Making Necessary Adjustments:Teaching Abroad in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article is an account of a semester-long academic teaching exchange in which a professor from the U.S. taught applied linguistics courses in the English department of an urban Indonesian university. A description of the professional fine-tuning made by the instructor in different areas of teaching due to local conditions, student characteristics, and institutional realities is given. Also addressed here are some of the personal adjustments required in cross-cultural faculty exchanges. The author aspires to an approach to teaching which takes into account the social and cultural factors that influence education in any given context, an orientation which has been described as "postmethod pedagogy" (Kumaravadivelu). Implications are also made for other university faculty who embark on educational exchanges and who may need to make changes in how they conduct themselves professionally and/or personally when they are in unfamiliar teaching and learning environments.

KeyWords: cross-cultural communication, higher education, international faculty exchange, Postmethod Pedagogy, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

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Resumen

Este artículo relata la experiencia de una profesora universitaria de los Estados Unidos que impartió cursos de lingüística durante cuatro meses en el Departamento de Inglés en una universidad urbana grande en Indonesia. Debido a las diferencias en las condiciones para la enseñanza, características de los estudiantes, y otros factores, fue necesario hacer ajustes en el contenido planeado de los cursos, en el estilo y práctica de la forma de enseñar, y en la evaluación del aprendizaje del estudiante. Estos ajustes no fueron simplemente cambios cosméticos; más bien son parte necesaria de lo que Kumaravadivelu llama "pedagogía postmétodo". Este enfoque de enseñanza sostiene que "toda la pedagogía, al igual que toda la política, es un asunto local" (Kumaravadivelu 539), y que la enseñanza en un contexto particular debe tomar en consideración lo que hace que esa sea una situación única, incluyendo sus características socioculturales. El debate respecto de si los métodos de enseñanza están "muertos" está más allá del alcance de este artículo; sin embargo, Bell lo resume mejor cuando señala que "el postmétodo no implica necesariamente el fin de los métodos sino más bien una comprensión de las limitaciones de la noción de lo que significa el método y un deseo de trascender a aquellas limitaciones" (334).Se incluye aquí una descripción de los ajustes que hice como profesora en Indonesia en respuesta a las condiciones locales, al igual que un informe de algunos de los cambios en actitud y conducta que hice como persona. Finalmente, ofrezco algunas observaciones finales e implicancias para otros académicos que participen en intercambios educacionales en contextos de enseñanza/aprendizaje no familiares.

Palabras claves: comunicación transcultural, educación superior, intercambio internacional de universidades, Pedagogía de Post Método, Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (TEFL).

1. Introduction

International teaching exchanges provide valuable opportunities for teachers and students to learn from each other and to build relationships that span cultural and other differences. However, teaching under new circumstances also requires extensive adjustment on different levels by the teacher.

This article chronicles the experience of a university professor from the United States who taught linguistics courses for four months in the English department of a large, urban university in Indonesia. Due to differences in the teaching conditions, student characteristics, and other factors, adjustments needed to be made in the planned content of the courses, teaching style and practice, and assessment of student learning. These adjustments were not just cosmetic changes; rather, they are a necessary part of what Kumaravadivelu calls "postmethod pedagogy." This approach to teaching holds that "all pedagogy, like all politics, is local" (Kumaravadivelu 539), and that teaching in a particular context must take into account what makes that situation unique, including its sociocultural features. The debate about whether or not language teaching methods are "dead" is beyond the scope of this paper; however Bell sums it up best when he says that "postmethod need not imply the end of methods but rather an understanding of the limitations of the notion of method and a desire to transcend those limitations" (334).

A description of the adjustments that I made as a teacher in Indonesia in response to local conditions is included here, as is an account of some changes in attitude and behavior that I made as a person. Finally, I offer some final observations and implications for other university faculty who embark on educational exchanges in unfamiliar teaching/learning environments.

