

**Teachers College  
Columbia University  
Japan Alumni  
Association**



**Reiko Takeda**

**Group 24**

“Listen to your students’ silence. I have always had misgivings about teachers labeling students as “shy” whenever they do not speak up...”

## TC Alumni Spotlight – Reiko Takeda

### On being “teachable” ...plus a new PhD! (congrats!)

**Tell us about yourself and your work recently.** My teaching career started in California, where I used to be a bilingual Spanish classroom teacher. After returning to Japan, I worked for a company where I developed materials for children's English classes. I also worked as an interpreter before I went back to the classroom in 2009. I started my TC coursework in summer 2010 and received my MA in TESOL in February 2013. I completed my doctoral dissertation and received a PhD in March 2017 from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at International Christian University in Mitaka, Tokyo.

**What drew you to TC?** I applied to TC after a year of teaching English at a women's junior college. Even though I used to teach elementary school in the US, I was not in the classroom for almost 10 years. Since I was out of touch with teaching all together, I needed to update myself with more current theory and teaching practices. So I decided to apply to TC.

**Describe your path since graduating TC until now.** When I looked at my options after TC, I decided to pursue another degree. Although I was aware that attending a graduate school in the US would have been the most ideal situation, I decided to stay in Japan and apply to ICU (my alma mater) because I was working part-time and did not want to leave my job. My four years at ICU were not easy, but it was worth the effort!

**What is your favorite thing about the place you live now?** Where I live is close to my new workplace – Seijo University in Setagaya, Tokyo. It is only two stations away from where I live and it is my shortest commute ever!

**What class/teacher/classmate has had a lasting effect on you?** There are two teachers who had a lasting effect on me. The first is Dr. Noriko Ishihara, who taught the Pragmatics courses, is a great teacher/researcher. Her expertise in cross-cultural pragmatics provided me with more tools to understand cross-cultural communication breakdown. Although I do not teach a pragmatics course, I try to squeeze in a lesson or two on speech acts every semester. Chris Hale is the other teacher, whose instruction in Conversation Analysis (CA) made me want to pursue research. Although my dissertation did not involve CA, it gave me the necessary knowledge to analyze the data of my research participants.

**What would you do if you could take a one-year sabbatical?** Since I work with prospective study abroad students at Seijo University, I would be interested in observing and recording their progress during their stay abroad, rather than simply measuring their progress after their repatriation. (But if I do that, it won't be much of a sabbatical, will it??) On a personal level, I would like work on my calligraphy and go to a lot of museums.

**What message would you like to share with the TC community?** There are two things I learned in TC. The first is a general message – that is to be “teachable.” As teaching professionals, we will always face new theories, new research methods, new teaching methods, new technology ... new almost everything. While it would be difficult to try to absorb everything, have a “teachable” attitude and try to take the time to learn something new. (You don't have to enroll in a PhD program to do this). The only way we can develop as teachers is by learning. TC Tokyo planted the seed in us to work as TESOL professionals; we have to do the work to develop and grow. At the same time, keep sharing what you learned to other colleagues and those new to the field. The other message, which is paradoxical and specific, is to listen to your students' silence. I have always had misgivings about teachers labeling students as “shy” whenever they do not speak up. Research has been conducted on students' silence and it was an eye-opener for me to learn that silence involved a lot of complexities in classroom interaction. Happy teaching!

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