EFLÅfs Othering of Japan: Orientalism in English Language Teaching

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This survey of two aspects of ESL/EFL (English as a second/foreign language) literature—advice to foreign teachers in Japan and research on cross-cultural learning styles—found many instances of what Edward W. Said called the discourse of "Orientalism." The argument is made that because of its Orientalism, the literature surveyed presents a distorted account of Japanese learners and classrooms.

本研究は、日本で英語授業を担当する外国人教員への指導アドバイスたるESL/EFL文献と文化的学習スタイルの研究報告を調査したものである。その結果、Edward W. Saidが「オリエンタリズム」と呼んだ論述の実例が多く発見された。本論文では、この「オリエンタリズム」によって、日本人学習者と日本の教育現場が著しくゆがめられた形でESL/EFL文献に報告される危険性を論じる。

Recent years have seen a vast increase in the number of foreign teachers in the Japanese educational system, contributing both to an improvement in Japanese students' foreign language skills, and to the "internationalization"[1] of Japanese society. As with most cross-cultural encounters, this one has not been free of problems, particularly concerning differences in those teaching methods, learning styles, and classroom behaviors familiar to foreign teachers on the one hand, and those expected or displayed by Japanese learners on the other. To redress these problems a large body of literature has appeared to advise foreign teachers in Japan. In addition, much research on cross-cultural and individual learning styles and strategies makes specific reference to Japanese learners. This literature contains many accurate observations and much good advice, but a close reading leaves the impression that many authors and researchers are writing in what Edward Said (1978/1994) has called the discourse of Orientalism, representing Japan as the Other, limiting what we can know of Japan, and in some cases expressing prejudice or hostility.

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This paper critiques the Orientalism of this ESL/EFL literature by drawing on works in Japanese studies, particularly in anthropology, history, and sociology, whose descriptions of Japan derive their authority from their linguistic and methodological expertise.[2] The investigation reveals Orientalism in ESL/EFL literature in both the advice to foreign teachers in Japan and the research on cross-cultural learning strategies involving Japanese students. I first define the key concepts and then apply representative examples drawn from this ESL/EFL literature to a model of Orientalist discourse.[3] My goal is to make their Orientalist discourse explicit so that foreign teachers will be more critical of published descriptions of Japanese education and students.

Terminology

Here I define a few terms that appear in my argument: Orientalism, discourse, Othering, stereotyping, representing, and essentializing.

Orientalism: "Orientalism" in the sense I use it here comes from Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978 and reprinted with an "Afterword" in 1994. This book, with its themes of hegemony, imperialism, colonialism, and racism (1978/1994, pp. 7-8, 13-14) and its use of postmodern literary theories of discourse and textuality (p. 13), made a strong impression on the academic world in the post-Vietnam War era, and is cited frequently to this day.[4] Even so, readers of this journal may be wondering what Said's work, devoted mostly to analyses of British and French works on the Near and Middle East, has to do with teaching English in Japan.[5] The connection is that this same Orientalist discourse permeates the ESL/EFL literature that I take up in this essay. This is dangerous because, as Said points out, "when one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting and the end points of analysis, research, public policy . . ., the result is usually to polarize the distinction—the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western—and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies" (pp. 45-46); this division itself is an expression of hostility (p. 45). This same polarization and hostility can be seen also in Japan's "self-Orientalism," the Nihonjinron (the theory of Japanese identity) literature, produced largely by and for a Japanese audience.[6]

Said defines Orientalism as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (1978/1994, p. 1). Specifically, "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made

between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (p. 2); "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (p. 3). Said argues that Orientalism is a discourse in Michel Foucault's sense of that term (p. 3) (see below); he sees Orientalism as an "imperialist tradition" (p. 15), as "a kind of intellectual *authority* over the Orient within Western culture" (p. 19), a representation of the Orient by the West (p. 21), "ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (p. 43). Orientalism is not a positive concept but "a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought" (p. 42).

Said is concerned particularly with the colonialism, ethnocentrism, and racism that characterize Western Europe's view of the Near and Middle East. As his argument progresses, his definition of Orientalism transmogrifies: it is "a system for citing works and authors" (1978/1994, p. 23), a rhetoric (p. 72), "a form of paranoia" (p. 72), a discipline (p. 73), a "collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies" (p. 73) , and more (pp. 95, 121, 202-204, 206). For our purposes, a work is in the Orientalist discourse vis-à-vis the Japanese learner of English if it has the following characteristics (the page references to Said indicate places where he mentions each characteristic; he does not refer to Japan, Japanese learners, or language education):

1) Othering: Posits the Japanese learner as an Other different from Western learners (p. 2) and by implication inferior to them (p. 42) .
2) Stereotyping: Stereotypes Japanese learners (p. 26).
3) Representing: Represents Japanese learners rather than depicting them (p. 21).
4) Essentializing: Essentializes or reduces Japanese learners to an abstraction (pp. 230 ff., 298-299).

These four characteristics form the model of Orientalism that I will apply to the ESL/EFL literature on Japanese learners.

Discourse: The term "discourse" is used widely today with many meanings (see, e.g., Norris, 1996; Wales, 1989, pp. 129-131); Said states specifically that he sees Orientalism as a discourse in Michel Foucault's sense of that term (1978/1994, p. 3).[7] For Said the main point is that texts in a discourse

"create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe"; in other words, what appears in writings about, for example, language classrooms in Japan, is not true in any objective sense but is merely the product of a constellation of representations of such classrooms, characterized by othering, stereotyping, etc. What is important for our purposes here is that a discourse in this sense has two effects: for writers, it becomes a vehicle for control over the other; for readers, it shapes, distorts, and limits the readers' perception of reality (in this case the Japanese classroom or student).

