MACRO-ANALYSIS: A TECHNIQUE FOR HELPING JAPANESE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH TO COPE WITH THE CULTURE BARRIER

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Abstract

One of the main causes of the difficulty experienced by many Japanese in expressing their ideas and opinions effectively in an English speaking situation is the great difference in attitudes in Japanese and Western cultures toward the nature and function of discussion. Comparative studies of Japanese and American culture show that while in the U.S.A. discussion and debate play a vital and dynamic role in the social, academic and political spheres, in Japan the spoken word has a much less prominent function. This writer has used macro-analysis techniques in several intermediate and advanced oral English classes as a means of providing Japanese students with experience in planning and carrying out their own democratic goal-oriented discussions in English. Macro-analysis techniques are a useful means to this end because they encourage an equal distribution of leadership among the members of the group and encourage a democratic atmosphere in which the group can seek to synthesize the ideas of its members into a conclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a report of this writer's use of macro-analysis techniques in teaching groups of intermediate and advanced college students of English how to express their ideas articulately and constructively in a democratic group discussion. The paper first presents the aims of such a procedure and then briefly analyzes the cultural gap between Japanese and English-speaking people with regard to their attitudes toward the nature and function of discussion. Then, after explaining briefly what macro-analysis is, it reports how these techniques have been adapted and applied in the college English classroom, and finally evaluates the procedure and makes recommendations for improvement and further development.

AIMS

The teacher of a foreign language must prepare students to overcome culture barriers as well as language barriers. Basic differences in thought and behavior patterns probably create a more insurmountable barrier to intercultural communication than language differences do. A pioneer in the new field of intercultural communication, John Condon, lists four areas that must be studied as sources of misunderstanding in communication across cultural boundaries: (1) the area of language, (2) the non-verbal area, (3) the area of values and (4) the area of reasoning and rhetoric (Condon, 1972: 45-46). As he lists these problem areas in ascending order of difficulty to overcome, the language barrier seems to be a relatively minor obstacle to communication in comparison to the other three areas. This writer sees macro-analysis techniques as a useful way to help students of English overcome not only this language barrier, but also

the barriers caused by deeper basic cultural differences in the other three categories, particularly differences in values and thought patterns included in areas 3 and 4. It is certainly true for Japanese, as it is for people of any culture, that these basic differences between their culture and other cultures create barriers to meaningful communication. Nakane Chie,[1] the cultural anthropologist points out one source of difficulty for Japanese in communicating with non-Japanese. She notes that a basic rule for social interaction for the Japanese is that there are three basic groups of people; those within one's own group, those whose background is fairly well known and those whose background is unknown. Non-Japanese people fall in the third category. Nakane concludes: "If the Japanese had some general code of manners for dealing with people which did not differentiate [these three categories of people] they might have an easier time approaching or interacting with foreigners" (Nakane, 1974: 131). Macro-analysis techniques might provide a model for the kind of general code of manners that is called for here, giving Japanese speakers of English a new kind of experience in participating in a democratic discussion.

The differing views held by Japanese and English-speaking people as to the nature and function of discussion are at the root of the difficulty many Japanese seem to face in effectively presenting their ideas and opinions in an English-speaking situation. There are several aspects to a meaningful discussion in English which must be understood in order to participate effectively in one. First, it should be a constructive, open sharing of opinions and ideas, with the goal of reaching some kind of conclusion. Second, it requires active participation of all members, which includes both careful listening and straightforward articulation of opinions and ideas. Third, it is based on the premise that the opinions of all the participants have value, and therefore some influence on the outcome.

