CONFERENCE REPORTS

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AS AN
EFL TEACHING FORMAT: FURTHER REFLECTIONS

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What is Intercultural Communication?

Intercultural communication studies communication that takes place between people from different cultures. It examines the new forms of human interaction that arise when people with different sets of cultural assumptions try to work together and play together. Such interactions don't strictly follow the set patterns of behavior of the native cultures of the participants, but represent in a sense a "third" or "inter" culture, with its own set of norms. As a result, the individual must develop new strategies to operate in this new environment — the ones that have been successful in the mother culture often don't work or are actually counterproductive (Condon & Yousef, 1975).

An increasingly interdependent world economy, and the increasingly international character of the scientific and educational communities, have radically increased the scale and importance of intercultural communication. In response, a new profession, intercultural training, has emerged. Intercultural trainers specialize in advising organizations and individuals on how to function more comfortably and effectively in an intercultural environment. Thus, like TESOL, intercultural communication remains at its root an integrated response to an eminently practical problem.

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Cultural Awareness

Becoming more interculturally sensitive begins with the development of a greater awareness of the all-pervasive influence of culture on our behavior, beliefs, and perceptions. Our culture largely determines our assumptive world, that is, the set of basic premises that underlies our behavior, and this makes it very difficult for us to view our cultural premises objectively.

Ethnocentrism, the belief that the values and norms of one's mother culture are "only common sense," or at least superior to any alternatives, is a widespread belief in all cultures. Of course, the specific content of ethnocentrism varies from culture to culture. For example, while Japanese ethnocentrism typically emphasizes the absolute uniqueness of all things Japanese, and posits an unbridgeable gap between Japan and the rest of the world, American ethnocentrism tends to take a pseudo-humanist form, proclaiming that all the people of the world are the same: wanting what we already have in America.

Interaction with people from other cultures does not necessarily lead to reduction of ethnocentric or stereotyping behavior. Indeed, history would prove that in general the result is just the opposite: witness the English and the Irish, black and white Americans, or the Japanese and the Koreans. The development of cultural awareness doesn't just happen — it requires work.

Communication Style and Language Acquisition

For a variety of reasons, English has become the pre-eminent language of the emerging world interculture. No one is more aware of this than the Japanese, who view English as their window on the world, the code through which they receive communications from the outside, and in which they must function in exchanges with other cultures.

However, when a Japanese student studies English with the

goal of communicative competence, he or she is soon confronted by problems not directly related to language, but rooted in non-linguistic cultural assumptions about communication itself: *communication style*. Communication problems that are perceived as having their roots in insufficient linguistic skills are in fact often the result of conflicting assumptions about the proper functions of language: what we're trying to express, the appropriate way to express it, attitudes toward self and listener, and uses of silent and non-verbal communication.

Any student of a foreign language inevitably also confronts communication style differences, but this problem is especially severe for Japanese students of English. It is difficult to imagine two cultures with more dissimilar communication styles than the Japanese and American. Research, as well as everyday experience, gives much evidence for this. (See Barnlund, 1975; Ramsey & Birk, 1983.)

The primary goal of verbal communication for Americans is self-expression, trying to make one's own position clear, while for Japanese the central goal is to strengthen the sense of group harmony. As a result, the ideal communication style in English is usually direct, logical and to the point, while Japanese is usually heavily qualified, often to the point of vagueness. At the same time, spontaneity is prized in American English, while Japanese places the emphasis on propriety, knowing the appropriate set phrase (*aisatsu*) to say in a given situation.

Every teacher of English in Japan has had the experience of responding to students's search for the *aisatsu* in English, something like: "How do you say *gochiso-sama*, or *kampai*, or *tadaima* in English?" When the teacher responds with an answer like: "Well, it depends on how you feel — any way you like," the initial response of students to this new-found linguistic "freedom" is often panic and insecurity.

Another major contrast between Japanese and English is the

sensitivity to status differences in communication. For foreign students of Japanese, it often seems that affirmation of status is the central focus of the Japanese language, with its countless levels of formality. By comparison, American communication style seems almost obsessively status denying. (Note President Reagan's habit of calling *everybody* by their first name, thus "Ron and Yasu.")

