

# Conference Proceedings

## DISCOURSE COMPETENCE: ESSENTIAL BUT NEGLECTED

Jack Barrow

Language teachers have long known that linguistic competence is not enough to enable students to communicate effectively; utterances must also conform to sociolinguistic rules of a given language and follow the discourse structure underlying the text. Discourse competence concerns the relation of sentences to text as well as the wider social context. Processing and producing large chunks of discourse, such as reading and writing essays or maintaining a conversation is the basis of discourse competence.

Discourse structure is determined by the constraints of the speech act which means that knowledge of social context is vital in interpreting a text. This background or prior knowledge is central in language learning. One way of representing the background knowledge used in the understanding of production of discourse is frame or schema theory (Brown *et al.*, 1983) which proposes that knowledge is stored in memory in data structures called *frames*, which represent stereotyped situations and may constitute the underlying discourse of texts.

This area of discourse is often neglected in language programs, maybe on the assumption that parts of it, being easily transferable, are already understood by students. The problem is, however, that much instruction and analysis in language courses still resides in the purely linguistic realm of phonol-

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ogy and syntax with little concern being given to surrounding context. This suggests that students be taught using longer chunks of text, whether spoken or written, and traditional item analysis be subordinated to the text. In terms of teaching discourse, three general areas will be discussed: social context enrichment, sequencing practice, and pedagogical discourse.

### 1. Social Context Enrichment

In comprehension, the fewer contextual cues one has, the more one must rely upon linguistic cues to fathom the text. In other words, according to Cummins (1981), context-reduced learning results in slower, more cognitively demanding learning. In presenting the material, it is therefore beneficial to enrich the context. Here are some suggestions: a) Explain causal relations and motives. What caused something to happen and what were the intentions of those involved? b) Broaden students' understanding of the context by comparing and contrasting the L2 situation with their L1 experiences.

### 2. Sequencing Practice

Speech events have a beginning and an ending; while communicating, the participants must *negotiate* meaning in order to maintain the conversation.

Japanese students often feel very awkward when striking up a conversation and resort to personal questions too soon which can result in embarrassment and eventual breakdown. Accordingly, students should practice and rehearse non-personal opening gambits and the introduction of neutral topics.

Maintaining a topic can also be a very difficult task as it involves the complex interplay of various basic functions such

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as stating and asking for opinions; clarifying; encouraging; requesting information; going back to the previous topic; closing or changing a topic (see the Conversation Maintenance Matrix).

It is my contention that students should practice these basic functions requiring them to maintain conversation within appropriate time spans, otherwise discourse competence will not develop.

### Conversation Maintenance Practice

#### Greetings (Socializing)

##### Introducing a topic

(eye contact, ah, say)

##### Giving or getting

info/advice/cooperation

Wh/question

Could/would/should . . .

I/you . . .

Is/are . . .

##### Clarifying

Huh?

Wajyusay?

Do you mean . . .

Wh/question

##### Ending or changing

a topic

Wh/question

When I . . .

HeckifIno

##### Responding or

encouraging

Uh huh

You're kidding

Oh yeah

That's (awesome)

##### Sticking to a topic

Wait, wait!

That's different

That's not the point

##### Closing a conversation

Well, it's time to go

I've got to . . .

Give you a call

Take it easy

Don't do anything I wouldn't do

##### Stating or asking:

opinion/emotion

Wh/question

Have/do you . . .

I/you . . .

This is/is this

##### Adding information

Yeah, and . . .

I know? also . . .

And then . . .

Dijyunodat . . .

##### Going back to a

previous topic

Like I said before,

Do you remember . . .

Before, you said . . .

Note: These functions are interlinking as in a matrix.

### 3. Pedagogical Discourse

A commonly used technique in teaching is to break down a speech event into functions, practice each one, and then put it back together in linear fashion. Many notional-functional texts use this method. However, the discourse is poorly reassembled again in many of the texts and it may be necessary for the teacher to provide numerous role-playing situations which tie all the previously practiced functions back together. Often, a lack of time prevents the students from internalizing the functions entirely, so textbook writers resort to 'reminders' and 'games' in which students fill in forms and schedules. Actually, the students need a variety of situation practices, a kind of 'discourse drill', in which discourse patterns are practiced repeatedly and in various combinations. Also, as previously mentioned, communication involves the complex interplay of many functions. 'Discourse drills' are needed to teach the interlinking of various functions of language in order to develop the ability to maintain a conversation.

In composition, there is a similar situation: a very complex set of items which are time consuming to teach and learn. Just as in conversation, most teaching is done in a linear fashion, presenting highly simplified and structured models to be read and analyzed, and then mimicked, enabling students of differing abilities to perform satisfactorily. However, in many cases, a text containing only one style of writing, descriptive for example, does not occur. Just as in speaking, writing requires a myriad of styles, modes of development, support, and devices. (See Composition Matrix)

We need to increase students' awareness of others' desires, knowledge, expectations, and message. This can be done by considering reader-based coherence, that is, the effective interaction between reader and discourse.

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### A General Matrix for Composition

<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Descriptive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– tells the story of events</li><li>– usually chronological</li><li>– purpose in mind; details selected</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– commonly from general to spec.</li><li>– reader sees what writer describes</li><li>– spatial order</li></ul>
<b>Analytical</b>	<b>Argumentation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– identifies features</li><li>– classifies in terms of them</li><li>– judges whether similar/different</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– gives an opinion</li><li>– persuades using reasons/exam.</li><li>– info often arranged in terms of importance</li></ul>
<b>Development:</b>	Chronological, Process, Extended Definition, Comparison/Contrast, Classification, Cause/Effect, Spatial
<b>Support:</b>	Personal experience, facts, physical description, example, documents, statistics, authoritative sources
<b>Devices:</b>	Modifiers, Metaphor, Simile, Personification, Definition, Documentation, Coherence devices: key words and phrases, pronoun referents, paragraph hooks, transitions
<b>General Concepts:</b>	general/specific, topic/support, abstract/concrete, deductive/inductive, introduction (thesis)/body/conclusion
<b>Common Approaches:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– paragraph → essay</li><li>– narrative → descriptive → expository → research paper</li><li>– personal writing → business/academic writing</li><li>– reading/analysis of model → selection of topic → pre-writing organization (brainstorming) → purpose, thesis → outlining → first draft → analysis/revision</li></ul>

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## USING THE TOEFL AT A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY

George H. Isted

### The Problem

This paper discusses a program initiated at the International Buddhist University of Shitennoji Gakuen in Osaka, Japan. As might be judged from the name of our university, IBU aims at educating students to become international citizens, and a pillar to attaining this aim is the English language program. However, as might also be assumed from the name of our university, all students are not necessarily interested in studying English. Here, I would like to discuss a program begun to help realize the university's goal aimed at non-English major students; specifically students majoring in Buddhism, Japanese Studies, Education, Arabic Studies, and Sociology.

The first problem in starting an intensive English program was the marked lack of interest in English. This comes from several factors, including the loss of interest in English during prior educational experiences, being worn out from the extensive preparation in general, and a feeling on the part of students that English will not be of use to them in their future careers. We also found a general tendency for students to have no specific short range goal after passing their entrance examinations, leading to a general lack of interest in their

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studies, be they English or other subjects. In addition to student motivation problems, it was also apparent that there was no core to the English curriculum with some teachers teaching simplified high school level readers while others were teaching original Shakespeare works.

