Functions of "Interpersonal Feedback" and "Dialogical Self" in Vocational Identity Formation Processes: A Case Study at the University of Oulu, Finland（the 2nd Report）

Junko YANAGIDA *

In the first report（Yanagida 2010）, university students' self formation processes were described based on semi-structured interviews at the University of Oulu, Finland. One of the suggestions for encouraging practical training was to help students to make decisions to continue or change their majors through interpersonal feedback and dialogical self（mental dialogues with themselves）. Based on the above suggestion, the purpose of this paper is to study university students' vocational identity formation processes that are embraced in self formation processes. Through semi-structured interviews with four students and one graduate, the following two findings can be pointed out:（1）interpersonal feedback can be obtained from various directions, and they should foster vocational identity formation, because realistic comments can be effective to reveal both good and bad sides of the specific jobs,（2）combining with interpersonal feedback, dialogical self can work more effectively to strengthen their vocational identities.

職業アイデンティティ形成過程における「対人的フィードバック」および「自己との対話」の機能に関する考察
～フィンランド　オウル大学の事例（第2報）～

柳 田 純 子*

　前稿（柳田2010）では「自己形成」を鍵概念に置いて、大学生の自己形成過程における専門分野での実習教育の意義を検討した。フィンランドのオウル大学での半構造化面接の結果、学生が専門分野の実習を通して対人的フィードバックを受け、また自己との対話を重ねていく過程から現状の専門性に対する自己適性を認識し、専門性の軌道修正が促されていることが推察された。この結果を踏まえて、本稿では「自己形成」概念が包含する「職業アイデンティティ形成」に焦点を当て、その形成過程で対人的フィードバックおよび自己との対話がどのように行われ、職業アイデンティティ形成に対して機能しているか半構造化面接をとおして考察した。結果、（1）対人的フィードバックが多方面から得られることにより、職業の現実を認識できる点で機能している、（2）自己との対話は対人的フィードバックと組み合わさって、より効果的に機能していることが示唆された。

*東京情報大学　総合情報学部　情報ビジネス学科
　Tokyo University of Information Sciences, Faculty of Informatics, Department of Business and Information

1．Introduction

In the previous report, Yanagida (2010) tried to clarify relations among the concepts, i.e. self formation, identity formation, career formation and vocational identity formation. These relations had not been fully clarified in the past research activities. Relations among the above concepts can be shown in the Figure 1.
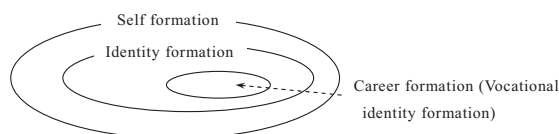

Figure 1: Relations among the concepts
Reference: Yanagida (2010), p. 38

According to Mizokami (2008), self formation embraces identity formation. Self formation is basically growth-oriented concept which focuses on changes from the past, while identity formation is task-achieved concept based on sameness and continuity. And, identity formation embraces vocational identity formation. The reason why vocational identity formation is focused on in this paper is as follows: this concept seems to be appropriate to understand how young people try to clarify their images of future jobs relating to their majors in universities. They should need to achieve various tasks in the pathways to establish their own future career perspectives.

Yanagida (2010) also argued university students' self formation processes based on a case study at the University of Oulu, Finland. One of the suggestions for encouraging practical training was to help students to make decisions to continue or change their majors through interpersonal feedback and dialogical self (mental dialogues with themselves). In this paper, interpersonal feedback and dialogical self are also keywords to understand how young people try to clarify their images of future jobs relating to their current majors in universities. As Mizokami (2008) pointed out, through interpersonal feedback, one is able to perceive one's feelings of reputations for one's behaviors. And, as Hermans (2003) referred to his theory, the self is conceptualized in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions. In this conception, the I has the capability of moving from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time. The I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions, and has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify functions of interpersonal feedback and dialogical self in vocational identity formation processes. Focusing on university students' vocational identity formation processes, key questions in this case study are as follows: backgrounds of choosing majors in university, experiences in studying, and forming images of future career perspectives. The reasons why these three questions seem to be important are as follows:

