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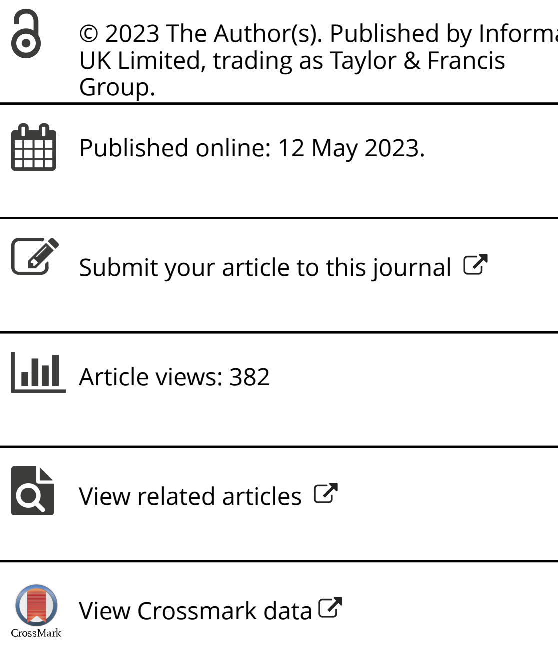

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Translations: A Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices of a Non-Native Speaking University Faculty Teaching in Cross-Cultural Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Faculty who do not speak the language of instruction in their universities as their first language face additional challenges in teaching. This study aimed to investigate a non-native speaker faculty member, Eisuke Saito, who had attempted to manage and overcome language challenges in teaching. Through an autobiographical self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) with reference to critical incidents, and critical discussions with co-author Michelle Ludecke, this article reveals that through listening to the students and observing their non-verbal responses, Eisuke came to deepen his understanding of the complexities of students' problems and confusions. As a result, class discussions were utilized more meaningfully, which involved working with students as co-curriculum makers. In so doing, the non-verbal responses that were overwhelming at the beginning of his teaching career eventually started to support Eisuke in facilitating discussion in his classes. This study posits that for non-native speaker faculty to change their practices, multi-faceted efforts are necessary – starting with respecting their students as co-curriculum makers, understanding students' needs through non-verbal signals, and considering how to add value in developing dialogue among and with students in an emergent manner based on students' confusions or questions.

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Non-native speaker faculty; cross-cultural teaching; multicultural contexts; pedagogy; self-study

The number of non-native speaker university faculty working in globalized contexts is increasing in many countries (Cantwell & Maldonado-maldonado, 2009; Singh et al., 2021). These faculty members are likely to be faced with different expectations, roles, and norms than in institutions in their home countries. If they are working in an institution where English is the medium for instruction, they speak English as an additional language; *and* if they are of color or ethnic minority, expectations and challenges may be heightened. Two issues emerge, namely: linguistic barriers and discrimination. Linguistic barriers are problematic experiences for faculty when working in non-native languages (Bradford, 2016; Dang & Vu, 2019; Tange, 2010) or in working with non-native speakers of their own languages (Singh et al., 2021).

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These faculty face different expectations, roles, and norms than those in their home institutions. When working in an institution where English is the medium for instruction, linguistic barriers and discrimination can pose significant challenges, particularly for non-white faculty who are also non-native speakers (Jang, 2017). Sadly, in some cases, there has been evidence of students attacking and abusing these faculty (Lawrence et al., 2013; Munene, 2014). Some non-native speakers feel that they are in a disadvantaged position, often excluded from decision-making processes and procedures about teaching, administration and even research, in comparison with local and/or Anglophone faculty. (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). These negative experiences can eventually lead to non-native speakers leaving the workplace (Lawrence et al., 2013).

There is a preference for native language proficiency that privileges native speaking over non-native staff, which in turn devalues the professional currency of non-native speakers (Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). In the case of social sciences, a high level of native language proficiency is necessary to interpret, produce or analyze complex textual information in both oral and written forms, which puts non-native speakers at a disadvantage (Tange, 2020). This is compounded by a preference for native language proficiency, which devalues the professional currency of non-native speakers and may lead to a lack of respect from students (Yeh, 2018). This results in non-native speakers experiencing great difficulty building rapport with their students (Tange, 2020). At the end of the day, these non-native speakers may be excluded from practices, conversations, or decision-making processes by the mainstream members of their departments or faculties (Rao et al., 2019; Tange, 2020) or they may choose to isolate themselves from colleagues (Śliwa & Johansson, 2014).

We sought to unpack the pedagogical practices of non-native speakers and understand in more detail how they overcome the challenges they face. While previous literature has mainly focused on linguistic and verbal issues, we noted that non-verbal issues are often overlooked. Non-native speakers may experience anxiety due to students' non-verbal expressions, such as gazes, frowns, unresponsiveness, sighs, or gestures such as putting their faces on the desk. There are many studies regarding non-verbal communication in the classrooms in general education, across early years, primary and secondary school contexts. The literature on non-verbal communication in the classroom recognizes the reciprocal relationship between the mind and body (Gallagher, 2018). Thus, there are scholars who highlight the body in teaching and learning processes – and discuss embodiment as part of pedagogy (Butler, 2017; Sinclair, 2005; Yeo & Tzeng, 2020). They are using the teacher body (Butler, 2017; Sinclair, 2005) and incorporating student embodied action, such as a tracing gesture using their fingers (Yeo & Tzeng, 2020) as a part of pedagogy.

