of Japan, she teaches a range of skills and content classes. These days, Rachael has a very positive and proactive outlook on life. Having been an alcoholic, regular weekly attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous continues to be an important support in her life. She has a particular interest in Buddhist meditation, world religions, and women's issues, all of which she is keen to try to incorporate into the content of her teaching courses. She plans to spend a few more years in Japan, after which she hopes to work for the VSO as a teacher trainer in a developing country, such as Cambodia, where she has been going twice a year for the past few years during her vacations as an assistant and adviser at a school.

How then can Rachael's teaching life story be interpreted where past and present experiences have been weaved together in a way that they reflect her future VSO direction, thus emphasizing a positive and satisfying sense of her practicing professional identity as expressed through purpose, value and justification, efficacy and self-worth in defining meaning in her life? To what extent can her teaching life story be interpreted in terms of the kind of primal learning, of mission or quest, and

examples of narrative capital that Goodson (2006) refers to, of projecting past experiences into future significance? Can we say there is a clear narrative intent at the beginning of, and then running through, Rachael's teaching life story?

It is evident from the opening of Rachael's narrative that teaching was certainly not initially on her agenda as a career she might follow in the future. Indeed, she begins her teaching life story by recognizing the irony of her present perspective on her teaching as "a central part of my life" compared to her rejection of teaching as a teenager, when she considered it as a traditional stereotypical profession for women:

> When I was a kid, one of the few jobs open to women, I'm fifty-five years old now, and so when I was a kid forty plus years ago, it was going to be hairdresser, nurse and teacher. Those were the three things that were open to us, and all the other little girls would say oh I want to be a teacher when I grow up. And I was adamant that the last thing I wanted to do was to waste my time hanging around with dreary children, drilling stuff into them, and it just so totally didn't appeal to me as a child. And then when I hit my teens, and lesbian feminism hit and became very radical, it was a female pursuit so that was totally taboo because nursing and teaching and hairdressing, of course, were all things that women did. And so we were meant to create new paths, and definitely teaching was not on my agenda.

However, after her move to live in Holland in her late teens, and after a number of years developing near-native proficiency in Dutch, she was (as we have seen in the previous chapter) asked by a group of foreign resident friends to teach them. At first she rejected the idea, having "no idea about how one goes about learning a language" and "no idea definitely how to teach it," so as a result her potential group of students ended up having classes with an academic linguist who applied a traditional grammar description approach:

> So they went off and they tried lessons with somebody else who had a degree

in linguistics and came back to me with stories of how this person had explained the reason that we use "hen" instead of "zy" was that it was an indirect object pronoun, and they had no idea what an indirect object pronoun was. And neither did I. Anyway, they came up to me with sob stories about how they were going to lose their jobs and have to go back to England.

She finally agreed to teach them a lesson of Dutch "on the strict understanding that it was going to be to prove to them that I couldn't possibly teach anyone anything," and that after an hour's lesson they would stop harassing her. So they turned up at her house boat in Amsterdam and Rachael's journey as a teacher began:

> Anyway, I sat down with my first lesson and I was trembling, and later on I confessed this to these women. And they said well we would never have guessed it Rachael. You looked so calm. And this has been one of my saving graces in life. Is no matter how nervous I am, no matter how incredibly racked with fear I am, I come across as totally self-possessed. And that worked that day. I wasn't going to let anybody know that I was going to be so feeble as to be frightened of failing at teaching a one hour lesson I wanted to fail. My street cred was that I was totally cool at all times and totally in command. So I brought that to the lesson with me and they sat down around this kitchen table and ten minutes into this or twenty minutes into this, I was in love with teaching. I was totally blown away. It was amazing. These women were learning something. They were happy. This energy was there. We were spending an hour in which something was happening, and it was something which was happening for them, and that somehow I was part of this. It was just amazing. Anyway, it went really, really well. And at the end of it, I still following my script, which was well you can see that I am useless, and to my delight by now I'd been converted. I was Paulina on the road to Damascus. It was marvelous. It just blew me away that I could change people's lives with this. And I was very aware from the beginning that it wasn't just me doing it. I was the coordinator but it was their energy, and their desire, and their enthusiasm. But I was able to harness that and focus it, and give them a reason, a rationale for doing what they wanted to do. And I think this has stayed with me all of these years. This feeling that I'm not the teacher so much as I'm the person who allows you to do what you want to do. You want to learn.

In this early episode in Rachael's narrative there is already evidence of her communicating a sense of mission, or of narrative intent, reflected in how she describes the realization of her discovery of being "in love with teaching" and her projection and anticipation that she "could change people's lives with this." The realization that she had the ability to "harness" students' desire, energy and enthusiasm for learning seems to provide the rationale for becoming an EFL teacher and for developing it as her future profession. Indeed, it is the basis for her *conversion*, referred to with the biblical metaphor of being "Paulina on the road to Damascus." We saw how for Rachael as a teenager strongly influenced by radical feminism, teaching was definitely not on her "agenda," and just prior to relating this epiphany of conversion Rachael describes herself in terms of following another "script," something we can interpret as another *story* she was living at the time, that of not having the skill or sense of confidence to teach. In highlighting her previous script as representative of "you can see that I am useless," followed by delight at being "converted," we can view this conversion to teaching as being related to an expression of attaining professional self-esteem and self-worth in her life.

This early episode in Rachael's teaching life story, then, can be seen as a good example of a narrative relating past experiences and moments of epiphany and revelation in a way that provides a coherent link to a narrative thread or mission statement, and as an anticipation of a future life direction. Her conversion metaphor and discovery of herself as someone who "could change people's lives" foretells of her future involvement with the VSO and desire to work in a developing country, thus showing a strong example of the primal learning and narrative capital motifs that Goodson (2006) employs to show connections to highlight awareness of a life's quest or journey, and how experience is valued on the basis of its relevance to a future

mission.

In analyzing a life story narrative I pointed in Chapter Two to the importance of paying close critical attention to recurring motifs, signposting, and to tacit examples of revealing the narrator's viewpoints and principles. In applying such a probing and critical analysis to the case of Rachael's story I would like to focus on the parts of her story that show concern for money, both in terms of an expression of its rejection, and as the recognition of a need for future financial security. This can be seen as the basis of potential personal conflict.

Soon after her first teaching experience in Amsterdam, at the age of 28, Rachael went to live in a small coastal village, Sosua, in the Dominican Republic. There she and her partner had taken over a small hotel. On hearing that she had been a teacher the locals hoped to get her to teach them English:

> The local people quickly heard that I had been a teacher. But a teacher of Dutch. And they came to my house and asked me could you teach our children. And I was of course not, I don't like children. I didn't say that to them. But basically I didn't like children very much. And I was living an idyllic life. I had a hotel and I was hanging around the pool. I had no real wish to teach their kids. But on the other hand, there was a little sneaking thing inside me thinking oh wouldn't it be lovely to be called the teacher. And to teach street children. I had this half political I want to be a savior of the world thing going on. And I wasn't busy with politics any more. I'd left that behind in Amsterdam. And women were coming along and gay rights were coming along. And so somewhere inside me maybe there was a seed of I could become like the teacher of the street children. This savior of the poor. But at the same time I didn't want to give up lying by the pool in my bikini and asking the maids if they'd finished ironing my clothes for that night out in the restaurant. I was trying to reconcile all this.