2. Background

I have been teaching in universities for over twenty years. About ten years ago, I received a teaching and research grant in the Philippines, assisting with teacher training as well as carrying out research. Since 1997, I have taught courses in linguistics and language teaching in an English Department at a U.S. university. My department offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and many of our students are practicing language teachers, while others are teachers in training. A large percentage of these undergraduate and graduate students will teach English in the U.S., but the students in their classes often come from varying language backgrounds. In addition, the majority of the international students will return to their home countries to teach, and some of our U.S. students will teach abroad after they graduate. "Internationalization" is a concept that is very real in my university and others throughout the world and involves "individual and institutional participation in academic, professional, and cultural experiences across national boundaries" (Biddle 9).

Over the years, I have developed a philosophy of teaching that contains some core values and practices. I respect the backgrounds and experiences of the people that I teach and, at the same time, I expect students to be open to different possibilities and viewpoints. I am committed to establishing and maintaining a relaxed atmosphere in my classroom, while balancing this with expectations for discipline and thorough inquiry. I want to challenge students to work beyond where they were, academically and personally, before they entered my classroom. I am also aware that I often must adjust what I am doing—whether this is how I conduct classes, structure assignments, grade students or any other area of teaching—in response to the goals and needs of my students.

3. Teaching in Indonesia

It was with this background and approach to teaching that I lectured for one semester in the English Department at the State University of Medan (UNIMED) in Medan, Indonesia on a teaching/research grant. Medan is a city of almost two million people, located on the island of Sumatra, the westernmost and second largest island in Indonesia. When I arrived in Medan in early February of 2004, I was informed that I would teach two sections of undergraduates in two subjects, sociolinguistics and language testing. Most of the students in my classes

were training to be English teachers, and the semester was already a week underway. I was excited about teaching the subject of sociolinguistics to multilingual students, yet at the same time challenged by the idea of teaching content in what for the students was a foreign language.

Then reality set in. In my four sections were a total of about 200 students. The smallest class contained 26, the largest 81. In Indonesia the temperatures are often between 26-32 degrees Celsius year-round (about 80 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit), yet the rooms in which I taught were not air-conditioned and there were no ceiling fans to even stir a breeze during the two-hour class sessions. Each classroom contained whiteboards, but I soon gave up the idea of using an available overhead projector since the electricity was usually out during the times that I taught. To add to this, students often had to bring extra chairs into the classroom to accommodate all of them, and this made the rooms even more crowded.

In addition to the difficult physical conditions, my students had no books, a library with only outdated materials, and no reliable computer facilities on campus. I was given a recommended curriculum outline for both courses the first day I came to the university, but these covered far more material than I thought manageable for one semester, even if the students' first language had been English. I also learned that students were taking ten to twelve subjects each semester, and this strengthened my resolve to streamline the syllabus and to build connections to make the content as comprehensible as I could within both courses. The purpose of these strategies was to help students clearly learn and then retain concepts, and then to help them apply these concepts to teaching in EFL classrooms. From week to week, I prepared lesson plans based on what I already knew and from books and from material in journal articles that I had brought with me, as well as from some books that I borrowed from the department's library. As I settled into my teaching, I was reminded of the image of building a bicycle while needing to ride it, and I was determined to get it built as soon as I could.

Another aspect of this teaching situation was the fact that there were very few foreign lecturers in the university, and I was the first outside faculty member in the English department in recent memory. The city of Medan is distant from the capital city of Jakarta and there are not as many resident foreigners in Medan as there are in some other Indonesian cities. This made me not only highly visible but also somewhat of an enigma to most of the faculty and probably to all of the students. My presence at UNIMED and the barriers that my students and I faced in understanding and working with each other underscores Baker and LeTendre's assertion that "the need to understand education on a more global level is inescapable in today's world" (5). Indonesian students were generally polite yet more formal way than, for example, in the Philippines where foreigners are more common and where English is a second rather than a foreign language. In Indonesia, English is rarely used for day-to-day communication, and is almost never employed as a medium of instruction in their educational system. In fact, in a discussion of communicative language teaching in Indonesia, Musthafa notes that, even in English classes, English is rarely used. His observation indeed mirrors my own experience of how English is taught and learned in the Indonesian university.