Critical is to understand students' signals in class, as student responses directly or indirectly inform the teacher about what to do next in the class (Schepens et al., 2007). The literature on non-verbal communication in the classroom recognizes the reciprocal relationship between the mind and body (Schmidt & Beucher, 2020; Sund et al., 2019). For example, student gestures and gazes are reflected in the diagrams that they draw (de Freitas & Sinclair, 2011).

Students represent their engagement with learning activities through embodiment, like fidgeting of the legs, looking at other students, or playing with their pens when disengaged, while being calmer and still when more engaged (Sund et al., 2019). It is

critical to understand students' signals in class, including silence, which can be an active action that creates multiple meanings in thoughts, ideas, emotions, or physical sensations. In some contexts, silence is a dialogical action, which is aimed toward, or results in, collaboration, as much as talking with each other is (Acheson, 2008). The teacher may also predict students' conceptual changes through changes in their small facial expressions – the students with a higher degree of comprehension about the given topic are more likely to show negative facial expressions before their conceptual change, while those with lower levels of understanding demonstrated the opposite results (Liaw et al., 2021)

However, these studies are not from university settings, and multicultural contexts were not premised inside the classrooms that they studied. Non-verbal factors are not necessarily discussed in the literature about the experiences of non-native speakers either. In considering the pressure non-native speakers are under, they may also have to fully utilize all their senses – including understanding the situation non-verbally. However, non-native speakers may struggle to interpret these non-verbal cues, which can affect their ability to engage with their students and create a positive learning environment.

Purpose of Study

This article examines Eisuke Saito's journey as a teacher educator with a focus on studying understanding his teaching practice as socio-historically constructed over time and overcoming challenges and developing solutions. In doing so, in collaboration with Michelle Ludecke, this article aims to consider: How do non-native speaking educators develop their practice in challenging contexts? We consider this an important question to address in an increasingly globalized world, in relation to exploring and understanding his teaching practice as socio-historically constructed over time, and how he overcame challenges and developed solutions.

By employing a self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) approach as a research method, it revealed complexities in Eisuke's practice and context. Collaborative reflection and analysis with a critical friend deepened reflection and increased the trustworthiness of the findings. This article examines how Eisuke, as a non-native speaker, sought to address challenges in his teaching using both verbal and non-verbal strategies. By examining Eisuke's S-STEP and engaging in critical discussion, we found that he recognized the value of understanding the meaning of his students' verbal and non-verbal communication in classes through his teaching and consultancy. This recognition led him to develop his own teaching approach, known as the 'ripples' strategy, by utilizing the resources he had acquired. This article, after the introduction and purpose, explains the key concept of 'critical incident' and outlines the methods used. Eisuke's autobiographic narrative and analysis are then presented in the form of 'analytical conversation' between Michelle and Eisuke. This is followed by discussion and finally, a conclusion.

Key Concept: Critical Incidents

In this article, critical incidents are a guiding concept. Critical incidents refer to a salient or crucial change, or tipping point, in a practitioner's life course. Critical incidents reveal to the practitioner aspects of their practices, beliefs or identities that they were not necessarily aware of before (Badia et al., 2021; Crowhurst & Patrick, 2018; Halquist & Musanti, 2010; Hanhimäki & Tirri, 2009; Harrison & Lee, 2011; Tripp, 2011; Voulgari & Koutrouba, 2021). Critical incidents are experienced through contradictions, tensions, or struggles due to conflicting demands or values (Crowhurst & Patrick, 2018). Most critical incidents can be very mundane phenomena, but they start to be critical through analysis and reflection by the practitioner (Badia et al., 2021; Halquist & Musanti, 2010; Voulgari & Koutrouba, 2021). Simultaneously, critical incidents are not necessarily problematic or negative, but they can be positive experiences too (Halquist & Musanti, 2010; Harrison & Lee, 2011). Critical incidents encourage practitioners to reflect on their practices from ethical and moral perspectives, which can strongly influence their emotions (Hanhimäki & Tirri, 2009; Voulgari & Koutrouba, 2021).

Exploring critical incidents in an autobiographical S-STEP way was beneficial for this study as it allowed a detailed analysis of how Eisuke overcame challenges in teaching. Michelle encouraged Eisuke to take a critical incident approach to selecting key moments in his practice to share, discuss and evaluate, so that Eisuke – as the researcher as the main focus of the study – could effectively select and communicate to Michelle events that have a causal relationship with the outcome as the focus of the study. This approach can also benefit other non-native speaking teachers and teacher educators by providing a model for reflecting on their own experiences and developing strategies for effective communication and teaching.

Methods

For this research, we chose the S-STEP (Samaras 2011; Mitchell 2005) as a qualitative research approach well suited to working with autobiographical material, narratives, and memory-work data. Also, this methodological approach validates teacher educators using existing written data such as reports, plans, and discussion boards, as well as visual or non-verbal data (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015) to research their own practices of professional and personal experiences, often in collaboration with critical friends (Loughran & Brubaker, 2015). This S-STEP draws on the critical incidents of Eisuke as primary data, and examines meanings and explanations of ordinary experiences, to investigate a variety of emotional memories (Cole 2011; Samaras 2011).

