ISSN 0287-2420

THE Language Teacher

全国語学教育学会

MAY 1986

¥750

THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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The Language Teacher Special Supplement

Japan Association of Language Teachers JOURNAL

VOLUME 7
NUMBER 2
MAY 1986

THE JALT JOURNAL

Volume 7, No. 2 May, 1986

Contents

THE JALT JOURNAL

The Journal of the Japan Association of Language Teachers

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CHAPTERS

Sapporo, Torkil Christensen
Sendai, Marc Helgesen
Yamagata, Paul Stern
Ibaraki, Jim Patten
Omiya, David Burger
Chiba, Margaret Otake
Tokyo, David Hough
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Tokushima, Noriko Tojo
Takamatsu, Phillis Manning
Matsuyama, Marin Burch Tanaka
Fukuoka, Richard Dusek
Nagasaki, Sarah Lindsay
Okinawa, Tatsuo Taira

IN THIS ISSUE . . . . .

**Ian Reader offers a thought-provoking essay on the difficulties of learning a foreign language in the Japanese secondary and higher education systems. He notes that ordinary foreign language instruction in both the UK and in Japan lack a sense of direction and motivating methodologies, although he also notes approvingly the specialist preparation in Japanese found in a handful of British universities. From the specialist model, he makes a number of generalizations of potential use to planners of Japan's system of foreign language instruction.

**David Dinsmore's metaphor for what may be passing as communicative language teaching is clear and biting: Classrooms are sometimes stages in a theater of the absurd. Time passes, much of no particular consequence is well-discussed and the participants do not really understand how they manage to go nowhere so quickly. Dinsmore urges teachers to think about the communicative value of their moves in the classroom, to examine the language they use there, and to avoid the trap of attending to the forms over the communicative values of the language they are teaching.

**Bernard Mohan discusses the implications of personal computer use in communicative language teaching. He notes that computers have been used in direct approaches to second language instruction (i.e., the focus is on language) but that little research has examined the incidental effects of computers on language learning. What happens to learners' language when the computer is the content focus rather than the language? His preliminary data suggests that ordinary conversation is a qualitatively and quantitatively better source of 'comprehensible input' than the computer. We wonder how second language learning will be influenced by computers that talk intel-

ligently. Are you listening HAL?

**Neville Saunders examines the acquisition of relative clause structures among Japanese EFL learners in Australia. He finds at least five stages of development through which the learners progress. He also finds evidence of L1-L2 interference as a factor in this progression – thus butting up against claims to the contrary by Dulay, Burt and Krashen – and some major differences in the strategies first and second learners employ during the acquisition of English relative clauses. Finally, he notes that interference and developmental theories don't adequately explain learner errors during acquisition.

**Joseph Boyle surveys classifications of human cognitive abilities and attempts made to identify and assess the elements of verbal comprehension. He notes that our concept of "verbal comprehension" has yet to be universally defined, although he also finds it odd that single-word vocabulary tests still hold center stage as markers of the verbal factor when we all seem to be keyed into communicative and discourse competence. His empirical study follows others in supporting integrative tests as appropriate (although not the only) markers of verbal comprehension.

We think this issue will appeal to a variety of readers – those with interests in national language policy planning, classroom-based research, future directions for language acquisition studies, as well as more traditional studies in acquisition of syntax and measurement of foreign language proficiency.

We invite readers to respond to the articles and to develop a meaningful dialogue with the authors.

LANGUAGE TEACHING IN BRITAIN AND JAPAN: A PERSONAL VIEW

Ian Reader

Abstract

This article expresses the author's personal experiences and feelings concerning language learning and teaching in a variety of contexts in Britain and Japan. Along with this, some of the contemporary criticisms made of language teaching in both countries are reviewed and discussed. Although the language teaching process in Japan is generally viewed in a critical light, it is suggested that there are a number of ways in which improvements might be made.

Introduction

In England we have a method that for obtaining the least possible result at the greatest possible expenditure of time and money is perhaps unequalled. An English boy who has been through a good middle-class school in England can talk to a Frenchman, slowly and with difficulty, about female gardeners and aunts; conversation which, to a man possessed perhaps of neither is liable to pall. Possibly, if he be a bright exception, he may be able to tell the time, or make a few guarded observations concerning the weather. No doubt he

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> *could repeat a goodly number of irregular verbs by heart; only, as a matter of fact, few foreigners care to listen to their own irregular verbs, recited by young Englishmen. (Jerome, p. 249)*

So wrote the English humourist Jerome K. Jerome in 1900 of language teaching in England. Certainly he wrote with tongue in cheek but there is much that rings as true today as it did then in his words, and not only in Britain. How, one wonders, would Mr. Jerome have viewed Japanese language teaching systems?

In this article I intend to outline and discuss three language teaching contexts with which I have had some experience and I shall follow on from this by making a number of remarks and observations that will, I hope, be of some relevance with regard to language teaching in general and to the numerous debates that surround it. The three contexts I will deal with span two countries, three languages (English, French and Japanese), two levels (secondary and tertiary) and two roles (student and teacher) and are based on my experiences. Like virtually all my contemporaries I learned French at school in England (in my case, for seven years); I also have taught both French and English at secondary schools in England. I have also studied Japanese at university level in England and have been teaching English as a second language in Japan in recent years. I feel it is fair to say that I have had a reasonably broad, if not necessarily deep, experience of the language learning/teaching process at different stages and in various roles.