To illustrate, in English the second person pronoun *thee* disappeared from daily speech in the 18th century as an expression of a sociolinguistic leveling process that resulted in only one all-purpose second person pronoun in modern English, *you*. On the other hand, in modern Japanese there are roughly a dozen second person pronouns in common use, each expressing a subtle nuance of status consciousness. Being able to know when *sochira-sama, anata, kimi,* or *omae* is most appropriate is something that can only be learned through years of cultural immersion.

Finally, the two cultures radically differ on how much use should be made of the verbal channel. Put simply, Americans talk a lot more than Japanese in almost any situation. Americans see the verbal channel as the proper medium for the expression of opinions, emotions, humor, nuances of meaning — words as the essential mode of communication. Japanese pay much more attention to non-verbal forms of communication: posture, uses of the eyes, costume, and, above all, the uses of silence. This fundamental difference in the use of language is perhaps the greatest impediment to successful cross-cultural communication between Americans and Japanese: in the absence of strenuous countermeasures on both sides, the Americans routinely end up doing nearly all of the talking.

Edward Hall (1977) provides a very useful model for building intellectual understanding of the systematic differences in communication style and underlying assumptions about human behavior that one encounters here. He characterizes

cultures as having *high context* and *low context* orientations to meaning. Cultures or people that look for meaning primarily in the verbal code, in what is said (content over form: "the message is more important than the messenger"), are labeled *low context*. *High context* cultures take meaning more from the situation, overall environment or behavior (form over content: "the messenger is more important than the message").

Using this model, America can be seen as an extremely low context culture, while Hall himself describes Japan as being the archetypal high context society. For Westerners, this model can be extremely useful in building an understanding of Japanese culture. (Hall, 1977, chaps. 6, 7, & 8.)

Applying Hall's model to intercultural interaction, we can see that by its very nature the interculture tends to be low context — the common assumptions necessary for highly contextualized communication simply do not exist. Misunderstanding is so easy in intercultural communication that it behooves one to make every attempt to be explicit and clear. However, attempting to communicate in this way is often not only difficult, but actually painful for most Japanese people.

But if the high context nature of Japanese culture makes effective intercultural communication initially more difficult for its members, it also makes the challenge of developing the necessary skills an opportunity for personal growth and intellectual and spiritual liberation that many individual Japanese are searching for in their study of English. This is one of the great challenges of TESOL in Japan.

Bringing Intercultural Communication into the Classroom

During the past academic year, the author has taught a content course in intercultural communication to an intermediate level English class of Japanese university students. Unlike ESL students in America or other English-speaking countries, whose lives are usually filled with intercultural

encounters with native English speakers, most university EFL students in Japan find intercultural communication largely an abstraction. Their awareness of their own cultural assumptions is generally quite low, and they have usually experienced Western culture primarily on the level of spectacle: Hollywood movies, rock videos, and Disneyland.

Moreover, their experience in English class in junior high and high school has usually been almost completely arid and negative. Painfully aware of the fact that after at least six years of English classes they are unable to communicate with foreigners on even the simplest level, they tend to blame themselves and generally have a very low estimate of their own abilities as English students.

For such students an English class focusing on intercultural communication and the development of cultural awareness has the potential to radically alter their perceptions of themselves as language learners and at the same time make the best use of those unique qualities that an American or other foreign teacher in Japan has to offer his students.

The basic text for this class was *The Culture Puzzle: Cross-Cultural Communication for English as a Second Language* (Levine, Baxter & McNulty, 1987). This book is an outstanding contribution to the growing effort to integrate the fields of intercultural communication and TESOL. The typical model in ESL texts is communication between native speakers of English, even if sometimes disguised by calling one of the characters "Taro" or "Maria." *The Culture Puzzle*, however, systematically illustrates the real problems, linguistic and cultural, that emerge in intercultural interactions between Americans and non-native speakers of English.

For example, through a technique called *Take One/Take Two*, students are first shown (*Take One*) the typical forms of miscommunication and conflict that occur in such situations as when they are paid a compliment, asked to express an opinion, or need to ask for clarification. Then, in *Take*

174

Two, students are shown a way to deal with the situation more effectively and comfortably.