Soon after arriving at UNIMED, I realized that I would need to adjust and fine-tune what I expected from students and from myself. As I got to know the students and other teachers better, and as I began to understand and appreciate different aspects of Indonesian culture, I was able to use that knowledge to inform my teaching and my relationships with the students as a group and as individuals. The academic adjustments that I made throughout the semester fell into three general categories: content, teaching style/practice, and assessment of student learning. There is, of course, some overlap among these three, but they are the teaching areas in which I needed to modify what I was doing the most.

The result is that I moved toward what Kumaravadivelu describes as "postmethod pedagogy" which involves transforming teaching in three related areas: a "pedagogy of particularity" that is sensitive to local conditions, a "pedagogy of practicality" that seeks to bring theory and practice closer together, and a "pedagogy of

possibility" that fosters an awareness of the sociocultural realities in which any teaching is embedded. These three aspects are all necessary, albeit sometimes difficult to implement.

The rest of this paper will primarily be organized around the areas of adjustment to content, teaching style/practice, and assessment of student learning. Throughout these sections, specific attention will be drawn to when the changes in teaching moved my practice in the direction of the three components of the postmethod pedagogy outlined by Kumaravadivelu; namely, a pedagogy of particularity, a pedagogy of practicality, and a pedagogy of possibility.

4. Adjusting Content

I started teaching basic concepts in both courses right away; for example, presenting the difference between language and dialect in sociolinguistics and the concept of validity in language testing. I mostly used materials that I had brought with me, but it took several weeks of teaching before I could begin to gauge the English proficiency of the students, and I kept revising that perception throughout the term. Once I had a chance to interact with students in and outside the classroom, it became clear to me that they were at many different levels of proficiency and that it was important to identify and clarify for them the core concepts, link these concepts with various applications, and, finally, weave these two together. For the sociolinguistics course, I wanted to build on what the students already knew about language and its use in society. This, along with taking into account students' English proficiency, was in keeping with a "pedagogy of particularity," a way of teaching that responds to local conditions and needs. Indonesia is multilingual, so I was certain that students were familiar with and could supply plenty of examples of phenomena such as code switching and address terms. I chose to focus on the material in several chapters of an introductory sociolinguistics textbook that I had brought with me (Thomas and Wareing), as well as some complementary material from a similar textbook (Holmes). An article that I assigned, "When Do Indonesians Speak

Indonesian?" (Goebel) addressed when and where the national language is used, an issue with which students had everyday experience. Cannon, who surveyed Indonesian educators in 1991, stressed that outsiders consulting or teaching in Indonesia should keep in mind that "ideas and approaches should be applicable in [the] Indonesian setting" (459). This was confirmed by my use of the Goebel article on language choice in my Indonesian classes. While students were initially skeptical about why I, a foreigner, was interested in research on language use in Indonesia, their skepticism was short-lived, and discussions in both classes about how and why different languages are used in Indonesia were lively and uninhibited. An added bonus was that the teacher and student roles were reversed, and I learned from the students about the intricacies of multiple language use in the different regions of Indonesia.

There were fewer reading materials available to me on the subject of language testing, the second course that I taught, so I relied principally on a text about communicative language testing (Weir). To support the reading, I also demonstrated several different kinds of tests and test items, and had students create their own. In addition, I focused on testing reading and vocabulary, as I knew these were important testing areas in the Indonesian context, and students read chapters from two highly readable books on those subjects (Harmer; Schmitt). I embrace a "pedagogy of practicality" in all of my teaching, and the area of language testing is a natural one in which to provide students with numerous practical applications.