There seem to be certain social conventions in Japanese culture that make this kind of discussion difficult. First, interpersonal communication in Japan is based on a hierarchical social structure in which there is a highly developed consciousness of relative rank and status. Second, the Japanese make clear distinctions as to what kind of behavior is appropriate to a given situation. Therefore, the way a Japanese speaks and what he says are largely determined by the situation and his status relative to the people to whom he is speaking. He is more likely to express himself openly and honestly when speaking to people of equal status in an informal situation than when addressing social superiors or inferiors in a formal one. Third, Japanese tend to be reluctant to stand out in a group as being different, so that even in an informal gathering of social peers, individuals may hesitate to express views that might not be shared by the whole group.

If these generalisations about Japanese behavior are true, it would seem to be extremely difficult for a Japanese to adapt himself to function effectively in the English-speaking world, where the social structure is more democratic than hierarchical, where there is less change in behavior demanded to suit different situations and where there is less pressure to conform to the group. It is the hypothesis of this writer, though, that language is to some extent a determining factor in reinforcing these habits and attitudes, and that when a Japanese shifts from his native language to English he may free himself from some of the cultural limitations that would restrict him if he were speaking Japanese.

Although the purpose of teaching a foreign language is clearly not to have students learn to merely imitate the manners and customs of its native speakers, it is important for anyone who wants to learn to communicate with those native speakers to understand something of the differences between his own culture and theirs. Only on that basis will

he be able to communicate effectively with them. For these reasons it seems important for the Japanese speaker of English to know how to present his ideas articulately in an English-speaking group situation.

It was with the aim of providing this kind of training that this writer began a few years ago to introduce macro-analysis techniques in several intermediate and advanced level college oral English expression classes. It was hoped that this approach would 1) encourage students to participate actively in planning and carrying out their own discussions, 2) encourage a democratic atmosphere in which no one, including the teacher, was regarded as the "discussion leader", and 3) help give discussions direction and purpose. This report summarises how macro-analysis techniques have been used in this way in advanced and intermediate college oral English expression classes of 10 to 20 students each.

THE CULTURE GAP

A comparison of American and Japanese social conventions and attitudes toward verbal communication will show very clearly the great cultural barrier which the Japanese must overcome in order to function effectively in the English-speaking world.[2] Dean Barnlund, a leader in the field of intercultural communication, presents the culture gap between the two countries very succinctly: "If one were forced to choose a few words to capture the ethos of these societies they might be these: homogeneity, hierarchy, collectivity and harmony for Japan; heterogeneity, equality, individualism and change for the United States" (Barnlund, 1975: 161). In contrast to the emphasis on social hierarchy and group harmony in Japanese society, the principles of equality and individualism on which American society is

based allow relatively free and uninhibited expression of opinion in a group, regardless of the relative rank and status of the group members. Open exchange of varying opinions is not only tolerated in American society, it is positively encouraged. "We [Americans] like to disagree; we enjoy being challenged; we find it interesting or even necessary to play the devil's advocate to create disagreements even if we really do not disagree" (Condon, 1972: 52). In contrast to this the Japanese place emphasis on preserving the appearance of harmonious unanimous agreement in a group (Doi, 1974: 22) and thus seek to avoid disagreement or contradiction of one another.

Japanese and Americans have rather different concepts of what a discussion is, and have different expectations of one. The Japanese tends to view discussion as somewhat of a formality, being prepared and planned to some extent ahead of time, so that the outcome is to some degree determined before the discussion itself actually begins. To the American, on the other hand, a discussion is a dynamic process of exchanging various ideas and opinions with the goal of synthesising them constructively into a conclusion. The very definition of a discussion of this sort precludes the possibility of predetermined outcome. Dean Barnlund sees this kind of attitude toward discussion as basic to the American social structure: "The American social structure rests upon deep commitment to discussion as the primary mode of inquiry, of learning, of negotiation and of decision making" (Barnlund, 1975: 89). He notes that while it is an "indispensable social skill" for the American to be able to articulate his views in discussions aimed at problem solving, the Japanese tend to consider articulate persons to be "foolish or even dangerous" (Barnlund, 1975: 89).

