A Reflexive Narrative of one Teacher's Professional Digital Literacy

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Abstract:

I have always combined my interest in technology with my work as a teacher, thereby developing my own digital literacy to the extent that it has been a very influential factor in my professional development and teaching beliefs. Whilst working in London in 2007, I began teaching IT skills classes to pre-masters students and at the same time I became the eLearning coordinator for a large chain of language schools with over 40 international locations. I was responsible for maintaining an online self-access centre and virtual learning environment with over 10,000 registered users. I created my own consultancy which offered technology training specifically for language teachers. Since moving to Japan in 2011, I have continued to utilise educational technologies in my work. My story may not be particularly unusual, and therefore in presenting a reflexive narrative of my experience I hope to open up a discussion with other practitioners who have similarly developed their digital literacy in order to improve their teaching and career prospects. I will also discuss my views on EFL teacher digital literacy in general, as well as my experience of student digital literacy. This presentation takes the form of a narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, 2013), based on data collected through the process of reflexive practice (Edge, 2011). I encourage others to utilise narratives as a way of improving their practice.

Narrative Inquiry and Reflective Practice

Becoming a reflexive practitioner means being able to constantly improve on things, being able to act on things, heightening intuition and awareness. This is connected with the idea of intuition (Atkinson & Claxton, 2000), awareness (van Lier, 1996), receptivity or basically being able to make decisions based on our experience, knowledge and beliefs about how something should be done (Gieve & Miller, 2006). Growing emphasis on practitioner research and teachers applying theory to what they do in the classroom (Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Edge, 2011; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2013; Holliday, 1994; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; J. C. Richards & Lockhart, 1994; K. Richards, Ross, & Seedhouse, 2012). "ESOL teachers are natural researchers" K. Richards (2003, p. 232)

Teacher and Student Digital Literacy
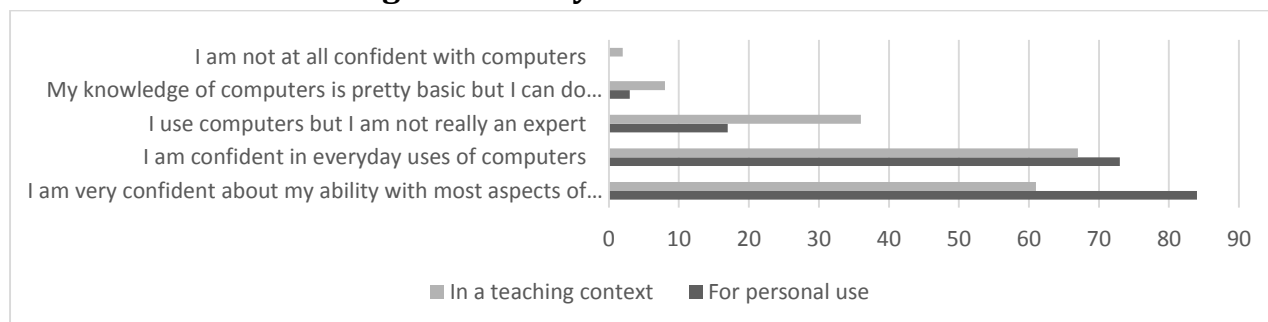
Teachers are not, as Kirschner and Selinger (2003) say, "road kill" but they seem slightly less confident about using technology when it applies to teaching contexts (Pinner, 2010). Teacher training has a correlation with student uses of digital learning technologies (Pinner, 2011).

Digital literacy and English proficiency have both come to be termed as 'life skills' (Graddol, 2006; Ushioda, 2011)
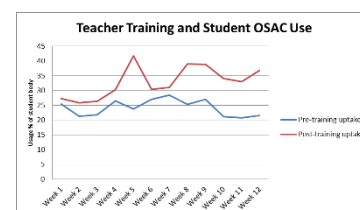
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