After the first few weeks, I became aware that the students found the terms and concepts used in the field of language testing very difficult, and that they did not have the same basic knowledge of the subject and vocabulary as did the students in the sociolinguistics classes. Therefore, to solidify the basic ideas, I had the students build definitions in their own words after reading on a particular topic. A good example of this was the idea of an "integrative test." I wanted to make sure that they had a good grasp of what this entailed, so I had them tell me first what they understood integrative testing to be before I started lecturing and

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leading discussions on it. The students would dictate their definition to me, I wrote it on the board, we would revise the definition (if necessary), and then come up with examples together. Some students were highly proficient in English and comfortable with the material (particularly those with teaching experience), and although I tried to call on a variety of students, the students who felt more comfortable in English were very helpful in getting the meaning across to the others. The more proficient students could, if we reached a serious impasse using only English, translate words and phrases into Bahasa Indonesia for the others.

I had been designing tests for my university classes for years, and so I drew on that and on my experience working in the testing industry to generate many of the lectures and demonstrations. This practical experience was urgently needed and seemed to be appreciated by these students, especially since many of them would soon begin their student teaching. A number of the lecture and discussion sessions in this testing course focused on guidelines for designing tests, and the pitfalls of different kinds of tests and test items. For example, when discussing the topic of oral testing, I conducted short interviews of volunteer students in front of the whole class. We then talked about criteria for assessing how students performed in those interviews, and identified the areas in which a teacher could help these students improve. This was much more instructive to the class than simply talking about oral testing in the abstract. This hands-on technique works well in just about any class, but was particularly useful in this context.

Some of the exercises that we did in class served more than one function. In the two language testing classes, I gave students paragraphs in English for which they needed to construct both open-ended (for example, essay) and close-ended (for example, multiple choice) questions. Their performance on these tasks (some of which were graded and some of which were not) informed me about how well they were learning the concepts and applications on the one hand, but I also noted their grammatical and lexical strengths and weaknesses in English. I then addressed some of these language issues directly or indirectly in class, making sure to

balance talking about what they were doing right, as well as their mistakes. I was acutely aware of my role as a language teacher as well as a teacher of content throughout my time at UNIMED. Because of this, I became used to what I came to think of as "meaningful digressions;" for instance, on one occasion when students wanted to make a test item on a word but were not completely sure of its meaning, we discussed the relative merits of using an English dictionary or a bilingual one.

When I returned home from Indonesia, I read Lewis's article about her experience as a teacher educator in Vietnam. The author stressed that it was important to let students know "that what you are suggesting for their classes is not just theoretical" (185). My Indonesian students were patient with theory to a point, but then they wanted to know how this could be used in their teaching. This realization fits within both a pedagogy of practicality as well as one of particularity; students needed practical experience because, as English teachers in Indonesia, they would have to put their knowledge to work as soon as they starting teaching in large classes with younger students who spoke little or no English.

5. Adjusting Teaching Style/Practice

Before coming to Indonesia, I was used to classes of American students for whom English was a first language, along with students from many different countries

who had already demonstrated their competence in English by meeting the admission standards for our university. During my year in the Philippines in the mid-1990s, I gave lectures and workshops to teachers and administrative staff. There was wide variation in all of these students' and teachers' ability to understand, discuss and write about academic material in English in both the U.S. and the Philippines, but the range that I faced in Indonesia far surpassed anything I had ever experienced.

I dealt with this broad spectrum of academic and linguistic preparedness among my students at UNIMED by slowing down on several levels. Obviously, I needed to speak more slowly, but I also decided to cover less material in each class period, allow extended

time for questions, and give students time in class to talk with each other about the topics at hand. In the event that something was especially difficult for them to understand or when I was unable to clearly explain something to my own and their satisfaction, I would rethink my coverage of the subject or choice of examples immediately. After class I would make notes for myself to know what had actually been done that day, any problems I had encountered, and jot down what I needed to do next time, or what I thought should be left out. I follow this method to a certain degree in my U.S. classes, but since I have more experience with that audience, the adjustments are usually not as extensive as they were in Indonesia.