First, as Schein (1978) pointed out, career identity formation can be fostered in the processes that young people deal with their career problems. According to Schein, career problems to be solved by young people under 30 years old include: considering one's future job in more realistic manners, improving knowledge, practicing skills in training opportunities, and so forth. Following Schein's suggestions, young people's vocational identity formation processes should be examined in view of their dealing with career problems that include: how to choose their majors, how to deepen their understandings of their majors, and how to consider their future jobs.

Secondly, as Yanagida (2010) suggested, university students seem to make decisions to continue or change their majors through interpersonal feedback and dialogical self through practical training opportunities. This may imply that functions of interpersonal feedback and dialogical self should be examined in view of their dealing with career problems.

2．Method

The overview of the case study is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Overview of the case study

1．Place	The University of Oulu (Address: Pentti Kaiteran katu 1, Oulu, Finland)
2．Period	September 11th – September 16th, 2010
3．Investigator	Yanagida, Junko
4．Informants	(1) Ms. A, the 3rd year student (2) Mr. B, the 2nd year student (3) Ms. C, the 5th year student (4) Ms. D, the 3rd year student (5) Mr. E, a graduate from the University of Oulu
5．Key questions	(1) Backgrounds of choosing majors (2) Experiences in studying (3) Forming images of one's future career perspectives
6．Procedures	(1) Semi-structured interview (2) Length of each interview: about 1 hour-3 hours (3) Records: IC recorder and writing down in a notebook. Contents of transcripts were reviewed by the informants.

Prior to each interview session, the participants were informed of the objectives of this case study. The interview guide is shown in the Figure 2. Also, they were confirmed that their responses were recorded for analyses. As for confidentiality, the informants were asked to review transcripts of interview before publication to an academic journal. From the ethical issue, names of the informants remain anonymous. Among the informants, Ms. A had already talked about her backgrounds of choosing her major as shown in Yanagida（2010）. This time, she was interviewed about the other questions.

The interview guide is shown as follows:

1．May I ask your name, grade and major？
2．How did you choose your major？Would you explain the process of your decision making？（Key question 1）
3．Were there any people you were talking about choosing your major？
4．How do you spend your time for studying？（Key question 2）
5．What is your most interest of your major？
6．Have you ever experienced practical training programs？
7．Did you learn something through the practical training？
8．Do you have some plans for future studies and future jobs？（Key question 3）
9．Are there any people you are talking about your future jobs？
10. Do you have any concerns about pursuing your plans for future jobs？

Figure 2: The interview guide

Following the interview guide, the estimated interview time was one hour, with the exception of the case of Ms. A. As she talked about various experiences in her teaching practices as well as her future career perspectives, it took much more time than I had estimated.

In this paper, methodologies of data analyses were referred to Hesse-Biber & Levy（2010）and Levy （2011）. The interview data analyses were done through coding and meta-code categorizing in view of the following two points:

（1） following Schein（1978）, responses of each informant were examined how he/she was trying to deal with his/her problems in developing career perspectives,

（2） following Yanagida（2010）, how interpersonal feedback and dialogical self were functioning in his/her vocational identity formation processes.

As for determining validity in qualitative research, Levy（2011）pointed out some strategies include: analysis cycles, analysis teams, a literature review, and the use of theory（macro-micro levels of analysis）. In

this paper, I took analysis cycles and literature reviews. First, as for analysis cycles, following Yanagida (2010), one of the suggestions from the semi-structured interviews with 3 students and 3 career coordinators was that interpersonal feedback and dialogical self could function when university students make decisions to continue or change their majors. Based on this analysis of my previous research, I planned to collect further data about functions of interpersonal feedback and dialogical self by asking the questions No. 3, 6, 9 and 10 shown in the interview guide. (Fig. 2)

Secondly, as for literature reviews, following Dyer & Jones (2009), one of the findings drawn out by the focus group interview with 9 young law and management female students is as follows:

Young female law and management students seemed to choose their major to access to career and professions, and greater financial and social independence as their greatest opportunities compared to their grandmothers and mothers.