There seems to be trend in the United States today toward recognising more and more the value of discussion as a tool in dealing with conflict in a constructive effort to effect

positive social change. This trend is reflected by Jones, Barnlund and Haiman in their analysis of the function of discussion in the United States, *The Dynamics of Discussion*, in which they state their aim as follows: "We advocate that people join with others in discussion as a way of bringing about change by democratic means" (Jones, et al., 1980: 16-17). Barnlund elaborates on this as follows: "In [the American] social system enounter is essential. The validity of change, cultural or personal, must be tested through dialogue. Discussion and debate, the most prominent communicative forms in western cultures, involve proposals and counterproposals, assertions and refutations, leading to agreement on critical principles or actions" (Barnlund, 1975: 166). Macro-analysis is based on this principle. While its purpose in the English language classroom is not to plan social action projects, it is, in the opinion of this writer, an effective way to teach students to analyse and discuss issues of vital importance to them in a constructive way, rather than simply discussing or debating in a vacuum.

A number of scholars in various disciplines who have made comparative studies of Japanese and English-speaking people have reached conclusions that suggest it is difficult or even impossible to carry out in Japanese society the kind of discussion described above. Nakamura Hajime, in his study of the philosophical roots of Asian cultures, notes that "Japanese are often lacking in the radical spirit of confrontation and criticism" (Nakamura, 1964: 402) which is essential to meaningful discussion. John Condon points out that there is social pressure in Japanese groups to "work for and through the group. One must follow form and do the expected. One must avoid embarrassment. These are not the qualities which make for great debates" (Condon and Yousef, 1975: 238). He goes on to say that Japanese seek to reach consensus not in open public discussion, but behind the scenes, and notes that public statements are usually just

formal announcements of what is already generally known to have been decided beforehand. He concludes that because "the clash of ideas" is abhorrent in their society "many Japanese have said that it is impossible to debate in Japanese" (p. 238). This aversion to expressing different opinions in open discussion is probably a primary reason why the range of topics considered acceptable for discussion tends to be narrower in Japanese than in English-speaking cultures. On the basis of a comparative study on how and to whom Americans· and Japanese express their ideas and feelings in words, Barnlund reaches the conclusion that "In Japan people rarely discuss in more than a superficial way any subject beyond their taste in food, television programs, films, music or reading. This, apparently, is the deepest communication they experience with anyone in their lives, even those closest to them," (1975: 157). Whether or not Barnlund's single study justifies such a categorical conclusion, it clearly indicates a difference between Japanese and Americans with regard to the kinds of topics that are discussed in their respective cultures. Nakane notes that the direction and content of a Japanese conversation is determined by the interpersonal relations of those speaking. She describes Japanese conversation as follows: "In most cases a conversation is either a one-sided sermon, the 'I agree completely' style of communication, which does not allow for the statement of opposite views; or parties to a conversation follow parallel lines winding in circles and ending exactly where they started. Much of a conversation is taken up by long descriptive accounts, the narration of personal experiences or the statement of an attitude toward a person or an event in definitive and subjective terms unlikely to invite, or reach, a compromise" (Nakane, 1970: 34-35). She goes on to state that there are "three basic steps of reasoning" in a meaningful discussion, based on thesis and anti-thesis, "party and confrontation on an equal footing

which will develop into or permit the possibility of synthesis" (Nakane, 1970: 35). She concludes that because Japanese groups tend to be intolerant of the expression of opposing opinions, "In Japan it is extremely difficult to engage in a truly democratic discussion (of the type I know from experience is common in India, or for instance, in Italy, England or America) in the course of which statements of opposition are taken by the other party and then form an important element of the development of the discussion" (Nakane, 1970: 147).

This writer's use of macro-analysis techniques in teaching English to Japanese college students in based on the premise that while it may be difficult or even impossible, as the evidence cited above would indicate, to have a truly democratic exchange of ideas in Japanese, through using these techniques as a framework in which to conduct English discussions Japanese students may be able to discover and experience aspects of the kind of democratic interaction that would be useful and perhaps even essential for them to function effectively in an English-speaking society.