The Nature of S-STEP

In S-STEP, practitioners investigate their own practices in a community in order to improve their practice (Samaras 2011; Mitchell 2005). They employ critical collaboration in clarifying the meaning of their practices to themselves and to other colleagues. Specifically, S-STEP investigates the challenges and struggles, or contradictions experienced by teacher educators as a way to improve their practice (Berry, 2008; LaBoskey & Richert, 2015; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). The degree to which S-STEP is considered

trustworthy depends on how useful it is perceived to be by readers in investigating, theorizing, or improving their own practices

(LaBoskey & Richert, 2015; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). By employing S-STEP, Eisuke, as a non-native speaker, was able to assess his teaching practices in socio-historical globalized Western contexts in a critical manner. Moreover, this approach aimed to shed light on the inequalities encountered by non-native speakers who don't have the language of instruction as their first language.

This S-STEP draws on Eisuke's lived experiences and practices as a teacher educator by undertaking meaning-making from experience (Kitchen, 2009). The approach considers the experiences of the practitioner, their workplaces, and communities from a historical perspective over the long term to comprehend how practices, knowledge, and practical knowledge have evolved (Kitchen, 2009). In this S-STEP, narrative storytelling is employed to present critical incidents for analysis. This narrative method entails Eisuke recounting his experiences, complete with details about characters, contexts, and story lines (Kitchen, 2009). There are also many silenced stories, in that through what is talked about, we also notice what has been silenced. Thus, utilising a critical incident (and critical friend) approach revealed a deeper meaning about the practitioner's/researcher's pedagogical practices and classroom experiences. Reflecting on both explicit and implicit representations of their teaching practices through self-investigation has allowed practitioners to provide others with the opportunity to understand their own pedagogical work (Brandenburg & Davidson, 2011). To further a practitioner's understandings a critical friend is indispensable in conducting S-STEP (Loughran & Brubaker, 2015). Eisuke collaborated with Michelle by sharing critical incidents and receiving feedback to further refine them. In this instance Michelle acted as a critical friend for Eisuke, and more explicitly worked to engage in a form of critical discussion and analysis with him through noting silences and asking questions. These critical discussions were reciprocal in nature, as Michelle also came to a range of discoveries that are outside the scope of this article. Together, we made a decision to present the data in conversation format, where both authors are presented as discussants, to highlight the benefits of exploring critical incidents with a critical friend in an autobiographical/S-STEP way. We aim to also invite the readers into the stories and assist them to see themselves in these stories. Strategic questioning by Michelle to elicit themes for analysis can also reflect the questions and theories of the readers (LaBoskey & Richert, 2015; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015).

Data Collection and Analysis

For this study, four data sources were utilized. They are: (a) autobiographic accounts of Eisuke, (b) regular Email correspondences and (c) regular conversations between Eisuke and Michelle, as well as (d) field notes that Eisuke took during teaching. The initial data were purely from Eisuke through his reflections. Autobiographic accounts were written from August to December 2020, then in July 2021. These accounts were then shared with Michelle, and there were exchanges of emails where she commented on, and both authors clarified the meaning of, the accounts. In addition, we had online conversations throughout early 2021 for further clarification. This article builds on our ongoing relationship as co-authors concerned with examining and improving the relationship between teaching and learning in teacher education contexts, as seen in other manuscripts we

have co-authored (Sato et al., 2020, pp. 36–7). In our works we make a considered decision to retain the grammatical structure of Eisuke's text in the description of the episodes, resulting in what English speakers and readers may consider awkward phrasing.

During this process, Eisuke and Michelle applied a critical incident framework to identify practices, beliefs or identities that Eisuke was not necessarily aware of before. We call these salient moments Eisuke's 'tipping points' in relation to his pedagogical development. As discussed below, Eisuke was hesitant about, and lacked confidence in, teaching but experienced an eventual turn in his perspective. To identify this turn we paid attention to (1) what made Eisuke feel negative about teaching; (2) when Eisuke started to see teaching differently, and (3) how Eisuke developed his own pedagogical approaches. A range of critical incidents were initially brought to the conversation, and while we discussed all of these critical incidents, together we selected a few key 'tipping points' to analyse further.

In this article, we take a dialogic approach to deepen our understanding of the meaning of each of Eisuke's critical incidents. After identification of his critical incidents, Eisuke shared his initial thoughts with Michelle, who conducted a thematic analysis, and organised their initial conversations into the themes below. Eisuke and Michelle continued their conversations with Michelle putting critical questions to Eisuke to strengthen and elaborate the analysis further. As we consented to identify ourselves as authors and critical friends in this study, ethical approval was not required. However, to maintain confidentiality, we have avoided identifying any other individuals or institutions mentioned in the paper.

Our Positionalities

The main focus of this study is on Eisuke's narrative accounts of critical incidents, which are presented in a narrative format. Eisuke was born in Japan and completed all his education, inclusive of his doctorate studies, in Japan. He then worked in the headquarters of a government agency for international development for a year after completion of his doctorate, then worked as a consultant from 2001 till 2008 in Indonesia and Vietnam. In December 2008 he joined a teacher educational institution in Singapore, and moved to his current workplace in Australia in January 2016. Eisuke is not a certified teacher but has been researching in and working with teacher professional development and learning, school reform and pedagogical issues.

Michelle also began working at the same (current) workplace at the same time as Eisuke. She was born in the United Kingdom, and has lived, studied and worked for extended periods of time in the UK, Australia and the United States of America. She shares doctoral supervision and co-authored publications with Eisuke, and they often discuss teaching strategies and pedagogical dilemmas with each other. Prior to her current academic position, Michelle had been working in Initial Teacher Education since 2006 and has been a registered secondary school teacher in Victoria, Australia since 1994. Michelle provided feedback on Eisuke's reflections and critical incidents, serving as a critical friend in this study.