With these problems in mind, it was proposed that a standardized test be integrated into the curriculum. This standardized test could be seen as providing a short range goal for the students and a focus for their studies. It would also provide a centralized goal for the English program as a whole, encouraging teachers to teach towards a common objective. Furthermore, successful completion of the examination would give the students a valuable credential which might be useful when they set out to look for a job. Finally, the program would give the university a public relations tool by which to attract better quality students, allowing for an upgrading of the university's image as a whole.

## The TOEFL

After considering the alternatives, including the TOEFL, TOEIC, STEP (Eiken), JACET, AREALS, Cambridge and Michigan tests, it was decided to employ the TOEFL as it is internationally recognized and could provide successful students with a useful credential as well as an incentive for further study abroad. Moreover, out of all the tests, the TOEFL seemed to be academically the best balanced. The structure of the TOEFL Test is shown below.

Table 1

<b>Section I —</b>	<b>Listening</b>
Part A	Short statements (20 questions)
Part B	Short conversations (15 questions)
Part C	Mini-talks and long conversations (15 questions)

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### **Section II – Structure**

- Part A Identifying correct structures (15 questions)
- Part B Error identification (25 questions)

### **Section III – Vocabulary and Reading**

- Part A Synonyms (30 questions)
- Part B Reading comprehension (30 questions)

### **Section IV – Essay**

An additional consideration was that the entire test could be administered in a single university class period of 90-100 minutes. Finally, there are numerous practice tests commercially available. These two points mean that an intensive incentive testing program could easily be set up and operated within the normal school schedule.

Scoring is based on a 700 point scale, with a base score of 200 points, derived by averaging a converted score from each section. The essays are graded on a scale of 1-7 and are not included in the main TOEFL score.

Although some overseas institutions will give provisional acceptance to foreign students with a score of 400 points, 450 points seems to be the standard minimum score for many U.S. colleges and universities, with 500 being the minimum for most. Only a few schools and graduate schools require more than 500 points. IBU therefore, set a final program goal of 500 points, expecting the students to attain at least 400 points by the end of their two year general education program, thus providing all students with the minimum credentials necessary for study in the United States from their junior year. Accordingly, the university allotted one class in the second year of the program specifically for TOEFL preparation.

### **Results**

The program was begun by administering a mock TOEFL



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examination in the first week of class, both to check the students' level and to give them a starting point with relation to their goal. The results showed an average class score of a mere 390, with only a few students scoring over 400 points. Over a three-year period, the test results of 2,370 students were analyzed and we found that the average increase in their overall test scores was to between 410 and 420, depending on major, with many students scoring above the 450 mark.

A more detailed analysis was made to see how students fared on each section of the test. The results are shown below.

**Table 2**

Listening Part A	20% correct
Listening Part B	27% correct
Listening Part C	27% correct
Structure Part A	40% correct
Structure Part B	32% correct
Vocabulary	33% correct
Reading Comprehension	33% correct
Essay	Not administered

The overall averages are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**

Listening	390	28% correct
Structure	448	35% correct
Reading	400	33% correct

### **Analysis**

As can be seen from the percentages of correct answers, the TOEFL proved far too difficult for our students, even though they were able to obtain adequate scores overall. An analysis of these scores and the question types they represent seems to indicate that the Japanese education system

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fails to prepare students adequately to perform in many of these areas:

- a. Listening for meaning
- b. Listening to natural conversation (including reduced pronunciation, etc.)
- c. Identification of speakers or locations of conversations
- d. Error identification
- e. Synonyms
- f. Reading for meaning
- g. Analysis of a reading passage
- h. Self expression
- i. Organizational strategies

Students seemed able to perform satisfactorily only in identification of correct grammatical structures. These aspects of language clearly need to be embodied in our curriculum if we are to help the students perform well on the TOEFL examination.

### Further Considerations

In designing our curriculum, we looked at the many TOEFL preparation books on the market and were disappointed to find that most of them are mere collections of practice tests. Those that claim to be workbooks seem to stress grammar, the only aspect that is not included in the list above.

### Conclusion

Using the TOEFL at IBU with non-English major students has been generally successful in consolidating the English program as a whole, improving student motivation, and providing a challenge. I believe that the motivation factor can best be encouraged by beginning with a TOEFL goal of, say 400 points, and raising the goal semester by semester

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until a satisfactory level of, say 450, is achieved. However, there still remains much to be done in the field of creating an adequate curriculum and providing materials to further improve the benefits already attained.

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**THE TEAM TEACHING METHOD:  
UTILIZING JAPANESE AND FOREIGN  
INSTRUCTORS EFFECTIVELY**

Soo-im Lee (Reiko Takeo)

**Introduction**

The ideal teacher of English in Japan would be bilingual and understand both Japanese culture and the culture of the target language. If a teacher had these two qualities, the highest level of communication could be reached. However, in reality, such teachers are rare. For example, Japanese instructors often have difficulties producing natural pronunciation and intonation, giving examples of idiomatic expressions and explaining the underlying meaning of certain phrases. Although there are many well-trained native speaker English instructors in Japan, it has been found that many schools are employing teachers who have had no prior experience or training in ESL/EFL and often have only a limited knowledge of English grammar. In addition, many foreign instructors are unable to help a Japanese student, who is intimidated by the presence of a foreigner, feel relaxed.

**Team Teaching**

Using these observations on the state of English teaching in Japan and combining the benefits and strengths of having both foreign and bilingual Japanese instructors, we have developed an effective method of team teaching. Each session is com-

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posed of two fifty-minute classes with no more than six students in each session; a Japanese instructor teaches the first fifty minutes and is followed by a native speaker in the second half. During the ten-minute break between classes the Japanese instructor briefs the native speaking instructor on the materials covered in the textbook and teacher's manual, and ways of dealing with specific difficulties are discussed.

With team teaching the Japanese and foreign teachers use the same materials, but they each focus on different aspects of teaching English. The Japanese instructors give explanations of the grammatical points in the lesson, provide translation and prepare the students for the next hour with the native speaker. A better prepared student will be more comfortable with the native speaker instructor, since the same material will be covered. In the second hour the foreign instructor can focus on specific, identified difficulties as well as working on students' intonation, pronunciation and use of expressions. Also, it is during this part of the class that the students can experience communicating across cultural lines.

### **The Benefits of Utilizing Japanese Teachers**

It is generally recognized that the skills of native speaker teachers, such as their fluent verbal ability and the fact that they can motivate the Japanese students to learn English, are valuable to English schools in Japan. It has been our experience, however, that Japanese instructors are equally important for an effective English program. As mentioned earlier, Japanese students tend to become shy and withdrawn in the presence of foreign teachers and often lack experience in exchanging ideas or opinions. With the Japanese teacher's help, the students can participate in the foreign teacher's class with less tension and more confidence. Japanese teachers can help their students to go beyond typical, mechanical responses to more creative and original interaction. We have

found that Japanese instructors are often able to help Japanese much more effectively by using a three-way attack strategy: role play breakdown, paraphrasing, and useful expressions.