WHAT IS MACRO-ANALYSIS?

During the last decade macro-analysis seminars have become more and more common, particularly in England and the United States. They have provided a way for small groups of ordinary citizens to study large-scale (hence "macro") issues in an organized, manageable and action-oriented way. Although these seminars have been used primarily for studying socio-economic issues with a view toward social change, they can be used in any kind of small group to deal with any topic, and the techniques they employ are in a constant state of development. A manual for organising macro-analysis seminars describes them as follows:

"Macro-analysis seminars are *democratically run* study groups that attempt to increase the participants' awareness of the economic and social forces that are shaping our global society. *They are distinctive in their concern for the needs and feelings of all group participants, and in the procedures being developed to assist the group to focus their discussions* and to derive from them valuable practical suggestions for social change action." (Jacobs, et al., 1975: 4; italics mine). In adapting these techniques to the teaching of English as a second language, emphasis has been placed on the process without losing sight of the goal for participants to "try to apply what they learn [in the seminars] to their attempts to change society and their own way of life" (Jacobs, et al., 1975: 2). The primary aim is to give students experience in holding discussions about topics of vital importance to them in a democratic atmosphere.

Following is a brief description of the group process basic to macro-analysis seminars.[3]

The agenda or plan for each session of a macro-analysis seminar is made by the whole group on the basis of consensus. There are three specifically defined roles in the group: the convenor, facilitator and assistant facilitator. It is significant that no one plays the role of "leader," "chairperson," "secretary" or "president." The teacher acts as convenor, and takes over-all responsibility for organising the group, providing necessary materials, and acting as facilitator for the first few sessions to orient the group to macroanalysis. The responsibility for conducting each session is assumed by two group members taking the roles of facilitator and assistant facilitator, but they are not discussion leaders in the conventional sense. The term facilitator has been coined in order to make clear that this person's role is to facilitate or aid the smooth functioning of the group toward achieving its goals. It is the task of the facilitator to see that the agreed-upon agenda is followed, and that the dis-

cussion does not wander from the topic at hand. She[4] must also be aware of the feelings of the members of the group, and see that they are understanding each other and that everyone is actively participating. In order for the assistant facilitator to help the facilitator with these tasks the two meet together before each session to decide how best to proceed. The assistant also acts as a timekeeper, to see that the agenda is followed, and as the recorder, whose job it is to write down on a wall chart items mentioned in discussion to which the group may want to refer again. Writing with a felt pen on big sheets of paper such as *mozoshi* is better than using blackboards for this purpose because these sheets can be kept and referred to in subsequent sessions. It is essential that the roles of facilitator and assistant facilitator be rotated, so that at each session a new assistant for the following session is chosen, and the assistant for one session becomes the facilitator for the next. In this way there is a different pair facilitating each meeting. Ideally everyone in the group should have a chance to play both roles.

USING THESE TECHNIQUES IN THE CLASSROOM

In classes in which macro-analysis techniques are to be used the teacher, acting as *convenor*, comes to the first class with an agenda like the one below, written on a big piece of paper so that everyone can see it easily when it is put up on the wall.

Agenda

1. Convenor's self-introduction, and introduction of macro-analysis	3 minutes
2. Agenda review	2
3. Pair introductions	15

4. Explanation of macro-analysis and group
   questions   5
5. Brainstorming on expectations and goals   5
6. Planning the next session   5
7. Convenor's comments   5
   _____
                              Total: 40 minutes