It was clear from the beginning that in all four of my classes many students had not done the assigned reading before coming to class. Even those who had read the material often seemed unsure of what they had read. I had anticipated this to a certain degree, partially because of their heavy courseload and after having read research that claimed that the English vocabulary knowledge of Indonesian university students was significantly below "the threshold level for independent reading of unsimplified texts" (Nurweni and Read 161). In response to these potential barriers to understanding, I started devoting large portions of class to having students work in groups, requiring that they include some people who had done the reading in each group. I wrote questions on the board that they could discuss first in their groups and then in the larger class. I kept adjusting the amount of reading they were expected to do, keeping the core chapters and only taking a few examples from some of the others. I kept building in as much redundancy as they and I could tolerate; I accomplished this by previewing and reviewing regularly, and by restating points at different times during class, reminding students of related concepts during lectures or group discussion. I also provided the students with written summaries and review sheets on a regular basis, especially as exam times approached.

One major difference between students in Indonesia and those in the U.S. that affected my teaching style was the extreme reluctance of students in Indonesia to answer questions that I posed directly to individuals. They also hesitated to answer questions that were asked of the class as a whole. I was aware of the difference between collectivist and individualist societies from my experience teaching international students in the U.S., and from my time in the Philippines and thought, initially, that I had adjusted my teaching style in Indonesia. However, because students at UNIMED had far less experience with using English in authentic situations, they were often completely silent when I addressed questions to the whole class or to individuals. Keeping in mind the third element of a postmethod way of teaching which stresses an awareness of sociocultural factors, I developed a solution whereby groups of students rather than individuals were asked to consider a question or to formulate one, given time to do this, and then allowed to respond as a group. This generally worked well, and students did, as the semester went on, find it easier to answer me directly or ask questions more freely. As Gudykunst points out, "cultural individualism-collectivism has a direct effect on our communicative behavior in that it affects the communicative rules that we use to guide our behavior" (50).

I was pleased to find that after a month or so, an increasing number of students talked with me outside of class, and this continued as the semester progressed. Before I came to UNIMED, most of my students had had little contact with a native speaker of English in their university classes. After the initial shock, however, they sought me out to ask questions, express their concern about their performance in the class, or inquire about an upcoming assignment or test. In addition, some of them just wanted to find out more about me and what I thought of them and their country. I think that providing them with a safe environment in class and tapping their preference to work in groups helped to facilitate their interaction with me. This, in turn, lessened their fear of speaking to me individually and in front of the entire group. On the other hand, I also continued to encourage individual effort and gave all of the students various opportunities to consider issues and answer questions on their own without consulting their peers.

In any teacher-student interaction relationships are important, but based on my

previous experience in Southeast Asia and from reading others' research, I was well aware of the necessity of establishing good relationships inside and outside of class. I agree with an Australian teacher and aid administrator who asserted that in situations such as the one in which I was teaching, "interpersonal relationships-based on cultural sensitivity, personal flexibility and a genuine respect for local people [can take] priority over formal qualifications and experience" (Cannon 463). This is not to say that qualifications and experience do not matter, but a foreign teacher may not get far enough to share these with their students if a personal bond is not formed first.

In general, my teaching experience echoes what was found over 40 years ago when a study of Americans teaching in Indonesia reported that "the main job satisfaction… seems to be in ingenuity in adapting teaching techniques to Indonesian conditions" (Smith 94).

6. Adjusting Assessment of Student Learning

An important part of any university course is how the students will be assessed. In the Indonesian system, I found once again that I needed to adjust my way of doing things, this time in the area of student assessment. UNIMED required that students take a mid-term and final exam and be graded on at least one assignment. At my home university, I can choose the bases upon which I assess student learning, and this may or may not include examinations and written assignments. Since I was obligated to give the students examinations and one of the courses I was teaching in Indonesia was language testing, I was aware that my assessment methods were also a model for my students. I wanted to make sure that not only were the tests I gave the students valid, but I was also determined to make them challenging and interesting.