At present, two of these language learning/teaching processes, those of French at schools in England and of English at all levels, especially in schools and universities, in Japan are coming under much scrutiny and a great deal of criticism, not from humourists intent on amusing their readership but from serious people disturbed at what they perceive are grave inadequacies (e.g., Wordell, 1985; especially Hansen, 1985:145-168). Briefly stated, the criticisms suggest that

these systems are unproductive, even counter-productive, and waste time and resources while failing to provide students with the necessary tools for communicative competence. Although it is outside my current scope, it is depressing to note that teachers of other foreign languages such as French in Japan suggest that the picture for English is, relatively speaking, rosy when compared to that of other foreign languages in Japan (Ozaki, 1985:2). The third of these processes, that of Japanese language learning in the United Kingdom, has as yet not been subjected to any close analysis or scrutiny. Indeed, judging from my own contacts with those involved in the teaching and learning of Japanese in the United Kingdom, there is little real criticism of the methods being used. In fact, the overall impression one gets is that the students who do study Japanese there do generally emerge with a fairly high level of communicative competence, able to read, write and speak Japanese by the time of graduation. More to the point, perhaps, is the fact that such students emerge expecting to be able to read, write and communicate in the language they have been studying.

That there is no groundswell of criticism of the methods in use can be partially attributed to the fact that, to all intents and purposes, these methods appear to be working. In addition it should be noted that this is a small-scale enterprise: Japanese is not taught until university level, and then only as a major course at four institutions, with five others offering Japanese courses as subsidiaries of other courses, usually Chinese. Because it is so small-scale, it is not infrequent that students eventually become teachers in the institution where they first studied, which in itself will make them less inclined to wish to alter the methods used. Furthermore, being small-scale, there is no incentive for an industry peddling new methods to develop. On the contrary, in Japan at the present time, one is only too aware of the enormous competition developing to sell books and methods: when one wishes to sell new methods and textbooks, one necessarily has a

vested interest in exposing the ills, real and imagined, of old methods and systems.

Despite (or because of?) the lack of analysis of teaching methods in England, students do graduate able to use Japanese competently, yet they suffer at least some of the disadvantages frequently cited as reasons for the general malaise of oral English in Japan. The United Kingdom is far from Japan, fares are high and few students have much money. Thus real conversation practice is rarely available, especially since there are relatively few Japanese in Britain, and those that are there tend to be working for companies. There are not the armies of native speakers willing, for a fee, to spend an hour or two a week discussing the weather, Tokyo Tower or anything else that will fill the time, that can be called upon by the Japanese here. Certainly many of the students from the United Kingdom have not attained fluency in Japanese at graduation (due to logistics, there is more of an emphasis on the written than on the spoken word in the courses on offer) but they have become equipped with the tools that will enable them to achieve proficiency should they need to. A student landing in Japan straight from graduation would by no means be a fish out of water, unable to function in the new environment.

One might, justifiably, ask the question, why do such students manage to learn a language and to acquire competence in it, even if they cannot have much practice speaking it while they are learning, when their Japanese counterparts seem to be failing, despite far greater opportunities, to do the same? And, to broaden the subject a little, why is it that some students of one foreign language, Japanese, in the United Kingdom are able to learn that language when the vast majority of their fellows prove totally incapable of coming to terms with the language of their nearest neighbour, France, which they learn in school and which provides, due to its proximity, far more chances of actually using the language in real situations?

A General Outline of Problems and Criticisms

A major factor here is the overall context in which the language is studied or learned. The point has frequently been made that the social context and the general level of expectation held by the society in question towards the whole language learning/teaching process is an important factor in whether students learn or not (Strevens, 1978). A society which, as a whole, is guided by the outlook that its students will be able to learn foreign languages creates expectations which its students are more likely to fulfil. Conversely, if students are surrounded by a general attitude that language learning is next to impossible, they will not acquire the mental set that will help them learn. Rather, they will live down, as it were, to those expectations that say they will not learn. That Scandinavian countries tend to produce good speakers of English could be attributed in part to the fact that expectations are high. It is not because any greater amount of time is spent on English than is the case in, for example, Japan. When expectations are high everyone responds, not just the students. Teachers motivated by the belief that the learning of a language is possible/probable are mentally better prepared to help and encourage their students to learn. Those whose approach to teaching focuses on such points as drilling lists of irregular verbs into their students are probably not going to be overly interested in the actual processes of communication.

Japan's Foreign Language Learning Ethic

It hardly requires a great degree of perception to realise the general ethic within Japan: The level of expectation is not high, neither among teachers nor students. Indeed, the society in general seems to have a vast complex about the whole subject of language. This affects not only social attitudes to English (and other foreign) language

learning, towards which the Japanese manifest inordinately self-deprecating views, but also the ways in which their native language is regarded. I am constantly struck by the way so many Japanese I meet tell me that Japanese is difficult, so difficult indeed that even the native speaker has a hard time mastering it. As a consequence, so the general theme goes, those who master it can hardly be expected to find the time or energy to pursue the study of other languages. Such attitudes have, rightly, received their fair share of criticism from Western writers in recent years, the most well-known being the assault made by Miller (Miller, 1982). It is unfortunate that Miller manages, in pursuing his attack, to descend from valid criticism to polemic, thus undermining his overall position. It is not really possible to assess any language on a hypothetical scale of difficulties but I would suggest that, simply on the grounds that children of all societies seem to master their mother tongues with a seemingly similar speed, there should be no differences, for the native speaker, in the ease or difficulty of the mother tongue.

What seems to happen with frustrating regularity in Japan is that, once one has spoken a very few words of Japanese, one will be told one is good at Japanese. A common series of observations then flows from this opening gambit, with the Japanese person concerned making various remarks about his/her own inability to master any English and ending with the view that the foreigner who is speaking Japanese must indeed be someone of great intelligence. Such an attitude clearly expresses the underlying ethic towards language learning; it shows an extremely low opinion of the capacity of Japanese people to learn other languages. It also, at the same time, illustrates a concept of what people who do learn foreign languages are like: of great ability, intelligent and, therefore, outside the norm. The implication is thus that those who do speak foreign languages are, in some way, outside the normal and accepted parameters of group consciousness and this is, of course, for a society such as Japan

in which group ethics and consciousness are emphasised to a great degree, bound to stifle rather than promote the ability and enthusiasm to learn foreign languages.