Eisuke's Critical Incidents as Autobiographical Stories

The following stories are told from Eusuke's point of view, and they have been written in English, which is not the first language of Eisuke, who is from Japan. Our aim is to bring attention to the pedagogical approach developed by Eisuke, a non-native speaking teacher educator, who has utilized both verbal and non-verbal communication to overcome the challenges he faced as a non-native speaker in a profession that often privileges English native speakers. Michelle, a critical friend who speaks and writes only in English, was able to glean the intended meaning from stories.

For this article, we identified three stages in Eisuke's professional experiences and selected a relevant critical incident to represent each. First, during his initial exposure, Eisuke was taken aback by students' non-verbal expressions when he began teaching at a tuition school. Secondly, he faced verbal challenges as a non-native teacher educator. Lastly, we focus on how he utilized both verbal and non-verbal communication to develop his own unique teaching approach.

Initial Exposure of Eisuke to Teaching Profession: A Non-Verbal Shock

My major throughout university was more about sociology or public administration of education, not teacher education. However, I had strong education experiences when I did my part-time job during my postgraduate time. I taught a class in a tuition school for the first time. I had only several students in a class. However, the striking shock for me in the first moment in my first class was:

> **Incident 1**: . . . the first time for me to see the facial expressions of indifference. Whatever I said, the students showed impassive, blank and 'silent' faces. Before that time, most of the audiences that I spoke to on previous occasions were basically interested in my speech, providing non-verbal feedback in the form of eye contact, nods, and sometimes even smiles. However, there was no such positive feedback or sign from the students (Eisuke, Reflection, Dec 2020)

I became panicked, frightened, and extremely daunted with all those blank facial expressions. Especially, silent expressions of indifference were horrifying to me – and still are. Again, it became a deeply traumatic experience for me – I had the sense of being entirely rejected. Probably, the students did not think to this degree – however, if I recount, I had content to teach, and I was ready to do so – but the students were not interested in anything and their faces were almost cemented, and were so hard to break. I did not know what to do to change the situation nor how to do it.

Struggles as a Teacher Educator: Verbal Challenges

It is interesting to note that my research now mainly focuses on in-service aspects of teacher education. The reason why I am working in this field and exploring my own teaching in the teacher education sector is largely due to my mentor, whom I met during an Indonesian teacher education project when I worked as a consultant after graduating from my doctoral program. Since then, I continued working with Vietnamese teachers after the project ended in 2007. The emphasis of the project was on teacher professional

development, based on class observations. Initially I was not confident, but was interested in the classroom observations and reflections, so I started to learn about these.

One of the powerful points that my mentor always made was about non-verbal expressions – how critical information would also be given non-verbally. I tried to learn through listening to him more, and by inviting him to wherever I worked. As a consultant, my mentor emphasized the importance of mindfulness and carefulness when listening to the students. Listening is different from 'hearing' – he meant this as an ethical stance, A key idea is to acknowledge the complete identity of the student from the beginning, and have faith in the motivations behind their behaviour and comments, even when they exhibit misconduct (Ahn & Trogdon, 2017; Janosz et al., 2018; O'Neill & Vogel, 2019).

In 2008 I joined a teacher education institute in Singapore. It was my first time regularly teaching graduate students, who were working professional teachers. The first two years were the most stressful for me, as it was a major challenge to comprehend the students' speech. When students asked a question, being a speaker of English as a foreign language, I needed some time to digest what they meant and to come up with a possible response. Probably, the students felt it was too long, and many of them must have believed me to be stupid – I heard one student from another class directly saying in front me, 'Oh, you are Mr. Oops'.

During my service in Singapore, in addition to teaching in the university, I frequently went to schools to conduct workshops for in-service teachers as part of their professional development. Some teachers – to be fair, not all – displayed animosity towards me, expressing their displeasure through scowls and glares. They would even perform tasks without acknowledging my presence. Those teachers tended to complain about my Japanese accent.

> **Incident 2**: The coordinator who invited me to the workshop said that the first day of the workshop was successful. I was happy, but the next remark was striking – her colleagues had been really unhappy to have invited me. One of them had attended my previous workshop in another place. She asked the coordinator why she 'involved' me in the school workshop, complaining that my accent had been horribly Japanese, waffling and making no sense – so that she had not understood the content well (Eisuke, Reflection, May 2022)

I have tried not to speak too much with a Japanese accent when speaking English during my professional career – perhaps I will seek an opinion of Michelle in the latter part of this paper. However, my audiences, especially the native speakers, believe I have a heavy Japanese accent. I am a non-native speaker, brought up through early childhood to my PhD in Japan, so there is a limit in terms of my English proficiency. No matter how hard I try to improve my English proficiency and reduce my Japanese accent, if native English speakers still perceive it to be insufficient, I must accept their judgment. However, this does not mean that it does not hurt me emotionally – it's like a bruise in my mind.

Underlining Verbal and Non-Verbal Aspects to Produce Strengths in My Teaching

I realized a need to change something in my teaching. Thus, I decided to change my teaching strategies and increase my mindfulness in teaching. I started with changing the way of addressing the students. Since then, I intentionally call the students by their title such as 'Mr'. or 'Ms'.. This is because I would like to have respectful relationships. To be

respected, I decided to respect my students first. Also, I decided to listen to the student voices by providing scrap paper at the end of the class (exit tickets) to let them write down their opinions about the class. It was quite a helpful practice for me to learn their needs and preferences.

