

**Teachers College
Columbia University
Japan Alumni
Association**



**Yuka Eto
Dezaki
Group 21**

“For me, TC has opened up doors to many wonderful, new possibilities. I sincerely hope you enjoy your time at TC.”

TC Alumni Spotlight – Yuka Eto Dezaki

On consulting, technology and “Englishnization”

What drew you to TC? I joined TC in the summer of 2005, but started taking classes in the fall semester. At that time, I had finally decided to work in the education industry in Japan for good. Until that point, I was a bit lost and did not know where I was headed career-wise. I started my career as a business consultant at PwC. I was planning on working in the LA office, but 9-11 changed my fate; the LA office wanted to cut down on the number of new college grads, so they referred me to the Tokyo office and I ended up moving from LA to Tokyo. Unfortunately, I did not know that companies in Japan decide on the placement of employees of new college graduates and employees do not have much say in their preference of department or field. Despite expressing my strong interest in HR development and HR consulting, I was placed in the Supply Chain Management Department and decided to leave the company in about a year. I then took a TEFL Certificate Course at UCLA, since becoming a teacher was something I've always wanted to do. I did a lot of volunteer work at the school district while I was in high school and college and enjoyed working with children. In fact, I had talked to a career counselor when I was in college and she said it would be easier to go into business consulting and then into teaching than the other way around. I loved what I learned at UCLA and got even more interested in teaching. Right when I was getting more interested in education, I heard that a graduate from my college was starting his own company in Tokyo and was looking for someone who can start up an English teaching business with him. I applied and got my first teaching job at a venture capital company. The company didn't do so well, so in about two years, I started working for ALC Press, a publisher that specializes in language training materials. Wanting to learn more about language education and second language acquisition, I decided to make an investment and started my studies at TC.

Describe your path since graduating TC until now. It took me five years to complete my studies and my two children “came to class” with me during my pregnancies. In the five years, I gained a lot of experience in teacher training, especially in the Japanese elementary school system. I got to work with many elementary schools and met wonderful children; I loved my work, but let me mention that it's unfortunate that I am not patient enough to reflect on my studies and put into use all the teacher tricks when I deal with my own children. I still keep having mommy's epic fail moments! Although I loved what I was doing, after having kids of my own, I needed some flexibility with my work hours, especially because my older daughter got sick quite frequently. I requested a transfer to the English lessons department for business people, where classes took place mainly in early mornings and evenings, where I could arrange for a babysitter or ask for my family member's help more easily. I've been working with adults for about nine years now and my experience got me a job at Rakuten, one of the first companies in Japan to make its official language English. I have been working at Rakuten for five years now and developed in-house English programs for Japanese employees and Japanese programs for non-Japanese employees. I have also been responsible for business development at Rakuten, leveraging what we've learned through our “Englishnization” efforts. I developed two apps named Kikoeigo (きこえ〜ご) and Maname (まなみ〜), which were released under ReDucate, a subsidiary of Rakuten. I am working on further business development, now focusing on young learners.

What advice do you have for others starting at TC now? I will continue to work for Rakuten, but have requested a change in contract type so I can do some work outside of Rakuten as well. I am now able to take on more teaching jobs outside of the company and I got a university lecturer job, despite not having enough publications. I was asked to do a sample lesson and everything I learned at TC came in handy. While at TC, I never thought I would become interested in teaching at a university, but I'm glad that the TC curriculum covered everything I needed to do so! My university students have all struggled with English in the past and think they are really bad at learning English. However, they are all interested in learning and so far, not a single student missed class or came in late! I sincerely hope to help them learn better and overcome all their negative feelings they've developed towards studying English. I've realized that technology comes really handy when keeping in touch with my students. I've set up my own LMS (learning management system) and have all my class materials and information there so students can learn more easily. I don't want to baby them too much, but I'm already seeing that many students actually listen to audio clips I've posted for them while only a handful of students downloaded the audio from the publisher's website. Many students have contacted me via email or the LMS about their studies in general and want to be better learners so I hope I can support them well throughout the semester. For me, TC has opened up doors to many wonderful, new possibilities. I sincerely hope you enjoy your time at TC. I'm sure all your sleepless nights and endless time spent in a room filled with reading materials will all pay off in the future!

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