However, *Culture Puzzle* was written for an ESL class with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In the Japanese EFL setting, students must be particularly encouraged to become more aware of Japanese culture, and at the same time to demythologize their view of Western culture. It is important that every attempt be made to do this *non-judgmentally*, to stress that the aim of the course is to discover the ways that different cultures meet the same human needs, not to determine which is better or worse.

For example, the students were assigned to interview their parents, asking them questions about how life in Japan had changed since they were young and how they felt about contemporary Japan. They also watched the Kurosawa film *Ikiru* (1954), which none of them had ever seen. The class then discussed what had changed in Japan since the film was made, and what has remained the same. Not only did they gain insight into their own culture, but they also had an opportunity to experience a masterpiece of Japanese cinema.

The class also explored some American cultural materials: movies, TV shows, popular songs. (For example, when discussing the family, we compared an episode of the *Cosby Show* with an episode of *Sazae-san*.) The point to keep in mind in dealing with this sort of material is to remove it from the level of spectacle and begin to inculcate in the students a sense of empathy with the characters and, ultimately, respect for the values involved. This necessitates a very careful selection of material and a lot of effort on the part of the instructor to provide a model of non-judgmental observation.

Finally, such a class has the potential to be a growing experience not only for the students, but also for the teacher. Long-term sojourners in Japan are in special need of the techniques and insights that this kind of class can impart. Thus, developing an understanding of intercultural commu-

nication and trying to integrate that understanding into one's teaching can be an important part of a personal strategy for becoming a more culturally aware person, better able to function comfortably and effectively in Japanese society.

Note

I published a resume of my presentation at the 1986 JALT Annual Conference, "Teaching Intercultural Communication to Students of English as a Foreign Language in Japan," in *JALT Journal 8.2*. The present report represents a further examination of the same theme, reflecting an additional year of research and teaching. I should also note that for the sake of simplicity, in this essay I equate "American culture" with "native speaker English culture." I apologize to those offended by this typical example of American ethnocentrism.

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CULTURE FRICTION AT JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOLS

Tadashi Shiozawa and Jacqueline A. Rives

The *Japan Exchange and Teaching* program (JET), which began in 1987, is the successor to the *Mombusho English Fellow, British English Teacher,* and *English Teaching Assistantship in Japan* programs. The aim of all these programs has been to place young native speakers of English in high schools around Japan to give students contact with speakers of English. By the end of 1988, JET expects to sponsor 1,600 foreign teachers.

This report describes the JALT '87 presentation, *Cultural Problems between Native English Teachers and Their Japanese Colleagues.* Interviews with full-time native speakers of English working at a Japanese high school revealed a number of common problems. In particular, they were not given professional recognition and responsibilities, were excluded from decision-making groups, and had poor communication with other teachers. Japanese teachers, in turn, had difficulty working with foreign colleagues. Although there are no easy solutions, we suggest a number of measures, such as having a go-between for these teachers, increasing social contacts between groups, and preparing Japanese teachers for their new colleagues through orientation meetings.

About 60% of Mombusho English Fellows or native teachers of English leave Japanese high schools without renewing their original contracts. Why? Are the students not motivated

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enough? Is team-teaching too difficult? No. They leave because they are frustrated with the way they are treated and what they feel is a lack of respect.

The Japanese government has hired about four times as many native teachers in 1987 as in 1986. Many of them will be stationed at one school rather than visit many schools. The presenters believe that as this base school system expands, cultural and perceptual problems will be more serious than simply how to team-teach.

The presenters interviewed several full-time native English teachers based at one school, and their Japanese colleagues. At the presentation common problems, their causes, and solutions based on these interviews were discussed.

During the interviews the biggest complaint heard from the native teachers was that they were not treated as responsible teachers or educators. For example, although they were full-time staff members of the English department, they were not usually invited to the regular staff meetings, and even when they were invited, they were not given an opportunity to speak out, for the sessions were conducted in Japanese and they did not understand what was being discussed. The Japanese staff probably intended to reduce the native teachers' work load by not inviting them to meetings, but the native teachers actually felt that they were ignored or not regarded as full-time teachers.