The above finding may suggest that young people can be influenced by their family member upon making decisions on choosing their major. Based on this literature review, I planned to collect further data about interpersonal feedback by asking the question No. 3. (Fig. 2)

And following Scandura & Williams (2004), supervisory career mentoring seems to be important for building positive career expectations within organizations. This finding may suggest that functions of interpersonal feedback can be expanded to mentoring functions. Based on this literature review, I planned to collect further data about interpersonal feedback by asking the questions No. 3 and 9. (Fig. 2)

3．Findings and discussions

Based on findings from the semi-structured interviews, discussions about how they form their vocational identities by relating to their majors in the university, and how interpersonal feedback and dialogical self work in their vocational identity formation processes are done in this section. In each sub sessions, excerpt from the edited transcripts are shown with codes and meta-code categories in the tables 2, 3 and 4. Through analyses of the transcripts, I grouped similar code categories together creating meta-code categories.

3.1　Backgrounds of choosing majors

From the answers, they seem to choose their majors mostly based on their own interests and preferences. The reasons why they had those interests and preferences appear to vary from person to person. Their home backgrounds seem to make significant influences on their decisions. (Table 2)

3.2　Experiences in studying

As referred to in Table 3, each informant seems to be engaged in his/her studying with their interests and preferences. The degrees of relating their experiences with future jobs differed from person to person. Practical training programs seem to function to foster their future vocational identities.

By referring to the answers of Ms. A and Ms. C, their experiences in the practical training in their majors appear to clarify images when they will be working in the similar situations. This function of clarifying images can be understood that one confirms with oneself whether or not he/she will be able to accept realities and to manage in even worse condition. As for Mr. E, his experiences of working in his father's firm seem to foster the consciousness of his entrepreneurship and to make him accept grim realities of managing a venture business.

In the case of Mr. B, he had expected the school curricula for learning video games design, but no curricula have been realized yet in the university where he is registered. This appears to make him feel disappointed. How to develop university curricula to link more directly with future jobs seems to become much more important in universities education.

Table 2: Analyses of backgrounds of choosing majors

Infor-mant	Excerpt from the edited transcripts	Code	Meta-code category
Ms. A	I have been interested in bird watching and insects. I want to know much about living things. Reference: Yanagida（2010）, p.42	creatures	interests
Mr. B	My parents had bought NINTENDO video game console for me and my sister. I became interested in studying computer science in the university, because I want to become a video game designer in future.	video game console	interests
Ms. C	My elderly brother loves computer and has gotten employed by Nokia. My interest in computers and network has been much owed to my brother.	elderly brother's influences	family
Ms. D	I had two options of the majors, one was economics, and the other was mathematics. I had to read many books to prepare for the entrance examination of the department of economics. My father is a mathematics teacher.	preparations for the entrance examination father's influences	preparations family
Mr. E	I finally chose management study for the two reasons. First, my father has been a serial entrepreneur for over ten years and established three companies by himself. Secondly, I think studying the social sciences should widen my possibilities of career in future.	father's influences social sciences	family interests

Table 3: Analyses of experiences in studying

Infor-mant	Excerpt from the edited transcripts	Code	Meta-code category
Ms. A	In this autumn semester, I have been doing more than one month teaching practices that are followed by the class of pedagogy. I am currently practicing teaching biology in a secondary school. From the teacher who is organizing this teaching practice, I have received the comment as follows: if there were only one thing to lead you forward in one teaching practice, it would be very satisfactory.	one month teaching practices comment from the teacher	endeavor encouragement
Mr. B	Before I entered the University of Oulu, I heard that there would be curricula for game designers in near future. But, it is shameful that there appears to be none at present. I am studying software development because I think it is very closely related with video games design skills. I am very excited with restarting the Japanese class in this September.	no curricula for game designers software development studying Japanese	disappointment endeavor interests in Japanese