Beginning with the first item on the agenda, the convenor introduces herself briefly and then explains that this class will be an experiment in using macro-analysis techniques to help the class have meaningful discussions. After reading quickly through the agenda, the convenor has everyone sit by a partner whom she does not know very well. They are then given three minutes to ask questions to each other in pairs, after which each member introduces her partner to the group. It is often helpful if the convenor suggests a few questions for everyone to ask each other, and has them think of others on their own. It is also useful to give a signal after a minute and a half so that partners can switch, to let each have equal time for asking questions. The convenor also pairs up with someone for this exercise. These introductions are designed to be an ice breaker to help members get acquainted and to relax using English together. The convenor then goes on to explain macro-analysis, giving everyone a copy of some introductory information from the handbook mentioned above to be read carefully at home (Jacobs, et al., 1975: 8-13). Emphasis is placed on the importance of sharing opinions on the topics discussed in a democratic way, and it is stressed that each member of the group has a big responsibility for making the class a success. After explaining that brainstorming is a way of gathering many ideas from the whole group as quickly as possible without discussion of each idea, the convenor goes on to item 5 on the agenda. Emphasising that in brainstorming no idea is

unacceptable, no matter how trivial, impractical or even foolish it may seem, the convenor asks students to share their ideas about their expectations and goals for this class, and makes a list of the things mentioned on a wall chart. She then proposes that the next session focus on a sharing of the main issues and problems that each of us faces today. The assignment might read as follows: 1. Read the reprinted explanation of macro-analysis and be prepared to ask questions about it. 2. Make a list of at least three of the biggest problems or issues that you face today in each of three areas: a) your personal and family life, b) your school life and c) the society in which we live. 3. Bring a background material in English, such as a newspaper or magazine article, tape recording, etc., for at least one of these problems or issues which may be used as a basis for future class discussions. Time is reserved at the end of the session for the convenor's comments. This time is useful for correcting English mistakes, awkward usage, poor choices of words and the like that students have made during the course of the session that it would not have been appropriate to interrupt the discussion to correct earlier. This time may also be used to make comments about the general conduct of the class, or about the topic at hand.

The following is a sample agenda for the second session:

Agenda

1. Excitement sharing	5 minutes
2. Agenda review	1
3. Choosing an assistant facilitator for this, and another for the next session	1
4. Explanation and questions on macro-analysis	5

5. Brainstorming on the issues and problems we face today	15
6. Planning the next session	5
7. Convenor's comments	8
Total:	**40 minutes**

Items 1, 2 and 3 on this agenda will be repeated at each subsequent session. The few minutes of excitement sharing, in which a few members of the group are encouraged to tell about something interesting that has happened to them recently, helps everyone to relax and builds a good group atmosphere. The agenda review allows for changes to be made at the suggestion of someone in the group if it seems advisable. It is useful to choose the next assistant facilitator early in the session so that she can observe the group process carefully in order to be an effective facilitator in the next one. In the second session only, two assistants must be chosen, one for this session and one for the next. After these preliminaries, the convenor, acting as facilitator, goes on to items 4 and makes further explanation of the purpose and process of macro-analysis in this class, and answers students' questions. The group is then ready to go on to the main focus of the day's agenda and begin a brainstorming session on the problems and issues of major concern to its members, with the recorder writing the ideas in note form on three separate wall charts, one labelled PERSONAL AND FAMILY ISSUES, another SCHOOL ISSUES and the third SOCIAL ISSUES. Then on the basis of this the convenor goes on to help the group plan a discussion topic for the following week based on one of these issues, and select a background reading or other material to be studied by everyone before the next session. It is advisable, unless the group is extremely competent in English and experienced in this kind of discussion, to choose topics from areas of personal

and family issues and school issues for the first few weeks. As topics in these areas are closer to students' daily lives they will find it relatively easy to express their ideas and opinions about them, whereas broader social issues are topics which they may not be accustomed to discussing even in their own language.[5]   Because it is not always possible between one session and the next to find suitable background materials on which to base discussions, students should be required to bring to each session at least one background material that might be used in future sessions so that a collection of these materials is always available to draw upon.