The first technique involves breaking down everyday conversation situations into a series of steps. For example, in the case of a telephone conversation, the teacher can divide the situation into four steps and each part can then be studied systematically and in detail. Using the telephone call as an example, the steps would be: (1) asking for the person he would like to talk with, (2) starting the conversation, (3) explaining the reason for calling, and (4) ending the conversation. Possible expressions for each stage are taught by the instructor. We have found that students learning these procedures in a role play situation find it easier to develop and continue their conversations.

The second technique, paraphrasing, is used when a student is having difficulty translating a word or expression into English. It is best for the students if the Japanese teachers avoid giving translations too quickly. Instead, they teach the students to paraphrase or re-express the concept using simpler, alternative vocabulary. This technique is also appropriate for the student who is trying to express complex ideas with a limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. For example, if the student is trying to say *futsukayoi* (hangover) and he doesn't know the word in English, the Japanese teacher can help the student paraphrase the word. The paraphrased word could be broken up into a couple of sentences such as "I drank too much sake last night. I feel sick now."

The third technique employed by the Japanese teachers is to emphasize expressions that are appropriate to classroom situations. For example, during the lessons the Japanese instructor might find repetition of the following expressions useful: (1) "I beg your pardon," (2) "Would you please repeat that question?," (3) "You speak too quickly for me, would

you slow down a bit?," (4) "I don't understand a word in your sentence." "What is . . .?," (5) "Would you tell me a similar word to . . ." If the students use these expressions skillfully, it should help them towards autonomy in language learning.

### Conclusions

Most conversation schools tend to rely too heavily on their foreign teachers' verbal ability. While foreign teachers are very useful for teaching pronunciation, intonation and expressions, their greatest contribution is to increase their students' motivation to learn and to use English. Native speaker teachers are essential for English instruction in Japan, however the existence of good bilingual Japanese teachers should not be ignored. The integration of these two types of teachers can greatly facilitate any English program in Japan.



## THE USE OF A RADIO ENGLISH PROGRAMME TO INCREASE STUDENTS' LISTENING TIME

Hisao Nishijima

### Introduction

Every EFL teacher in Japan knows that the majority of Japanese students learning English are generally not exposed to enough spoken English. What can we teachers do to increase their listening time? I suggest that using a radio English conversation programme is probably one of the best and easiest ways of meeting this need. The programme I have in mind is NHK's 'Radio English Conversation' (英語会話) and I would recommend this programme for the following reasons. Firstly, conversations contained in the monthly textbook are 'natural' in that they are carried out at natural speed and are not based on grammatical points unlike the other NHK radio English programmes. (The students I teach have had at least six years of English education and most of them are rather tired of going through English grammar again.) Secondly, textbooks are easily obtained even at a small bookshop and they cost only 200 yen. When some comprehension difficulties arise, the students can always refer to the written text. Thirdly, they do not need a special short wave radio, just an ordinary radio is good enough to receive the programme. Fourthly, the programme is broadcast three times a day from Monday to Saturday, lasting fifteen minutes.

In the past, little consideration has been given to the use

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of a radio programme for students' English studies partly because ways of using the programme are usually left to the students to decide. The teacher who tells the students to listen to the programme does not always try to find out whether the students are really listening to it, how they are listening, or how much they are getting out of the programme if they do.

I would like to make some suggestions which students should keep in mind when they are working with the programme and some activities based on the programme that the teacher can use in class. The students need some incentives to continue listening. To help them listen to the programme continuously, the extent of their understanding and their progress must be constantly monitored in class.

### **Some Tips on Listening to the Programme at Home**

#### **A. Comprehension**

- 1) Record the programme. Listen to the day's dialogue with the textbook closed. Do the same a few more times to see if your understanding of the dialogue improves.
- 2) When you encounter unknown words, you should first try to guess the meaning of them. Then you can proceed to look at the textbook or a dictionary. If there is no sign of improvement in understanding the conversation, you should look at the part of the text which is causing comprehension problems and should find which words or expressions are the problem. Repeat 2) and 3) several times until you grasp the general meaning of the dialogue.

**B. Other Activities.** Do one or more of the practices below *only after* you have grasped the general meaning of the dialogue.

- 1) a. Firstly, repeat after the native speakers (NSs) with the book open. Repeat the dialogue mentally. Secondly, repeat after them silently forming the words with

- your mouth. Thirdly, repeat aloud after them.
- b. Close the book and repeat after the NSs. If the students do not need the above exercise, they can omit it, or the order of the two exercises can be reversed.
  - c. Cover the left hand side of the English text and try to say the rest. Progressively cover the text as you memorize more.
  - d. Look at the Japanese sentences on the right hand side of the text and translate them back into English.
  - e. Check the accuracy of your pronunciation and intonation of the dialogue by saying the sentences ahead of the NSs, with the book closed and comparing yourself with the NS model.
  - f. Read the Japanese part and record it on cassette tape. While listening to it, interpret it into English, either consecutively or simultaneously.
- 2) Dictation
- a. Transcribe the day's skit with the book closed, then check it.
  - b. Transcribe the small talk at the beginning and end of the programme.
- 3) Try to substitute as many words as possible using sentences in the day's skit as a basis.
- 4) Make dialogues using the day's key sentence or one of the expressions learned from the day's programme.

### **Activities Based on the Day's Dialogue**

#### **1) *Filling out blanks***

Using a cloze test format, have students fill out blanks while listening. Only the first short responses of each speaker's utterance can be made blank as a variation of this exercise. Japanese students often fall silent partly because of difficulties in finding the first short phrases. In this task students are required to choose appropriate replies from a list.

**2) Use of Communication Strategies (CSs)**

The students role-play the dialogue. When they encounter problems of any kind, as a result of inattention or lack of understanding, they should try to solve them by making use of CSs, for example, asking the other partner to repeat the part which seems to be causing him problems; asking him to rephrase a particular word; asking him to say a particular sentence in a different way; asking for the pronunciation or spelling of a word or phrase; paraphrasing; exemplification. Even if they have listened to the programme and know the meanings of the words in the text, they can always practice using various CSs to check their partner's knowledge.

As a variation, cut out the day's dialogue and paste each speaker's part on a piece of paper. Place all the cards of Speaker A's utterances with the first sentence at the top of the stack and do the same with the other speaker's cards. Working in pairs, students are encouraged to use CSs as they read out the dialogue.

**3) Rearrangement**

Cut out all the speakers' parts and stick each of them on a piece of paper. Mix them up. Groups of two or three students try to arrange them in the right order.

As a variation, the above pieces of paper can be mixed with sentences taken out of another days' skit to make the practice more difficult.

**4) Chain story**

Groups of three or more make up a story, using the words, mainly content words or expressions in the day's skit. A group leader tells the story to the class. This practice can be done by the whole class. The teacher gives a different word taken out of the day's dialogue to each student. The class creates sentences that would form one story.

**5) More sentences**

Divide the class into two teams. The teacher gives each

team one word from the day's skit. Their task is to create as many sentences as possible, using the given item. They are given a time-limit, for example, five minutes. After the time is up, a student from each team reads out their sentences aloud. The teacher checks them for grammaticality. The team which has the most new sentences wins the game.

