

Tracing the emotional currents in the (re)construction of one learner’s English L2 identity: A narrative case study approach

Presenter: Amelia Yarwood



Context:

- Medium-sized foreign language university in East Japan
- Self-directed language learning (SDLL) module (13 weeks) taken online with a learning advisor

Scan to hear
Hiroto's English
Beginnings



Participant:

Hiroto ▪ International Business Communications ▪ Freshman
Wanted to “study English with English” ▪ Exposed to English from a young age ▪ Started seriously learning at the end of JHS
▪ 885 TOEIC score ▪ Overseas experience under 3 months

Research Aims:

To holistically investigate the quality and function of emotions in the (re)construction of a single learner’s identity during a SDLL module.

Research Questions:

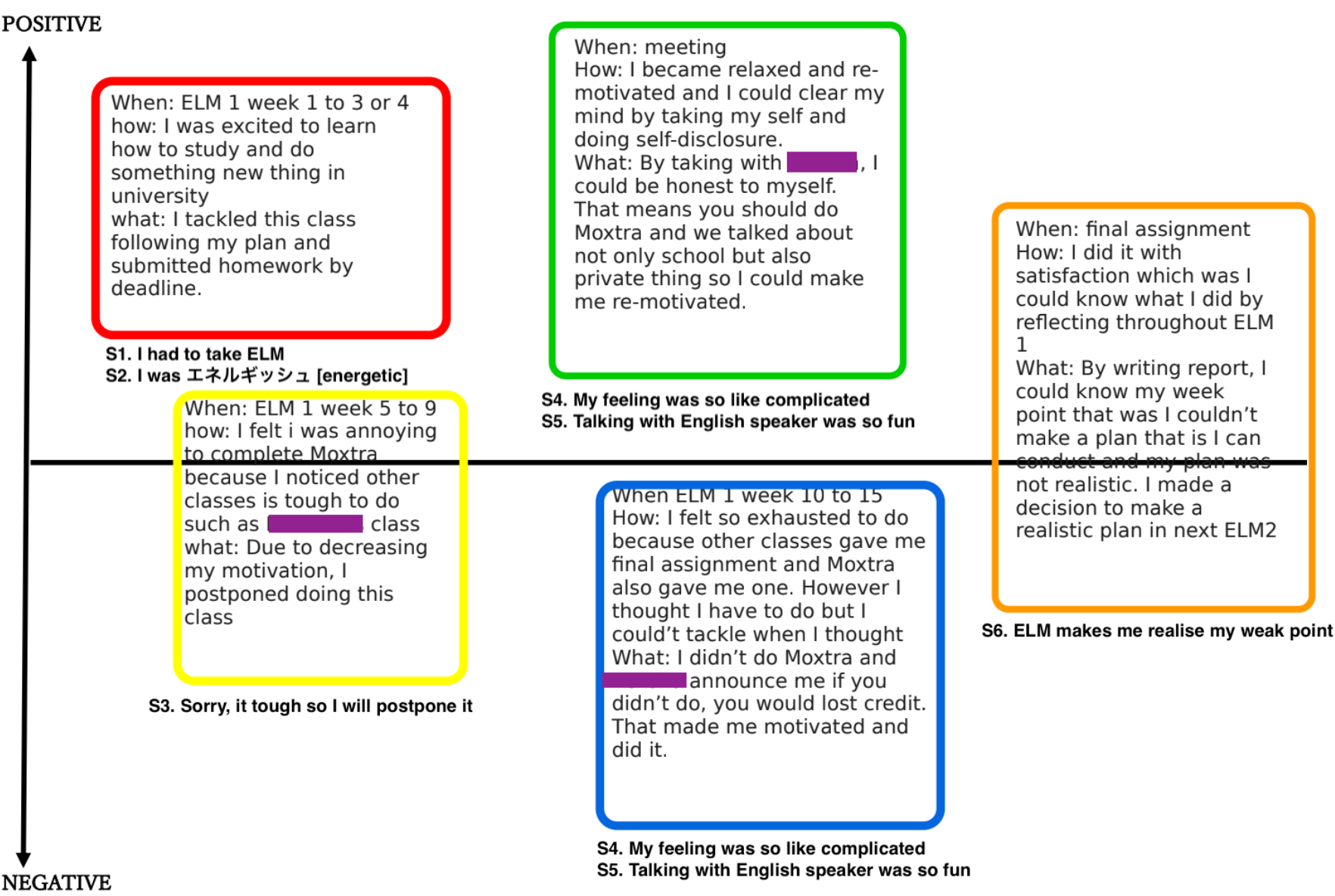
- What narratives does a single learner construct of their English learning experience during a SDLL module?
- How do emotional qualities in the learner’s narratives function in the construction of their English L2 identities?

Data Collection:

- Visual Language Learning History (VisLLH)
- VisLLH and member check Interviews
- Identity Statements created through a re-storying process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

Data Analysis:

- Short Story analysis for *content* (who, where, when) and *context* (story/micro, Story/meso, STORY/macro) (Barkhuizen, 2016)
- Inductive coding for emotions
- Deductive coding for the emotional tone and sequence of the narratives (McAdams et al., 2004, 2006; Hiver et al., 2019)



Category	Short story title	Summary
Motivation stories (Characterised by excitement)	S2. I was エネルギー [energetic]	Proud of his idea to combine TOEIC study with a credit-bearing course, Hiroto started the module in a state of excitement.
	S5. Talking with English speaker was so fun	Unlike speaking with his classmates where he felt judged, Hiroto gained a little confidence when speaking to a fluent English speaker.
Conflict stories (Characterised by a mixture of positive and negative emotions)	S1. I had to take ELM	After hearing the module was easier than regular classes and needing to fulfil credit requirements, Hiroto decided to enrol in the module.
	S3. Sorry, it tough so I will postpone it	Getting through assignments from regular classes became a priority for Hiroto during the first five weeks of university. He stopped submitting the work without telling his advisor. Despite feeling guilty and expecting the advisor to be angry at him, he was relieved to receive an empathetic response.
	S5. My feeling was so like complicated	In the final week of semester Hiroto was exhausted. He didn't want to complete the module but after talking to his LA, he was able to clear his mind and move forward.
Self-awareness stories (Characterised by pride, regret and appreciation)	S6. ELM makes me realise my weak point	Hiroto realised through the module that he had overestimated his capabilities.