The basic, underlying expectations towards foreign language learning in Japan are not high. This has not been helped by Japanese history in general, for the country does not have a very active history of language learning. It is worth pointing out, for example, that throughout the first 1,300 years of Japanese contacts with Buddhism there was no systematic attempt to develop a linguistic study of Buddhism. Even though Japanese Buddhism was of the Mahayana school, no Japanese monk or scholar tried to study the lingua franca of Mahayana Buddhism, Sanskrit, systematically. Despite the long history of contacts with China, Japanese Buddhist monks as a rule did not have any knowledge of the Chinese language even though the texts they chanted in their temples often were in Chinese script. Moreover, most of the monks who went across to China to study were not well-versed in Chinese, which led in itself to a number of errors in interpreting Chinese Buddhist teachings. It was not until the Meiji era that Japanese scholars began to undertake a linguistic study of Buddhism and, at first, they were obliged to go to the West and study under Western scholars such as Max Muller. In other words, there is no real history of language learning in Japan that could act as a counterweight to the contemporary low-expectation ethic that shackles the language learning process.

Given this historical and social background, it is not therefore surprising that most people end up with poor memories of language learning and no ability to speak. This leads on to a brief look at attitudes to English learning in Japan. Few pupils would seem to express a real liking for it. Indeed, Steinberg reports an oral survey in a school class in which almost all her students responded simply "*kirai*" ("I hate it") and she quotes a teacher's survey in the Chugoku region which reported 78% of schoolchildren interviewed as disliking

English (Steinberg, 1985:99). I have often asked students in Japan about their attitudes to learning English at school and I have yet to find one who has expressed a liking for it; I really wonder whether a dissatisfaction number of 78% was not too low!

The prime cause of dissatisfaction and dislike is the heavily grammar-oriented syllabus. Students are not only predisposed to believe that English is difficult but have their conceptions reinforced by what they are taught at schools. With an excess of sentence analysis and the like, an impression of difficulty is created which the students find hard to escape. They learn rules of grammar but get no encouragement that what they are doing is going to open up channels of communication. One student of mine stated, in an essay, "there was no end to learning English grammar patterns; it was just like algebra!"[1] He reported that he never, until he came into contact with foreign teachers at university, had contemplated that English was a means of communication, largely because no-one had ever made him aware of such a fact. It appeared to him, as to other students, that English was yet another cog in the examination and assessment system, a means of grading and testing so as to sort out who would go to which university. English was used in a somewhat algebraic way to help sort out who had assimilated the formulae, rules and theorems that they had been asked to learn from those who had not. In this, there seems to be little room for the student to express his/her own feelings or to take part actively in the learning process.

One thing that I found, to my surprise, to be both novel and useful in developing students' enthusiasm is to actively give encouragement for good work and for any work that represents effort and an attempt to communicate. One of my seminar students remarked that I never used words like 'bad' in my assessments of students' essays; rather, I used only words that implied shades of good. All the class agreed that this did not lead them into delusions of brilliance (Japan-

ese students are always very honest on such points) but did encourage them to work harder, because they felt they were getting some return for their efforts. Their previous experiences had generally been of critical assessments that deterred them from further effort. To some, encouragement was a new phenomenon and I have had the experience of students becoming quite emotional because they have had no real experience of being praised before. Yet it is precisely this lack of encouragement and praise that many students complain about. Recognition is, naturally, an important part in the stimulation of learning.

In contrast, the stress placed on grammar and on the use of English as a means of testing serves to place emphasis on the technical errors that students commit rather than on the communicative content of what they say or write. Discouragement rather than encouragement is what tends to emerge. Students then retreat behind the barriers that say "English is difficult", barriers constructed by prevailing social consciousness rather than by actuality, and lose heart rapidly. The fault in this whole process is not one of teachers alone or of the education system as it now stands: Students themselves are partially to blame, too. I find that students do have a too rapid tendency to surrender to the ethic that tells them that English is really too hard to speak. Without trying in the first place, they are liable to give up and admit to an inability that society and the sytem presupposes them to have. With more emphasis placed on communication and greater feedback from teachers, perhaps students would acquire the motivation necessary to improve their learning.

Similar Factors in England

There are many similar factors in England, in particular with regard to the learning of French. The English do not have a great reputation as linguists, a failing broadly covered up by the emergence of English as the major international language. There is an almost proud refusal to learn other languages (a characteristic assimilated to a perhaps

greater degree by Americans) coupled with a "let them learn English" attitude that fit snugly into the old Empire mentality and has never quite been eradicated. Most British people make little or no effort to speak another language and, as often as not, appear proud of their inability or refusal to do so, prefering to rely on the time-honoured technique of, when trying to deal with foreigners, speaking louder and slower in English. Perhaps it would be accurate to say that British people are smugly pleased at their inability to function in other than their own language and at their failure to have learned what they were taught at school.

It is probably unfortunate that the language usually taught at schools in Britain is French. There has been a long history of distrust, hostility and outright warfare between the two nations which has resulted in a generally contemptuous, not to say downright derogatory, attitude towards the French, their language and all their customs. This hardly serves to make French seem appealing to English schoolchildren, especially when one takes into account the different accent required, which only tends to heighten the alienness of the language. Of course, it could be argued that, with this anti-foreign language ethic, few languages would be palatable to British schoolchildren, certainly not German, although Dutch might be reasonably neutral!