The graded assignments that I gave in both sociolinguistics and language testing were very practical. For language testing, students wrote example questions from texts that I distributed and discussed, and we revised the questions in class. They had a similar task as part of a take-home final exam. In the sociolinguistics class, students had two graded assignments. Both assignments involved giving examples from their own language use of such phenomena as code switching (the alternation of two languages in oral or written language) or using language to show identity. The second assignment built on the first one and was a description of their "linguistic repertoire," including how they felt about the different "codes" (languages or dialects) that they spoke. I concluded that practical assignments were not only highly valued by my Indonesian students, but that I needed to use my short time there for giving them concrete tools for either teaching or for understanding better their own linguistic identity and skills.

The midterm and final exams consisted of a combination of multiple choice and short essay questions that covered the concepts and applications in both of the courses. In addition, on the multiple choice questions, students were required to provide an explanation of their answers to two questions. I chose the two questions and handwrote the numbers on the individual tests; students near each other had to provide explanations to different questions.

I always monitor my students during tests, walking around and sitting in different parts of the room when feasible, but the monitoring requirements of teaching in this context took me by surprise. For the mid-term, I gave all of the students the same form of the test (although they had different multiple choice questions to explain), and still, contrary to explicit spoken and written directions, many of them liberally "shared" their answers with each other. I was able to stop this in many cases by a look or a reminder that they were to keep their eyes on their own tests, but nevertheless, many of them copied from their classmates, in several cases changing correct answers to incorrect ones. One student even called across the room to a classmate asking for confirmation of an answer. Although this collaboration among students is often valuable and to be expected in a collectivist culture such as Indonesia, my Indonesian colleagues expected students to work individually during examinations and I was obliged to do the same.

I dealt with this by weighing the essay portion of the midterm tests more heavily than I had planned. For the final exam, I constructed five different forms of the test per class, and announced to them ahead of time that the people sitting near them would not have the same form of the test. I heard from my Indonesian colleagues that they had to monitor their own students closely during tests, but I suspected that my students were more daring during my examinations, perhaps because foreign teachers had a reputation as being less strict (and possibly less vigilant) than their usual teachers. Even if students had copied the answers on the multiple choice questions from their classmates, if they didn't understand the material or why they had answered the way they had on the first part, this showed up clearly in their essay responses and I could see what they understood and how well they were able to apply what they had learned.

When I graded the assignments and essay questions for all of the classes, I graded more holistically than I did at home. I could tell that some of the Indonesian students with weaker English skills still had a good grasp of the material and often provided excellent examples, and so it was necessary to read past the lack of verb tenses and other grammatical problems and look for meaning. I came to realize, especially when I read student writing, that it was not sufficient to call English a "foreign language" in Indonesia; rather, it was more like a "foreign foreign language" and I factored that into my assessment of their understanding of and written expression about linguistic and social concepts. I found myself asking the question: What if this were your third or fourth language—how well could you express yourself in it? I had to keep in mind that these students were dealing with difficult academic texts and that their proficiency in English was still developing.

7. Conclusión

Looking back on my teaching experience in Indonesia, I believe that my commitment to flexibility in teaching was a definite asset. I know that while I made mistakes, I also perceived almost immediately upon arrival the need for various adjustments in my teaching and interactive styles. Throughout the semester, I proceeded to do what I could to determine the needs of these particular students and to teach them accordingly.

I had gone from an academic setting in the U.S. where students have easy access to books, computers and other resources and where they study only three or four subjects at a time, to a very different situation in Indonesia where students are expected to do much more with much less. I was taken aback by this at first, but as I got to know the students and the learning environment, I adjusted my expectations (I did not lower them, but adjusted them), and supported these students by finding reading and other materials, and by furnishing them with appropriate feedback and guidance.

