

LETTERS, HOME: (Re)Constructing My Place in Language Teaching  
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Abstract

This autoethnographic enquiry has tended and cultivated a way of life, constructed and reconstructed a sense of home, as found in the teaching I've carried out in Japan over the 7-1/2 years leading up to the time I began to write. I've sought the furusato, the uchi—by which I mean the home, the dwelling, the ground—in which my practice as a language teacher finds its proper context. This has corresponded to an understand-ing of myself in the Japanese terms that named me: having once left Canada as EFL instructor, I profess to be returning as eikaiwa no sensei—master, if you will, of English conversation. But what does this mean, after all? Exploring the context of this profession invites a focus on questions of curriculum, understood as overall condition, space provided, for pedagogy. I've found that, just as eikaiwa is in many ways a kind of extracurricular (gakugai) activity, these questions depend on the nature and potential of the outsider's experience, that of gaijin, in which I become eikaiwa no sensei.

I've sketched out the methodological characteristics of this personal narrative enquiry, this autobiographical way of making sense. I've considered the space provided for autoethnography in living poetically after offering a sequence of what I've called English conversations, each a series of letters composed in my correspondence with a student or colleague in Japan. I've offered a sequence of essays and narratives which emerged as I, here in my native Prince Edward Island, dwelt on the themes arising in the conversations. Since many of my key terms have emerged in Japanese, I've offered a glossary of sorts. It may be found beginning on page 155.