There is a clear expression of conflict here between having a comfortable life and taking an opportunity that she sees as linked to her future direction and her altruistic desire to help others less fortunate than herself. After revealing "a sneaking little thing inside…to teach street children," and how she had "a half political I want to be a kind of savior of the world thing going on," Rachael immediately refers to a privileged life of lying by the pool with the maids ironing her clothes. She underlines this conflict explicitly by observing that she "was trying to reconcile this." At first she rejects the idea of teaching in Sosua. However, having gone back to Holland briefly and having gained increased confidence and interest in teaching from taking an RSA certificate at the British Council in Amsterdam, Rachael returned to Sosua and was persuaded by "a true Dominican matriarch" to teach groups of the village's teenagers. In relating this episode we can see how she takes the opportunity to embed her principle of altruism, as well as connecting it to her own social background and upbringing:

> And so I set up a system. I said I don't want to start dealing with charity. And I do know I come from a working class family, and one of the things I learned, and we were pretty damn poor when I was a kid. It was an alcoholic household. And money was a real issue. I mean food was an issue in my childhood. And my mother had to pull every string that her little Irish heart could to make ends meet and she needed to get what she could out of anything. And I knew that this strange relationship that we'd had as children, if it was free it was something that you didn't value that much. And it's hard to put into words. A listener coming from that sort of background, you understand what I mean. Things are devalued when they are free and easy in a way. But at the same time I was thinking I don't want to deny anyone a lesson because of not enough money. And many people there just don't have money. So I set up a system. I said OK. It's going to cost a peso a lesson. I knew that people tended to have a peso for something but I knew that many people didn't so I set up a system. I said just once a month give me an envelope and if you have money you put in a peso a lesson. And if you don't have any money just give me an envelope. I talked to all the mothers about this, I was very clear to them. I said look if you don't have the money it doesn't matter.

> And there's going to be no name on the envelope. So I do not know who's paid and who hasn't. And there's no way I'm going to treat a child differently because they've paid or haven't paid. Well, somehow these lessons got bigger and bigger. And I was the only entertainment in town, and apparently my lessons were fun and the kids adored them. And I mean I was just teaching everyday. And once a month all these kids would turn up and they'd be telling each other oh you've got to give an envelope today.

This 'envelope' story relates how classes were paid for anonymously and optionally. While this episode represents an essentially tacit example of revelation, within the narrative she refers to telling the mothers that "if they didn't have the money it didn't matter," thus making her view explicit. Clearly, the role of money in Rachael's life and in society seems to be a recurrent theme of her narrative and one that may be strongly linked to her present life direction to working for the VSO. This strong altruistic thread that seems to be central to Rachael's narrative also appears to be influenced by her own social background identity as "working class." In fact, this envelope episode is introduced by mention of coming from "a poor working class family" where "her mother had to pull every string her little Irish heart could to make ends meet." This envelope incident reveals to us the importance for Rachael of feeling she is making a difference to the lives of others less fortunate than herself, and in so doing underlines her sense of purpose, self-worth and moral justification.

Not surprisingly, demand for her classes increased and expanded to include all age groups in the village, from teenagers to adults, and even local teachers. She was what she describes as "the only entertainment in town." However, it was at this time in her life when Rachael's self-esteem was severely affected by alcohol dependency:

> That's when alcoholism got caught up with me. I started teaching in an artisan center in Puerto Plata and I was running around and doing all my teaching and sort of somehow feeling that I was somehow the savior of the masses a little

bit inside. And my drinking got worse and worse and worse. Which often happens. Alcoholics often tend to go to Caribbean islands. And anyway my teaching really got affected. And, it was dreadful, for my students now. And I look back. I just went down and down and down and of course you live in a small village. Everyone knew. I mean, of course I didn't know that everyone knew. But it was the talk of the village of course that everyone knew. But I was the only show in town, so I mean people kept coming and again on the basis I think just that people just bring their own energy. I mean they learned English despite the fact that they had this totally disorganized drunken fool in front of them. The point was reached when I just couldn't keep going. Couldn't be bothered. The alcohol was much more important to me than actually getting out of bed and going off teaching, so I convinced my partner that I couldn't deal with the strain and that freed me up to focus on my drinking career. And I managed to make a great success of that. Became a fully blown street drunk and hit bottom, and came out the other end. That's a whole other story.

It is directly after narrating the envelope episode that she reiterates in what can be interpreted as a rather self-critical tone as "still feeling somehow the savior of the masses," and when she reveals the nature of her descent into alcohol dependency. We might question whether her sense of failure to fulfill the need as a savior, and her desire to help others, resulted temporarily in a lack of self-worth and a turn to alcohol. Her recovery from this has remained an important issue in her life and she continues to regularly attend Alcoholics Anonymous in Tokyo. In fact, Rachael's recovery appeared to be connected to her return to her own education, her personal and professional development, and her future commitment to being as good a teacher as she could be, reflected in her self-critical view at the time that she was not doing a good job. She felt she needed to further her education and as a result she went to do a degree in TESOL at the University of Stirling:

Somehow managed to get sober. And that's when the ground was cleared. I sort of woke up sober and had a good hard look at what had been going on. And I realized I had been doing my best as a teacher on the island. But really I

had to look at it clearly and I had to say these people who needed a good teacher were really getting second best. In the developed world teachers are certified. Teachers know what they are doing. And it really hit me that the people who need decent teachers, the ones who really need them the most are getting people like me. The drunks or the uneducated and the untrained. And I won't say I was hit with incredible remorse because recovery doesn't work like that luckily. But I took a good clear look at this. I was contributing to the problem more than I was solving a problem. And what was I going to do about this. And I had to say Rachael you can't keep running around giving people second best. People who deserve something a lot better than this. So with the best of intentions I ran back to England and now the hotel had gone and the money had gone. So I went back to Holland for a couple of years and saved up a little bit of money, and went back to university in England. I hadn't had a degree. I'd been doing all this with absolutely no higher education. I hadn't been able to go on to university. It was not something that a working-class family encouraged when I was young, especially not for a female. I mean females from my area did not go to university. And I realized that the teaching was one of my passions but that studying was a passion. I mean it was just amazing. To be back in school. I was thirty-seven by the time I managed to get sober and get back to Holland and get the money and get back to school. So from thirty-seven to forty I was back in school and just absolutely adored it. The wonderful joy of being able to be in school and learn, and then now to learn about how people learn about classrooms, about language. To begin to feel that I was someone who was learning how to do what I really loved doing at a better level. To understand how I could approach teaching on a more methodical and productive level.