Subsequent sessions will go on to focus on various ones of these issues the group has listed, as well as others they may choose later, with the aim of reaching some kind of group consensus at each session.   The same basic procedures described above will be used in each session, with the students taking the roles of facilitator and assistant facilitator, leaving the teacher free to correct English mistakes, use the blackboard to provide necessary expressions and vocabulary, and make comments and suggestions as a member of the group rather than as a discussion leader.

Below is the agenda for one session which two advanced classes held on the problems of working women in Japanese society:

Agenda

1. Excitement sharing		5 minutes
2. Agenda review		1
3. Choosing the assistant facilitator for the next week		1
4. Discussion: Working women in Japan — the problems they face		20

5. Planning the next session	5
6. Convenor's comments	8

Total:	40 minutes

The groundwork for this session had been laid the week before by holding a brainstorming session on the aspects of the issue of women working in Japan. Those aspects that the group wanted to pursue were noted by the recorder for use in the subsequent session. The following are the notes from those preparatory brainstorming sessions, taken from the two separate classes:

Class A: **Women Working in Japan**

- Why do women quit work when they marry?
- What kind of jobs can women have?
- Which is the best way for the child, for the mother to be always with him or not?
- What kind of jobs are good for married women (for the job itself and for the woman herself)?
- Why do companies make women quit?
- Why don't Japanese men help their wives?
- Why is there any difference between men and women in the speed of promotion in a company?

Class B: **Working Women**

- What should the husband do to help?
- How do you bring up children and have a job?
- How to choose a job that you can do all your life.
- What does this society demand of working women?
- What should you do to do your job and your

housework smoothly?
- Which is more important, having a job or being married?
- Inequality between men and women in professions.

During the discussion time of the next class session (noted on the "Agenda" above), the notes taken in the preparatory session were pursued and a new set of notes taken, which are shown below:

Class A: Why do few women have equal status with men in the business, professional and political worlds of Japan?

- Not so many women have careers because of tradition. Marriage.
- The traditional work at home is important.
- Women want to have careers outside the home.
- The problem becomes a conflict of feelings.
- Many girls study literature, music, and art at college. Literature (or music or art) is for girls (emotional).
- Not so many women have leadership at work.
- Women do not have equal opportunities at work: wages, time of retirement (prejudice).
- Companies (men) do not employ women.
- Women should not give up their jobs in spite of the problems.

Class B: 1. The basic differences between men and women

a. psychological differences
b. Women bear children.
c. Women have delicate sensibilities.
d. physical strength

    e. physical attractiveness
    f. awareness of details (women)
    g. (men) think roughly

2. What efforts do women have to make to over-come these differences?

    a. Women have to have an understanding with their husbands.
    b. We women have to use our strong points in our jobs (such as awareness of details, deli-cate sensibilities).
    c. We women need not conceal our weak points, and we need not overwork.
    d. Women must not put on an air of ignorance, which has been believed to be a virtue.
    e. We must change family relationships.
    f. Education can change men's and women's psychology.

3. If something happens in the family, what does she do?

    a. All the members of her family must make an effort to overcome the problem.
    b. cooperation with men
    c. All the members of the family have to understand the essence of the problem.
    d. Community helps them financially.
    e. Try to make a comfortable life.

These rough notes give only a very general picture of what was actually discussed in these two classes, and represent only a sample of the structure that sessions may take and the topics that can be undertaken.

In conclusion, the benefits of group evaluation should be mentioned. Although it is too time-consuming to have a

group evaluation at the end of each session as is recommended (Jacobs, et al., 1975), this writer has found that holding evaluations from time to time improves the quality of sessions. The last session at the end of each semester has been devoted to evaluation of all sessions and to evaluation of the use of macro-analysis. These evaluations have provided information and suggestions which have been useful in planning subsequent seminars. The following conclusions are based on these evaluation sessions and on this writer's observations.