Othering: "Other" and "Othering" are philosophical terms: "The question of the relation of self and other is the inaugurating question of Western philosophy and rhetoric" (Biesecker & McDaniel, 1996, p. 488; see also Kapila, 1997; Macey, 1996, pp. 392- 393; Riggins, 1997). For Said, the Orient is one of the West's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1978/1994, p. 1). Although he concentrates on the Near and Middle East, other scholars have pointed to the role of China and Japan as the West's "Other"; Geertz, discussing Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword,* says, "But Japan, about the last such elsewhere located, or anyway penetrated, has been for us more absolutely otherwise. It has been the Impossible Object" (1988, p. 116; see also Iwabuchi, 1994; Tobin, 1986, p. 264; Tobin, 1991, p. 7; Zhang, 1988; note the title of Befu & Kreiner, 1992). Othering is not by definition a malignant act; to know ourselves, we must differentiate, as many philosophers have pointed out (Zhang, 1988, p. 113). The problem begins when "the nature of this 'Other,' in reality, has less to do with who the 'Other' is than with the identity of the subject who is gazing at the 'Other'" (Befu, 1992a, p. 17), so that we end by interpreting the other in the light of our own self-perceptions (see Iwabuchi, 1994). According to Befu (1992a, pp. 17-18), we can correct for this tendency by making comparative analyses of differing perceptions of the other, by comparing, for example, the images of Japan presented by British and by French scholarship.

Stereotyping: Said uses the term "stereotype" in a common-sense way without giving a technical definition (1978/1994, e.g., pp. 26-27); however, given the importance of stereotypes in the study of cross-cultural communication between Japan and the West (e.g., Finkelstein, Imamura, & Tobin, 1991; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994, pp. 2-3, 93-96; Mukai, 1994; Wilkinson, 1991), we should define it here. Stereotyping is "the process of ascribing characteristics to people on the basis of their group memberships" (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994, p. 1), and a

stereotype is the "collection of attributes believed to define or characterize the members of a social group" (p. 1). Oakes et al. argue that "stereotypes serve to reflect the realities of group life as perceived from a particular vantage point and within a particular context" (p. 160). For example, the stereotypes of Japanese that appear in Hollywood films changed with the changing political and economic relationships between Japan and the United States: the mysterious Oriental of the 1930s, the fanatical samurai of the 1940s, the clown in kimono (1950s and 1960s), the economic animal (1970s and 1980s), the sophisticated financier (1980s), the high-tech gangster (1990s). These are stereotypes reflecting Americans' changing views of the Japanese, who did not mutate rapidly between the 1930s and the 1990s.[8]

Representing: Said's first epigraph (1978/1994, p. xiii) is a quotation from Marx's The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (1963, p. 124). The "they" in this case is the French peasantry who are "incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name" so that they need a representative who is "an authority over them" (p. 124). "Representation" is also a term of aesthetics, referring to how and to what degree the visual arts and literature abstract from reality; literature itself may be called a "representation of life" (Mitchell, 1995, p. 11). Said uses this term in both its political and literary senses; for him, Orientalists (i.e., specialists on the Orient) have used their (imperialist/colonial) power over the Orient to represent it to Western readers, abstracting from the reality, representing rather than depicting the actual circumstances of the Orient (1978/1994, pp. 21-22; see also pp. 57, 60, 62-63,), so that Orientalism can be defined as "a system of representations" (pp. 202-203) that "creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his [sic] world" (p. 40).

Essentializing: Said frequently describes Orientalism as "reductive" (1978/1994, e.g., pp. 239, 297-298, 309) or "essentialist" (e.g., pp. 315, 333); these terms have technical meanings in philosophy (Bullock & Trombley, 1988, pp. 284, 730) but Said seems to mean just the act of explaining or describing complex things simplistically. Williams describes essentialism for Said as the reduction of Oriental complexities "to a shorthand of caricature and cliché" (1996, p. 142). In a discussion of "Japan bashing," Miyoshi uses "essentialism" for a case in which "a society, a culture, and a nation are all identified and defined as a pure abstract absolute that is sterilized from any interaction with other elements and forces in history" (1991, p. 72). This seems close to Said's meaning.

ESL/EFL Literature and Japan

In this section I apply the above model of Orientalist discourse to the ESL/EFL literature on Japan, specifically the materials advising foreign teachers how to teach in Japan, and the research on cross-cultural learning styles and strategies. The literature on teaching in Japan includes: 1) advice on how to find and keep a teaching job (e.g., Best, 1994; Dillon & Sower, 1996)[9]; 2) impressionistic accounts of teaching experiences (e.g., Davidson, 1993; Feiler, 1992); 3) advice on classroom management (e.g., Wadden & McGovern, 1993); and 4) studies of classroom management, learner behavior, etc. (e.g., Sasaki, 1996). Research on cross-cultural learning strategies includes both general studies that make some reference to Japanese learners and those devoted exclusively to Japanese learners. I also make reference, for purposes of comparison, to popular and academic studies of Japanese education, particularly ethnographic studies of classrooms.[10] My method has been to search the literature for clear examples of the four major characteristics of Orientalism; these examples are cited below with explanations and criticisms.[11]

Othering

The literature on teaching in Japan others Japanese learners by establishing an Orientalist polarity: positing an East vis-à-vis the West. Titles like "Classroom Cultures: East Meets West" (Cogan, 1996), "The Chrysanthemum Maze" (Kelly & Adachi, 1993), or "West vs. East: Classroom Interaction Patterns" (Rule, 1996) are examples of this. The West is seen as rational (and superior), the East as mysterious (and inferior). I offer two examples: 1) the use of Confucianism, an archetypal symbol of the Oriental Other, to "explain" aspects of Japanese classrooms; and 2) the positing of an unbridgeable difference between Japanese and Western communication.

The idea that Confucianism has a powerful influence on contemporary Japanese education is common in the literature on teaching in Japan (e.g., Sower & Johnson, 1996, p. 26). Often "Confucianism" is simply an undefined Oriental force; Esposito (1997, p. 296), for example, conflates it with Buddhism. McLean reduces Japanese universities to battlegrounds for a struggle between essentialized "Confucian and Christian philosophies" (Gorsuch, Hinkelman, McLean, Oda & Robson, 1995, p. 16); she invokes the 19th century conflict between Japanese spirit and Western knowledge (*wakon yosai*), untroubled by the historical conflict between Japanese spirit and Confucianism (see, e.g., Befu, 1997, pp. 11-13; Harootunian, 1970, pp. 24 ff., 154 ff.; 1988, pp. 186 ff.; Najita, 1991, p. 618). Stapleton (1995), finds in Confucianism the source of many aspects of Japanese education that

puzzle foreign teachers: the emphasis on social hierarchy, the role of effort, an emphasis on memorization, the importance of examinations, etc. Let us examine these points, drawing on research on Confucian thought in Japan and on classroom ethnographic studies.