In her reflections one of Rachael's main concerns is her own learning and education, raising issues regarding both formalized qualifications for becoming an EFL teacher and the significance of experience and self development. While she values highly the importance of her own formal educational experiences, for example the opportunity to do an MA, she emphasizes that actual teaching ability and knowledge are more the result of practical experience and context than getting qualifications. In her narrative the importance of learning and self-awareness of the need for furthering her education emerged as a major impact on her professional identity, and she has recognized critical

times in her life that were transitional moments of need for education, self development, and improving her teaching through greater professional understanding: "Rachael you can't keep running around giving people second best." However, her experience of tertiary education and the joy she got from learning were tempered early on by a fear of failure and inadequacy. Yet, as this passage reveals, education seemed to be the answer to her sense of low self esteem:

> So I was so frightened when I went back to school. I was so convinced I was going to fail that I actually had a plan that when they got my first essay and dumped it and told me that I was totally incapable of learning I was going to run away to Spain and have no contact with anyone anymore because it was proved I was all show and bluster and no basis. That basically I had pretended to be intelligent my whole life, I'd pretended to be well read. And though I'd read widely and deeply and constantly through my whole life, I had this feeling of inferiority, coming from a working class person who didn't have a college education. Then, of course, alcoholism didn't help my self image. But anyway I was so convinced I was going to fail and I was going to be so embarrassed that I was going to run off to Spain. That was plan B. And the first book I remember when I got the reading list and I looked at the books and I thought I don't even understand the titles of some of these books. What am I going to do? I'm going to have to write essays about these and I've got no idea how you really write an academic essay either. But somehow I managed to get through and I managed to get good grades. Maybe because I was feeling so driven, so driven by fear, I studied more than anyone else maybe and I read more and I memorized more and managed to get good grades. And I managed, and this is I think what is so useful to me now, as a teacher, is I thoroughly loved it. I got the joy of being in university. But instead of doing it as most people do when they're eighteen, nineteen, and twenty, and then they forget it, I got this at thirty-seven to forty and I got it as a total gift. I mean I got it as an alcoholic in recovery, and working class girl and I got it at a late age. So I got this incredible experience in a different perspective. So now when I'm teaching students, I'm always much more aware I think than other people of what a great joy it is to be able to learn something, to feel your brain absorbing new concepts. And I think maybe perhaps other people forget this sometimes in class. But it's there for me very much at the forefront of my mind whenever I'm in the classroom.

In this passage we see Rachael projecting a marked sense of generativity and of valuing her past experience in relation to her present: "What is so useful to me now as a teacher." Furthermore, she articulates the sense of "joy" she felt at her own learning and connects it to the joy that she tries to communicate to her present students. On completing her BA Degree, Rachael moved to Japan where she got work in a high school, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, she gained valuable teaching experience there which would later serve her well in her university teaching practice, and which helped develop her strong principled approach to L2 only classroom use.

Again, while at the high school, Rachael began to reflect on her need for greater knowledge and understanding about her profession, and as a result, she decided to do an MA in TESOL at Temple University in Tokyo as a part-time student over a number of years. She describes how "I just woke up one day and said look you just don't know enough about teaching. I don't know enough about how we learn languages. I'm feeling lost again." She also highlights this sense of feeling lost as "a constant theme of my life," and what comes shining through from Rachael's teaching life story is her self-critical nature, of constantly reflecting on her own professional development, and questioning and justifying her teaching principles and practices.

In making a connection to her present teaching context in the following passage, to her future plans to work for the VSO in developing countries, and to her own sense of the importance of her professional development and training, she recalls how in the Dominican Republic being "totally unqualified" she felt like "the one-eyed woman in the land of the blind." In further exemplifying a sense of purpose and of making a difference to the lives of others, she sees her role as passing on this self awareness of

the importance of "self improvement and doing self reflection" to other potential teachers:

> What's happening now is I do a teacher training course in one university which I realized in Japan has very little validity because most of the students in those classes are not there because they want to be teachers or English teachers. They just want to get a teaching certificate, rather like a driving license. It's something you get, something you might want to use and to have it is something to say I have, I have the teaching certificate. I tell the students very clearly, this is practice for me. I want to be able to go to another country and be able to teach English teachers how to teach. So again I'm making mistakes. I'd rather make my mistakes here than Ethiopia where I might be the only teacher they get. I don't want to be in the situation again like in the Dominican Republic. Somebody said to me once, I was talking about the teaching and I said I didn't feel very good, and they said but you're the best one there is. And I was horrified. I think that was when it first hit me that I was totally unqualified. I'm the best there is. Yes I was. I was the best person there was. I knew more about grammar than anybody else. I knew about how to teach better than anyone else because there wasn't anyone else with any training. You know I was the one-eyed woman in the land of the blind but of course in the land of the blind the blind have all learned how to deal very well with their blindness and maybe the one-eyed person thinks they're better off. So anyway, I have this real horror of being the best there is and the best there is being totally inadequate. So while I'm working in a country like Japan where they have incredible opportunities and plenty of finance to repair the damage, I'm doing my mistakes here on Japanese students. As I say again, I'm not doing as badly as some people because I do have degrees in the area, but I am faced with students who I have to create the enthusiasm to learn in them. It's really tough to be doing the teacher training diploma, you know one of the requirements for a teaching certificate and seeing how totally uninterested these students are in the real academic aspects of it. I mean it's just horrifying to think these people might become English teachers one day. Though I'm doing the best I can to show them you know fun, possible techniques for things that are going on and trying to instill in them an awareness of where they can go for more information and more self improvement and doing self reflection.

From this passage we see again how Rachael's purpose is clearly and openly shared with her students: in using her Japanese university classes as a training ground for VSO she observes she is "making her mistakes" on them. In the case of teaching a class of potential English teachers she tells them very clearly that it is practice for her and that she wants to be able to go to developing countries and be able to teach English teachers how to teach.

At this point, as Rachael nears the end of her narration, she relates her whole teaching journey to where she feels she is at the moment, bringing together various important strands that comprise the narrative thread and her present story to live by, one that is embodied in her commitment to future VSO teaching/teacher training. I would like to present this lengthy section in its entirety over the next few pages and so allowing Rachael the space to voice her narrative closure without fragmenting it.