6) *Dictation check*

Outside the class the students transcribe the small talk at the beginning or end of the programme or the brief outline of the day's skit. They check each other's dictation in class. The teacher writes down on the board the words they have picked up. The words are written in such a way that their positions show the places where they are supposed to be when the whole transcription is written out.

7) *Creation of new sentences*

One student produces a sentence using one of the words or expressions and whispers it to his neighbour. Then the neighbour puts it into Japanese and gives it to the person sitting next to him. It follows this pattern up to the last person (Eng → Jp → Eng → . . . . Jp → Eng). If the last person gets a Japanese sentence, he translates it into English. They compare the first student's sentence with the last one's to see how similar or distorted it is.

8) *Setting up new contexts*

Using the key sentence of the day's skit, have the students think of other contexts relevant to their experience in which the key sentence of the day's skit can be used. For example, ask your students to invent different situations to which the expression "It seems like an easy way out" (from the skit broadcast on November 10, 1986) applies. A student may say, for example, "You were late for class because you slept in. But you say to the teacher that you got stuck in the lift and had to call someone for help."

9) *Follow-up dialogues*

The teacher invents a situation related to part of the programme's conversation. For example, in the Nov. 12 skit Mitsuo's bike is missing, so a situation like the one below can be created. For example, "Mitsuo goes to the police and gives the registration number to them. At the police station he describes his bike." Groups of students make up dialogues based on the given situation.

Reference

NHK Radio *Eigokaiwa* (English Conversation), November Issue, 1986

## TEXT, CONTEXT, AND LANGUAGE TEACHING: A SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Peter H. Ragan

### Introduction

When we discuss features of language for purposes of communicative language teaching (CLT), the eclectic but traditional model of language we employ limits us to a concern with form. The widely received dichotomy that holds between form and function, usage and use, accuracy and fluency and similar pairs of supposedly polar opposites (cf. Widdowson, 1978; Rodgers, 1983; Raimes, 1983; Brumfit, 1984) is evidence for the difficulty language teachers have in relating the wording of text to the communicative context on which it is dependent. This is a consequence of the misconception that the form of a text cannot be related systematically to the context in which it is used.

A more useful model for the description of language for CLT is available. The systemic-functional model developed by M.A.K. Halliday (1985a, 1985b, 1985c) allows us to relate the context in which language is used to the text which operates in the context. Text is the combination of grammatical and lexical features which we can refer to as *wording*. In this abridgement of my presentation at JALT '86 for the colloquium on 'Learning Spoken and Written Language', I wish to introduce the systemic-functional model (SFM) and briefly consider some insights it provides into the nature of language in use.

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## The Bridging Role of SFM

CLT is commonly associated with functions, use, and fluency. Meaningful and appropriate verbal communication, however, relies on a successful encoding of language, which generally leads to a concern with form, usage, and accuracy.

This concern is the basis for the self-limiting attempts in many CLT materials to link wording to functions, which are interpreted after Halliday's original conception of functions (1973) as the uses to which language is put. Examples of this include *agreeing* and *disagreeing*, *classifying*, *comparing*, and the like.

Such functions are typically linked semantically but arbitrarily to wording. For example, in one popular writing textbook (McKay and Rosenthal, 1980) students learn to encode the function *analysis* for scientific writing by using the passive voice and for describing location by using the vocabulary of spatial relationship.

Such presentations are useful but are ultimately frustrated by the multitude of purposes for which language is used *and* by the unsystematic manner in which form has been related to function. The SFM resolves this impasse by interpreting functional variation not just in *register* — variation in the use of language — but also in *lexicogrammar* — the coding of language. It incorporates two concurrent interpretations of function: function as the use to which language is put in context, and function as the reflection of that use in the wording of text. This dual interpretation facilitates the relation of context and text which has otherwise eluded CLT.

We commonly experience the evidence for this relation between wording and successful communication of meaning using language in particular contexts. It is generally not difficult to recognize the variety of texts we encounter as belonging to particular contexts. Conversely, in a familiar context we can normally predict the kind of text that will



be produced.

This is simply demonstrated: give your students a few lines of the transcription of a conversation between a doctor and the patient she is examining and ask them what the context is. Alternatively, have them write or act out the possible exchange between a shopkeeper and a customer seeking a particular product. This relation between context and text is most apparent in language which is highly contextualized but operates in spoken and written modes encompassing different genres and purposes, including academic discourse.

### How does the SFM describe context and text?

A situational context can be described in terms of what is taking place, or *field*; in which language plays a part; *mode* – what part, written or spoken, the language is playing in this activity; *tenor* – who is taking part and the relationship between them; and *purpose* – what language is being used to accomplish.

The SFM describes the wording of spoken and written texts as well as the situational context. Wording is linguistically described as encoding three kinds of meaning, referred to as *meta-functions*. The three kinds of meaning are *textual*, *interpersonal*, and *ideational*. Textual meaning is the message focus of the clause, encoded as thematic structure. Interpersonal meaning is the encoding of exchange in the clause as mood structure. Ideational meaning is the representation of reality in the sense of content, encoded as transitivity structure.

They are called meta-functions because they form the basis for the semantic organization of all natural languages. They are derived from systems of choices available in the language code and are semantically related to the uses to which language is put in situational contexts. They occur simultaneously in text, that is, the meaning of text is derived from the encoding of all three of these structures at the same time.

## Proceduralism in Action

The text–context relationship can be illustrated with an example of the procedural register. A set of instructions is highly contextualized and readily exemplifies this relation as such text often involves using language to direct action within some environment.

I have involved university students in Singapore in a task-based communicative language learning activity using procedural texts. They communicate sets of instructions to each other for the purpose of constructing a design using coloured, wooden blocks. Here are two clauses taken from the set of instructions which initiates one such activity that illustrates the functional nature of wording.

Figure 1: An Analysis of Wording in Two Clauses

1. *This design will have four sides:*

Theme	Rheme			(TEXTUAL)
Mood		Residue		(INTERPERSONAL)
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	
participant	process		participant	(IDEATIONAL)

2. *Line up the red block against the right side of the white block.*

Theme	Rheme			(TEXTUAL)
Residue				(INTERPERSONAL)
Predicator	Complement	Adjunct		
process	participant	circumstance		(IDEATIONAL)

Textual meaning is encoded through thematic structure as the MESSAGE focus of the clause – the Theme is that part of the clause which encodes what the speaker/writer wants to tell the listener/reader. In the first example, the Theme is the nominal group *this design*. In the imperative clause, it encodes

what the speaker or writer wants you to do. Thus in the second example, the Theme is the imperative verbal group *line up*. Theme is realized as the first ideational element of the clause. In terms of grammatical classes, Themes may be encoded as nominal groups, prepositional phrases, adverbials, and imperative verbal groups.

Interpersonal meaning is realized through mood structure as EXCHANGE between speaker/writer and listener/reader. This is the encoding of the four primary speech functions of offer, command, statement, and question. The Mood function is encoded as Subjects and Finites (such as *did*, *can*, and *will*, the simple past and present of *be* and *have*, or an element fused with a Predicator such as *goes*). This is where polarity (yes-no) and modality (the intermediate degrees between the positive and negative poles) are found.

In the first example above, we have a statement with the Mood function encoded as Subject and Finite – *this design will*. The second example is a command whose mood structure is encoded as the Residue function only, comprising a Predicator, Complement and Adjunct.