I also called upon my experience as a teacher who had lived in different cultures both in Europe and Asia to help me see and then respond to the unique aspects of Indonesian culture. One social feature that was important to acknowledge and celebrate was the role of religion and culture in Indonesia. Cultural topics were an integral part of what we discussed in sociolinguistics; for example, we shared with each other what we perceived to be the social norms that governed our speaking in different situations in English, Bahasa Indonesia, and in the other languages that we spoke. The students appreciated it when I asked them questions about Indonesian culture and religious traditions and subsequently discussed an article I was writing and then sent to an American newspaper about the visibility and seeming acceptance of different religions in Indonesia. They were pleased that a westerner was actually writing something positive about their country, especially because of recent bombings against foreigners in Bali and Jakarta. The students were aware of my previous experience in Southeast Asia, but they were also very conscious of the cultural and linguistic differences between Indonesia and nearby countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore.

Not all of the adjustments I made were professional ones; immersion in a different culture requires personal adaptation as well. This process of adjustment, moreover, is often better understood once the experience is over and you can

appreciate the person and teacher you have become.

I advise others who set out on international exchanges that a different kind of patience and sensitivity are necessary when one is living and working in a foreign country, especially when the host culture is significantly different from those in your home country. Traits and practices that work in one environment often do not travel well and must be rethought in the new context. For example, a visiting scholar is also a guest, and the responsibilities of a guest in Southeast Asia, as one example, require that the visitor be open and accessible. This may mean suspending or modifying (at least some of the time) some pre-existing notions of things like privacy and what kinds of questions are too personal. Being a stranger in a new place often means being exposed to everyone's scrutiny and there is no point in trying to avoid that attention, especially since it is often positive.

I agree wholeheartedly with Kumaravadivelu and others (e.g., Giroux; van Manen) who have worked to expand the notion of what teaching is and should be. Teaching encompasses not only the standard issues such as strategies, materials or curricula which a teacher follows or changes, but, in addition, an effective pedagogy, especially one that is using a second language for instruction, must also allow for "a wide range of historical, political and sociocultural experiences that directly or indirectly influence L2 [second language] education" (Kumaravadivelu 538). I was teaching in English and in Indonesia, and it was vital to adapt my teaching to that context and those students. Such a situation fits Singh and Doherty's description of a "global contact zone" where the cultural assumptions and identities of both students and teachers are necessarily examined and negotiated. My experience in this particular kind of culture contact resulted in my becoming more aware of the myriad influences on teaching in my own culture once I returned home.

I have pointed out areas in my teaching which exemplify primarily two aspects of "postmethod pedagogy" as described by Kumaravadivelu, a pedagogy of particularity and one of practicality. However, the third aspect of this approach to teaching,

a "pedagogy of possibility," one that acknowledges and fosters an awareness of the social and cultural factors that surround and influence teaching in any given environment, underlies many of the teaching changes that I made as well. This is the area in which I made the most effort, but was at the same time perhaps the most difficult and challenging. Living in a new culture and navigating the differences and similarities on a daily basis was a rich source of information to me about the complexities of Indonesian society and culture. I did my best to incorporate some of that new knowledge into my teaching, and would have continued to do this had my stay been longer.

I have participated in two long-term educational exchanges and numerous shorter term experiences, and although it has not always been easily accomplished, my personal and professional repertoires have been enriched far beyond my expectations. When I think back on my experience in Indonesia, I see the students in my office and in class, but I also remember the times I met them by chance in the Internet cafés and local markets, and I recall their smiles and tears during the farewell party they gave for me. I am also proud of the academic discoveries that I helped these Indonesian students make inside and outside the classroom. Staying home is safe and predictable, but for a university professor, traveling and teaching in an unfamiliar environment are important endeavors. This is especially true insofar as the experience helps teachers connect with a different group of students and colleagues, which serves to recalibrate the teacher's own teaching and interactive skills. This, in turn, leads to a very different kind of reflective teaching than could have been achieved at home, and, in a larger sense, contributes to the elusive notion of the "internationalization" of higher education.

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