Concerning hierarchy, Smith (1983), an anthropologist who emphasizes the influence of Confucianism on contemporary Japan (p. 37), points out that the conception of hierarchy "was far more rigid in theory than in its practical application" (p. 48), both in premodern and contemporary Japan. Further, Dore argued that because Confucian education was "a training in principles" (1965, p. 308), it encouraged individual application of those principles rather than absolute obedience to authority. Finally, van Bremen (1992) showed that the Confucian influence in Japanese popular literature stresses heroes of the Wang Yang-ming tradition who were activists and rebels, a far cry from the image of docile students at the bottom of the Confucian hierarchy.[12]

Stapleton (1995, p. 14) sees the long Japanese school year as an example of the Confucian emphasis on effort. Leaving aside the problem that discussions of school calendars cannot be found in the Confucian classics, it is a fact that Japanese students go to school more days than do students in U. S. public schools (e.g., Rohlen, 1983, p. 160). However, Lewis (1995), looking at instructional time rather than hours spent in school or on school activities, found very little difference between Japanese and United States elementary schools (pp. 62 ff.; see also Shimahara & Sakai, 1995, pp. 142-143; 218-220); Fukuzawa (1996) found that "Japanese middle school students actually spend proportionately more time on nonacademic subjects and activities than their American counterparts" (p. 303).[13]

For Stapleton, Confucianism is the justification for rote learning and memorization in Japanese schools (1995, p. 15); he presents no evidence, hardly surprising in view of the research finding that drill was more frequent in Chicago's classrooms than in Japan's (Lee, Graham, & Stevenson, 1996, p. 177; see also Stevenson, 1989, p. 89). Aiga (1990, p. 143) points out that rote learning in Japanese language classrooms is likely to be based on the theory of habit formation, which owes more to Fries than Confucius. Finally, Confucianism is blamed for the Japanese system of evaluation by examination (Stapleton, 1995, p. 15). It is true that in the early modern period there was an examination system based on the Chinese model (Dore, 1965, pp. 85-86, 201 ff.) but it did not function like the Chinese system (Nosco, 1984, p. 25). In fact, the modern emphasis on examinations owes as much to European as to Confucian models (Frost, 1991, p. 298; for background see Amano, 1990). In short, descriptions of Japanese education as "Confucian" are misleading

because the term is used without reference to the complicated history of Confucian thought in Japan (see, e.g., Bodart-Bailey, 1997), and because ethnographic data shows that many of the "facts" cited to illustrate this "Confucian" influence are simply false.

Concerning the unbridgeable difference between Japanese and Western communication, we often are told that Japanese students "have been trained to communicate in a very different way from the foreign teacher of English" (Cogan, 1995, p. 37), or that there is an "inherent conflict in the communicative styles of foreign teachers and their Japanese students" (p. 37).[14] This may be true. A large research literature argues that Japanese speech acts, communication styles and patterns, etc. differ from those of North Americans (e.g., Beebe, 1995; Clancy, 1990; Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, 1996; Maynard, 1997; Miller, 1995; Rinnert, 1995; Yamada, 1997). However, there are two problems. The first has to do with the quality of this research. For example, Clancy (1986) uses an orthodox research methodology to study the acquisition of Japanese communicative style, but her definition of that style (pp. 213-217) is based on stereotypes about Japanese culture that Mouer and Sugimoto (1986), among others, have thoroughly debunked. Further, her starting point is the contrast of Japanese and American communicative styles (p. 213) but she is forced constantly by her data to point out that there is not so much difference between the two styles (e.g., pp. 222, 229).

A second problem is that speech acts, communication styles, discourse patterns, etc. are culture-specific, so there are differences among all people from different countries and language backgrounds, not just speakers of English and Japanese. There are even differences among people of various ages, genders, occupations, discourse communities, etc. For example, Deborah Tannen has shown convincingly that there are differences between North American male and female speech, and between New York and West Coast communication styles (1984, 1986, 1990). Problems of communication between native English speaking teachers and Japanese students may result from the fact that the teacher was brought up in the United States or Australia, but such problems might also result from age or other differences. Further, there is nothing in this unique to the Japanese situation.

Stereotyping

The typical stereotypes found in Western writing about Japanese society—group-oriented, hierarchical, harmonious—are found in the teaching-in-Japan literature (e.g., Wordell, 1993, p. 147), where they are used to "explain" the behavior of Japanese students and guide the practice of

native speaker teachers.[15] This creates problems because stereotyping prevents our seeing the reality and complexity of our classrooms (see Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, pp. 20-22). Below I look at two examples, the idea of Japanese society as group-oriented, and the depiction of Japanese classrooms as hierarchical.[16]

One of the most common stereotypes of Japanese society is that it is "group-oriented" so that Japanese students behave as a group rather than individually (e.g., Bingham, 1997, p. 37; Kobayashi, 1989; O'Sullivan, 1992, p. 11; Schoolland, 1990, pp. 151 ff.; Shimazu, 1992); the proverb, "the nail that stands out gets pounded down" is offered as "proof" that Japanese value the group more than the individual (e.g., Anderson, 1993a, p. 103; Mayer, 1994, p. 15; Nozaki, 1993, p. 31; Sower & Johnson, 1996, p. 26).[17] However, Mouer & Sugimoto (1986, pp. 99-155) present empirical evidence and methodological critiques showing that the Japanese may be no more group-oriented than other peoples in the world (see also Befu, 1980a; 1980b; Kuwayama, 1992; Maher & Yashiro, 1995, p. 10). Groups certainly play an important part in Japanese society and education (e.g., Hendry, 1986; Iwama, 1989), but not necessarily at the expense of the individual (see, e.g. Kotloff, 1996, pp. 114-115; Sato, 1996, pp. 120-122, 146); Morimoto cites the "more contemporary saying" that "the nail that comes out all the way never gets hammered down," used as a slogan of the student activists who have been opposing school regulations (1996, p. 203). Kataoka (1992) shows how teachers try to develop students' independence and self-initiative (p. 98) in a process that emphasizes the development of the individual in a group context. Using Reed's (1993) idea of avoiding cultural explanations in favor of common sense, we could argue that the main reason teachers emphasize the group is that it is the most practical way to deal with the large classes typical of Japanese schools (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 62; see Reed, pp. 61-62).