> The story started off with teaching Dutch. That was sort of a pre-beginning, but teaching in the Dominican Republic, my feeling of I'm the savior of the poor has luckily through years and years of teaching and recovery and alcoholism has sort of melded itself together and I've got a got a sense of humor about that. I do want to join the voluntary services but last year I was focusing on making enough money so that I could leave Japan and join the VSO in England but again beautifully the way these things work, for me it's a karmic flow, that I got into the right places at the right time for development. Last year when I saw that earning lots of money quickly was not a good way to go because I was ripping all my students off by focusing on trying to do too much work meant that my students got slightly less than perfect attention from me and I really wasn't enjoying myself and this is not the whole thing about teaching for me. I should be enjoying myself. My students should be enjoying themselves. There's no reason to be spending any of your time in being less than totally satisfied and happy. So this year I dumped some work and came back to this wonderful level, where I'm really enjoying what I'm doing and the students are all individuals for me again and we seem to be on the same page. And then I had somebody who was working in Cambodia with

Buddhist monks and this school for kids that can't afford the Cambodian school fee. This is wonderful. This is again practice. I'm not the only teacher involved in it so this is exactly what I want to do. Now I'm sort of going back again to where I was in the Dominican Republic. I've got the chance now to learn from Cambodian teachers about what do kids need, kids that are getting first language literacy and English. In a tourist area, so learning English is really going to help these people to make a living which is actually what was so great in the Dominican Republic. Kids could see tourism coming up and learning English as a tool to make money. You could get working-class kids who had no possibility of getting to university. And actually once you're involved in this you usually find well-meaning people visiting who are willing to stump up for a university education for these kids so that any of these kids can see that if they learn English, they've got a chance actually to get a job and have some access to some of the loops flowing around. So this school is in Siem Riep, and now that I've got a lot more tools at my disposable I'm viewing that it's like everything in the last twenty years is on the job training. I've got the chance to go to Cambodia. This woman went there as a volunteer originally. She's also a teacher, very committed. She's been putting the teachers there, she's been exposing them to the CELTS training programme, the English teacher training thing. She's a Canadian and she's been helping the Cambodian teachers with that training programme. And last year she wanted to get volunteers sent out to some volunteer organization. The volunteers don't know how to teach so last year she spent a lot of her energy teaching the volunteers how to teach. So this is a great opportunity for me if going there I can learn from the Cambodian teachers what Cambodian kids need, what developing world children need, how they approach the teaching, what the kids need. I've got my expertise. I'll get practice in teaching volunteers who I've no experience of teaching and I'll be able to see how she is training those teachers, and this is a really exciting point. What's happening is we are getting one of the teachers there and a teacher at a university here. They're going to be doing a writing program with the Cambodian kids and university students here. So then the teacher who does the writing program in Cambodia is going to write a paper with the Japanese writing teacher and they can present it at the Cambodian TESOL conference. So I'm learning how to enable teachers, how to facilitate teachers, and this is exactly the area I want to go into. I feel all the things that I've learned in university and in Japan can be used, that I can be an assistant to teachers. I can facilitate teachers in other cultures. They will have the expertise as to what the children in that culture need and what they need to learn. It's no use me coming in with my

experience of Japan just the same. This is how it was. That's not true. I know how it works in Japan and I'm pretty sure I know how it works in the Dominican Republic but I don't know how it works in Ethiopia or Cambodia. But the local teachers know. They know the psychology of the children. They know what people in that culture need. But I do have technical expertise. We have some incredible ideas in our classrooms. Just the simplest ideas don't cost money. Changing partners to get a new audience. But for someone who's teaching, who's been teaching for fifteen or sixteen years in some small town in the middle of nowhere and maybe didn't get that much training in school, just learned how to do grammar translation method, this would be mind-blowing. But to come in to say to the teacher you should do this. It's not going to work. They're going to look at you and think who the hell are you coming in here telling me how to teach? You come in here everyday for fifteen to twenty years for next to no money and try and get these kids who have got malnutrition and low motivation to learn English and then you tell me how to do it. And I can quite see that I would be really resentful of some foreigner, you know if some Ethiopian person walked into my class tomorrow morning and started telling me how to tell Japanese students how to learn English. I don't know how happy I'd be at some know-it-all coming and telling me how to do it...Anyway, I've been very lucky. I've had access to self-improvement. And then I've been paid to get all this training in classrooms. All of the years in classrooms have been training grounds for me. Especially this last couple of years, really seeing how a core programme can work in a university. I really feel now that there are people out there who know more than I do, people with more experience than me. But I certainly don't want to feel that my students are getting a second-class teacher and I really feel that I've got more to learn but that if I went out tomorrow somewhere that I would be at least the equal, that my students would not be like my Dominican students, got a teacher who didn't know how to teach. And I don't feel guilty about that but I definitely feel I presented myself as someone who was pretty good and when I look back now their enthusiasm compensated for my lack of experience, and I was quite enthusiastic but now the woman who's going to go out and continue on the next stage is a woman who is at least on the right page. I've got the experience, the classroom experience, I'm roughly up there with what's happening in the textbooks and the methodology and the theories about how languages are learned. And that the woman who walks into the classroom can say I'm a decent product, you're not losing out by having me in your classroom. And I can join the voluntary services not because I'm a failure in another area or I want to do it as a hobby.

This still is my career. I have energy. I can keep going till I'm seventy, I'm sure. Not six days a week that I'm doing now or even five. I definitely think my energy levels will go down. But that I could give a really professional level of enthusiasm and commitment. At least until I am seventy. So I've got another fifteen years of productive life ahead of me and now this year I'm getting this wonderful chance to go to Cambodia and before I finish saving my money for the pension fund I'm able to start practicing, so that when I do join the volunteer services they're getting someone who has got experience in assisting or going in and facilitating with teachers and students in a developing world situation. So I really feel that it's another wonderful opportunity and I feel it's come round full circle. This is what I wanted to do originally in the Dominican Republic, and I didn't even know what was possible then.

As she nears the end of her teaching life story, Rachael reflects on a clear sense of direction and purpose for her future development, connecting it to everything that has gone before. Rachael's future goal of working for the VSO as a teacher trainer and adviser is a large part of her life at present, and she needs to voice this in a way that it comes across as a clearly valued aspect of her practicing professional identity. Rachael plans to stay a few more years in Japan but she is already researching the necessary procedures and potential opportunities for working in the developing world. This preoccupation remains evident in her narrative as she seeks as a narrator to justify her present work experience in the environment of Japanese universities as contributing to that future goal. It is important therefore that she is able to express her present work experience as a valued contribution to her future professional development. She views Japan as a training ground, and in linking her narrative thread to a Buddhist "karmic flow," whereby she "got into the right places at the right time for development," she is interpreting the past as having a highly generative and purposive outcome: "everything in the last twenty years is on the job training" for her VSO future. This emphasis on underlining present context as practice for one's future

recalls Husserl's view that "we cannot even experience anything as happening, as present, except against the background of what it succeeds and we anticipate will succeed it" (Crossley, 2002, p. 4).