Second, in a related problem, native teachers felt that they were not integrated into the system. For example, they were not given information they needed. The monthly school calendar is not translated and most of the daily handouts that are put on all the Japanese teachers' desks are not found on the native teachers'. The Japanese teachers probably do not provide these because native teachers cannot read Japanese and they think that some information is not necessary for the native teachers, but concerned native teachers do want to know what is going on around school and it is they, the native teachers,

who want to decide which information is important for them. The fact that the Japanese staff do not care to tell the native teachers about the things going on around them makes them feel they are not integrated into the school organization.

Third, native teachers felt that they were not given enough responsibility. The native teachers want to get more involved in work in addition to teaching English itself, such as becoming a sub-homeroom teacher or being in charge of a school club in order to be treated like other Japanese teachers. But the Japanese teachers seem to take away from the native teachers even the work they can easily do. Treating the native teachers too differently from the Japanese staff creates a sense of being an outsider in the native teachers.

Fourth, communication between native teachers and Japanese teachers was sometimes weakened because of cultural and perceptual differences. For example, one interviewee claimed that Japanese teachers were unfriendly because they never said *Good morning* or *Hi* to him and they seemed to avoid the native teachers. But this is simply because Japanese tend to avoid eye contact and some Japanese feel too awkward to say *Good morning* in a foreign language. The interviewee logically understood the reason behind these actions of the Japanese staff, but still could not emotionally understand why the Japanese teachers cannot say such easy words as *Good morning*.

Fifth, there are some problems on the native teachers' side as well. In particular, some native teachers are unwilling and unable to assimilate. For instance, some isolate themselves from the Japanese staff, write letters while saying there is nothing to do at school, or leave school before the end of the teaching day. In addition, without learning to understand some Japanese, it is difficult for them to be independent inside the school.

In addition to these five problems, several other issues were raised by the participants at the presentation. In response to

the presenters' first two problems — not being treated as a colleague and not being integrated into the school system — one participant suggested that these problems were more severe for native teachers who were not based at one school, especially for those who did *one-shots* (visiting a class once). The lack of continuity, lack of purpose, and entertainment aspects of the one-shot system were all causes of dissatisfaction.

In regard to responsibility, two separate issues were raised. First, one participant questioned whether native teachers can legally do the same things that Japanese teachers do. He pointed out that the immigration laws require that foreign workers do only the work that Japanese workers cannot do. This makes both the schools and native teachers reluctant to assign or accept duties other than classroom teaching. The second issue concerning responsibility involved unqualified native teachers. Many of the native teachers who come to Japan are inexperienced and have difficulty carrying out their classroom responsibilities. Moreover, a few individuals are in Japan as "tourists" and have no interest in teaching or behaving the way teachers are expected to behave.

Concerning culture and assimilation, a participant suggested that one of the reasons native teachers find it difficult to relate with Japanese teachers and assimilate into the system lies in the Japanese image of *sensei*. In Japan, the *sensei* is someone who always gives knowledge and never receives anything back from students. Cross-cultural contact between native teachers and Japanese *sensei* requires both give and take that Japanese teachers may be unaccustomed to or unwilling to accept. To paraphrase the participant, it is difficult for a Japanese *sensei* to deal with natives because they have forgotten that being a good teacher means putting yourself in the position of the student or the partner and learning from others.

Underlying both sets of problems introduced by the presenters and the participants is the question of what the native

teacher's role in the classroom and the school is. One participant asked this quite clearly, "What is our purpose here?" and another said, "What can we do to achieve our purpose?" It is clear that these two questions must be solved before culture friction disappears.

The purpose of the native teacher is an issue that needs to be considered by many people, from the Ministry of Education and English departments within each school to individual teachers – both Japanese and natives alike. However, to help ease the problems that do exist, some solutions can be attempted immediately by both Japanese and native teachers in their daily work.

There is no easy remedy for the variety of problems, but one possible solution is to place a go-between between the native teachers and Japanese teachers. This Japanese go-between does not need to become a baby-sitter for the native teachers, but he must help them in every possible way so that they can work smoothly at Japanese schools. This go-between is extremely important in that the native teachers do want someone with whom they can openly talk about their working conditions and personal problems related to their jobs.