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although further experimentation with the process of using macro-analysis techniques in teaching English is needed, a tentative conclusion may be drawn that this application of these techniques not only presents students with a new model *for* and valuable experience *in* participating in a democratic discussion in English, but that it also builds on elements already present in Japanese culture, giving the process some positive outcomes that might not occur in a similar seminar made up of non-Japanese members. This writer is fully aware of the limitations in using the classroom as a place to train homogeneous groups of Japanese students to participate effectively in the kind of democratic discussion which is a basic and integral part of the culture of native English speakers. Nevertheless, she believes that classes based on macro-analysis techniques provide students with a valuable first step in developing their English communication skills in this direction.

Macro-analysis techniques provide students with an opportunity to discuss issues of interest to them in an open and democratic way that seldom seems provided on any level of the Japanese educational system. In evaluating the process,

students who have been in groups composed of more than one grade level have said they found it a satisfying experience to talk together without having to be conscious of their relative grade levels as they are when they speak Japanese. For this reason there seems to be a more stimulating atmosphere in classes of mixed grade levels than in leveled classes.

It is certainly not easy to develop good facilitator role skills, but Japanese students often display some valuable abilities in this area that more individualistic native speakers of English tend to lack. A good facilitator must know how to encourage the expression of various opinions in a group and help to synthesise these views into a conclusion which is acceptable to the group. Japanese tend to have a highly developed sensitivity toward the thoughts and feelings of others and are well trained in cooperating and working together in a group. These qualities are useful skills for a facilitator because they help her to know when and to whom to direct certain questions in order to further advance the discussion, and to incorporate the various views expressed into a group consensus. The other side of this coin is, of course, that Japanese tend to rely too much on a leader. It is difficult for them to develop the habit of volunteering their opinions when it seems appropriate. There is also a tendency toward expressing a false consensus that is not really an expression of the ideas of the whole group. The teacher, as convenor, must strike a delicate balance between providing too much leadership, which students tend to readily relinquish to a teacher, and not enough. The convenor has a vital role to play not only in helping students to improve their ability to express themselves in English, in such ways as correcting mistakes and providing useful words and expressions, but also in other areas, such as helping plan future class sessions, helping to focus topics suggested by students, and providing relevant reading and other background materials. In addition, the convenor can greatly enrich discussions

by expressing opinions from her own viewpoint as someone older whose experience is different from that of students, and if she is not Japanese, as someone with a different cultural perspective.

Experience has shown that macro-analysis works best in classes of about 10 to 15, and certainly not more than 20 students. This would no doubt be true for a group of any cultural background, but an observation by Nakane throws some interesting light on why this is true in a group of Japanese. She notes that Japanese groups seem to function most smoothly if they are made of about 10 members with no significant differences in economic and social status (Nakane, 1970: 144). This probably helps to account for the success found in teaching small homogeneous groups. Interestingly, though, as noted above, students have frequently pointed out in evaluation sessions that they have found it valuable to have students of different grade levels in the same group, and have commented that their discussions would have been more lively and interesting if the groups were more homogeneous. For this reason it would be desirable to have students from various college departments in each group if possible. The next step beyond this is for students to transfer their newly acquired discussion skills outside the classroom to broader-based groups made up of a wider variety of participants of different ages, sexes and academic and cultural backgrounds. Based on her experience in teaching Japanese students and being a participant in English discussion groups in which Japanese take part, this writer believes that without the experience of participating discussions in this kind of broad-based group a Japanese will find it difficult if not impossible to develop the kind of skills necessary to bridge the culture gap outlined in the beginning of this paper, and learn to participate constructively in a truly democratic discussion.

Finally, an evaluation should be made of the use of the

procedures unique to macro-analysis in the English classroom.

1. Excitement sharing at the beginning of each session seems useful in creating a relaxed mood and a positive atmosphere in the group. Again, Nakane's observation on the importance of "relaxed and informal talk" (Nakane, 1970: 144) at the beginning of a group meeting of Japanese would indicate that this technique is not a foreign import to Japan, and therefore it is a practice that students should be able to accept easily and carry out. The only difficulty found here has been getting students to share something voluntarily, rather than waiting to be asked.