Ideational meaning is realized through transitivity structure as the REPRESENTATION of reality. This is what is usually understood as content. It encodes process – what is going on – as verbal groups, participants in the process as nominal groups, and circumstances associated with the process as adverbial groups and prepositional phrases.

In the first example there are two participants, *this design* and *four blocks*, and the process *will have*. In the second example there is the process *line up*, a participant *the red block*, and the circumstance *against the right side of the white block*.

Now let's link text and context by analyzing only Themes in this set of instructions, which comprises 25 sentences and leads to the construction of a rectangular design using 6 coloured blocks.

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**Figure 2: A Set of Instructions**

- ( 1) You are going to make a design using coloured blocks.
- ( 2) This design will have four sides.
- ( 3) The opposite sides will be equal in length.
- ( 4) Take one red and one white block.
- ( 5) Put their long sides together so that they match up evenly.
- ( 6) Line up the red block against the right side of the white block.
- ( 7) Place them flat in the middle of the table with their short sides closest to you.
- ( 8) Take a black block from the remaining unused blocks.
- ( 9) Put one of its long sides against the sides of the white and red blocks closest to you.
- (10) Take another white block from the unused blocks.
- (11) Place one of its long sides against the side of the black block closest to you.
- (12) Now take the remaining black block.
- (13) Line up one of its long sides against the right side of the red block in your design.
- (14) Now take the last block, which is yellow.
- (15) Place it in the open right corner of your design.
- (16) One of its long sides should be placed against the short sides of a black and a white block.
- (17) Its short side farthest from you should be up against the short side of a black block.
- (18) Now let's check your design.
- (19) We will start from the farthest left corner of the design and proceed to the right.
- (20) The three blocks, in order, are white, red, and black.
- (21) The remaining three blocks are, from left to right, black over white, and then yellow.
- (22) Together, these six blocks form a design with four sides.
- (23) Its longest side is the length of two blocks.
- (24) Its shortest side is the width of three blocks.
- (25) The design is a red, white, black and yellow rectangle.

When the Themes of this text are grouped together according to the ideational topics they refer to, some very interesting patterns emerge. These lead us back to the context in which this text is found. We can identify four topics for the Themes

of the finite clauses in these 25 sentences: the topics of reader/writer, procedure, blocks, and design.

**Figure 3: Topical Themes in the Set of Instructions**

Reader/ Writer	Procedure	Blocks	Design
1. you			2. this design 3. the opp. side
	4. take 5. put 6. line up 7. place 8. take 9. put 10. take 11. place 13. line up 14. take 15. place	14a. which	
		16. one of its long sides 17. its short side	
18. let's 19. we		20. the three blocks 21. the rem. three blocks	
			22. together 23. its longest side 24. its shortest side 25. the design

First of all, this pattern of Themes reveals the method of development of the text. There is an orientation section where the message focus is on the reader and the design as a whole in sentences 1–3. Next comes the mandatory procedural section: the grouping of procedural Themes as imperative process in sentences 4–15, and references to blocks in sentences 14, 16 and 17 in expansion of preceding procedure clauses. The com-

pletion of the instructions on how to place the 6 blocks occurs in sentence 17 and is followed by a recapitulation section where the message focus is on reader and writer in sentences 18–19, to blocks in sentences 20–21 and to the design again in sentences 22–25.

Secondly, we can derive the situational context from this text. The purpose it is carrying out, to instruct in the placement of blocks, is seen in the wording. The wording is derived from the contributing features of register – field, mode, and tenor.

There is evidence for field in the lexical items *design, sides, take, put, line up, place, blocks*, and so on. That the mode is written can be seen in the simple clause structures which rely on nominal groups to convey much of the meaning (q.v. Halliday, 1985c). Tenor can be seen in the references to encoder and decoder in the Themes. The interpersonal relationship between them can be seen in the mood structure encoded as clauses of command and statement.

Mood and transitivity can be analyzed in a similar way. Using the SFM, further analysis of texture could be carried out – the structural and cohesive features that characterize text – in terms of information structure and focus (Given and New) and cohesion. In this brief introduction, however, I have performed only a limited thematic analysis to indicate the potential of the SFM to contribute to our understanding of the context–text relationship.

A more extensive systemic-functional analysis and comparison of texts by native speakers and second language learners of different levels of proficiency provide some important insights for language teaching:

1. Despite the diversity evident in the way texts are encoded, texts may be traced and related to the contexts in which they communicate meaning. There is a form–function relation. Students need to study the features of context more closely and be made aware of the options available to them as

examples of wording which can encode the text–context relationship.

2. The multi-functional nature of wording is apparent and important. It is possible, for example, to look at Themes and see features of mood and transitivity as well, and *vice versa*, since three kinds of meaning co-exist in the structure and lexis of language as message, interpersonal, and ideational meta-functions. The same lexical items in most cases encode or contribute to the encoding of more than one functional element in the grammar and thereby to the meaning of the text. This is an undeniable feature of language: grammatical structures and lexical items have more than one function in the realization of meaning. Awareness of this feature should guide our preparation of materials and syllabuses and be brought out by our communicative methodologies.

3. We see evidence in all texts for the remarkable diversity and creativity that mark language in use. The SFM of language identifies the options that contribute to this diversity. Our students also display such variety in their encoding of meaning. When a text deviates from our expectations (since our students do not have full command of the language code), our lexicogrammatical interpretation of the text must question its appropriateness for its context, since a functional description of wording is related to language use.

We need to consider how to stimulate the encoding and decoding of text with an emphasis on the communication of meaning in context. We also need to identify which methods of development, which choices of thematic, mood, ideational, information structures and cohesive devices warrant our students' attention. We do this to ensure the text–context relation so that our students can learn spoken and written language more effectively.

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## ENGLISH FOR TRANSLATION

Candace Séguinot

When I was preparing for my trip to Japan, I read a guide-book for tourists. The book recommends that people who don't know Japanese use phrase books to learn enough of the language to get around but adds

The only objection to . . . phrase books is that they are too correct. As a result, many phrases for even simple everyday needs come out rather long, and tourists have trouble remembering them. It is best to dispense with non-essentials. . . . Why should you care if you speak pidgin Japanese? Everyone knows you're a foreigner. . . . If you are worried about sounding too blunt or uncouth, you can always accompany your speech by a nice, friendly smile, and the Japanese will know that you're trying hard and they will readily forgive your grammatical lapses. (Namioka, 1979)

If we analyze this advice in the terms provided by Corder (1983) and Faerch and Kasper (1983), we see that the author is suggesting both a *learning strategy*, that is a way for the learner to build up or expand an *interlanguage*, and a *communicative strategy*, which is a way to compensate for inadequate language resources. The reader who has not studied Japanese is asked to realize that he or she will face problems, and should therefore develop a *systematic technique* for dealing with them. Two techniques in fact – a *formal reduction*

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*strategy to avoid error and to facilitate communication* and the use of a *co-operative strategy* – smiling.

This example illustrates some of the problems with strategy research. More specifically, strategy research deals largely with ESL in an institutional setting, and the recommendations that strategies be overtly taught in the classroom assume that they remain constant across programmes and levels. As the discussion which follows attempts to show, this is not necessarily the case.