Groups that play an important part in Japanese classrooms are equivalent to the peer groups in the West that "also exert a powerful influence on most children's upbringing" (Duke, 1986, p. 33). Anderson (1993a) too, in an otherwise excellent article that offers sound advice based on ethnographic research, sees in Japanese groups "the reverse of the western concept of individuality" (p. 104). One of his examples is the "marathon deliberations" of university faculty meetings to achieve decisions by consensus (p. 104; see also Wordell, 1993, p. 151); this is one pattern in Japan but many readers will have experienced just the opposite, meetings where decisions are made by acclamation or fiat, and in which discussion, never mind consensus, plays little part (see, e.g., McVeigh, 1997, pp. 90, 100-101).

A second common stereotype is that Japanese society is vertical and hierarchical (e.g., Hill, 1990, pp. 84-85; Kay, 1994, p. 5) although scholars have pointed out weaknesses in this view (e.g., Bachnik, 1994a, p. 8; 1994b; Sakurai, 1974; see also Rohlen, 1983, p. 208). We are told that Japanese students "are quite unaccustomed to challenging a respected superior" (Sharp, 1990, p. 208) and that for Japanese schoolchildren "life is order and order emanates from an authority figure" who is the *sensei* (Davidson, 1993, p. 42; see also p. 36). Exponents of these views might be surprised at ethnographic research showing that in some cases Japan's classrooms are less authoritarian than those in the United States: "in mathematics and science, Japanese teachers are more likely than American teachers to encourage the expression of disagreement . . ." (Lewis, 1995, p. 174; see also Sato, 1996, pp. 138-139; Stigler, Fernandez, & Yoshida, 1996, pp. 241-243; Tsuchida & Lewis, 1996, p. 196; Whitman, 1991, pp. 165-167). Nursery school teachers make great efforts "to keep a low profile as classroom authorities" (Lewis, 1989, p. 36; see also Lewis, 1995, pp. 108 ff.; Peak, 1991, pp. 77, 186) and delegate control to children; the result is to create in the children's minds the sense of a teacher "as a benevolent, though perhaps not quite indulgent, figure" (Lewis, 1989, p. 42), a far cry from the stern Confucian disciplinarian that appears in the stereotypes.

In elementary schools, too, the routines that have given foreign observers "an impression of tight authoritarian control" might be better seen as a means of giving students responsibility, which American students cannot have because their classroom routines are so unpredictable and teacher-controlled (Tsuchida & Lewis, 1996, p. 195; see also Shimahara & Sakai, 1995, p. 75). School clubs have authoritarian aspects, but Cummings found that middle school clubs "encouraged participation, expressiveness, and cooperation, and de-emphasized competition" (1980, p. 99). White (1993/1994, p. 89) sees American secondary schools as more authoritarian and hierarchical than those in Japan. At the college level, Hadley and Hadley's (1996) results suggest that vertical relationships are not necessarily authoritarian (p. 54).

Many writers characterize Japanese classrooms as "ritual domains" in Lebra's (1976, pp. 120-131) sense (e.g., Mutch, 1995), in which "norms of interaction tend to be defined by status differences between teacher and student . . ." (Cogan, 1996, p. 106). The first problem with this is that even if it is true it is not evidence that Japan's classrooms are different from those in other countries. The second problem is that these characterizations imply that all Japanese classrooms are the same, but ethnographic research has found a vast difference between elementary

school classroom behavior and that in junior and senior high schools. While secondary-level instruction often, if not always (e.g., Wardell, 1995, pp. 45-46), consists of teacher-centered lectures with limited active participation by students, elementary classrooms are "characterized by a facilitative role for teachers and considerable student-student interaction" (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1996, p. 7; see also Fukuzawa, 1996, p. 295; Lewis, 1986, pp. 196-197; 1995, pp. 113-114, 176; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, pp. 176 ff.).[18] Cummings (1980) found that primary school teachers "make significant departures from the traditional approach" (p. 125); in middle school he notes "teachers lecture more and are relatively less likely to turn over time to subgroups in the class" (p. 135), suggesting a relative rather than an absolute difference. Research on science instruction shows that class management is not so different between Japan and the United States (Jacobson & Takemura, 1992, p. 156). Finally, Okano (1993) emphasizes the differentiation among high schools in Japan; her description of a technical school class (p. 198), if not exactly *Blackboard Jungle*, is not too far from many American high school classes (see also Sands, 1995).

The literature is filled with images of Japan's silent, authoritarian classrooms; Hyland claims that "the Japanese education system does not seem to value independence nor assign creative or imaginative tasks" (1994, p. 59). First, creativity, like other social constructs, is culturally determined; Lewis (1992) finds a high degree of creativity and self-expression in Japanese schools. Further, there is an "extraordinary gap between the American media's portrayal of drill and memorization in Japanese elementary schools and the active, idea-driven learning that researchers have observed" (Lewis, 1995, p. 176; see also Lee, Graham, & Stevenson, 1996). Although Fukuzawa (1996) found that Japanese middle school classes are mostly lecture style and the instruction was "decidedly uninspiring and old-fashioned" (p. 302), Japanese teachers in the lower grades "seem to be more comfortable [than American teachers] with group discussions, mistakes, confusion, and other aspects of a discovery- oriented (or constructivist) approach" (Rohlen & LeTendre, 1996, p. 14: see also Duke, 1986, p. 160; Lewis, 1995, p. 95; Tsuchida & Lewis, 1996, pp. 210-211; White, 1987, pp. 67-68).