Another possible solution is for both sides to try to become more socially involved with each other. This can mean something as small as exchanging greetings, talking to a neighbor, or sharing a cup of tea between classes. For the native teacher, this also means trying to learn enough Japanese to carry on a social conversation and to get information about upcoming school events. Much of a school's business is conducted through such informal encounters, and this is a good way to make friends, learn about what is happening at school, and ask questions. For the Japanese teacher, this means approaching the native teachers using English, Japanese, or a mixture of both. On a more formal level, the Japanese staff may want to conduct an orientation about the native teacher, his role in the school, and how to communicate with him before he

actually arrives. This kind of orientation would be especially useful for teachers outside the English department and would help develop cultural awareness among all staff members.

In conclusion both Japanese and native teachers should always try to pay close attention to each other's culture and working conditions, and try to reduce the perception gap by developing a cultural awareness of each other. The Japanese and native staff members do not necessarily need to forget that they are from different nations, but they must strongly realize that they are both colleagues working for the same school. Coupled with this is a strong need to define what the purpose or role for the native teacher within and outside the classroom is. The number of issues raised by both the presenters and participants in the "Culture Friction" workshop indicate that this issue needs to be confronted directly and that all people involved in the process have to have an ongoing forum for discussion and decisions on native teachers' problems and purposes.

TELLING FAIRY STORIES
IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

Chris Royal-Dawson

In this report I establish some points about the value of story-telling, give a brief account of the activities I use to exemplify these points, and conclude by listing types of activity that can be done before and after telling stories.

Why Tell Stories?

There are four major arguments for teachers telling fairy stories to elementary students.

1. Telling stories has advantages over reading them aloud. Teachers have complete control of the language used, and can vary the speed with which they deliver the story according to the level of the class and their ability to understand. Teachers are free to watch the students for signs of incomprehension and can, if necessary, stop, backtrack, and reformulate. Because there is eye contact, there can be a greater sense of involvement in the story and the language used to tell it.

2. Fairy stories have advantages over other kinds of listening material. The genre is familiar to everybody; everybody can recall a time in childhood when things were very comfortable, and so they are reassuring to beginners who often find language learning traumatic. They deal with "big" themes which are common to all cultures: ambition, greed, causality, the chaos of untrained emotions, parental rejection, etc. They are also open to many levels of interpretation, and have one stylistic feature, repetition, which makes them accessible to students who are in the early stages of language learning.

3. Standard coursebook listening materials have limitations which the telling of fairy stories can remedy. Typically

the coursebook extracts are very short, and are governed by the authors' ideas of student needs which at the early stages may include survival in America, Britain, or other English-speaking countries. Consequently there is a heavy concentration on functions and grammar in the early chapters of coursebooks.

4. These survival functions and grammar, while necessary, are not sufficient for language learning. Together they may represent the minimum essentials for when we are trying to get things done, when we are participants in the everyday work of the world. But they do not cover the area of expressive language.

Expressive language is used when we are more concerned with our own experiences, when we disengage from trying to get things done, when we can sit back and reflect on our experiences and those of others. In this mode, we are not so much participants as spectators and commentators on life. We engage in gossip, reporting the day's events, expressing surprise, joy, and empathetic emotions. In the spectator-commentator role we, and our students, need the skills of narrative art forms of novels, poetry, films, plays, soap operas, *manga*, and story-telling.

Potential Problems and Some Solutions

1. Stories are considered too difficult for beginners to handle because they require long periods of listening — often up to ten minutes at a stretch. So the stories require preparation and they require suitable follow-up work (see Classroom Activities below).

2. Teachers might feel that standing in front of a class telling a story is a very risky business. Teachers should therefore prepare a story outline for themselves. In preparing the outline, teachers should not censor the stories, but should include all the apparently distasteful bits that have withstood the test of time. It is important to use the outline as a prompt sheet,

and not as a script, otherwise you will lose many of the advantages of story-telling. It is best to practise telling the story to yourself five or six times before telling it to a class; a cassette recorder can be a useful aid. The best stories are those that have the potential for a lot of mime and gesture, which are best practised in front of a mirror.

Session Activities

After establishing these points, outlines of "The Three Little Pigs" were handed out to one-half of the people present and outlines of "Lazy Jack" were handed out to the other half. Each member of the audience was asked to read the outline carefully with a view to telling the story to another member who was unfamiliar with it. Everyone then practised by muttering their story aloud to themselves at least three times to ensure a confident and interesting rendition. The participants were then arranged so that a "Little Pigs" teller was sitting next to a "Lazy Jack" teller. When the activity began, everybody was engrossed for the next ten minutes in making their stories entirely comprehensible to their partner.