As ESL classes for immigrants develop functional curricula, teachers are faced with an ironic dichotomy of language teaching versus social integration: the most effective means to a goal of integration may not involve the use of language. The language teacher may choose or be given a role of facilitator, pairing native English speakers with foreign or second language students, or arranging outings, to encourage language practice and acculturation. Students are given maps and asked to *use* the public transit system, not sit and practice drills about it. In other words, in reception classes there is a movement to teaching coping strategies, whether or not language is involved. It may in fact be difficult to predict what functions or notions will be needed by a mixed class of immigrants beyond the coping stage.

In ESP classes it is easier to predict the need for specific notions or functions. Vocabulary can be field restricted, and grammatical structures can be chosen to reflect those most frequently encountered in the profession or area of study. There is a wonderful example of how this selection works in the English reservation form sent out by the Japanese Inn Group; the form asks the prospective guest to please ask their questions in the order and form written on the brochure when calling to make reservations.

Academic English is a little more difficult to characterize. Preparation for college or university studies is task-oriented: the organization of essays and reports is generally part of the

curriculum. In response to research which has shown that preoccupation with surface accuracy can interfere with the production of effective writing (see Flower and Hayes (1980) for first language composing, and Jones (1980) for ESL writers), ESL classes in North America have taken an English-across-the-curriculum approach. This means that students are encouraged to work at their intellectual level on tasks similar to those of the disciplines they will encounter outside their language classes. The strategies of the academic English class encourage the creative use of limited resources. If the argumentative structure of an essay is well conceived, the accuracy of vocabulary or grammatical structures may receive less attention. It is here that Corder's advice about the need to teach resource expansion strategies rings truest.

However, just as the reduction strategies recommended by my guidebooks are inappropriate to teach a language for academic purposes, it seems clear that strategies taught either directly or indirectly in university language courses are not necessarily appropriate for students who go on to study translation.

There is some indication that the effectiveness of the use of strategies varies with language proficiency. One of the pioneering studies on language learning strategies (Bialystok 1979: 387) found that ". . .in Grade Ten greater overall use of the strategies is associated with achievement while in Grade Twelve the effects of the various strategies become more specialized." Bialystok also noted that achievement on formal tasks is modified by knowledge of the specific tasks, not by general exposure to language. This agrees with the findings of Smelcer *et al.* (1980) who found that a number of subjects who had rated their knowledge of French as excellent did not perform well on a simultaneous interpretation task, something for which they had no training. The experimenters also concluded that subjects focused too much on grammatical correctness, meaning that they did not cover the content

adequately, because their foreign language classes had trained them to pay too much attention to minor grammatical details.

From what is known about successful language learners, certain types of people are likely to make better translators than others; Naiman, Fröhlich *et al.* (1975). According to Nation and McLaughlin (1986), the more experienced language learner seems to have the ability to abstract structural information implicitly from linguistic stimuli without prompting. There may also be some predisposition to one of the two types of translation, see Larson (1984), though other theorists link this distinction to the search for formal and dynamic equivalence to task types; Nida (1964) and Newmark (1981).

Translation theory also tells us that translators vary procedures according to the type of text and that students of translation need to learn to make certain responses automatic; Nida (1964), Vinay and Darbelnet (1977). As Nation and McLaughlin have noted (1986), automatic processing frees the language user to apply controlled processing to higher-order tasks.

The fact that translation students need to develop automatic responses explains why creative strategies that are taught in programmes for academic English may be inappropriate. Students must value meaning over form, but must also aim for accuracy – and that within strict time limits. That is why translation programmes turn to non-communicative exercises like paraphrasing, rewriting, summary writing, précis writing, and directed reading which seem to produce strategies more appropriate to translation.

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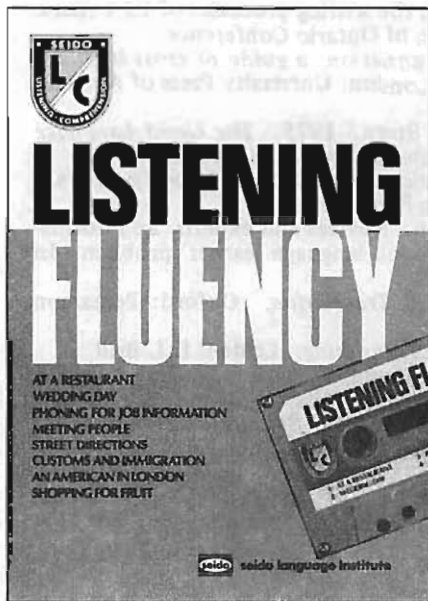
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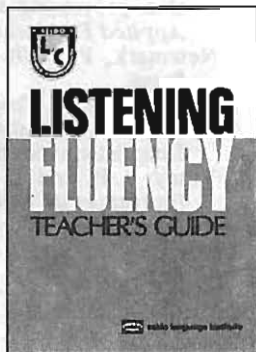
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# LISTENING FLUENCY

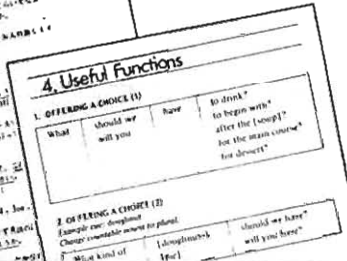
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**TEACHING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION  
TO STUDENTS OF ENGLISH  
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN JAPAN**

John Ratliff

This presentation examines the use of intercultural communication as a teaching format for intermediate and advanced English classes in Japan. It is based on two years of teaching intercultural communication to high intermediate level English students at Sundai ELS Language Center in Tokyo.

**Intercultural Communication and Cultural Awareness**

Intercultural communication is defined as the study of communication that takes place between people from different cultures. It deals not only with the patterns of behavior within various cultures, but also examines the new forms of behavior that emerge when people from different cultural backgrounds interact. The field of intercultural communication derives its theoretical framework from many disciplines, including anthropology, linguistics, communication, psychology and sociology. But the actual development of the field in the United States dates from the early 1960's, when the problems of such groups as Peace Corps volunteers, American businessmen being posted overseas, and foreign students trying to adjust to life in the United States created the need for an effective method of improving communication across cultures. Since then, the field has developed steadily, both

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theoretically and practically. Specifically, the teaching of intercultural communication has been moving from an academic comparison of the traits of various cultures towards a focus on the development of the student's general level of *cultural awareness*.

The inculcation of cultural awareness typically goes through several stages. First comes a growing awareness of culture and the way it affects human behavior. Different groups, in different situations, are shown to have provided for the universal needs of human beings in different, but equally valid, ways. One of the basic principles of intercultural communication is that no set of solutions is intrinsically "right" or "wrong" — only different. Each set of solutions, that is, each culture, has its own inherent logic, which can be best understood through an approach of *non-judgmental observation*: asking "what" and "how," rather than "why," and resisting the temptation to make immediate comparisons with one's mother culture.

Non-judgmental observation helps the student to overcome feelings of *ethnocentrism*, that is, the belief that the solutions of one's own culture are "natural" and "common sense," and would be seen as such by any reasonable, sensitive person. Each culture has its own characteristic form of ethnocentrism: for example, one merely has to compare the widespread belief in the United States that "everybody should learn English" with the equally ethnocentric belief on the part of many Japanese that "no foreigner can really learn Japanese."