On the college level, teachers complain of "a wall of silence" (Helgesen, 1993) but also "disruptive talking" (Wadden & McGovern, 1993, p. 115). Helgesen's explanation is reasonable: students do not talk in English because they have not been taught to do so (p. 38) but for Wadden and McGovern, the misbehavior of Japanese students is "culturally determined" (p. 115); somehow only Japanese students whisper in class and only for-

eign teachers find this rude (p. 117)![19] Sasaki too finds that Japanese students "follow their cultural code of classroom conduct" (1996, p. 237), which includes "not doing homework" (p. 235); no wonder foreign teachers have trouble with this exotic species! Woodring (1997), struck with the "discrepancy between what had been read about the mythological Japanese student and what had actually been experienced with very real students in the classroom" (p. 158), used a survey instrument to examine teacher-student and student-student interaction; her results showed that her Japanese students were "surprisingly similar" to their American counterparts (p. 164), proving many of the stereotypes wrong.

Representing[20]

Japanese society is represented as homogeneous and harmonious (e.g., Sower & Johnson, 1996), although there is a good evidence for the existence of both diversity (e.g., Clammer, 1995; Creighton, 1995, p. 155; Denoon, Hudson, McCormack & Morris-Suzuki, 1996; Kawamura, 1980; MacDonald & Maher, 1995; Maher & Yashiro, 1995; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993, p. 82)[21] and conflict (Moore, 1997; Mouer & Sugimoto, 1986, pp. 64-83, 106-115; see also Horio, 1988, pp. xii-xiv; Krauss, Rohlen, & Steinhoff, 1984; Najita & Koschmann, 1982). For example, in his recent survey of Japanese society, Sugimoto (1997) documents the existence of "regional, generational, occupational, and educational" diversity and stratification (p. 5), concluding that "Japan does not differ fundamentally from other countries in its internal variation and stratification" (p. 5) In education, Japan's "monocultural" classrooms have been contrasted to multicultural classrooms in the United States (e.g., Wright, 1996). This is true in one sense but ignores the evidence that in Japan "diversity is judged by different criteria" than in the U.S., so that Japanese teachers are conscious of marked diversity in their classrooms in terms of "varying regions, occupations, and social classes" (Sato & McLaughlin, 1992, p. 6). Davidson (1993) "explains" perceived problems in Japanese education by representing Japan as a machine-like culture: "English instruction reinforces the Japanese tendency toward precision, persistent and determined labor, rote memorization, and, I'm convinced, xenophobia" (1993, p. 38; see also Pennycook, 1994, p. 4).

Even fairly straightforward research can fall into Orientalism through facile representations of Japanese behavior rather than scientific explanation. For example, Robbins ends an excellent study on language learning strategies by explaining her results in terms of an unsupported representation of Japanese students as desiring "to passively absorb information provided by teachers" (Dadour & Robbins, 1996, p. 166).

Ryan (1995a), puzzled by the tendency of Japanese students to recommend less punitive sanctions for misbehavior than their Australian counterparts, "explains" this with reference to Doi's concept of *amae* although this idea has been discredited (see, e.g., Dale, 1986, pp. 121-142; Mouer & Sugimoto, 1986, pp. 130-132).[22]

Kobayashi (1990, p. 25; see also 1989; 1994, p. 164) represents Japanese as illogical or creatures of intuition against logical Western reasoners.[23] Mok (1993) too represents Japanese students as lacking Western logic and critical thinking skills (pp. 157-158), glossing over the fact that the American educational system devotes vast resources to redress these problems in students who happen not to be Japanese. Kelly and Adachi (1993, pp. 156-157) represent and speak for a fictional Japanese college English teacher and Nozaki (1993, pp. 30-33) represents "typical students" just as Said finds Flaubert representing the "typically Oriental" Egyptian courtesan Kuchuk Hanem (1978/1994, pp. 6, 186 ff). Wordell and Gorsuch (1992, pp. 8-9) represent "deep-bred Japanese cultural assumptions about employer-employee relationships" in their citation of an inane satire of foreigners' employment conditions at conversation schools; Said argued that "the idea of representation is a theatrical one" (p. 63) but even he probably did not imagine that the theater would be farce!

Essentializing

In most of this literature, "Japan," the "Japanese," "Japanese education," are presented monolithically, with no sense of variety or individual differences. Walko (1995), for example, has projected his experience of some junior high schools in Kumamoto Prefecture to absolutes; according to him, all such schools in Japan have wood floors (p. 364). Even research studies with careful descriptions of the subjects often lapse into sweeping generalizations such as "in Japan, role behavior is conditioned to a strong degree" (Busch, 1982, p. 130). Kobayashi (1991) talks of Japanese students as if they were all identical products of a "maternal society." Oxford & Anderson (1995) give a good survey of research on learning styles of non-American Anglos but most of their comments about Japanese students essentialize them beyond recognition; for example, "Japanese and Korean students are often quiet, shy and reticent in language classrooms" (p. 208; see also Oxford, Hollaway, & Horton-Murillo, 1992). The same essentializing of Japanese students appears in other learning style research (e.g., Hyland, 1994; Nelson, 1995, pp. 10-12; Stebbins, 1995, pp. 110-112) although Ozeki (1996) showed that "it is difficult to generalize learning styles of Japanese students as a group" (p. 121); this is noted by Oxford and Anderson them-

selves (1995, pp. 209-210). Redfield and Shawback (1996) found no great differences between the Japanese and American students they studied with respect to attitudes towards language teaching and learning.

Essentialist statements are by their nature not comparative although, as Befu (1992a) points out, cultural difference is a relative matter (pp. 31-32). Statements like "competition to pass entrance examinations . . . is fierce" (Sower & Johnson, 1996, p. 26) may be true but are presented as absolutes, so we have no way of knowing that such competition may not be as "fierce" as it is in Korea and Malaysia, or even France (see Frost, 1991, p. 293).[24] Likewise, "the homogeneity of the Japanese educational system" (Greene & Hunter, 1993, p. 11) is often pointed out; this is true compared to the United States, which happens to have a decentralized educational system. But how does Japan's system compare to that of Singapore, or Turkey, or Nigeria? In other words, Japan's educational system is not essentially homogeneous, it is more or less homogeneous than those of other countries (see Ichikawa, 1986, p. 255). Further, despite the centralized control of education in Japan "in practice, Japanese teachers are actually less controlled in matters of instruction then are most of their American counterparts" (Sato & McLaughlin, 1992, pp. 5-6). Ichikawa (1986) argues that "even in Japan . . . considerable differences exist at each level of education and also among school districts and individual schools" (p. 245; see also Sugimoto, 1997, pp. 118-119); Okano (1993, p. 252) found high school teachers resisting the administration. Statements like "an important difference from Western schools, then, is that wider *societally-recognized concepts* still dominate at schools in Japan, while in the West *school-generated requirements* dominate over those from outside, which are redefined" (Reinelt, 1987, p. 8) not only essentialize Japanese schools but also reduce all schools in the West to one.