While articulating a strong sense of efficacy and agency in determining a purposeful outcome of her Japanese experience, Rachael's self questioning of being comfortably well off seems almost to be expressing a sense of guilt for "having been paid for getting all this training in classrooms" in her present teaching context. There is then a suggestion here of atonement and reparation: Is she feeling awkward about her comfortable life of the present in Japan? Is there an underlying frustration about not being able to get away and achieve her desire to work in the developing world? Is the only thing keeping her in Japan the money? It is notable elsewhere in her narrative that she appears to be reassuring herself by telling students that she does not have to be in the classroom "for the money," and later she reflects that she is "not a prisoner of the classroom." Such comments may suggest that Rachael feels that in motivational terms she is not living a totally fulfilling teaching life direction in the present.

As such, it is significant that Rachael needs to reiterate a sense of continuity and futurity: "I feel that all the things that I've learned in university and in Japan can be used;" "all the years in classrooms have been training grounds for me." Thus, she is again valuing her Japan experience as not something contrary to, but as contributing to her VSO goal. Furthermore, this sense of generativity is strengthened by her feeling that her teaching life story "has come round full circle," in projecting her present desire to work for the VSO on to her past by commenting that it was something that she always "wanted to do originally in the Dominican Republic." This points to a sense of making up for lost opportunities. Or, in the hindsight of making connections

could this be a narrative reassessment of past experience, of Husserl's 'protention,' a need to make up for something she did not achieve in the past in the Dominican Republic, some kind of process of redemption for not really fulfilling her desire of wanting to teach the street children?

Of course, deeply embedded in most of us is a personal desire to have others recognize and appreciate our achievements and our values, and to understand who we think we are, and the individual identity we wish to have. As such, we may be highly selective, consciously or subconsciously, about relating in a coherent way those events which we interpret as having a greater significance in the development of the person we wish to be. Throughout Rachael's narrative there is certainly language which suggests her awareness of consciously constructing a narrative identity and of relating her experiences coherently as her story to live by in the present: "So again life worked out perfectly for me"; "I think this is a good point to put in"; "the story started off teaching Dutch"; "I've jumped ahead of myself again."

However, Rachael's narrative also has evidence of language which may be interpreted as revealing a more real-time, spontaneous, in-the-present reflective process at work, such as comments like: "It's something that's coming out on this tape"; "When I look back now"; "I feel it's come full circle." And then, notably, when Rachael concludes her reflective taped monologue by highlighting some of the key elements that she values as comprising her practicing professional identity and of her teaching outlook (communication, facilitation, enthusiasm, and passion), her closing comment before she turns the tape off is: "This has been nearly two hours. I don't know if this makes any sense whatsoever. I have just talked and talked and talked." This language suggests that at times she has been engaging in a real sense of stream of consciousness

at work, of verbalizing what may have been only internalized before, within the spontaneity of a free flowing monologue. This implies that she was not really aware of just how well she weaved together a coherent narrative identity as reflected in the analysis I have offered in this chapter. It would appear then that Rachael's narrative sense of unity, thread, her story to live by, is partly constructed at a more subconscious level, and in so doing reflects the essence of narration as involving self-revelation and a process of professional development as well as a narration about one's professional development.

In this chapter I have attempted to show how Rachael's teaching life story reflects the importance of having a sense of narrative thread, earlier described in this thesis in terms of having a "story to live by" (e. g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Heilbrun, 1988; McAdams, 1993). She projects a coherent sense of her practicing professional identity as expressed through a narrative identity that reflects a set of values, principles, and beliefs as fundamental aspects of individual personality. We can say her story reflects a coherent identity despite the existence of conflicts and of a sense of reconciling various aspects of her experience and principles.

In providing a clear future direction in her life of undertaking VSO work Rachael has underlined her sense of purpose, value and justification, efficacy, and self-worth, the four essential needs outlined by Baumeister and Wilson (1996) in a framework for analysis that supports taking an experience-centered, narrative psychological approach to identity construction. Furthermore, Rachael's narrative also supports the view that "a well constructed story possesses a kind of narrative truth that is real and immediate and carries an important significance for the process of therapeutic change" (Crossley, 2002, p. 11). This "therapeutic change" in Rachael's life will take

place when she moves on from a teaching context and environment where the main thing really keeping her there is an understandable concern for her future financial security. Her strong affirmation of a sense of futurity ("I've got another fifteen years of productive life ahead of me") underlines the potential of a satisfying life narrative, and emphasizes that she is moving toward a transitional point in her life and is someone who is "going to go out and continue on the next stage" as "a woman who is at least on the right page."

In this chapter, and the preceding chapter, I have allowed Rachael's story to be told as much as possible in her own words, and while I have had to reduce considerably her original 17,000 word monologue narrative, I hope I have managed to keep the essence of her teaching life journey and included the most significant and relevant episodes and perspectives that have contributed to her practicing professional identity. While I have tried to establish connections in Rachael's teaching life narrative, I would like to emphasize that I am fully aware of the subjective nature of my own interpretation of her story. While recognizing the subjectivity involved in any researcher's interpretation of narrative data, Atkinson (1998, p. 69) warns us that: "Rather than assuming a stance "over and against" the person telling the story, analyzing, limiting, or classifying the storyteller in any way, we seek to find the relevance of the story itself." I hope that I have gone some way towards achieving that in this chapter; that is, finding the relevance of Rachael's story, and of how she gives coherence to her teaching life and professional development and practice. In Chapter Eight, as I conclude this study, I look to incorporate some of Rachael's own reflections on her narrative monologue and her reaction to my interpretations.

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Chapter Eight: Reflections, Outcomes and Closure

In this process, teachers… reconceptualise the journey they are taking, question and re-articulate their assumptions, values and beliefs…their educational visions.
(Gill & Pryor, 2006, p. 289)

…teachers' stories of inquiry are not only about professional development; they are professional development.
(Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 6)

I started this research process as a result of taking a particular interest in EFL teachers' classroom language policies, and I then began focusing on an ethnographic classroom study of one teacher, Rachael, who was particularly committed to maintaining a strict L2 only policy. My investigation into her rationale, principles and practices led to her narrating a reflexive monologue guided by the request to tell me her *teaching life story*. It was the outcome of this, a two-hour account of a teacher's journey and process of professional development, which led me to make a methodological shift to doing narrative analytical research. Consequently, I began to focus on the process of Rachael's construction of what I termed as her *practicing professional identity*. My narrative analysis led not only to looking at her professional development in terms of TESOL, but also at the principles, values and beliefs that guide her daily life, her interpersonal classroom interactions, and her future teaching life directions. Ultimately, Rachael's interest and commitment to future VSO work became a defining *narrative thread* for determining a clear sense of coherence, efficacy and self-worth, and even what I have interpreted as the suggestion of a redemptive journey of personal and professional self fulfillment.