Moreover, I realized that my teaching tended to be flat in my early career in Singapore so I tried to be more critical in interacting with the students. In responding to the student remarks in a critical way, I tried not to forget a sense of humor. I started this effort in the latter part of 2010. Using humour can be challenging as it has the potential to harm people in different ways. Thus, I always put myself down, not anyone else, when making a joke.

I kept reflecting on what my strength is – something that I could utilize in my teaching. As a consultant for school reform, I had recorded many video clips of classroom observations. I used these to reflect together with the teachers. I thought that I could utilize these clips in teaching a unit about lesson study as part of a short course for middle level leaders. In this unit, I referred to the importance of paying attention to embodied or non-verbal signals demonstrated by the students, as many teachers were likely to ignore such signals despite the critical importance of these observations (Sato et al., 2020). I thought it would be helpful playing video clips even from other countries exposed the students to analyze the situations in the practices – and it worked. In 2012, when I started running a new unit about professional issues of teachers, I decided to use the video clips to connect the content, concepts, or theories in the readings with actual practices in the classrooms.

By experiencing more teaching in classes and observing the classroom practices in my school consultancy, an idea eventually emerged in my mind around 2014 about the layers of factors influencing the process of teaching, as seen in the model shown in Figure 1 below. This model was originally used to explain what I noticed in the observed consultancy classes. In due course, I came to the realization that I comprehend the

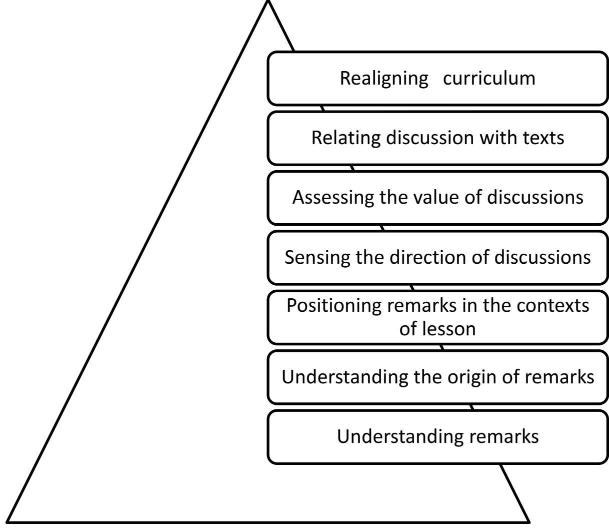

Figure 1. Eisuke's understanding of complexities in discourses in a class.

happenings in a class through acknowledging the intricacy of discourses within it, which helps me prepare to facilitate discussions among students.

It starts with understanding the literal meaning of students' remarks. I pay attention to those who are still formulating their thoughts, or are confused about the content, or are even giving up on learning. If those students say something, I instantly try to understand the origin or inspiration of the remark. The origin might be an assigned text, a previous remark by another student or myself, or shared experiences outside the class. Then, I position the remarks in the context of the lesson – how relevant the remarks are in the *given moment* within the entire lesson, *whether* they are relevant, how they are related to *segments of the discussion* between the students, and how relevant they are to the *themes* of the lesson. I then predict the direction of the discussion by running scenarios in my mind on how I could use the remarks: whether I continue to seek opinions from the students based on, or in addition to, the given remarks, or whether I should put forward a critical question about the implications of the remarks and ask the students to discuss. I quickly examine the values and meaning of each possible scenario and decide which one would be most significant and important to help the students learn about the given topic of the class. Eventually, I use the relationships between the remark and the text to guide the conversation, so the students refocus on their readings. Obviously, this requires re-alignment of the curriculum of the class because these elements are all emerging live, rather than fixed in advance. I need to do all these in a few seconds – while listening to the students. This is similar to the discussion of teachers' interactive cognition (Meijer et al., 1999; Schepens et al., 2007) but with more zooming in onto how to respond to and utilize the remarks by the students in different contexts with emergent curriculum.

This way of understanding such complexities requires full attention and energy. If we teach in our own native languages, it would be an instant and intuitive processes. However, running through all these scenarios in a different language is quite exhausting. I have always held an image of my teacher-self right from the beginning of my career in Singapore as 'giant ears walking' – my ears like Dumbo the elephant's. I use this sense of 'giant ears walking' to maximize my attention on making second to second decisions. After each class, I felt, and even now feel, extremely tired.

My increased attention to both non-verbal and verbal communication in the consultancy classes assisted me to realize that I could actually utilize my experiences, constructed through bitter and harsh exposure to difficult instances, as resources for my teaching. My awareness led me to produce my own pedagogical approach: the 'ripples' strategy. I create a situation where a student's question or remark poses another aporia or question for other students – like a ripple effect. I try to glean what the student struggles with, and pass it to other students to respond to, especially if I find the question potentially meaningful and worthwhile to think about further. This strategy involves an instant precariousness in riding a ripple along with the struggling student/s, and then requires critical thinking to frame or reframe their struggles as ripples to other students, for their response. I combine both verbal and non-verbal elements to identify student struggles with high potential for further meaningful and worthwhile consideration.

> **Incident 3**: I ask the students to discuss in groups. Then, I identify someone that s struggling by their facial expression. I call on them to share their struggle by guaranteeing perfect safety to share. Their points are likely to be important and difficult questions for other students too.