Essentializing leads to factual errors. Sower and Johnson (1996, p. 26) say that "most students from grades K-12 wear school uniforms" but this is not true of most public elementary school students (see Conduit & Conduit, 1996, p. 103) or many private secondary students. Durham & Ryan (1992) explain differences in survey results between Japanese and Australians on the grounds that most of the Australians surveyed lived off-campus, implying incorrectly that Japanese campuses are residential (p. 79). More serious, Gunterman (1985) claims that using physical force on high school students is not "taboo" (p. 131). While corporal punishment is not uncommon in Japanese schools, as Schoolland (1990) has documented in detail, Gunterman might have pointed out that in fact it happens to be against the law (Morimoto, 1996, p. 211; Schoolland, p. 56). Even such

unexceptional "facts" as "Japanese civilization began with the cultivation of rice" (Sower & Johnson, 1996, p. 27) turn out to be highly debatable assertions (see, e.g., Amino, 1996; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993, pp. 30-36; for a more conservative view see Imamura, 1996, pp. 142-144, 217-219). Stapleton points out that the Japanese education system has "none of the gifted or remedial programs that are common in the West" (1995, p. 15); this may be true but fails to acknowledge that "much effort is expended [by teachers] . . . to feed extra material to the quick learners, and to give extra help to the slower learners" (Dore & Sako, 1989, p. 6).

Conclusion

The above survey shows that there is considerable Orientalism in the ESL/EFL literature on Japan. I want here to anticipate some objections that might be made to my argument and evidence. First, I do not mean to argue that there are no cultural differences among nations with respect to learning strategies, the role of the university in society, classroom management, student expectations, etc. For example, excellent work has been done on cross-cultural issues in Japanese classrooms (e.g., Ryan, 1993; 1995a; Shimizu, 1995). My quarrel is not with evidence that points out characteristics of Japanese learners or with advice that will help foreign teachers to overcome the cultural gaps they face in Japanese classrooms. My objection is rather to arguments that are based on Orientalism rather than evidence, and to advice that is grounded in assumptions, stereotypes, platitudes, and errors.

Some readers might complain that I seem to be claiming that groups do not exist in Japan despite the substantial evidence for their role in Japanese society. I have argued above not that groups do not exist in Japan but rather that the notion of Japan as a group-oriented society is not a useful explanation of Japanese behavior in general or of Japanese students' behavior in particular. Likewise, such characterizations are relative; after all, wasn't the theme of *The Lonely Crowd* (Reisman, Glazer, & Denny, 1950/1953) and *The Organization Man* (Whyte, 1957) just that the United States was a group-oriented society that discouraged individualism? Finally, as mentioned above, ethnographers like Lewis and Sato have found that school groups do not necessarily stifle individualism.

Another objection that might be made is that much of the ethnographic evidence on Japanese classrooms cited above comes from studies done in pre-school or elementary school settings, and not junior and senior high schools, which are more likely to be characterized by hierarchical relations between teachers and students, rote learning, etc. In

response I can say first that much of the Orientalist literature on teaching in Japan makes no distinction between K-6 and 9-12 classes, referring instead to essentialized Japanese classrooms, students, and so on. Further, as Rohlen and LeTendre (1996) point out, "the successes of Japanese high school students . . . rest heavily on a foundation of prior teaching and socialization that had nothing to do with the cramming and rote learning associated with high school instructional processes" (p. 8); "the basic routines established in K-9 . . . make possible the subsequent, rather dramatic change in academic teaching style at the secondary level" (p. 7). In other words, I do not dispute the claim that many Japanese high school classes use "rapid-fire instruction that emphasizes facts and procedures" (Lee, Graham, & Stevenson, 1996, p. 189; see also Fukuzawa, 1996, p. 302), but insist that generalizations about grades 9-12 education in Japan will be misleading if they ignore the context of Japanese students' entire school experience. Further, we cannot focus only on classrooms to understand our students' concepts of schools and learning; Fukuzawa argues that students are not alienated from high school because "an efficient, teacher-centered approach to instruction is separated from a variety of social, emotional and moral training activities" that emphasizes the whole person (p. 317; see also Sato & McLaughlin, 1992, p. 5). Schools in Japan, as in any country, form a complex system that cannot be explained or described in simple generalizations about classroom practice or club activities in isolation.

I have attempted above to show that much of the literature under review is characterized by Orientalism. My point is not that there are occasional stereotypes or factual errors; my claim is that these fictions have been woven into a pervasive discourse that shapes our descriptions and then our perceptions of Japanese learners and classrooms. Given this, how can we overcome the authority of the Orientalist discourse to attain a better understanding of the teaching and learning situation in Japan? First, foreign teachers have the responsibility to read the literature more critically, being constantly on the lookout for the stereotyping, essentializing, etc. that I have pointed out; at the same time, foreigners must become more sensitive to the actual conditions of their teaching environments and more knowledgeable about Japanese culture, resisting the tendency to reduce Japan to an unknowable Other. Second, researchers should be more careful about accepting the results of previous research uncritically, and of course should avoid explanations based on proverbs, stereotypes of national character, or facile representations. We need many more carefully done studies of Japanese learners and classrooms, and we need more critical syntheses of previously published research.