Infor-mant	Excerpt from the edited transcripts	Code	Meta-code category
Ms. C	I have experienced practical training programs twice. One was in 2007 at an insurance company, the other was in 2009 at a nanotechnology development company, and it took 2 months to complete each of the training programs.	participations in the practical training programs	satisfaction
	Based on my experiences as a trainee, I think I would like to join a firm whose management policy is more employees-oriented.	work environment	observation
	My focus on studying is more friendly interactions between human beings and computers. I take cognitive approaches to it.	cognitive approaches	steadiness
Ms. D	I have got more interested in practical aspects of mathematics than mathematics itself. My research interests include programming in the computer science, its applications to financial fields and so forth.	practical aspects of mathematics	interests in practical aspects
	I also have got interested in Japanese and taken a language class in this university.	studying Japanese	interests in Japanese
Mr. E	In the Department of Management & Organization, there are no practical training programs.	no practical training programs	dissatisfaction
	My first summer job was at a construction site, the second was at a real estate agency, and from the 3rd year, I have experienced jobs on financial management at my father's companies.	job experiences in his father's companies	entrepreneurship
	I also established my own company when I was a 3rd year student.	company establishment	venture business

3.3 Forming images of one's future career perspectives

The answers seem to be divided into two groups. One is that informants seem to almost decide on his/her future job, and the other is that informants seem to explore possibilities of his/her future job pivoting on their current majors. The former group is referred to the cases of Ms. A, Mr. B and Ms. C. And the latter group is referred to the cases of Ms. D and Mr. E.

Based on the answers, two findings can be recognized. （Table 4）First, in both of the groups, interpersonal feedback can work to form their future vocational images. Interpersonal feedback appear to be brought from the various people, e.g. parents, brothers & sisters, teachers, people met in practical training, friends. This feedback seems to function as role models as well as valuable information on realities of future jobs. In the case of Ms. C, she seems to feel anxieties of hard working environment in ICT industries by warning from her brother. But, she appears to make clear her vocational images to become a computer engineer based on her experiences of practical training programs. In the case of Ms. D, she seems to receive much information on realties of a teacher. This interpersonal feedback from her family members appears to help her not rush into decision making.

As for Mr. B, he did not mention explicitly strong interpersonal feedback. He seems to regard video games as much more connected with his vocational images formation. Although he would like to become a game designer, he felt much anxieties how to realize his hope. Afterward in February 2011, he expressed

Table 4: Analyses of forming images of one's future career perspectives

Infor-mant	Excerpt from the edited transcripts	code	Meta-code category
Ms. A	I would like to become a biology teacher. It is necessary to complete the teaching profession course in this university to become a qualified teacher.	a biology teacher	clear goal
	I decided to apply to the course just before the due date. I was wondering whether to apply or not. In no way I wanted to become a teacher when I was a junior high school student in Japan.	experiences in junior high school days in Japan	hesitations before decision making
	I met many respectful teachers after arriving at Finland.	respectful teachers	role models
	I have had much fun to teach Japanese to Finnish students.	a Japanese teacher	teaching experiences
	I talked with a friend of my senior-high school days, whose major subject is education. According to her advice, becoming a qualified teacher will be a good choice to make my living.	advice from her friend	financial independence
	I would like to make clear differences of educational systems between Finland and Japan, and consider what causes these differences.	differences of educational systems	identifying her mission
Mr. B	To become a game designer in the video game industry is only goal in my future career.	a game designer	only goal
	I have had no idea about how to become a game designer.	no idea	anxieties
	In the Computer Science Department, practical training programs are not compulsory.	limited opportunities for practical training	anxieties
Ms. C	I have heard from my brother in Nokia that I will need hard working in the ICT Industry.	warning from her brother	anxieties
	I hope I will be working as a computer engineer at some firms with good working environment.	a computer engineer	clear goal
	I will not go to a doctorial course because it will be very hard to obtain academic positions, which I heard from my sister-in-law who is currently in a doctoral course.	warning from her sister-in-law	clear goal

