

A Reaction to Gorsuch's "Yakudoku EFL Instruction in Two Japanese High School Classrooms": *Yakudoku*, Grammar Translation, or Reading Methods?

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In the last issue of *JALT Journal* Gorsuch (1998) cites a paper I wrote (Jannuzi, 1994). The first citation mentions my article as one that describes and comments on the *yakudoku* method (YDM). The article is next cited as one addressing the supposed deterministic "washback" effect of university entrance exams on English language teaching (ELT) at Japanese high schools. This response clarifies the article's contents.

My 1994 article makes no mention of the so-called YDM nor does it discuss, beyond a brief mention, the "washback" effect. I omitted the term *yakudoku* from my paper because in all sources consulted the Japanese scholars themselves translated *yakudoku* as a type of "grammar-translation" (see Tajima, 1978, who also contradicts Hino on whether *yakudoku* is distinct from grammar-translation). I ignored Hino's (1992) now influential use of the term because I felt he had not made a strong enough case for native *yakudoku* being essentially distinct from approaches in western foreign language teaching (FLT). Gorsuch agrees with Hino that there are significant differences between the western grammar-translation method (GTM) and the native YDM, for example, the balance of grammar with reading and translation and the direction of translation. With the YDM, some type of reading for understanding is the main goal, and translation is usually from the L2 to the L1. However, in the GTM tradition, grammar is regarded as the key skill which is supposed to enable the student to order language and translate it in either direction.

In my 1994 article I attempted to characterize the ELT that I found at junior and senior high schools in Fukui Prefecture. However, rather than use the term GTM, I opted for the term "reading method" (RM) as explained in Stern (1983, pp. 460-2). I felt it to be more accurate than GTM because most of the translation was from L2 into L1 (in agreement

with Hino and Gorsuch), but, more importantly, the translation was done almost entirely by the teacher! Is it just possible that the Japanese use of the RM might reflect—as it did in the west—a pragmatic response to the GTM and the use of written texts in FLT? The term RM is more apt than GTM because of the structural syllabus which selects the target texts, the graded language, and the overall classroom objective of learning a FL while reading for understanding.

Finally, rather than begging the question of the reality of the GTM, RM or YDM, further inquiry might prove more useful if it were centered on teaching methods and classroom activities, with reference to Stern's (1992) universalist dichotomies: interlingual/crosslingual versus intralingual; analytic versus experiential; explicit versus implicit. I think that the data will show that much EFL in Japan is entrenched in the same strategies so often linked to grammar-translation: crosslingual, analytic, and explicit at the expense of intralingual, experiential and implicit; or, in other words, what McArthur (1983) calls the "conservative position" on methods and approaches to ELT.

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