Third, publishers and journal editors have the greatest responsibility because Orientalism is a discourse in Foucault's sense, in which, as Said explains it, a "textual attitude" is fostered when "the book (or text) acquires a greater authority and use, even than the actuality it describes" (1978/1994, p. 93). By publishing the kind of work I have criticized above, ESL/EFL publishers and journals have enhanced the authority of this discourse. It will not be easy for the journals to attain a balance between freedom of expression and a rejection of Orientalist Othering but, once aware of the problem, it should not be impossible. Said's work has taught us what we did not know about the way we see and comprehend; it is now our responsibility to rectify our perceptions of Japanese learners and classrooms.

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Notes

1. "Internationalization" (*kokusaika*) is in quotation marks because it "is a conservative policy that reflects the other side of a renewed sense of Japanese national pride, if not nationalism . . . instead of opening up Japan to the struggle of different nationalities and ethnicities, the policy of internationalization implies the opposite: the thorough domestication of the foreign and the dissemination of Japanese culture throughout the world" (Ivy, 1995, p. 3; see also p. 26; Creighton, 1995, pp. 150-155; Faure, 1995, pp. 266-267; Iwabuchi, 1994; McCormack, 1996, pp. 274 ff.; McVeigh, 1997, pp. 65 ff.; Mouer & Sugimoto, 1986, pp. 171, 377-404; for different views see Dougill, 1995, and Stefásson, 1994). Wada and Cominos (1994, p. 5) claim that the real purpose of the JET Program is to teach foreigners about Japan (see also Wada & Cominos, 1995, p. viii). White (1988/1992) points out various meanings of "internationalization" in Japan (pp. 50-52, 80), emphasizing that for the Ministry of Education and the business world internationalization may be good for Japan but internationalized individuals are not, so that Japan's emphasis on "internationalization" is merely rhetorical (p. 120). Concerning returnee children (*kikoku shijo*), she rejects Goodman's (1990b) thesis that returnees are not disadvantaged (p. 126); interestingly, Goodman (1990a) reports that he "ended up taking a position almost completely opposite" to his original view (p. 163).

2. This is not to say that the Japanese studies literature is free of error or Orientalism. One example is the wide-spread belief that "the Japanese public school has been able to achieve virtual total literacy of its graduates" (Duke, 1986, p. 79); even Lewis repeats this (1992, p. 238). However, much evidence shows that many Japanese children have problems reading their own language (Burstein & Hawkins, 1992, pp. 185-186; Hatta & Hirose, 1995, pp. 231-233; Hirose & Hatta, 1988; Rohlen, 1983, p. 29; Stevenson, Lee, & Stigler, 1986, p. 233; Taylor & Taylor, 1995, pp. 351-353; Unger, 1987, pp. 83 ff.; 1996, pp. 24 ff., 124 ff.). A second example is McVeigh's (1997) ethnology of a Japanese women's junior college. Although he specifically states that his study "is about a particular women's junior college" (p. 17), he often discusses Japan's junior colleges in general (e.g., pp. 85 ff., 177) and in effect essentializes and represents all Japanese students (e.g., p. 79), not to mention characterizing English as "the language of the Other" (p. 65; see also pp. 73 ff.). Ichikawa (1986, pp. 253-256) lists several causes of error in U. S. studies on Japanese education.

3. Evans (1990; 1991) is the first to my knowledge to apply Orientalism to language teaching in Japan. Honey's (1991) response is instructive because of its assumption that a reassertion of stereotypes of Japanese learners constitutes an effective rebuttal of Evans' argument.

4. Said's concept has generated a tremendous literature; see the web pages devoted to Said at http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/indiv/scctr/Wellek/said; visited December 23, 1997. For a recent review see MacKenzie (1995, pp. xi-19). On Said's work, see Habib (1996) and Rossington (1995).

5. Said (1978/1994) refers to Japan infrequently and only in passing; his apparent reference to the Shimabara Uprising (p. 73) is, as Massarella points out, "nonsense" (1990, p. 372, note 11). Miyoshi (1993) claims that in Japan "*Orientalism* has been read principally as a part of the Middle East discourse and is viewed as having little to do with Japan or cultural understanding generally" (p. 284). On the applicability of Said's thesis to the English-language literature and scholarship on Japan, see, e.g., Befu (1992a, pp. 22-24); Dale (1996), Minear (1980), Morley and Robins (1992), Mouer (1983), Williams (1996, pp. 140-154), and the discussion on H-ASIA (March 2-11, 1996; http://h-net2.msu.edu/~asia/threads/ thrdorientalism.html; visited December 23, 1997).

6. *Nihonjinron* (see, e.g., Befu, 1992b; Dale, 1986; Kawamura, 1980; Mabuchi, 1995; Manabe, Befu, & McConnell, 1989; Mouer & Sugimoto, 1995; Yoshino, 1992) is best described as a program of disseminating "the essentialist view of 'Japaneseness' not only among the Japanese but also throughout the world, so that 'Japaneseness' would be 'properly' recognized by Others" (Iwabuchi, 1994; see also Ivy, 1995, pp. 1-2, 9). This has lead to Japan's "reverse Orientalism" (Borup, 1995; Faure, 1995; Miller, 1982, p. 209; Moeran, 1990, p. 9; Moeran & Skov, 1997, pp. 182-185; Ueno, 1997), "self-Orientalism" (Iwabuchi, 1994), or "auto-Orientalism" (Befu, 1997, p. 15), stereotyping and essentializing Japan while creating an ideal West "for purposes of self-definition" (Gluck, 1985, p. 137). Creighton (1995) argues that "Japanese renderings of *gaijin* [Caucasians] are occidentalisms that stand opposed to Japanese orientalisms about them-

selves" (p. 137), and Goodman and Miyazawa (1995) see the Japanese concept of the Jewish people as a "kind of reverse Orientalism" that "reifies a particular Japanese cultural history" (p. 13 n.). In the end, the *Nihonjinron* may be parallel to the Melanesian *kastom*, "the concern to preserve and perhaps recreate what people see as their traditional ways" (Carrier, 1995, p. 6), or perhaps to "Occidentalism," a term that Chen (1995) uses for China, "a discursive practice that, by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others" (pp. 4-5). See Carrier (1992) on the relationship between "Occidentalism" and "Orientalism."