My interpretations of Rachael's narrative monologue, governed by emphasizing certain themes and episodes in her story, may not have been acceptable to Rachael, and while I have referred to the principle and practice of her validating and corroborating her story as presented in Chapters Six and Seven, I feel it is an essential part of the process of concluding this study that she has the opportunity to voice her reflections on my representations and analysis of her story more publicly. Therefore, in this final chapter I incorporate some of her comments made in two closure/reflection interviews done after she had read my representation and analysis of her story in Chapters Six and Seven. Of course, inevitably, what I present of her comments here are limited and are my selections rather than hers, though again she has verified them as being appropriate. In furthering a more collaborative and co-constructive approach, ideally, this could have been a more negotiated, and even a co-written, lengthier chapter, though the impracticalities of this and further demands on Rachael's time and already enormous contribution to this thesis outweigh what would be an interesting, innovative and highly ethical closing. In this chapter I bring together some of the "strands" - interestingly, a term that Rachael used herself in talking about her narrative during these interviews - of this study in trying to highlight its outcomes, knowledge contributions and any implications for future research into professional development within a TESOL orientation.

Most importantly, the participant in any narrative research is ultimately the most knowledgeable - and has the most right - to validate and indeed interpret their story. Researchers should be taking into account "the insider's viewpoint on the life being lived" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 59). In addition, as Kushner & Norris (1980, p. 26) have stated, they should be working towards practices that give participants "the dignity of

contributing to theories about their words," resulting in sharing meaning production that can lead us to "develop significant understandings of schooling and education." This, I hope, has been partly the outcome of this study, with a particular focus on the Japanese socio-educational context and Rachel's approach to teaching university English classes within this context.

As narrative researcher, I found that choosing what to include, or rather what to exclude of Rachael's story, was a difficult process, primarily because of how I saw the contingent nature of the episodes Rachael related. Therefore, in analyzing her story through the lenses of L2 only pedagogy, as well as the Baumeister and Wilson (1996) *needs for meaning* framework, I did not want to further fracture the coherence of her narrative or present short, unconnected sections of it under pre-emptive themes determined by categorizing and coding, something that results from taking a typical *analysis of narratives* approach (Polkinghorne, 1995). Furthermore, I was constantly aware of the two hours she had spent on sharing this story with me, making conscious or subconscious choices about what she wished to talk about, being unconstrained by the specific questioning of a more commonly structured interview process. Ethically, I had to presume that everything was there for a reason, that the *strands* were all part of a *narrative thread*, and that I should present the story as much as possible as she related it and wished it to be voiced, an outcome which I hope reflects a strength of the taped monologue data collection technique. The narrative analytical approach that I took - similar to Polkinghorne's (1995) *narrative analysis* distinction - seemed to satisfy Rachael's wish to maintain a sense of having a coherent whole to her story that helped highlight the connections and impact of the personal and professional aspects of her life on each other:

I was really quite surprised. I thought well you'll take out some themes and discuss them in academic language. I'm very pleased because again that would have been censorship...I want to stand by my name and my openness…To take something out wouldn't work. And this is what I found reviewing when I was reading it I realized that each strand depends on the other…Actually I kind of lost sight a little bit of my working-class side. Because I go to AA, because I meditate, the Buddhist and alcoholic recovery part of me is strong, but when I was looking at my working-class side, my early education, it takes its place as part of these strands that work together.

In seeking to explore Rachael's narrative as a coherent whole, I suggest that this thesis contributes an exemplary and innovative way of collecting narrative data, in that the taped monologue in itself acts as a process of significant reflective professional development. Such a process allows an individual construction of their own narrative thread without an interviewer interrupting, distracting from the flow, or setting their own agenda. Goodson (2006), in emphasizing the researcher's role as listener, calls for "a vow of silence" (p. 17), noting that by keeping initial interviews unstructured the researcher intervenes as little as possible in the life story narration. The taped monologue technique, prompted only by a request to tell a teaching life story, leaves the participant in complete control of time, place, and content, and so guarantees this ideal. As she reflected on her involvement in this study, I was interested to know what she felt about the process of doing the monologue:

Yes I remember it very well. I took a day when I felt I had some free time. To me, I didn't think it was for you anymore. I took it and I walked around my house, sat in different places. It was like a journey down memory lane. You don't often get the chance to look at that part of our lives. We don't often get the chance to reminisce about your teaching, and how your ideas formed, and your experiences in that way. I carried on talking and talking and talking and absolutely loved it…Very quickly it became myself and this machine, and I was just talking to myself.

Furthermore, on the question of if I had used a more traditional interview format Rachael observed: "I would have censored. I'm very open, but I think looking at another person you're aware of the impression you're making. And when I did it into the recorder, it was more me talking to me." As such, the taped monologue technique produced a free-flowing narrative of a teaching life, one not simply of chronological plot and remembered facts, but also showing constant self-evaluation and self-reflective commentary. While I have not found reference in the narrative field to the use of the taped monologue technique as a means for gathering data, it does build on the idea of free association narrative interviewing (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), designed to prevent the researcher from putting constraints on the speaker's story.

While the taped monologue allows a participant a free rein in telling their story, it does, as I have mentioned before, take a certain character and fluent speaker to perform their teaching identity in the way that Rachael was able to. To make the most of this experience as an opportunity for reflective practice requires someone who is self-questioning and open to self-examination, and of course, open to examination by others. In following Dewey (1933), Johnson and Golombek (2002) have observed that to have educative experiences teachers need to engage in a mind-set of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness, and they suggest that when teachers inquire into their experiences with this set of attitudes, which means seeking alternatives, recognizing consequences, and continual self-examination, "they individually and collectively question their own assumptions as they uncover who they are, where they have come from, what they know and believe, and why they teach as they do" (p. 5). These outcomes, I believe all apply to Rachel's reflective journey as presented in this thesis, and as Rachael remarked in a closing interview, her narration helped her reflect on her "identity in the true sense of identity, of who I am,

and who I want to be; that was really fascinating."

As a result of Rachael's taped monologue, the research focus of this study, while maintaining a strong practical TESOL orientation with its focus on issues of classroom language policy, took a narrative turn towards exploring the process of a teacher's professional identity formation and its development within a particular socio-educational context. As such, this thesis is founded on the view that telling a teaching life narrative can be a revealing, reaffirming, and even transformative exploration of self. By verbalizing past and present experiences, we can reflect on and affirm our teaching life's direction. In this way, relating a narrative becomes an empowering act, and as Squire (2008, p. 50) observes, experience-centered narrative analysis needs to attend to a participant's story in terms of its potential for transformation and resolution for the teller.