> Then, I provide another 'ripple' by asking whether all the other students can relate to the struggle. If the students become silent, I immediately give another ripple, asking them to consult with each other about the point. This moment is when the students definitely need some buddies to consult with or talk with – a real moment of emergence of collaborative learning. I keep this going until the discussion meaningfully subsides. If it is hard for the students to resolve the point after some attempts, then I share my knowledge or ideas based on their discussions. In this way, my classes center on student perplexities – they are important co-curriculum makers for me (Eisuke, Reflection, July 2021)

This 'ripples' approach was formed sometime at the end of my service in Singapore and practiced with confidence in the latter half of 2018 in Australia – a decade after the commencement of my teaching career. Non-verbal signals, which initially were sources of horror to me, have become resources to facilitate verbal strategies in my teaching today.

Analytical Conversations

Here we draw on the notion of critical friendship after Loughran and Brubaker (2015) as a way of interrogating Eisuke's experiences. We drew on additional data from audio-recordings of our professional discussions and email conversations to construct the following four vignettes: *Realizing the Distance; Listening Verbally and Non-Verbally; Understanding 'Layers';* and *Creating 'Ripples'*. We drew on Michelle's experiences of delivering personalized professional learning in a school through a series of interactions between teachers and university-employed teacher educators (as academic coaches) (Ludecke et al., 2021). In doing so we present our exploration of specific instances of the overall theme of translations in teaching as a conversation.

Realizing the Distance

Eisuke: In the early stage of my career as a faculty member in Singapore, English oral communications were the serious problems. While I had some level of understanding of non-verbal aspects through my observations, it often served as more of an alert or pressure since it primarily captured only the disengagement or dissatisfaction of the students. As a result, the psychological distance between the students and myself was quite large.

Michelle*:* Your embodied experiences of teaching are the subtle ways you can 'read' the classroom and the students. However, this expert kinesthetic sense seems to be dominated or even pushed out by a focus on what you perceive to be challenging student attitudes. Do you think the students believed there was a 'distance' as you put it?

Eisuke: They may, or they may not. Possibly, they may not have intended as I felt – yet it also shows how vulnerable teachers can be in the classrooms – as KelchtermansKelchtermans (1996, 2009) argues. The feeling of vulnerability is exacerbated by the limited accessibility caused by speaking a non-native language (Bradford,

2016; Dang & Vu, 2019). Then, although I worked as a consultant for teacher professional development, ironically, I had only memories of the fiasco that was my own teaching. Despite the active research and field experiences before coming to join the institution, I felt hesitant and apprehensive about teaching in general. In addition to that, I needed to teach in English despite completing all my education from kindergarten to PhD in Japan.

***Michelle**:* So, you perceive language as the primary barrier between you and the students? Whether this is face-to-face or online?

***Eisuke**:* Yes, I did – and still do. This stage is about the initial problematization, so basically about face-to-face teaching experiences at earlier stage of my teaching career.

Listening Verbally and Non-Verbally

Eisuke: I designed a system inside my classroom based on a respectful and engaging network for learning. In negotiation with my students, I started listening to their voices, making changes in my pedagogical strategies, and exercising a sense of humor in my classes.

Michelle: What was the strategy of negotiation you used to 'listen' or to privilege student voice? Was this something you learned from your mentor? I think your mentor has strongly shaped your pedagogical approaches and thus your teacher identity. I'm interested to hear more about this other 'actor' in your network and what or how you learnt from observing and working with your mentor in understanding the students, their learning and their well-being through lesson study.

Eisuke: What I learnt from my mentor (and related books) was to pay attention to students' embodiments, like facial expressions. In classrooms, the students provide so many quiet signals – and actually in many social contexts outside the classroom too – through their non-verbal expressions. Students express their non-verbal communication through their bodies, particularly through their facial expressions, with the eyes being the most crucial. Certainly, there are multiple ways of interpreting non-verbal expressions, but we need to come up with hypotheses and potential cards to play with regard to students' perplexities, confusions, engagements or refusals about what they are supposed to work on. In other words, I learnt that student embodiment of learning (or not learning) and facial expressions are clues to decide what next actions about curriculum and pedagogy to take instantly.

Michelle: What I notice is the transformation of your role, and your understanding of how a teacher learns to shift their focus from preparation and delivery of materials towards a deeper understanding of how their teaching is being received by the learners, and how adjustments are made in response. Your mentor's work has clearly been an inspiration to you, in your journey to becoming an expert teacher. So, while earlier, verbal English language was perceived as a barrier, being able to 'read' body language is now a possible way of solving the problem. I think this comes back to some of our earlier discussions about embodying a disposition of openness and receptiveness (Sato et al., 2020, p. 45) and aligns with Blanco and Saunders (2019) recognition that when teaching in a different context to that of one's home institution the effect that embodied teaching has, and the emotional responses this embodiment elicits, has educative potential.

Understanding 'Layers'

Eisuke: Then, I realized the depths and complexities of the teaching and learning process. In other words, I tried to understand how the students come up with their remarks and how their discourses are constructed within the classes, as shown in Figure 1.

Michelle: So, this was when you had a big shift in your teaching focus? Was this through managing student behaviors and attitudes, or more through managing yourself by acknowledging that your 'trauma' around your use of English as the medium for instruction can be minimized by other strategies?