If the mental set of schoolchildren in Japan and Britain is largely preconditioned against successful learning, then I would like to add a further disadvantageous factor. In both countries the most common time to start the study of a foreign language is when the child changes school, moving up to a higher grade. It is probably not the best time to give the child the cultural experience, or shock, of meeting a foreign language for the first time. Children moving from the upper levels of one school, where they are the most senior and biggest children, to the lower levels of a senior school, where they immediately become the smallest and weakest, are bound to feel some emotional discomfort. If

they are thrust into the maelstrom of a new school with all its different forms of behaviour and status, they will not be in a particularly receptive frame of mind to deal with a new language. In fact, it is hardly surprising when children react against the language in question; I can easily see how, in such a situation, the new language could become the symbol of all that is wrong and disturbing about the new situation and environment. Students are not likely to enjoy their studies in such circumstances. I realise that the rationale of the system is not based on letting students actually enjoy what they study but it might not be a bad idea to look more closely at the time when the foreign language learning process is started, divorcing it from the teething problems associated with the changing of schools.

The use of the word 'enjoy' in the previous paragraph opens up another area in which language learning in Britain and Japan can rightly be criticised, and an area in which something to cure the malaise may be done. The debates currently raging in Britain over the failures of school language teaching point very definitely at the rigid adherence to grammatical structures and the overuse of grammar as a road into language, with the target language being taught as a *subject* with rules to be learned, examinations to be passed, tenses to be mastered and so on, rather than as a living means of communication used by other human beings. A sample example of opinions being raised at present may be quoted from the letters page of the Education Supplement of the *Guardian* newspaper:

> Present teaching methods and the prevailing attitudes to foreign language learning in Britain are based upon the mistaken assumption that language should be taught as a subject rather than as a means of communication. (Sweeney, 1985)

This is nothing radical or new, merely one of many letters on the subject that have appeared recently. The whole field of French studies in Britain is under siege, as it were, from

commentators and participants alike, with the "subject, not means of communication" charge in the very forefront of all criticisms.

I will add a few personal observations here. Cultural stereotyping, manifest in most French textbooks in use in schools, helps to underline the oddities, as it were, of the French, to subtly inform the British schoolchild what he/she already has inferred from social attitudes, that the French are different, over there, across the water and not really to be communicated with. In the textbook I studied at school we met a "typical" (i.e., caricature) French family. Monsieur Dumesnil smoked a pipe and bibbed a little wine while Madame seemed always to have a *baguette* under her arm and Raoul, the son, wore the inevitable beret. There was a dog, too, introduced in a way that confirmed the British prejudice that foreigners (especially the French!) do not treat pets properly. The whole text was heavily grammar-weighted. After five years I, like my peers, could dutifully put verbs in the subjunctive but was unable to communicate with a French person. But then no-one ever seemed to consider that communication was part of the process anyway. Later, after having spent some time in the francophone world, I began to teach French in schools in Britain but I found that the grammar-oriented structure in use provided me with few outlets to suggest that French was a means of communication at all: Not only were the pupils ill-prepared for such an outlook but the other staff were committed to the grammatical approach to the exclusion of all else.

A compounded problem, which is beginning to arise in Britain, is that the study of the native language, English, has begun to change in recent years, with grammar being excluded from the classroom. As a result, few pupils learn what nouns and verbs are any more (modern terms include 'naming words' and 'doing words') so that the grammar-oriented French teacher finds him/herself having to explain grammar itself prior to teaching the (already culturally

unwilling) pupil how to conjugate verbs and so on. This merely serves to heighten the apparently alien nature of French and to work against its acceptance.

Language Teaching at the University Level: A Case Study

At this point I would like to alter the focus of my inquiry and examine an aspect of language teaching/learning at the tertiary level in the United Kingdom, as well as an aspect of the same process in Japan. It should be borne in mind that recent debates have suggested that not all is well in the language learning process at school level in either country overall. Nonetheless, a reasonable number of students do opt to do further language studies at university in England, whether to study French or another language. One can reason that, no matter what the system is, there will always be a small percentage who can learn languages with facility and who will thus learn French (or whatever language) as much despite as because of their teachers. In addition, for English people, France is close at hand, close enough to allow those sufficiently keen to get as much conversational practice as they wish. There is still, however, a high fall-out rate: Of the 90 pupils who started studying French at school when I did only one went on to study it at university and possibly only three or four managed to have any competence at all in the language.

When one examines Japanese learning at the tertiary level, a number of different factors come into play. Schools do not teach Japanese at all in Britain. As a result, the student has neither had the discouragement of a rigourously non-communicative learning system to colour his/her impressions, nor has he/she had the chance to become interested in Japanese. In fact, to wish to study Japanese at all requires that the student takes steps to find out where this can be done, what entrance requirements exist and so on -- information rarely available at schools, which, because they do not teach

Japanese, tend not to encourage students to study it at university level. [2]

Some special motivation seems to be necessary in such a situation and, at present, the number of students that make the move into this new area is rather small. This is partly, too, because the number of institutions offering Japanese courses is small and they are limited for space and numbers of places. At present there are four universities (London, Sheffield, Oxford and Cambridge) that offer full Japanese courses and, of these, Oxford and Cambridge only have minimal intake, with the first year students at Oxford studying for a year at Sheffield. Five other institutions (the universities of Leeds, Durham, Newcastle, Sterling and Edinburgh) offer Japanese as a subsidiary course, usually in the Chinese department. To all intents and purposes, Japanese teaching is confined to London and Sheffield, with about 20-30 students currently in the first year course at each place. In all there are less than 60 students of Japanese in the first year course of all the institutions mentioned and less than 150 students studying Japanese at tertiary level at all. This is a small figure and one could, justifiably, argue that it is too small to provide any real evidence on which to draw worthwhile conclusions about language teaching. The smallness of the number in itself points to this being a highly committed minority, with all the resultant stimuli and motivations that flow from this. Self-selected minorities have stronger motivations for working than do majority groups who have been produced by the inertia that is a major factor in determining the course of study that most students pursue.