I see Rachael's determination to voice her VSO direction and to ground it in her teaching life experiences as just such an example of empowerment, occurring within a frame of proactive professional development as a reflective practitioner. Such a process provides the teller the opportunity to piece together - consciously or subconsciously - those significant episodes into a meaningful and coherent narrative of professional development, which in itself becomes a process of professional development (Gill & Pryor, 2006, p. 289). Using the Baumeister and Wilson (1996) framework, I have analyzed how this opportunity to underline meaning in our lives can reflect the importance of efficacy, self-worth and *generativity* in determining the value of our past experiences to our present and future teaching life directions, and of linking these strands together into a coherent whole. On being asked whether she was aware of giving coherence and clear direction to her story, Rachael again used the

strands metaphor, commenting: "I wasn't aware. That really was surprising. I do ramble and I do digress. It was just giving you the whole story. It just seemed to have worked its way beautifully together. And when I say strands I think strands are bound together and each gives the other strength."

In producing a sense of coherence Rachael's narrative also allowed her to address what I have interpreted as the redemptive nature of her story in terms of making up for lost opportunities or unfulfilled goals and aspirations, relating again her past experiences to a reaffirmation of her strong commitment to future VSO work. We have seen in my analysis that at times Rachael appeared to feel almost guilty for having a relatively easy life, as if she needed to make up for this in some way, for something she did not fulfill in the Dominican Republic. It was also perhaps something that originated back in her early schooling experiences and working-class background. When I asked her about this interpretation of there being evidence of a sense of redemption in her story, Rachael replied:

> Actually, this is maybe part of my guilt, of why I'm focusing on reassuring myself I have enough money. Because it was in the Dominican Republic that I realized that what I wanted to do was to teach teachers. And I somehow got off course with Japan and the Masters degree, and getting money for my old age. I felt like I'd been pulled off course. Joining the VSO will be a continuation of that, and if I don't do that, indeed I will never feel complete. It was something that was there, and going on and doing that other work completes that.

Furthermore, and returning to the theme of empowerment, in responding to the suggestion of a working-class impact on her teaching life and on her future VSO direction Rachael responded by talking about her teachers at secondary school who helped give her a sense of choice, of going beyond the role that a 1960s working-class community expected: "I was given chances," Rachael remarked, by "teachers who

said you can do anything you want." She continued: "I would love to do similar things for other people," and so reflecting a strong sense of the need for empowering others.

While I have undertaken a narrative psychological analysis of Rachael's story in this thesis, I have also framed it within a TESOL orientation, which involved a detailed account in Chapter Four of the Japanese socio-educational context and in Chapter Five of the debate for and against L2 only pedagogy, a principle which I have argued is such a central part of her practicing professional identity, and a major theme in her narrative. Her appreciation of language as a "living wonderful organic whole" and her desire to communicate this to her students, with the "setting of boundaries" for engaging them in real communicative language use, reflected a keen critical understanding and knowledge of their previous high school English experience. Her reflections on her practices and principles within her teaching life narrative can be seen as an example of when "professional practice is located within a whole-life perspective, it has the capacity to transform our accounts and our understanding" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 71). Her L2 only policy and practices, when considered as part of her humanistic approach to understanding her students, can be viewed as promoting a skill and confidence that empowers them to participate actively in future English classes and in other opportunities to use English, and she touched upon this in one of her closing interviews:

> The joy that gives me when I see them on their own doing things without me. And they know they've taken control themselves. And that is so empowering for them. Because that gives them the knowledge that when they go on in the future to any English language situation that they are capable of functioning in that. And that should be the aim of all L2 teachers.

While Rachael's narrative is not then typically one of *resistance* in a critical sense, it is

a reaffirmation of her unwavering, fundamental commitment to L2 only policy, which is an essential part of her teaching identity. It also represents a resistance to the recent critical pedagogic trend in TESOL of greater acceptance of teacher and student L1 use. I feel, therefore, it is important that this *strand* has been highlighted again in this closing chapter.

As I proceed to conclude this study, I should admit to using the term *closure* in the title of this chapter somewhat disingenuously. In reality, in the highly interpretive arena of narrative research there are "no automatic starting or finishing points" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 1). For example, the researcher/participant relationship, which in order to bring about such a reflective, personal and open life story account as presented in this thesis, needs to develop well beyond the bounds of any traditional, objective distancing. In the case of this study, the relationship does not come to an end when the research is over: it involves two professionals who constantly offer mutual support for each other's work. Also, most significantly, and contradicting the idea of closure in terms of Rachael's story, there are further present and future stories in the making. Her story is not static, but in a constant flux, as new experiences may change the way she views her past. Indeed, we may reflect on how a retelling of her present teaching life story might be different perhaps if told in ten years time. As Andrews (2008, p. 95) notes, "we are forever re-scripting our pasts, making sense of things that happened in the light of subsequent events…This process of reinterpretation of events is one which is ongoing throughout our lives."

In addition, I should recognize that the data as presented in this thesis is reinterpretable, and that Rachael's present story to live by, as presented in Chapter Seven, can be interpreted differently by others, and indeed by myself. This view is

reflected in Barkhuizen's (2011b) use of the term *narrative knowledging*, which underlinies the nature of meaning making as fluid and active, and points to the need to "avoid conceptions of narrative knowledge as stable, permanent, and unchallengeable" (p. 396). Narrative data may be revisited, and coming back to a particular research project years later, a researcher may make a rather different interpretation. This leads to asking the following question: "Is there ever an end-point to narrative analysis, or is it always, and only 'provisional'?" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 14), and to recognizing that in the field of narrative research "the hermeneutic circle never closes" (Squire, 2008, p. 50).

To take the issue of transparency and self-critique a step further, it is necessary to question the apparent exclusivity that may seem to be given to any one particular researcher in 'possession' of their participant's story and the adequacy of their interpretations: "Does someone have special analytic insights simply because they gathered the original data? What right, if any, do we have to challenge the interpretations which researchers make about their work?" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 14). I can only concede that my own interpretations, insights and understandings are largely dependent on my own subjective positioning in this thesis, on my own capacity for - or lack of - in-depth analysis at any given time, and on an ability to empathize with the participant. Indeed, with a researcher's intense and close engagement with another's life experiences the process becomes not only one of self-development for the participant. For, as Sparkes (1994, p. 52) suggests, "presenting moments from the lives of other teachers can fracture our taken-for granted views and lead us to engage in some serious rethinking about ourselves and others as teachers." It can also, however, help reaffirm our own beliefs and teaching life directions. The purpose of narrative research is not simply a question of bringing

about change in practice, though of course it may well involve personal change and transformation.

As I address narrative research outcomes, I begin to consider questions such as: "Does meaning making become knowledge? What counts as knowledge?" (Barkhuizen, 2011b, p. 395). Clearly, in single-participant narrative analytical research, which embraces both the particularity and uniqueness of an individual's teaching journey and the researcher's subjective positioning, knowledge claims will be significantly different to those founded on the more traditional generalizations of positivistic research or even the cross-case commonalities of other approaches. Narrative research entails a "search for a different kind of knowledge, knowledge which empowers rather than making possible prediction and control" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997, p. 78). I believe this kind of empowerment is reflected in Rachael's narrative as an "opportunity for professional self-enhancement" (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p. 217), and that it represents an example of how reflective activity can assist teachers in "becoming more aware of, and thus understanding better, themselves and their practices." (Barkhuizen, 2011b, p. 394). In this thesis, I hope that I have demonstrated that as a teacher engages with narrative as monologue, and so articulating their teaching rationale and principles, they can produce a high level and complexity of teacher thinking and self-reflection.