Another aspect of growing cultural awareness involved in overcoming ethnocentrism is developing a *tolerance* of the *ambiguity* inherent in cross-cultural situations. Gradually one can gain the comfort necessary for *empathy* with and *respect* for the thoughts, feelings and aspirations of people from cultures very different from one's own.

When introducing these ideas to students, they are first asked to examine their own culture, in this case Japanese



culture, and then make comparisons with the target culture, which for the sake of this presentation will be assumed to be American. In doing this, the skill of non-judgmental observation is introduced. For example, the issue of stereotypes could first be raised by asking students about stereotypes within Japanese culture: for example, what stereotypes do Kanto people have of Kansai people, and vice versa? The lesson could then progress to stereotypes of Americans held by Japanese. The instructor might then reveal some of his or her own stereotypes of Japanese and what he or she has done to deal with them. This sort of discussion obviously requires a comfortable, non-threatening atmosphere in which the instructor provides a model of the non-judgmental, reflective listener who is also prepared to take risks in looking at his or her own beliefs and behavior.

### TESOL and Communication Style

The usefulness of intercultural communication training in teaching English to speakers of other languages is clear. For both the ultimate goal is the development of effective communication. But it is important to note that problems of communication across cultures are often blamed on linguistic misinterpretations, when the misunderstanding or misbehavior more likely resides elsewhere: in the subtler but consistent patterns of behavior which become understandable when we appreciate differences in cultural values. In this sense, it becomes clear that one cannot become fluently bilingual without at the same time becoming *bicultural*, which involves taking on a second identity, a new personality.

Anyone bilingual in Japanese and English is particularly aware of the changes in personality that occur when switching from one language to the other. This is a reflection of the radically different *communication styles* of Japanese and American cultures. Generally, the most important aim of

communication in English is to convey clear and concise information about the speaker's opinions, desires, or mental or emotional states; Japanese communication style is more attuned to interpersonal harmony. For example, I have noted the consternation created when Japanese are first confronted by what for most Americans are quite ordinary and useful questions: "What do you think?," "What do you mean?," "What do you want?," and "How do you feel?" These questions call for a highly individualistic and verbal style of communication – for Americans "natural," for Japanese exceedingly strange.

It is essential for the teacher of intercultural communication to Japanese EFL students – indeed, any sojourner in Japan – to become thoroughly familiar with the basic differences in communication styles. Highly recommended for more on this subject is Ramsey and Birk (1983).

### Teaching Intercultural Communication in Japan

The development of cultural awareness is demanding, sometimes frightening and painful, requiring the abandonment of the security of ethnocentric beliefs and the development of personal flexibility and a willingness to take risks. This is a challenge for anyone, but particularly for someone from Japan. Many of the basic values of Japanese culture, such as the sharp demarcation between *uchi no* and *soto no* (inside and outside), the sense of the uniqueness and infallibility of the Japanese culture and language – in short, those values characterized in Japanese as *shimaguni konjo*, ("island-country way of thinking") – tend to deny even the theoretical possibility of the development of genuine biculturalism. One is either 'in' or 'out.'

At the same time that these factors make the development of cultural awareness more difficult for Japanese, they also make it a potentially liberating process. For some Japanese,

a glimpse of this potential to experience a kind of internal freedom literally inconceivable within the confines of their own culture, serves as a powerful motivation to undertake the tremendous effort necessary to learn English. The Japanese students whom I have known to be most successful in learning English have been motivated by some form of this vision. A class in intercultural communication, if effectively organized around the cultural awareness model outlined above, has the potential to enlighten both student and teacher.

### Teaching Technique

The practical limitations inherent in the typical teaching situation here in Japan are formidable. Intercultural interaction, except that of the teacher with the students, remains largely an abstraction for most students. In the case of the typical college-age student, the relative lack of maturity and passive attitude toward education only add to the problem.

This necessitates an emphasis on developing the students' awareness of Japanese culture, which can be done through observation, interview and role playing techniques. This can be interesting and enlightening to the students who, typically, have a low awareness of Japanese culture and the extent to which it shapes their lives. One of the most successful activities I tried was having my students interview their parents about how things had changed in Japan since they were teenagers, then make a report on the interview in English. In most cases this was the first time the students had talked of such matters with their parents, and it often gave them a personal insight into the social and historical changes in post-war Japan, as well as a glimpse into the attitudes and aspirations of their parents. Students can be empowered by becoming "expert" observers of their own culture.

When moving to the area of cross-cultural comparison,

there is a wealth of authentic American cultural material in Japan with which students are familiar, especially movies and popular music. Generally, however, they experience these things totally at the level of *spectacle*, not as something that relates to the realities of their own existence. Attempting to develop the qualities of empathy and respect is the key here. For example, I showed my students the recent American film *Mask*. We then used it as a basis for a discussion comparing and contrasting the modes of parent-child communication as well as attitudes toward the handicapped in Japan and the U.S. I've also used the songs of people like Bruce Springsteen and Billy Joel to illustrate the American emotional landscape. One student remarked: "I never knew the music I was listening to talked about people like me."

I also had the students go out into the streets of Tokyo in teams and interview English-speaking foreigners, asking them about their lives here and their attitudes toward Japan. This was the most popular single activity. Students said it really helped them in overcoming their fear of speaking English with native speakers: "I could talk to ordinary foreigners, not just English teachers."

It should again be emphasized that for this kind of class to be successful, the teacher must take pains to be a good role model of cultural awareness. Non-judgmental listening, tolerance of ambiguity, and, above all, showing respect are essential for the teacher of intercultural communication. The Japanese are acutely sensitive to our judgment of them. I sometimes think the most important thing to many of my students is to feel that I like them. This issue cannot be overstressed.

The course I taught had a syllabus of ten weeks, each week based on a chapter from Levine and Adelman's *Beyond Language* (1982), which I recommend for use with an intermediate or advanced class. The intercultural role plays were particularly effective. The chapters are set up functionally:

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introductions, verbal patterns, nonverbal communication, personal relationships, family values, educational attitudes, work values, time and space patterns, cultural conflict and cultural adjustment. I also used Condon and Kurata's *What's Japanese about Japan* (1974) as a basis for discussion of Japanese culture; I liked the book, but my students complained that it was too old-fashioned. I used many articles from *The Japan Times*, *Time* and *Newsweek* on life in Japan and the U.S. I also strongly recommend Condon and Yousef (1975), Gaston and Clark (1984), and Kohls (1979) for valuable expositions of intercultural communication theory, and Ramsey and Birk (1983) for an excellent contrastive analysis of the communications styles of Japanese and Americans.

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**COGNITIVE STRATEGIES OF JAPANESE STUDENTS\***

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**Introduction**

The critical importance of learning strategies in second language learning has long been recognized. It is no exaggeration to say that students of similar linguistic ability will differ in linguistic performance according to the efficiency of their learning strategies.