Classroom Activities: Before the Story

For all stories it is advisable to pre-teach the vocabulary using drawings, mime, guessing games, and bingo.

Classroom Activities: After the Story

Activities which can follow up the stories include:
1. arranging pictures of events, or objects which appear in the story in the order in which they appeared.
2. writing key words (e.g. verbs) under the pictures which have already been put into order and then getting the students to tell each other the story.
3. matching halves of sentences to make whole sentences that describe one episode in the story.

4. arranging eight sentences in correct order that briefly outline the story.
5. drawing eight (or more) pictures that illustrate the story; adding a sentence to go with each picture.
6. adding an extra episode to a story (e.g. "Goldilocks and the Four Bears").
7. making an alternative ending to the story.
8. arranging paragraphs of the printed version of the story in order.
9. students retelling the story at home into a tape recorder.

Conclusion

Throughout the presentation the importance of enjoyment in this kind of activity was stressed. I concluded by showing a video of the story "Tittymouse and Tattymouse" being told to a class of high school and junior high school students. In it the students were seen to be both responding to the story's meaning and enjoying it immensely.

The titles given below are good sources for stories to be used in class.

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PROJECT WORK IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Desmond Thomas and Elizabeth Austin

Motivating students through class projects is now a well established approach in primary and secondary school teaching in Britain. Learning through project work is seen as helping to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the real world and as being highly motivating. Projects can involve the students in visiting museums, libraries, factories, and so on as part of their research. Working together, students are then able to present their findings, for example as wall charts or pamphlets, for others to see.

Such projects can be devised for subjects right across the curriculum. Indeed, project-style activities often deliberately break down the barriers that have been artificially created between one subject and another.

TEFL, too, is now beginning to respond to the challenge of helping students learn through project work. Innovative language schools in Britain are also using classroom projects to "bring the real world into the classroom" (e.g. Fried-Booth, 1986).

We believe that incorporating a project-based approach to learning can also benefit learners in EFL classrooms in Japan. At the same time, we realise that EFL classes in countries where English is not a first or second language, such as Japan, are faced with a whole series of constraints.

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Constraints on Using Project Work in the Classroom

The most obvious constraint is that the world outside the classroom presents very limited opportunities for using English. Second, language courses usually have a very rigid syllabus; attempts to introduce classroom activities which are not specifically language-focused may meet with considerable resistance not only from school authorities, but, in the case of adult learners, from the students themselves. Third, private language schools, at least, are constrained by the fact that their students are busy people who can devote little time to English outside their few hours of class time per week. Last, teachers themselves will probably prefer to experiment with small-scale projects before they feel ready to undertake lengthier projects which will involve much more care and planning to set up and successfully carry off.

The answer to these problems we see as *mini-projects*. The appendix to this paper lists a series of such projects that teachers at our school have used. Most mini-projects involve the student in very little time-consuming research. The most common approach is simply to pool the students' existing knowledge, so the projects do not require an inordinate amount of teacher preparation time. In both process and product, however, these mini-projects remain distinct from other types of classroom activity.

The Product

Projects necessarily entail end products. Because of the focus on the end product, project work is unique among language-learning activities. Language-learning tasks generally involve a focus on language for its own sake; in contrast, classroom projects involve language use as a means to an end. Each project therefore, however hard or easy, will be putting the students' language proficiency to the test.

Getting to the Product: An Example

We identified five stages in project work.

Teacher Planning

The teacher should analyse the linguistic and extra-linguistic skills which the mini-project requires, and prepare the materials.

Initial Input

The most important consideration at this stage is to motivate the students to undertake the project. Input may be in terms of language and/or ideas. Such input may come through various channels: written texts, video, audio, or discussion; and from various sources: the students themselves, the teacher, or work by other students.

Student Takeover

We perceive this stage as a fundamental part of a classroom project as it encourages learner independence. At this stage the planning, research, collating of material, composing, practice, rehearsal, and production of rough drafts are all organised by the students. They make the decisions after discussion which may or may not be in English. The only thing a teacher does is to impose a time limit.