Infor-mant	Excerpt from the edited transcripts	code	Meta-code category
Ms. D	I am not sure to become a mathematics teacher, but will get the qualifications for teaching mathematics.	under consideration	unclear goal
	My father is a mathematics teacher. I grew up recognizing my father as a teacher. I think I understand what a mathematics teacher is.	her father as a teacher	reality of being a teacher
	Two of my older sisters, who are teachers, have warned me by saying "Think twice before becoming a teacher".	warnings from her sisters	reality of being a teacher
	I have not had a clear picture of future jobs yet, but I think there is wide applicability in mathematics. I would like to apply mathematics to some practical uses.	under consideration	unclear goal
Mr. E	I would like to continue this real estate investment business for about 5 years. After that, there will be two options. One is that building a different business with a capital increase with my current business; the other is that going to continue my father's businesses.	under consideration	unclear goal (two options)
	Although Nokia have transferred their manufacturing base from Finland to the overseas where personnel costs are less expensive, Oulu is still a "silicon valley" in Finland. So there are many small businesses based on ICT here in Oulu.	social climate of Oulu	role models
	I think ideal entrepreneurs have ambition, drive forward and create something by themselves. My father has been one of the ideal entrepreneurs.	his father as one of the ideal entrepreneurs	role model

his plan to apply for the exchange student program between the University of Oulu and the Hokkaido University. He hoped to study in Japan and to get first-hand information on Japanese video games.

Secondly, dialogical self seems to work more effectively in connection with interpersonal feedback, in particular, when one considers meanings of the feedback he/she received. In the case of Ms. A, she had been wondering whether she took the teaching profession course until the limit of the due date. As described in the previous report, she could not have many experiences of good relationship between pupils and teachers in her junior high school days in Japan. Through mental dialogues with herself, she seems to be able to examine her images of being a school teacher by comparing negative feedback in her junior high school days with positive feedback after living in Finland. Her decision to take the teaching profession course was finally made because good images became superior to bad images through the process of mental dialogues with her.

And in the case of Mr. E, he started his in-university business after obtaining feedback on venture business management from his father as a role model. Also,

he seems to receive much influence from the social climate of Oulu as a "silicon valley in Finland". He was thinking of two options, one is to build a different business with a capital increase, the other is to take over his father's business. He seems to talk mentally with himself based on the interpersonal feedback from his father as well as some local entrepreneurs in his process to establish his future career perspectives.

3. 4　Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to clarify functions of interpersonal feedback and dialogical self in the vocational identity formation processes based on the semi-structured interviews conducted at the University of Oulu, Finland. More case studies and discussions should be needed for generalization. Even if these research limitations, conclusions can be drawn out as follows with two implications.

First, interpersonal feedback can be obtained from various people around young people. By receiving feedback from various directions, their vocational identity formation should be much more fostered. As shown in the case of Mr. B, the very favorite "things" （in his case, video games）could work as a trigger to vocational images formation. And, as for contents of feedback, realistic comments to reveal both good and bad sides in the specific jobs can be more effective to form vocational identities.

The importance of presenting realistic information on jobs to young generations is pointed out in Wanous （1992）. He named this as "Realistic Job Preview （RJP）". RJP can effectively moderate feelings of worry or embarrassment upon entering to unfamiliar work environment. One of the significant functions of interpersonal feedback seems to be regarded that young people can examine differences between images they have and possible realities of their future jobs before they start job-hunting.