Learning strategies can be divided roughly into three groups: metacognitive, cognitive, and functional (socio-affective and communicative). Cognitive strategies have been broadly defined by Gagne (1977) as "skills with which learners regulate or modulate their internal processes of (1) attending and selective perceiving; (2) coding for long-term storage; (3) retrieval; and (4) problem solving." Cognitive strategies are the tools which enable students to become autonomous learners. They are the skills which students possess which regulate how they learn, how they remember,

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how they analyze and solve problems, and how they recall previously learned information. To the extent that students use cognitive strategies effectively, they become more efficient learners.

Metacognitive strategies are those which the learner uses to plan for learning. They include such functions as advanced planning, monitoring, self-evaluation, and selective attention. These strategies are powerful tools because they mean that the learner is in charge of deciding what, and to what extent, she will learn.

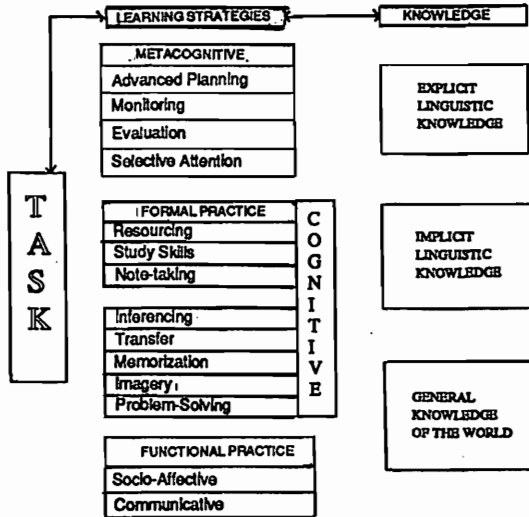
Bialystok's model of language acquisition (1978) provides a good basis for demonstrating that the conscious use of learning strategies is an essential part of language learning. She outlines three types of knowledge which the learner brings to the learning task: explicit linguistic knowledge, in current jargon, language which is learned; implicit linguistic knowledge, language which is acquired; and a general knowledge of the world. The type of strategy which a learner uses in any given situation depends on the type of knowledge required to complete a task.

Drawing on Bialystok's model of language acquisition it is possible to conceive of the schema shown in Figure 1.

Research in the area of learning strategies has concentrated primarily on language learning in an ESL context with scant attention having been paid to how they operate in an EFL situation. O'Malley and Chamot (1985) point out that "strategies introduced in a formal setting can contribute to implicit linguistic knowledge, and therefore to the students' ability to comprehend and produce spontaneous language." (559). This has particular significance in an EFL learning setting where the amount of input is limited, and where most language is introduced within the confines of the classroom.

Our research was undertaken with the aim of trying to determine the types of cognitive and metacognitive strategies which good language learners in Japan use. In particular

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**Figure 1**

we were interested to find out if there are strategies which good language learners use which seem to be contrary to what is generally expected or indeed taught in schools, given that most language training in Japan is still done by the traditional grammar-translation approach. Despite the lack of emphasis on teaching communicative skills, some students do in fact acquire a certain degree of communicative competency in English. Is there anything about the way they approach the learning task which differs from students who are unable to communicate effectively?

### Subjects

Our research population consisted of 38 students at a girls' high school in Osaka. All of the subjects were in their last year of senior high school. This particular age group was selected because we felt that older students would be more cognizant of their own learning strategies.



In this particular high school there are four classes at each grade level. Our population consisted of approximately equal numbers of students from the highest and lowest classes, the students being chosen randomly on the basis of student numbers: even-numbered students were selected from the high class and odd-numbered students from the lower class. Students who had lived abroad were excluded from the study.

## Methods

The purpose of this study was to identify the learning strategies of successful learners of EFL. We hoped to be able to correlate the use of certain strategies with English oral proficiency.

To measure the students' language ability the following instruments were used:

1. The John Test: an oral placement test based on a series of pictures. It contains three parts, each of which tests a different skill. Part I tests aural comprehension. Students are directed to look at the pictures and are asked questions about them. Part II measures the ability of the students to produce connected discourse in the form of the past tense narrative. Part III tests the student's ability to ask questions. Directions for these questions range from "Ask me his name," to "Ask me what he would like to do when he finishes school."

2. The average of the results of the term-end exam scores in English for all three terms of the previous year and the first term of the current year; we wanted to see if there would be a correlation between achievement as measured by school tests and students' oral abilities.

To evaluate the students' strategies the following instruments were used:

1. A student questionnaire in Japanese which contained

questions designed to elicit information on study habits. We focused on 12 categories of language learning activities. For example, in the memorization category questions such as the following were asked: "When I have to memorize, I try to use word association or mnemonic devices." and "Memorization of patterns and words is a useful tool in learning English." In the self-monitoring category, the following types of questions were posed: "I always make an effort to use correct English pronunciation." and "In class I try to respond mentally to all the questions posed by the teacher."

2. A teacher questionnaire was used in order to check the validity of the student responses as well as to collect information on the student's classroom behavior. Teachers were asked: if the student seemed interested in English; if the student used reference books in and out of class; if the student asked questions of the teacher outside of class; if the student paid attention to her own and other students' answers; and so forth.

3. An interview in Japanese covering study habits and cognitive strategies was used to get open-ended answers to some of the questions the students had been asked in the questionnaire. Some of these questions were: "How do you study English?" "What do you do at home?" "Suppose you had to memorize 30 vocabulary items by tomorrow, what would you do? How would you memorize these words?"

The second part of the test was designed to try and elucidate the cognitive strategies the students use to accomplish language tasks. Two examples of the types of problems posed are:

1. The student was shown a card with the sentence:

The night was so \_\_\_\_\_ that not a sound was heard.

Four choices were given on the card:

- |          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| a. quiet | b. beautiful |
| c. dark  | d. dangerous |

and asked to choose the word which would best complete

the sentence. She was then asked to explain how she made her selection.

2. The following words were read by the interviewer and students were then asked to remember as many as possible:

book	rain	girl	pencil
tree	mountain	mirror	apple
Japan	milk		

The students were then asked to explain how they were able to recall the words.

### Results and Implications

We are reluctant to draw hasty conclusions based on the data collected until it has been completely analyzed; however the findings do seem to indicate that there is a strong correlation between classroom achievement and oral proficiency. What is most interesting is the fact that while all students who performed well in the oral assessment had high scores on the achievement tests, students who had high achievement scores did not necessarily do well in the test of oral proficiency. Furthermore, the results appear to show that the types of learning strategies which good language learners in Japan use are similar to those which have been described by Bialystok, Rubin, Stern, and others. That is, good language learners in Japan are willing to take more risks by, for example, inferring the meaning of a word based on the context; they monitor their own performance and that of others; they stress the importance of communicating meaning over grammatical accuracy — and they have better study skills. In addition, good language learners in Japan make use of some learning strategies which seem to be the result of the general learning environment in Japan, where memorization plays a key role. This is evidenced in the variety of mnemonic devices used by students which enable them to memorize long lists of vocabulary items in preparation for entrance

examinations.

Wenden (1985) and others have underlined the importance of teachers' awareness of their students' learning strategies, so as to be able to facilitate more efficient learning and enable students to become truly autonomous learners. Research into the cognitive strategies of students learning in an EFL environment has been neglected for the most part. As a result, not enough attention has been given to the development of materials which train students not only in learning the language but learning the process of learning itself. This is, after all, one of our main tasks in language teaching, to help students to become independent learners.

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