As Barkhuizen (2011b, p. 400) notes, while narrators engage in the process of *narrative knowledging* in relating their stories, narrative researchers engage in the systematic analysis of the insights and assumptions illustrated and embedded in the narration. In this process, the researcher's role is to bring out the participant's story to engender fuller self-understanding, and through presentation of the story and its

interpretation, making a contribution to increased knowledge of understanding teacher experience. As Riessman (2008, p. 154) points out, "no story speaks for itself but instead requires interrogation and contextualization." Also, as researcher, in undertaking such a role "there are times when we may react from a very personal place, maybe because what the person has said connects deeply with part of our own experience" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 65).

In fact, in doing narrative research we should feel the need to recognize, and indeed embrace our subjective positions and own reflexivity as an essential part of research report writing. Writing in the first person is perhaps "the best evidence of the narrative turn in contemporary social research" (Riessman, 2008, p. 154), and in doing so narrative researchers should not fear expressing their own personal growth as being part of the research process. Embracing the researcher's role can involve experiencing and then verbalizing new knowledge about research processes, something that I have gained as part of my research journey. Thus, part of my own *narrative knowledging* has been the overcoming of the challenges involved in presenting, justifying and analyzing the narrative of a single participant, to get it valued as "an academically valid research methodology" (Bell, 2011, p. 580), and therefore to get it seen as an acceptable addition to the Exeter thesis canon.

I began this thesis by writing about my research journey and I have emphasized it as part of concluding the study. Quinlan (1996) has also pointed out the importance in narrative work of researchers making their own lived stories apparent so as to meet the criterion of transparency. In addition to talking about my own research journey, I should also admit that to some extent Rachael's teaching life story has made me reflect on my own pedagogical values. Like Rachael, I have always held a strong

belief in L2 only class policy as a principled approach to take, particularly given the Japanese context. At the start of this thesis I described how I came to question this though because of taking an interest in issues of critical pedagogy and the greater student freedoms it calls for. However, through this study and my ongoing conversations with Rachael during the last few years of this research, focusing particularly on an understanding of socio-educational context, there has been mutual support for maintaining a disciplined L2 only approach which goes against the recent trend and popularity of L1 classroom use.

In conclusion, I would like to summarize the research outcomes and implications of this narrative study. First, in developing the construct of *practicing professional identity*, I have explored the teaching life experiences and episodes that have informed a teacher's set of values, principles and practices, and their present teaching philosophy and future directions. In one way, Rachael's teaching life story has been a narrative of redemption and self-discovery. In another, it has been about how she has constructed her teaching identity in relation to the socio-educational and cultural context in which she works. This study has also contributed an exemplar of how to undertake interpretive research as reflective practice and professional development, and widened understanding of conducting single participant research in the field of TESOL education.

In addition, this thesis has wider implications regarding the issues of critical cultural knowledge and classroom language policy. First, it raises the question of to what extent critical cultural knowledge of a particular teaching context is significant, and therefore if, and how in practical terms, it should become a focus of teacher training in TESOL oriented programs. In Rachael's case, her understanding of the Japanese

socio-educational context is rooted primarily in experience. It can be argued, however, whether it is appropriate to particularize countries and cultures by engaging with specific critical cultural issues *a priori* teaching experience, given that this can result in the stereotyping and essentializing of cultures. On the other hand, the knowledge passed on by teachers having had experience in particular teaching contexts may well prepare novice teachers better for the various classroom behaviors, attitudes, relationships and interactions that they are likely to experience, and therefore improve levels of confidence and effectiveness in their initial teaching experiences.

Furthermore, in terms of implications for classroom language policy, particular in an FL context, this thesis has also pointed towards the potential of following a disciplined approach to L2 communicative use while also providing a supportive and friendly learning environment. In Rachael's case we have seen how she has developed a "benefic authoritarian" approach to her teaching which involved a commitment to the principle of a strict L2 only classroom environment while managing to incorporate a strong sense of humanistic values in her relationships and interactions with her students. This raises the issue of to what extent many teachers are opting to use the L1 primarily as a means for maintaining a friendly stress-free environment and so sacrificing valuable opportunities for real, natural, procedural L2 language use. Again, this points to the suggestion that Rachael's model could well provide the basis for teacher training issues about the importance and methods of maximizing L2 use while at the same time promoting humanistic values and understanding. This could engender a major rethinking about the recent trend to adopt a more critical pedagogic perspective on L1 use.

Finally, in using an innovative taped monologue technique this study has made a

distinctive contribution to the forms and processes of gathering narrative data. The narrative and its analysis showed how a teacher's in-depth telling of her life story provided an opportunity to engage in a high level of self-reflexivity and self-critique. As such, this technique also provides a practical method of peer research and supportive reflection, helping teachers to examine with a trusted peer their developmental processes, as well as reassessing pedagogic principles and practices. In practical terms this could be an effective method for teachers at their particular institutions to become involved in coordinated professional development by producing an access library of shared teaching life experiences as an alternative to classroom peer observation, and so focusing on getting more at the why and origins of practice rather than viewing the practice itself.

On a final note, Rachael herself has begun to use the taped monologue technique with her class of practicing teachers to reflect on and explore their motivation for becoming teachers and their own learning experiences. The result of such a productive and collaborative teaching/learning project has clear potential for future Japanese English language teachers, and therefore particularly for English teaching in high schools. This kind of collaboration, as an aspect of teacher training and development, could extend to joint student/teacher research, presentations, and publications. And that, of course, could represent one of Rachael's future stories in the making.

*

Appendices

Appendix One

The following is a list of questions which guided the biographical profile interview:

1. Can you please tell me something about where you grew up as a child?

2. Can you tell me a few details about your parents?

3. What was your early schooling experience like?

4. What jobs did you do before you started a career in teaching?

5. When did you start teaching?

Appendix Two

The following is a list of questions which guided the closing reflections interviews:

1. How do you feel about the way I presented your story and experiences?

2. How do you feel about my interpretation of redemption in your story?

3. What was the experience of doing the taped monologue like?

4. Can you compare doing the monologue to being interviewed?

5. Do you think there is anything more I should have done during this research process to help you?

6. Can you describe what you see as some of the positives or negatives of being involved in this research?

7. Do you feel this research has influenced your teaching in any way?

Appendix Three

I would like to include my present email address for anyone who wishes to see a complete original transcript of Rachel's interview: fordkeith@hotmail.com

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