2. Posting an agenda where everyone can see it, and reviewing it quickly at the beginning of each session is a good way of giving everyone a clear idea of how the session will be spent.

3. Brainstorming is a useful way of getting an idea of the range of ideas or opinions on one issue in a short time. It is particularly useful to keep the notes taken in brainstorming sessions to be referred to in later sessions.

4. Taking notes on wall charts is a way of ensuring that everyone can follow the thread of the discussion. It helps students in remembering new words and phrases they have heard. Care should be taken that attention be focused primarily on the discussion itself, rather than on the note-taking, and that the process of note-taking does not slow down the discussion. Students often have difficulty in capturing the main points of the discussion in a few brief notes, and are often worried about making embarrassing mistakes in grammar or spelling. The convenor should stress that the notes are intended to serve as a guide in discussion, and in planning future session, and that the ideas themselves are more important than the way in which they are written. She should also keep a felt pen handy to quickly and unobtrusively correct grammar and spelling mistakes.

5. Macro-analysis seminars are usually designed to depend on a very demanding reading list. In the English class it is often difficult to prepare good reading materials ahead of time, since the topics tend to be varied, and there is usually little time after a topic has been selected to search for and distribute appropriate readings. It is advisable to select topics far enough in advance so that at least one good basic background reading on the topic can be provided for everyone to read as homework before each session. Ideally there should also be other readings that could be assigned to one or two reporters before each session, but this is often difficult, and in a 40-minute session there is often not adequate time for a reporter to report and still have a good group discussion.

6. Macro-analysis seminars are usually planned for three-hour sessions. Most English classes are not that long, so the sessions must be telescoped into a shorter time. There is often just not enough time to have good reports on background material, good discussion that leads to some conclusions, and then enough time for adequate comments from the teacher. The challenge is to strike a balance so that none of these things is consistently sacrificed for lack of time.

CONCLUSION

Adapting macro-analysis techniques to the teaching of oral English expression to intermediate and advanced students makes it possible not only to teach basic language but also to give students valuable experience in participating constructively in a goal-oriented discussion in English. While students' progress in these areas is difficult to measure, this writer believes that in teaching by the method described in this paper she achieves some measure of success in several areas. First, students' ability to express themselves in English

improves. Not only do they learn to avoid using certain ungrammatical or awkward constructions, and learn new vocabulary and expressions related to areas of their own interest, but they also improve in their ability to formulate their ideas and express their opinions articulately to the group. Learning new information about topics of interest through the medium of English in this way provides valuable training in thinking in English, and should lead to discovery of new ways to formualte and express ideas, and to analyse problems. Lastly, it is hoped that this method of teaching provides students with the incentive to follow up on issues discussed and other new ones through further reading, study and discussion.

There is much that remains to be investigated and experimented with in the area of teaching people how to overcome the barriers to communication caused by cultural differences. It is hoped that the kind of training described in this paper can be improved upon in the future in such ways as alloting more time for each session, providing a greater variety of background materials on a wide range of topics to be used as a basis for discussion, and having more heterogeneous groups. It is hoped that this report might serve as a starting point for further investigation and experimentation in the field of intercultural communication.

NOTES

1. Japanese names are cited with the family name first.

2. While these conventions and attitudes may vary to some extent in different part of the English-speaking world, this paper will confine itself to a consideration of the American society with which the writer is most familiar.

3. For more detail see Jacobs, et al., 1975, pp. 6-13.

4. In this paper the feminine pronoun is used, since the classes de-scribed were composed entirely of women.

5. Discussion of such things as social and political issues, which is not only acceptable but the norm among English-speaking people, is much less common among Japanese, particularly when the topic is controversial and the group a heterogeneous one. (See p.51)

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