Secondly, dialogical self might work more effectively in connection with interpersonal feedback. Dialogical self, as Mizokami （2008）pointed out, it is regarded

as conflict and coordination processes between plural me's. This characteristic of dialogical self is apt to have risks to cause a dead end in one's career development process, if one considers too much by oneself alone. Those risks could be moderated in connection with interpersonal feedback, because one should be able to make decisions based on various interpersonal feedback as a guideline.

4．Future perspectives

As mentioned in the above conclusions, to gain more credibility for generalization, longitudinal case studies on university students' vocational identity formation processes are needed, in particular, focusing on how university students foster their future job images relating to their majors. As referring to the case of Mr. B, his expectations to obtain learning opportunities of the game design are not fulfilled at present, because there are no courses in the current curricula of the university he enrolls in. More effective curriculum development to link with possible future jobs and to encourage university students' vocational identity formation should be essential in this time of recession and in future as well.

In order to realize more effective curriculum development, there seem two research approaches as follows:

One is to develop effective co-operative educational programs in university curricula. Some Canadian universities seem to precede in this kind of co-operative education program, i.e. the Canada-Japan Co-op Program. This program has been succeeding in sending Canadian university students to some major Japanese companies to obtain practical training in more than six months. My future research plan may include conducting semi-structured interview sessions with the Canadian students and their trainers in the Canada-Japan Co-op Program. Findings from this research may contribute to help university students foster their vocational identities in cross-cultural working

environment.

　The other is to develop supervisory career mentoring programs between university teachers and their students. Following Scandura & Williams（2004）, supervisory career mentoring seems to be important for building positive career expectations within organizations. In universities, daily relationships between teachers and students through classroom sessions as well as outside activities can help students build future career perspectives. Teachers seem to function not only as academic advisers but also as career mentors. My future research plan may include both quantitative and qualitative investigations on key elements of developing supervisory career mentoring programs in university education.

Acknowledgements

【References】

Canada-Japan Co-op Program. http://www.thecoopjapanprogram.com/（reference period; July-October, 2011）

Ciulla, Joanne B.（2000）. "*The working life–The promise and betrayal of modern work*-", New York, Three Rivers Press.

Dyer, Suzette and Jones, Debra（2009）. "Young law and management students' perception of their future career", *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 33-44.

Giddens, Anthony（1991）. "*Modernity and self–identity self and society in the late modern age*", Cambridge, Polity Press.

Hermans, Hubert J. M.（2003）. "The construction and reconstruction of a dialogical self", *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, Vol. 16, pp. 89-130.

Hesse-Biber, S.N. and Levy, P. L.（2010）. "*The practice of qualitative research*", Revised Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

Levy, Patricia（2011）. "*Oral History: Understanding qualitative research*", New York, Oxford University Press.

Mizokami, Shin-ichi（2008）. "*Psychology of self formation*", Kyoto, Sekai Shisousha Publishing Company.

Nokia Corporation. http://www.nokia.com/（reference period; July-September, 2011）

Scandura, Terri A. and Williams, Ethlyn A.（2004）. "Mentoring and transformational leadership: The role of supervisory career mentoring", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 65, pp. 448-468.

Schein, Edgar H.（1978）. "*Career dynamics: Matching individual and organization needs*", Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

University of Oulu. http://www.oulu.fi/english/（reference period; July-September, 2011）

Wanous, John P.（1992）. "*Organizational entry: Recruitment, selection, orientation, and socialization of newcomers*", Second Edition, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Yanagida, Junko（2009）. "Encouraging career development process through an industry-university cooperative project: Career development process of university students participating in project-based learning", *Journal of Tokyo University of Information Sciences*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 9-25.

Yanagida, Junko（2010）. "Encouraging practical training programs for university students' self formation processes in specialization: A case study at the University of Oulu, Finland", *Journal of Tokyo University of Information Sciences*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 35-48.