Eisuke: The shift of my focus in teaching was from understanding 'English' to understanding 'multiple layers in process' through careful listening. It does not mean that English comprehension ceased to be a problem – it is still so. However, my attempts to comprehend students on a deeper level extended to even the most subtle nuances and implicit ideas. These changes in focus came from learning more from my students – what they would like to know, discuss, and understand more through giving their reflections at the end of the lessons. Also, through implementing numerous workshops and classes, I became familiar with their accents and the speed of the local dialect – guiding me to identify where to and not to focus when listening to the students or participants. All these made me understand the gist of discourses with the students in the classes. Many teachers will have their own multiple layer models in their minds, with components different to mine. These teachers' responses to the students will likely be more dynamic and intuitive, perhaps like a pinball (Keast & Anders, 2017; Keast et al., 2017). However, to me, a teacher's work is more strategic – like game theory (Saito et al., 2022) – where expert teachers know what to focus on. In other words, they predict what will happen based on precise information-searching (Geertz, 1978, 1979) about what is happening in the students' minds, and how student learning can develop by continuing the given discussion. Such expert teachers would and could calculate this very fast, almost to the degree of intuition, I guess. I do not mean that I can do this (yet), but at least I can organize my thinking and responses into layers (as represented in Figure 1) to keep in my mind.

Michelle: While some might suggest that by simply spending time in the new context you might eventually come to such an understanding, I believe that, as you have demonstrated, it takes a concerted effort on the teacher's part to dedicate themselves to the task of professional development. Teachers' perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development, as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change, and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice (Beijaard et al., 2000).

Creating 'Ripples'

Eisuke*:* Moreover, I started to recruit any factors in my teaching process – utilizing the student remarks and their facial expressions about their perplexities as clues to me. To me, mundane questions, perplexities, and confusions are sources of and opportunities for learning. I like to value those mundane problems and upgrade them as windows for deeper learning. Even gaps in students' levels of understanding the content or their access to various resources outside the classroom should be utilized as ways for every student to learn better. These ideas are represented in my 'ripples' pedagogical approach – capturing student questions and perplexities even through their non-verbal expressions and persistently letting the students discuss and contemplate their questions.

Michelle*:* We started out recognizing two key actors: yourself as a non-native speaking teacher working with English as the medium of instruction, and your students as dismissive, derisive and disengaged. In the past the students' attitudes built up your 'trauma', yet now we see that trauma has reduced, and in place you can recognize opportunities for teaching effectively. Although your expertise in English has certainly grown over the years living and working in an English-speaking country, what do you think has been the main mobilizing factor?

Eisuke: There has been a change in my notion about the students. In the reflection in July 2021, I referred to the students as 'co-curriculum makers'. Throughout my attempts to understand the complexities and multiplicities of the meaning in their discourses, and to dig out together what the students do not understand, I realized that improvisational building and development of curriculum is conducted in the process of my lessons. This shows an almost opposite view towards the students: from those who threaten and scare me to those who work together with me.

Michelle*:* I'd like you to also re-consider the impact your mentor has had on this mobilization . . .

Eisuke: It is indeed an extension of his impact. The 'ripples' approach emerged from my personal struggle over the years in finding ways to create authentic opportunities for students to seek help. Drawing on my mentor's guidance, I began to realize that the confusion expressed by students was a clear indication to encourage them to seek support from their peers. Very recently I realized the meaning of such improvisational changes based on capturing signals by the students as my mentor always pointed out. This represents an improvisational shift in the curriculum, as the in-class situation, including student responses and thoughts, diverged from prior expectations about the class. These shifts reflect the students' needs and desires, as interpreted by me. Thus, my mentor, as well as the books that his colleagues wrote, guided me to realize the need for improvisation and to accept the unexpected.

Discussion

As a non-native speaking teacher educator from Japan, Eisuke had a series of challenges. First, he was faced with complaints, discrimination or biases that he felt were demonstrated by some students (Jang, 2017; Lawrence et al., 2013; Munene, 2014) in the early stage of his career in Singapore. Eisuke's desire to improve his pedagogical practices was not motivated by performance indicators or a desire for promotion (Lawrence et al., 2013; Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). Rather, he simply desired to be a better lecturer: he kept thinking about how to improve his pedagogical practices, which would be informed by, and inform, his research. To achieve this goal, Eisuke developed the 'ripples' approach over the years, which would prioritize respectful learning relationships and seek to understand the complexities of the classroom.

As a result of the critical discussions with Michelle, Eisuke came to a clearer understanding of what a huge barrier the English language as a medium for instruction can be. His understanding aligns with others (Bradford, 2016; Dang & Vu, 2019; Tange, 2010) who recognise how much of a challenge it is to convey the meaning of content in a non-native language in an effective and student-friendly manner (Tange, 2010); but it does not mean that it is impossible. Eisuke's attempts to understand, analyze, and utilize the complexities of teaching and learning processes for his pedagogical practices have helped him to 'read' verbal and non-verbal signals from students. Eisuke utilized his prior experience of observing teaching and learning processes to better understand non-verbal signals in his own classroom. This allowed him to recognize and interpret the complex layers within classroom discourse, resulting in the 'ripples' strategy. Eisuke utilized what he learnt from his mentor, his students, the partner schoolteachers in developing South-East Asia, colleagues in his workplaces, and critical friends such as Michelle. His experiences show that the stories of non-native speaking Asian faculty can go beyond deficiencies – acquiring confidence through various attempts and with effort.