Outcome

This can take the form of a video, an audio recording, or a written text. It may be more ephemeral such as a class outing or a presentation.

Exploitation

It is important that there should be some form of exploitation; this can be in terms of linguistic feedback for the students. But the product should also have' a purpose which is not solely pedagogic or linguistic. It should have an audience – either the students themselves or an outside audience.

Example: A Dramatised Picture Story

The students did this mini-project at a point in the syllabus

which required creative story telling. There were 12 students in the class which was at upper elementary level. The students were attending four hours of classes per week. The end product was to be a video recording of a sequence of pictures telling a story. The students were to write a narrative and record it. Four hours of class time were allocated to this project.

Teacher Planning

We chose this project because it involved the students in writing narrative. However, they also needed to embed dialogue in the narrative and to use areas of vocabulary specific to the chosen stories.

The teacher found picture cartoon sequences, drew in voice balloons, and made enlargements of them sufficient to fill a video screen. Two stories were chosen: *Aesop's Fable of the Donkey* (chosen because of its authenticity) and *Adventure at Sea* (chosen because of its dramatic potential); both came from Heaton (1966).

We decided not to teach students the use of the video camera. The students therefore only needed to build up confidence in speaking into the microphone. Groups also experimented with sound effects and background music.

Initial Input

In the first of the sessions, students did warm-up activities involving them re-ordering the elements of jumbled pictures from a "Peanuts" cartoon.

Then in groups of three, the students worked on providing a dialogue for the voice balloons for each of the two stories. Then the students wrote a detailed narrative for each picture. It was at this point that the teacher provided remedial work on reporting verbs and adverbs (e.g. *asked, called, shouted, complained; angrily, happily,* etc.) which could be used in the story.

Student Takeover

In the second two-hour session the students were given a time limit in which to accomplish the following tasks, which they had to manage themselves:
— redraft the story to include dialogue
— invent a title
— allocate reading parts
— rehearse until ready for recording

Outcome and Exploitation

The final product was a series of video stories which the class could watch and enjoy — and listen to their own voices speaking English. When the activity was repeated with another class, this video was used at the input stage.

Conclusion: The Benefits of Project Work

We believe that project work can benefit students at every level of proficiency, providing a stimulus to language learning in a whole variety of ways. It involves the students in "authentic" language use. It promotes learner independence, and builds up student confidence. It provides the students with a clear series of goals which are motivating and challenging. It applies and supplements classroom work, integrating different language skills as well as teaching organisational skills.

Our students were unanimous in saying that the project was both enjoyable and useful. They reported that being able to hear themselves speak in English was particularly valuable. They also commented favorably on enhanced "group-feeling" as a result of having worked together, and the fact that they could work at their own pace.

Some Examples of Project Work at Different Levels

Beginner/Elementary

1. Dramatised Picture Stories

The students write a narrative with dialogue for a cartoon

story. A video recording can then be made, using the picture sequence and student voice-over.

2. Producing a Travel Brochure

Students prepare a foreign visitors' guide to their town, containing general information and a sightseeing schedule.

3. Recipe Book

A collection of favourite recipes and cooking hints, compiled by the class.

4. Student Magazine

Containing stories, puzzles, games, etc., all created by the students themselves.

Intermediate

1. Scripted Radio Play

Students learn how to prepare and deliver a script for a simulated broadcast of a radio play.

2. Restaurant Guide

A collection of critical reviews of favourite or unfavourite restaurants visited by the students.

3. News Programme

A TV or radio news programme based on authentic newspaper articles. Students select and present interesting items with 'live' interviews.

4. A Guide to Studying English

A brochure for fellow learners of English giving information and hints on how to study and practice English outside the classroom.

Advanced

1. TV Documentaries

Students learn how to put together and produce short TV films documenting some aspect of their daily life.

2. Science Fiction Journal

An anthology of the students' own creative writing inspired by selected readings from science fiction authors and classroom discussion.

3. Soap Operas

Students write and perform alternative endings for short plays or TV dramas and record them on audio tape.

4. Reading Projects

Students plan their own reading programme for the term, monitor their progress on a planner, compile short critical reviews of stories they have read for other students, and/or give short presentations to the class.

References

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Heaton, B. (1966). *Composition through pictures.* London: Longman.