When I studied Japanese at London (at the School of Oriental and African Studies), there were 20 students in my year. Of these, ten were full-time degree course students, four were officials of the British Foreign Office studying Japanese prior to taking up appointments in Tokyo, two (including myself) were studying Japanese as part of a doctoral

course in Japanese Buddhism, and four were studying other aspects of Japanese culture for which they required some knowledge of Japanese. The ten full-time students were on four-year degree courses and the other ten were doing the first year only of that course. Of the degree students, three were married to Japanese people and were studying to improve their own knowledge of the language, two had lived in Japan and wished to return there after learning the language formally, and the rest were talented linguists who had become bored with learning European languages and wanted to extend their linguistic knowledge elsewhere. In other words, all those who were studying Japanese had some form of commitment and strong motivation to make the efforts required to learn the language.

The universities concerned demand evidence of linguistic ability, with success in advanced level examinations at school essential. Along with this, a more general capacity for study and an ability to deal with various areas concerning Japanese studies is required. The prospectus issued by London University, in which entrance requirements are given, states that candidates need to show broad general intellectual capacity (University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1985:25). One has to be able to deal with a wide range of topics concerning Japan, not just the language itself – one studies not merely the language but the culture as well. This is an important point, for it makes it clear that Japanese is not solely perceived in linguistic terms but is viewed as a cultural complex about which students must learn if they are to successfully master the language itself.

For those with other than the highest levels of motivation the London course is so intense as to discourage. In the first year, the four least motivated students decided to leave because the heavy workload gave them no free time. In the first year, starting from absolute beginnings, one learns 1,000 *kanji* at the rate of 50 a week (apart from the first five weeks, when one learns the *kana* syllabary). At the same time, one

has over 20 hours a week in the classroom as well as vocabulary to be learned outside. The first weeks of the course demand a weekly total of 24 hours in the classroom spread over five days (plus two hours extra spent in lectures about the history of Japan). The daily structure was along these lines:

10 a.m. Study of grammatical points (new ones each day)
11 a.m. Verbal drills using structures learned in the previous class
12 p.m. Language Laboratory: tapes using more drills concerning the points already learned that day
2 p.m. Conversation class building on these structures in groups of five students
3 p.m. *Kana/Kanji* writing class (5 *kana* a day at the start)

After five weeks, there were slight changes in structure with fewer conversation groups and less Language Laboratory but, in their place, more classes on reading and on rendering Japanese into English. One was expected to learn vocabulary lists as well as *kanji* lists and, on top of this, to read about Japan.

This is a full-scale commitment and those who were not prepared to put in a good 35-40 hours hard work each week were liable to find themselves falling behind rapidly. But, at the same time, we were stimulated by achievement and encouragement at our ability to use Japanese and communicate. In the morning of a day, for example, we might learn the past tense form of adjectives (e.g., *muzukashikatta*) and ways to use this tense; the next classes on the same day would teach us how to insert this form into our conversation and in the conversation class we would use it to communicate in an encounter with a Japanese person, which we could then describe as *muzukashikatta*. After 10 weeks of such study, I was able to hold my first real (if slow) Japanese conversation and, by the end of the year, I was able to read a full-length book in Japanese on my own. All the students involved were able to communicate with Japanese people.

For those who continued into the second year and beyond, additional courses involving literature and, later, other languages of the Far East such as Chinese and Mongolian could be studied. The staff involved were both English and Japanese (four English and five Japanese, three of whom were full-time). The Japanese were all tenured members of the university with all the rights and benefits that English staff have. Other departments dealing with the languages of the Far East also have this balance: The Chinese Department at Leeds, for instance, has five British and four Chinese members of staff. As a rule, the British members deal mostly with the structure of the language and the Japanese with practical applications (conversation, *kanji*).

Of course, this is an intense course using committed students. The onus is definitely on the students to do the work and to attend (no registers are taken at universities in the United Kingdom). Also, after the first weeks it is expected that the students will themselves make the effort to obtain Japanese conversation practice. At the end of the second year, all students visit Japan for 2 months for a special language programme.

The Japanese Context: Possibilities for Improvement?

What I feel this case does show is that integrated courses in which new skills are taught frequently can work well when there is a good programme of reinforcement and where the motivation comes from the students. Japanese universities do not, however, run on these lines. Even courses that are considered to be reasonably integrated, such as that described by Hansen (Hansen, 1985:158-167), have to battle against the problem that the students themselves are either not motivated or that they have many other classes to attend as well. Even when the time devoted to English on the timetable is greater than for other subjects, it still remains one subject for which the student has to obtain credits as a means to final graduation. Because of this, most students enter

university with the same mental set they had at school, with English seen as something they must do to get a qualification. It remains, thus, a subject, not a means of obtaining information or communicating. One can hardly demand that students who have countless other courses to follow should devote themselves only to English homework and studies yet, as my example from London seems to suggest, this would be the most effective way to achieve results.

An additional problem concerning Japanese students is their acquired passivity. The process they have undergone at school, in which facts have been taught for them to assimilate, has prepared them for a passive role in the classroom. The teacher has the active role and is expected to 'provide' all the equipment necessary for the study at hand. Yet there have to be two people in the process, the teacher and the student; if a student will not make any effort, even the best teacher will find it hard to teach. One has to start, as a rule, by educating students out of the patterns they have acquired at school and into the traditions of partnership and mutual seeking after knowledge that motivate much of Western scholarship.

What Can We Do?

