



TC Spotlight

Jackie Suginaga

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- **Hometown: Ireland**
- **The University of Ulster**
- **TC Tokyo Group 23**
- **Currently a teacher, IELTS examiner, tutor and gymnastics coach**

Well, it has been one year since leaving the hustle and bustle of Tokyo and returning to live in a quiet village in Ireland. Certainly a contrast, but I have to say that I like both worlds, and wouldn't trade the ten and a half years I spent in Tokyo for anything. I'm currently working as a teacher and an IELTS examiner at Queens University Belfast (QUB) and at University College Dublin (UCD). I also provide tuition for learners who need extra help. I hope in the future to welcome students from abroad to my home and allow them to study a tailored programme whilst experiencing the beauty of the local area.

I have also reverted back to a previous passion - coaching gymnastics, something I did long before leaving Ireland for Japan. An old friend and fellow gymnast, LeeAnn, who was also a senior member at my club collaborated with me and we opened up a small club for the local community. It is such a wonderful sport and the kids love it. I can also transfer across many of the ideas that I learned on my MA TESOL at Teachers College to teaching gymnastics, namely encouraging students to become autonomous and interdependent, incorporating Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, as well as fostering group dynamics and near peer learning. I am also continuously learning new things.



What drew you to TC?

The reputation for being the best place to do my MA TESOL drew me to TC as when I was considering where I should study. I happened to meet a wonderful person, Anne, who was a TC graduate who worked on the same campus where I worked. She told me how amazing the programme and teachers were, and I would say that I made the right choice.

What is your favorite memory from TC?

One of my favourite memories at TC was in Nancy Grave's Autonomy class. She was teaching along with Stacey Vye and also John Fanselow happened to be in the class as a special guest at the time which was wonderful. I will never forget the atmosphere of learning, discussion and reflection that took place. The whole class was alive with individual and group interactions with both teachers and learners that really influenced me in a very positive way.

What is your favorite thing about the place you live now?

The favourite thing about the place I live now is waking up to the sea in front and the mountains behind me and being a 15 minute drive from my family.

Have you found TESOL theory and practice relevant to/useful in any other fields?

Yes, as I previously mentioned I have been able to transfer knowledge and skills I learned at TC to coaching gymnastics at my club - namely, strategies for autonomous learning and development, incorporating Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) into overall lesson planning, and also the idea of near-peer learning. All of which are very relevant to teaching the kids at the club.

What message would you like to share with the TC community?

To the wider TC community, I'd like to say keep living the dream, encourage students to lean in their own way, and enjoy your teaching experience and your students' will too. Oh and keep in touch!