SDLL1. The Overestimator

I do my best to kill two birds with one stone whenever I can. I know I need to get the required test scores and credits but my personal life is busy so I want to make my university life easier. I chose my courses based on how easy I think they will be, or if they can be combined with other goals. Sometimes I overestimate my abilities and do too much though. This makes me feel overwhelmed and stressed out. When this happens, I want to run away from non-compulsory study.

Re-storyed Identity Statement using S2, S1, S3 and S5

Note: Hiroto (H)
Codes: Apprehension (Appre.); Exhaustion (Exhau.); Unhappy and Negative Emotional Tone (ET2); Happy and Positive Emotional Tone (ET4); Flux Emotional sequence (ES4)

1	H	my thought was when I...	Appre.	ET 2	ES 4
2		if I talk to my teacher "Sorry, it is too tough for me" then			
3		my prediction[of the teacher's answer] was "Why?!"			
4		And teacher became angry and I would be scold[ed]..			
5		But it was not true.	Relief	ET 4	
6		My advisor sympathize with me.			
7		She said, "maybe I also know your feeling"			
8		because she was a student of in KUIS before.			
9		"If you are postponing, I accept your decision."			
10		And like when I talk with her, I [was] impressed.			
11		So this is my positive impression.			
12		Negative impression was like "sorry, sorry advisor..."	Guilt	ET 2	
13		Yeah, it is also the amount of assignment makes me	Exhau.		
14		decreasing my motivation.			

Extract from S3. Sorry, it tough so I will postpone it

Results:

STORY scales are present primarily in relation to the *when* (near-future) and *who* (Japanese society). Government education policies, job hunting and wider ideologies inform these policies are visible in the references to TOEIC examinations on the Story-scale.

- TOEIC represents social capital that is **desirable** within the job market, the university and Japanese society at present.
- Public expectations regarding the linguistic abilities of International Business Communication students at foreign language universities increases the **desire** to perform well, but also the **apprehension** at not fulfilling this other-imposed role.

Story scales focus on *where* (university; within the SDLL module; in classes) and *who* (TOEIC; Imagined learning advisor). Requirements set forth by the university and the SDLL curriculum create circumstances for conflict stories to take place.

- University requirements mandate a 630 score on TOEIC for graduation which instills Hiroto with both **apprehension** and **determination**.
- The SDLL curriculum requires learners to plan, complete self-study tasks and reflect on learning each week. **Exhaustion**, **guilt** and **apprehension** are experienced when the workload from other classes conflicts with SDLL task and he ‘postpones’ his SDLL without telling his advisor initially.

story scales focus on *who* (Hiroto), *where* (university) and *when* (present; imagined future). Hiroto’s vision of himself as a first year student was centred around his desire to be seen as someone who has “向上心 [ambition]” and is “always moving forward the future.”

- The **desired** self Hiroto possessed generated excitement which combine with **apprehension** over the future resulted in overestimating his time and energy levels
- Appreciation (retrospective)** influenced his reappraisal of his hardships as valuable lessons

Discussion:

- Influenced by the *STORY* level factors (TOEIC; public discourse) and *story* level ambitions (to be perceived as ambitious), the emotions associated with Hiroto's desired identity acted as a motivation state (Frijda, 2003).
 - Excitement** and **apprehension** operating on respective current and future timescales pushed Hiroto to act in order to maintain his desired image. It was during this period that stories of Motivation were found.
- The act of maintaining this desired identity despite changes at the *Story* level (increased workload) resulted in **exhaustion** and **guilt** and became a catalyst for Conflict stories to take place.
- The negative emotions functioned as a resource (Yamashita, 2015) for Hiroto to realise he had overestimated his abilities.
 - Failing a course by dropping out would have been incongruent with Hiroto’s desired identity but working with the advisor to develop a more flexible plan allowed him to maintain his self-concept.
- Telling (first to his advisor) and retelling (in his reflection and to me as a researcher) his Self-awareness stories allowed Hiroto to assimilate narratives of growth into his personal sense of self (Pasupathi et al., 2017).
 - Maintenance of Hiroto’s desired identity is achieved by generating positive emotions towards, and positively evaluating the hardship endured as valuable life lessons

Conclusion:

Methodology

- Barkhuizen’s (2016) Short Story approach to narratives is beneficial for understanding the contexts in which identity (re)construction takes place in.
- Identifying the emotional tone and sequencing is useful in linear but not in non-linear narratives. Re-storying may be required before coding for tone and sequence.

SDLL Modules

- SDLL modules are spaces through which identities are informed, reinforced or shaped due to the potential for emotionally charged conflicts between desired identities and present realities.
- Sharing stories (eg. reflections; during advising sessions) plays a significant role in supporting learners to identify their emotions, the antecedents to these emotions and the significance of the emotions in relation to their desired identity.

Scan for
the
references
+ appendix