An ideal solution would be a greater amount of specialisation and less compulsion: Those who really do wish to learn English at their universities should be able to do so while those who are doing so simply because they have to do so, in order to gain necessary credits, should be allowed to study something else. This would remove the least willing elements from the class and enable those who want to, to get on with their studies. In addition, more regular, shorter classes would be in order. At present, most universities in Japan have long classes, often as long as 100 minutes in duration, with the students meeting (often in classes of 50 or more) once a week. In both numbers and duration, this is excessive for

both students and teachers. The most enthusiastic student can lose concentration after an hour or more; and how often do teachers find their own energies fading and the last ten or fifteen minutes of a class vanishing, in terms of effectiveness? Everyone would be better off meeting more regularly, for shorter periods. In Britain university classes last an hour and there is little wastage in this period. Is there any real reason, apart from timetabling convenience, for classes to be longer? The more students in a class, too, the less likely is there to be much success. This is particularly so in Japan, where students have a natural reticence to speak in front of their peers. The larger the class, the greater the reticence seems to be.

Smaller classes that meet more often would naturally yield some improvement but this is probably asking too much, too quickly, from the education system here. It presupposes that the sytem is truly committed to enabling Japanese students to become good users of English and that there is enough of a commitment in the system for it to reform itself. Although overnight reforms (or even 'over-decade' reforms!) cannot be expected, I feel that, in the long run, they will have to be made. What concerns me more, in the short term, is how we can make the most of what we have currently got, and how we can most effectively work with the situation as it stands. Here I think that probably the most useful move would be for more emphasis to be placed on the cultural complex surrounding the English language. Students need to be informed, regularly, that English is not a subject but a means of communication used by countless millions of people in many nations as a native tongue, and as a way of communicating by other people who did not learn English as their first language.

As I have pointed out, students who study Japanese in the United Kingdom study the culture that surrounds it and are expected to be interested in it, taking courses in Japanese history, religion and so on. This not only gives

valuable insights into the culture that spawned the language but also helps remove the language from the level of subject (which makes it unpopular) to that of living entity. By making English a living entity by means of showing aspects of Western culture and history to students it is possible to make the language assume the status of a real entity in which the students can participate. Instead of being discouraged by excesses of formalised study, students can be shown how to appreciate and enjoy English.

In this, one needs a broader scope than that of an English language teacher alone. Recently, voices have been raised in debate in language journals in Japan over the subject of the professionalisation of language teaching, with some writers demanding that only qualified, specialist EFL teachers be hired[3]. I would like to point out that those who teach Japanese in England are not, for the most part, specialist langauge teachers but people who have studied aspects of Japanese society and culture. Their expertise and understanding of Japan is as valuable to students seeking an entree into Japanese language as are the techniques of the language specialist. In the context of Japan, the Japanese professor with a knowledge of American or English literature could be as valuable to his department and students as is a native speaker or specialised teacher of language, as long as the system is able and prepared to accommodate the use of culture as a learning/teaching technique. Calls for greater specialisation and for more 'professionalisation' seem to be moving the emphasis away from, rather than towards, the broad perspectives that are needed.

What surely is needed is increased cooperation between native speakers who teach in Japanese universities and their Japanese colleagues. We need a wider field, not the possibilities of a narrower one. In the long term such increased cooperation, through shared research and coordinated programmes, is vital, while in the immediate present individuals can act to ameliorate the situation without, and this is a very impor-

tant point, creating a sense of fear in their colleagues. Everyone who does work in Japan is no doubt aware of the possibilities of emotions such as fear and distrust arising where people of different countries and attitudes work together (or, to be more accurate, work in the same department or institution).

Those who seek direct and radical reforms may merely create a reverse reaction: More can be achieved by quiet example and personal action in the classroom than by lobbying in meetings. If individual teachers can encourage students to shed their culturally imposed barriers to the learning of foreign languages and can help bridge the gulf between teacher and students, then this might help other teachers to do the same. There is the potential for all involved to realise that the teacher and student have to work in tandem and that the teacher can act in an effective way simply by encouraging rather than, as is the norm, discouraging students. It is not beyond the bounds of the imagination to foresee a future in which teachers will introduce foreign languages as enjoyable systems of communication within the potentialities of their students, rather than as abstruse and difficult algebraic sytems designed as barriers and certainly not aimed at producing communication or enjoyment.

Currently I use the classes I teach at Kobe University of Commerce in this way as much as possible, especially two classes called 'Language Seminars' that some first and second year students take. In these classes I attempt to give the students some interesting input, using aspects of Anglo-American culture through which to teach English (alternatively, it could be said that I am attempting to teach foreign and comparative culture through the use of English). Whichever way it may be perceived, I think that the students do feel that they are doing something other than 'just' learning English and this seems to fire their enthusiasm. They do quickly realise that there is potential for a foreign language beyond the examination process (to emphasise which point

I do not give any examinations in my courses). At first, students find it hard to follow all that goes on because instruction is entirely in English but, once they understand that they are not being criticised for errors and are not being judged, they relax and surmount the barrier that has previously told them that they cannot understand English. In a matter of weeks they begin to dismantle the barriers to learning that have been so carefully constructed during their school years and, by the beginning of the second year, I am able to speak for half an hour at more or less normal speed on some aspect of culture and find that the class has understood what has been said. This in itself raises confidence levels considerably.

By presenting interesting courses and by introducing, in an enthusiastic way, the cultural aspects surrounding a language, it is possible to overcome the students' reluctance to believe they can master English. Slides are useful: A slide show seems to fuel enthusiasm more than almost anything else and gets students responding in English. Students begin to assimilate the language almost unconsciously as they begin to see themselves participating in a class not about English but about, say, England. Students alter their perceptions, too, in dropping old concepts of the teacher-student divide and cease to view me as a remote 'sensei' from whom all information is to be received, and start seeing me as a person with whom they can communicate and cooperate. In turn, what most stimulates me in teaching in Japan is the tremendous friendship and feedback I receive from my students. I know also that my staff colleagues are aware of the whole situation and that they generally are sympathetically disposed towards my methods. For any hope of wider reforms I know that I can have far more effect through this action by example than through thumping the table at staff meetings and the like.

