

A Meeting of Hearts and Minds 「心」が出会うとき



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Abstract

In our virtual dialogue across continents we puzzle out our storied professional lives and histories, our shared interests, concerns, passions and challenges as practitioner-researchers and teachers. We create “data” for our plenary and pave way to meeting each other in person in Kobe. Through our dialogue we hope to jointly (re-)construct our stories, to co-learn and co-write to better understand ourselves and each other, our inner voices and that of the other. We also hope to give the readers of Learning Learning a glimpse into our journey of exploration towards the plenary.

Keywords: *narrative inquiry, learner voices, co-learning, experience, affect, collaboration*

概要

大陸を超えた私たちのバーチャル対話では、研究的視点を持った実践家そして教員として私たち自身の教員人生、歴史、共通の関心、懸念、情熱、挑戦について考察している。私たちは神戸でのプレナリーに向けた「データ」を作り、対話を通して自分自身、お互い同士、自分たち及び他者の内なる声に対する理解を深めるために協働的にストーリーを（再）構築し学び執筆している。『学習の学習』の読者の皆様にも、私たちの探究の旅の一部をお届けします。

キーワード：ナラティブ・インクワイアリー、学習者の声、協働学習、経験、情意、協働

Dear Leena,

Our first encounter was a retreat for *the Learner Development Journal 2* (LDJ2), one of the JALT LD SIG publications. As the editors of LDJ2, Masuko Miyahara, Patrick Kiernan and I organised the retreat, which was held at Seikei University on March 27th, 2017. As one of the “distant” authors for LDJ2, you joined the retreat via Skype with Fergal Bradley, the co-author of your paper. We were physically distant (it is about 7,500 km between Finland and Japan!), but listening to your talk, I gradually felt some empathy and noticed that there are some similarities about our educational practices and approaches. Feeling a sense of empowerment, my experience at the retreat was distinctively imprinted on my mind. Then a few months after this “catalytic experience”, I was invited to be a joint plenary speaker with you at ILA 2018. It was a big surprise to me not only because I did not expect that I would be part of the plenary session but also because it was something that I had never heard of or experienced before. More importantly, it was a joint plenary with you, Leena! With both

excitement and apprehension, I sent email to you for the first time in September 2017. This was the very start of our collaborative conversation, which has now continued for over six months already.

Dear Chika,

Again, I am writing to you, having a conversation with you through my written text. Since starting to prepare our joint plenary for ILA 2018 we have become true textual friends: we *talk* about our research and practice through writing emails. We have thus become co-writers who read and interpret each other's texts in order to find the themes we want to focus on in our plenary. When I looked at some of the "big" themes we have so far named in our emails, that is, well-being at work, professional development, learning as practitioner-researchers, and being and becoming co-learners with our students, I realized that they are all processes inherently collaborative in nature. We have both collaborated and co-written with other colleagues in the past: I, for example, have carried out autonomy-inspired narrative inquiries with colleagues from my own context, the ALMS programme in Helsinki. And, in fact, the very first time we "met" was in 2015: we were co-writers for the *Stories of Practices* (edited by Barfield & Delgado). This collaboration and writing across continents also happened in a narrative, dialogic manner.

We have also "met" each other through our published texts before and after our virtual meetings. Inspired by van Manen (2002) I have come to think of research reading as re-writing: as readers, we "fill in the gaps" in other people's writing. In our own publications, we have written about the "small" themes that we both feel strongly about, that is, our histories, passions, concerns, motivations, and challenges as narrative practitioner-researchers. These will be one thread in our joint plenary. So far, as readers of each other's texts and emails, we have been filling in the gaps with enthusiasm! I often feel it is difficult to describe and summarize the richness of detail in my context of work when writing; texts only give a glimpse of an experience. The experience itself, its dialogic uniqueness, is often missing. And yet, writing in qualitative research writing aims to give the reader "an evocative sense of being addressed by the text" (van Manen, 2002). I feel that we are practising this way of writing in these emails.

In our live conversation in Kobe I visualise us sharing our research stories and the stories behind the writing of those stories (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) but also having a heart-to-hearts about our daily life on our landscapes of practice.

Dear Leena,

Through the interactive process of re-storying, as textual friends, we have been engaged in connecting, echoing, developing, questioning and constructing (Savvidou, 2008). Each story was developed and became more vivid as we connected each other's stories to our own. I realised that one of the things we have in common is our deep interest in learners and that we both emphasise the importance of learners' voices including their feelings and emotions. We both have tried to elicit and understand their inner voices using various tools such as diaries and drawings, and even reflect on our professional and personal selves, which we think are not possible to separate from each other. Moreover, both of us believe that learners and teachers including counsellors have a symbiotic relationship to each other, which reminded me of a "parallel process" (Levin and Shanken-Kaye,

1996). It is the phenomenon of shared affective experience; one's emotion moves another person's affect. If a student feels good, so does a teacher, and vice versa.

Minimising the apprehension and maximising the excitement that I had at the beginning of our collaborative conversation, I found myself enjoying sharing my professional and personal stories with you. Moreover, I even came to realise that our collaborative conversation itself became a parallel process. Your emotions moved my affect and we shared affective experiences by sharing each other's stories. I hope that our parallel process will be even more dynamic and intensified in our joint plenary at ILA 2018, Leena!

Dear Chika,

It is so true that “shared emotional experiences” happen when stories are told and their impact on the tellers is shared! We both have a concern for learner voices that need to be heard, supported and respected; we know students will learn from telling their stories from experience and we both want to support them in doing this. When I was reading about conversational collaborative research in *Creative Practitioner Inquiry in the Helping Professions* (edited by Speedy & Wyatt, 2014), it struck me that, in a way, through these virtual conversations we are writing a collective professional biography. In particular the chapter on collective biography as a method by Sue Porter inspired me into thinking of our preparation work as a kind of collective biography, although perhaps not in the strictest sense of term.

I had a flashback to the very early days when I started working with language learning histories and invited my students to do collaborative memory work: they discussed, shared and co-wrote their collective stories. For me as their teacher, it was one way of truly “hearing” students' *insider* experiences and their learner *voices*. They illustrated the stories with photos and drawings and, in their discussions, often had vivid flashbacks that opened up windows into the classrooms of their past. Engaging in collective biography of this kind was a way of for the students to listen to each other's stories, to reminisce together and to co-write personally meaningful, empowering texts with their peers.

The two of us are in the process of re-storying our professional pasts as practitioners, researchers and persons. We are busy exploring our umbrella theme, a collaborative reflection on our professional journeys with learners' voices, and yet, I feel, we started our collaboration, not that long ago, “not knowing” (Porter, p. 185). From the very beginning, however, I have experienced the deep resonances of our professional and personal stories from our different contexts, our unique narrative landscapes of research and practice. Just like in my students' memory work, the snowball is rolling: memories re-surface, I am in the process of naming and choosing epiphanies, critical moments and episodes, and I have started reconstructing my narrative, yet again, in this new timeplace through this on-going virtual dialogue.

I wonder if the idea of collective biography and memory work will open up new horizons for us and make our collaborative writing about, analysing and theorizing the work we do more experience-based and holistic. At the ILA conference, we will have the opportunity to meet in person and to discuss, to share and care, and, perhaps, a web of experiences will emerge, unique and individual but also connected and shared, our experiences interwoven with our students'. I feel

we will know more in September and understand better how we have promoted our pedagogies for autonomy and what we could/should do next.

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Bios

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