As seen in *Struggles as a Teacher Educator: Verbal Challenges*, the 'Mr Oops' episode demonstrates the discrimination Eisuke had to face as a non-native English speaker, which aligns with other literature by 'outsiders' (Jang, 2017; Lawrence et al., 2013; Munene, 2014). Even students have caused some similar language-based discrimination (Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). Eisuke is from Japan and his lower proficiencies in English were

certainly a huge disadvantage in comparison with the local and/or native faculty (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018; Tange, 2020). Despite his negative experiences, however, Eisuke did not leave academia.

Eisuke's experience indicates that non-native faculty can choose to create a respectful environment in response to a negative climate against them. Once he started calling his students by their titles, Eisuke built up more respectful climates in his classrooms. Also, to prevent the stigma related to linguistic disadvantages (Śliwa & Johansson, 2014), it is crucial to articulate the challenges and the necessity for assistance regarding language or English issues, prior to the occurrence of such stigmatization. If, initially, students do not respect non-native speaker faculty (Yeh, 2018), then the faculty can try to show their respect to the students first, which was Eisuke's intention when he started calling his students by their titles. If it is hard building up rapport with their students (Tange, 2020), faculty need to make themselves more approachable.

Moreover, non-native faculty should become more attuned to non-verbal communication signals to decipher critical clues about what students feel and think. As there are strong ties between embodiment, cognition and emotions (Gallagher, 2018), Eisuke utilized the student embodiments or non-verbal signals as critical clues about their cognitive or emotional aspects. We recognize that our focus on embodiment is not a mere matter of pedagogy with *reference* to embodiment (Butler, 2017; Sinclair, 2005; Yeo & Tzeng, 2020). Rather, it is crucial for faculty to learn how to *interpret* the students' embodied signals and information, including silence (Acheson, 2008) or facial expressions (Liaw et al., 2021). Then, it is especially important to see if the students can recognize and reflect on their struggles, boredom, or hardships in order to re-engage themselves with the tasks or questions (Schmidt & Beucher, 2020; Sund et al., 2019). Simultaneously, the non-native English speaking teacher needs to recognize and reflect on what is to be done in the next step in their teaching (Schepens et al., 2007). As in incident 3, in Eisuke's case, the pedagogical strategies that he created was 'ripples'. The student confusions can be largely expressed in their frowning facial expressions, stiff bodies, or silence. On observing those moments, Eisuke thought it would be high time to cause another 'ripple', for example.

Through experience, mentoring, and critical conversations with Michelle, Eisuke was able to confront his challenges and develop an ability to interpret the meaning of his students' non-verbal embodied responses. This allowed him to deepen his understanding of how to enrich the discourses in his classrooms. These combined efforts helped Eisuke develop his own approaches to teaching. First, Eisuke came to understand and utilize multi-layered questions to critically understand the meaning and value of discourses as represented in Figure 1. Second, Eisuke started to learn how to utilize students' silence in his classes as opportunities for collaborative learning – he developed the 'ripples' strategy. Eisuke's ability to listen to his students and understand their problems and confusions led him to grasp the complexities of verbal discourses in his classes, which in turn enabled him to view his students as 'co-curriculum makers' (Saito & Fatemi, 2022).

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate a non-native speaking teacher educator's own pedagogical approach utilizing verbal and non-verbal communication. The investigation took

place through an autobiographical S-STEP with reference to critical incidents by the lead author and based on a critical friendship with his colleague and co-author. This study implies that for non-native speaking faculty to change their practices, multi-faceted efforts are necessary. Efforts such as those made by Eisuke to respect students and regard them as co-curriculum makers – akin to moments in a series of 'ripples' – go beyond mere courtesy. They involve a commitment to understanding students' needs through careful observation of their nonverbal signals, including their silence and facial expressions. Eisuke's approach also involves deep consideration of how to add value to the development of dialogue among and with students in an emergent manner, rather than as predetermined. Figure 1 demonstrates how Eisuke's efforts can help non-native speaking teachers and teacher educators gain confidence and improve their communication in the classroom. These efforts help non-native speaking teachers and teacher educators become more confident and produce better communication in their teaching.

As demonstrated through Michelle's critical friendship, there is a duty of care and respect that native speakers should have towards non-native speaking colleagues. This duty of care and respect can also be a great opportunity for cross-cultural understandings to develop and ultimately enhance the relationship between teaching and learning in teacher education contexts. Other implications include the need to address institutional structures that inadvertently disadvantage non-native English speakers. Non-native English speakers may face challenges in meeting requirements for promotion and tenure, especially in institutions where scholarship and research are emphasized. They may receive lower evaluations from students or colleagues due to language barriers or cultural differences, which can impact their career prospects and job security. Non-native English speakers may not receive the same level of support and resources as their native English-speaking counterparts, such as language classes or mentorship programs. Such institutional structures can create barriers for non-native English speakers and contribute to systemic racism in academia. It is important for institutions to recognize and address these issues to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all members. Forming special interest groups within universities – and in some cases intentionally creating 'buddies' of native and non-native speakers – can deepen the understanding and learning of all parties involved. Participating in such exchanges of learning can enhance educators' practices through sharing historical and emotional influence on their professional development. Additionally, the exchange of experiences can create opportunities for collaborative research in S-STEP, as members challenge their existing beliefs and practices about teaching and learning in a public manner as they actively seek out alternative perspectives on their practice.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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