Conclusion

In this article I have outlined some of the criticisms lodged against language teaching in Britain and Japan and have described one specialist language programme in London that does achieve results. This is a specialised programme and, as such, cannot provide full answers to the problems of more general systems but it can offer some useful lessons. I have also made some tentative remarks about the ways in which improvements can be made in the system in Japan as it now is, as well as suggesting areas in which reforms should eventually be made. Students can be helped to feel that foreign language learning is not just a chore and not just a means to make them unhappy. It is my experience that students do respond well to encouragement and that they can come round to the view that English is enjoyable. They may even look forward to their classes! If such attitudes can be achieved, then the journey towards competence is radically shortened. Importantly, too, the teacher's enjoyment is heightened, so that fresh energy will be generated throughout the whole process. The attainment of competence does lie within the student's grasp when students realise that they are being asked to do something that is perfectly feasible and even pleasant. Until any major and radical reforms are introduced to alter the focus of the system as a whole, this is the area in which the most effective progress can be made and it is something that can be worked on at this moment.

Notes

1. This quotation has been taken from an essay written by a student in a seminar I taught at Osaka University but its tone reflects the mood of remarks made both orally and in writing to me by many of the students I have taught in Japan.
2. This information was conveyed to me by Dr. P. Francks of the Chinese Department, the University of Leeds, England. All the data and remarks in this section are based on my own contacts with

staff and students at institutions in Britain that teach Japanese and cover the years from 1979 to the present.

3. For example, in *The Language Teacher* (newsletter of the Japan Association of Language Teachers), there has been a spate of letters in the Opinions section on this issue, starting with Redfield (December, 1984), with a response by Shishin (February, 1985) and responses to Shishin (e.g., Gay, April, 1985). As I have indicated in this article, I feel that this debate is somewhat of a red herring: The emphasis on qualifications seems to reflect a disturbing concern with form rather than essence and tends to reinforce rather than reform the contemporary, and widely criticised, formal system of teaching English in Japan.

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VOL. IX, NO. 2 FEBRUARY 1985

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WAITING FOR GODOT IN THE EFL CLASSROOM*

David Dinsmore

Abstract

This article is the result of observations carried out in a small number of EFL classrooms in Japan. It reports that there is a lot of what might be called 'time-passing' going on, and little meaningful communication. In this respect it tends to confirm the reports of other researchers in the area. The article shows how a teacher can become a researcher and thus gain valuable insights into processes of teaching and learning. It also makes a strong plea for teachers and others actually to observe what is going on in classrooms, as a first step towards a more professional approach to the teaching of EFL/ESL.

In a purposeless world that has lost its ultimate objectives, dialogue, like all action, becomes a mere game to pass the time. (Esslin 1968:86)

Many critics have noted that the structure of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is one of bursts of pseudo-activity, punctuated by awkward silences where the characters search for something else to pass the time. The following exchange

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is typical:[2]

Estragon: That wasn't such a bad little canter.
Vladimir: Yes, but now we'll have to find something else.

As I taught and watched others teach, and read the literature on classroom research, I became aware that lessons also often seemed to pass from meaningless activity to silence, as teachers and students worked at passing the time. In this article I will analyse some examples of classroom interaction from my data, and show how they resemble the world of Vladimir and Estragon.

Method

I observed and audio-recorded three classes (with the consent of the teachers concerned). The classes were selected purely on the grounds of convenience: they happened to be taking place in the institution where I was working at times when I was free. I normally sat at the back of the room, out of sight of the students, but visible to the teacher. The microphone and recorder were kept as far out of sight as possible. Air-conditioning noise and reflective walls caused problems on some tapes, but very little was indecipherable. The microphone was aimed at the teacher during periods of teacher talking time (TTT), but if students were working in groups or pairs I focused on the most accessible of these. Even when pointed at the teacher, however, the microphone picked up most of what was said by the students also, as the rooms were small and class numbers low. Before each lesson I spoke to the teacher and made a note of what was planned. I also noted numbers, approximate ages and levels of the students, as well as their sex, occupations, and any other relevant information, such as textbook or other materials in use. In my observation notes I recorded such features as seating arrangements, use of the blackboard or

other visual material, break times, any clearly defined boundaries (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982) within the lesson, and any non-verbal behaviour which seemed important. Later I transcribed the tapes and analysed extracts, mainly using the system first developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), and set out more recently in Sinclair and Brazil (1982). My analysis uses mainly their terms, as well as some taken from Fanselow's FOCUS (1977). I refer the reader to the cited works for a fuller explanation of the terms used.

Data

The data comprise six hours of audio-recordings and the accompanying observation notes. This represents three lessons taught by three teachers, all native speakers of English, who were classified by their employer as 'experienced'. They all had EFL teaching experience in several countries and situations. One had the RSA Diploma in TEFL and was a teacher supervisor, one had a postgraduate certificate in education and a short-course TEFL qualification, while the third had the ITTI Cert. TEFL. In addition they had all attended compulsory in-service training during their employment with the company.[3] The students were all Japanese, with two classes of male businessmen in their late twenties and early thirties, and one class of seven females and one male, mostly college students in their late teens to early twenties. They were all classified as 'intermediate', although there was quite a range of ability throughout the group. The businessmen were preparing for an examination which would determine their prospects of an overseas posting, while the others were following a 'General English' course, mostly for social reasons, as far as I could ascertain. All three classes were using the same textbook, *Exchanges* (Prowse *et al.*, 1980). The authors of this book state their belief that 'language use should be chosen *first*, and the linguistic content, the forms, should be finalised at the *second stage*'

(1980):1; emphasis in original). I refer the reader to the introduction to the Teacher's Book for a fuller description of the aims of this book. In my opinion, however, it bears a very close resemblance to more 'traditional', structurally based coursebooks, despite its claims to a more 'functional' approach. I believe this has a bearing on the data which will become evident in the discussion which follows.