7. Foucault himself defines discourse as "the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts" (1979, p. 154), as "a group of rules that are immanent in a practice, and define it in its specificity" (1969/1972, p. 46), as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49), and as "a space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed" (p. 55); see also Macdonell, 1986, pp. 82 ff.). However, I need to enter three caveats. First, Foucault states that his use of the term "discourse" varies in meaning (1969/1972, p. 80). Second, Said modifies Foucault's definition on the important point of the "determining imprint of individual writers" (1978/1994, p. 23). Third, as Bové (1995, p. 53) argues, it is impossible to ask or answer questions about the meaning of "discourse" in Foucault's sense at all because to do so "would be to contradict the logic of the structure of thought in which the term 'discourse' now has a newly powerful critical function" and "would be, in advance, hopelessly to prejudice the case against understanding the function of 'discourse'" (p. 53).

8. See Johnson (1988) for a survey of American images of Japan; she too concludes that "popular stereotypes are greatly influenced by immediate events" (pp. ix-x).

9. Perhaps Stern's (1992) complaints about foreign teachers in Japan belong in this category.

10. The literature on Japanese education in English alone is immense; Beauchamp and Rubinger's (1989) annotated bibliography lists about 1,000 items, although it is now almost a decade out-of-date.

11. Foreman-Takano (in press) finds stereotypes, essentializing, etc. in another body of literature, reading textbooks produced in Japan.

12. Bolitho (1996), in a brilliant riposte to the view of early modern Japanese society as Confucian, shows that the characteristics attributed to Japan's "Confucian" society are just those that describe pre-modern societies in general (p. 199). Nosco (1984) points out that elements of Japanese society attributed to Confucianism may have existed prior to the introduction of Chinese thought (p. 5). Gluck (1985, pp. 102 ff.) shows how many different ideologies were masked by the term "Confucian" in the planning of Meiji educational policy. Further, some historians have argued that "Confucian harmony" was a tradition invented in the Meiji period to enhance political control (see Maher & Yashiro, 1995, pp. 8-9).

13. Stevenson, however, reports that Japanese fifth graders spend twice as much time in mathematics classes as Americans (1989, p. 94; see also Stevenson, Stigler, & Lee, 1986, pp. 208-210; Stevenson & Lee, 1990, pp. 30-31). Ryan (1995b, p. 71) states that Japanese teachers spend about the same number of classroom hours as their British counterparts teaching their subject matter.

14. The same point is made of classroom behaviors and expectations; see, e.g., Greene and Hunter (1993) and Ryan (1995a, 1996). For research on what Japanese students expect from foreign teachers, see Durham and Ryan (1992), Fensler (1988), and Redfield (1995).

15. Note Finkelstein's (1991, p. 138) critique of the U. S. Department of Education's study *Japanese Education Today* (1987, esp. pp. 2-4) as perpetuating these stereotypes (see also Horio, 1988, p. xiii).

16. Inevitably this literature stereotypes the West as well, as Said claims: "the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western" (1978/1994, p. 46). Wordell cites Yoshida/Mizuta's reductionist summaries of Americans and Japanese (1985, p. 12, 1993, p. 147).

17. Mouer and Sugimoto (1986) point out that a proverb is not evidence of anything because 1) "like many languages, Japanese contains numerous pairs of opposites" (p. 135); here they suggest "lone wolf" (*ippiki okami*) (p. 135); 2) all proverbs do not have the same degree of currency; and 3) they can often be interpreted in different ways so that there is no agreement on meaning (p. 151). In another example of proof by proverb, Williams (1994) explains that Japanese students are silent because of a cultural tendency toward a reflective personality (p. 10); as proof, he cites a Japanese proverb meaning that mouths are to eat with, not speak with. By this argument, a culture with the proverb "silence is golden" has the same cultural tendency. Klopf (1995) quotes ten proverbs that "suggest that speaking is the root of all evil" (p. 171) and concludes flatly: "The desire not to speak is the most significant feature of Japanese language life" (p. 171)! Lebra (1987) gives a balanced study of the role of silence in Japanese communication, but even she is not above citing the same proverbs (p. 348). A quick glance at Buchanan's (1965) compilation of Japanese proverbs shows not only that English has ready equivalents for many of these (e.g., p. 75) but also that Japanese has proverbs praising eloquence (e.g., p. 75).

18. Anderson's recent research (1993b, in press) shows that "the Japanese teacher appears to be not so much a conversation partner as a facilitator of student interaction" (1993b, p. 87); he argues that the students are engaged in "group consensus building" (p. 87) but an alternative reading of the data he presents suggests that students are expressing themselves individually.

19. To add to the confusion, Miyanaga argues that "to the Japanese, to be quiet and to listen is active, not passive" (1991, p. 96), while for McVeigh, students' quiescence results from their encounter with the "Other" (1997, p. 79) or from bullying to maintain social harmony (pp. 180 ff.).

20. Parallel in a sense to Japan's "self-Orientalism" mentioned above is a kind of "self" representation, —described humorously by Stewart (1985) as "an especially virulent disease" (p. 89).

21. In contrast, Lewis (1995, pp. 172-175) points to a lack of diversity in classrooms.

22. Japanese are not the only ones to be represented. Durham & Ryan (1992) argue that Australians, as compared to Japanese, "value a certain degree of uniformity" because of their "convict heritage" (p. 78).

23. Honey (1991, p. 45) cites Kobayashi (1990), claiming that because she is Japanese, her conclusions are correct. I would argue that the works by Japanese nationals that I criticize as Orientalist are similar to what Pratt (1992) calls "autoethnographic expression": "instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's own terms" (p. 7).

24. Grove (1996) shows that critical statements made about entrance tests for Japanese schools often reflect prejudices and ignorance of the situation in Japan. In addition, both popular and academic studies of Japanese education emphasize the influence of the entrance tests; Shimahara (1979), for example, sees Japan as a "group-oriented society" and the entrance tests as "a powerful means employed by this [Japanese] society to determine individual group membership" (p. 93). Unfortunately for his theory, "most Japanese students have little to do with the widely publicized 'examination hell'" (Sugimoto, 1997, p. 10; see also Ichikawa, 1986, p. 250).

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