Discussion and analysis

The following is a discussion based on analysis of extracts from the data. Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) data are from primary-school mother-tongue content (not language) classes, so I had predicted that the basic exchange structure they found (Teacher Initiation–Pupil Response–Teacher Follow-up) would not be so prevalent in the adult EFL classes I observed. However, in all three classes this was the main structure occurring in Teacher–Student (T–S) interactions. For Teacher C this could perhaps be explained by the fact that he had worked as a secondary school teacher before moving into EFL. Teachers A and B, however, had only EFL experience, yet both exhibit the structure to a similar extent in their classes. Perhaps this is an example of something learnt (or acquired) during our own school days which automatically takes over when we adopt the role of teacher. This is an area where further research is necessary, as it may have an important bearing on teacher training. Here are some examples, drawn from all three lessons:[4]

TB: ahm when did this happen + when did this happen + last year + tomorrow
S: a short time ago
TB: yes. a short time ago (1)

TC: what other kinds of hotels are there
S: business
TC: business yes (2)

TC: what can she speak
S: Italian
TC: she can speak Italian. yes (3)

TA: ok. what's the preposition
S: in January
TA: ok. in January (4)

Sinclair and Coulthard (among others) have suggested that one reason for the prevalence of this sequence is the unequal power distribution in the classroom. Only the teacher has the power to initiate discourse and to judge the correctness of the other participants' contributions. This hardly seems compatible with a 'communicative' EFL teaching methodology. (Long and Sato (1983) have shown that differences in question patters used by teachers in and out of the classroom would also seem to be at odds with a 'communicative' approach.)

Another feature of Sinclair and Coulthard's data which, contrary to expectation, I also found prevalent in mine is the relatively large amount of TTT devoted to setting-up activities ('structuring' in FOCUS). In all three classes the teacher remains firmly in control of the discourse for most of the time, either directly or indirectly. He uses this virtual monopoly of talk to take elaborate structuring turns, such as the following, from Teacher C's class:

TC: I want you to listen for two things + ahm + what kind of place + what kind of place does each person + want to go to + + + + and. when they get there + what do they want to do + ok so. what kind of place. what + do. they want to do + + so we've got the mother + father + daughter + + and let's listen carefully + three people talking but they also. talk about the two boys + the two boys are not speaking + but we hear + what they want to do + ok + + two boys. the twins ┐ + the twins + + + + right. first time + just
S: two boys ┘
TC: + listen all right. don't write any notes + first time just listen + you've got these things + we're listening out for. don't write anything first time + only listen + + (plays tape) (5)

Although it does not show up well in the transcript (notice the pauses, however), the speed of this utterance was much slower than normal speech and also contained many of the features which have been characterized as 'foreigner talk', such as unnatural stress, aspiration of final stops and much repetition (cf. Long and Sato 1983). This is a class of adult businessmen, preparing for a test of their communicative ability and possible posting abroad. This type of speech would not seem to be of much help in achieving this aim.

The next extract, from Teacher B's class of college students, shows similar characteristics:

TB: uh huh. ok right + ahm + right look back at the dialogue that we were doing on Tuesday +page thirty three ok + + I want you to write + two questions about the dialogue + any two questions. who what + when. why. where any two questions. do does + + + + write two questions about the dialogue + any two questions **(6)**

Again notice the number of pauses and the frequent repetition. Despite (or perhaps because of) this, the students' non-verbal behaviour during and after this utterance indicated that they did not clearly understand what they were being asked to do. Later the teacher had to go round students individually to check they were at the correct page and to reiterate the 'two questions' instruction. Note that he never gives any clue to why they should write two questions, and only two. Thus, the students are confused. Chaudron (1983) gives copious examples of students being confused by well-meaning teacher. He makes the point that:

> The difficulty with the employment of specific procedural questions or of obliquely logical questions is that, while they may conform to the teacher's notion of a simplified structuring of knowledge, they may not be the simplest logical steps for a learner of ESL. They presuppose a

sophistication in the learner's ability to acquire knowledge that may not match his or her classroom skills in ESL (Chaudron1983:135).

Another extract from Teacher B's class later in the lesson:

1 TB: right + ahm. find a sentence with criticize in. in the dialogue + find a sentence with criticize + sorry criticized
2 S1: (non-verbal response: bid)
3 TB: Midori + criticized
4 S1: (non-verbal response: points)
5 TB: ok + Chino
6 S2: (non-verbal response: points)
7 TB: yes. sentence
8 S2: you've been criticized a lot recently for your own behaviour
9 TB: yes + Zed you've been criticized a lot recently for your own behaviour. ahm. ok. second one + exaggerated + ah + Ichiro
10 S3: that's all been exaggerated
11 TB: good. yes that's all been exaggerated + what did that do
12 S4: (non-verbal response: bid)
13 TB: Akiko
14 S4: he had a mid-air party
15 TB: uhm. what did that do + in the sentence that's all been criticized + + + + Ichiro
16 S3: (inaudible)
17 TB: correct + louder
18 S3: nothing
19 TB: correct. yes. nothing ┐ ok nothing. here's some more sentences
20 (laughter) ┘
21 Ss: (non-verbal response: comply) (7)

At (1) the teacher marks the boundary quite lightly but still clearly, and then 'plane changes' (moves from 'saying something' to 'talking about saying something': Sinclair and Brazil 1982:32) to issue a directive. Notice again that he says it twice. Even here he makes a slight mistake which, though corrected, sets the tone for what is to follow. The

students eventually find what is required and are rewarded by a teacher repetition (9). He then sets a second task. Note the nature of these tasks: merely to find two (random?) words from among the many present. At (11) the 'real' purpose behind these strange directives emerges. 'what did that do' represents a plane change of a rather bizarre nature. The students' grasp of his meaning and of the cohesive devices of English is limited, as is well demonstrated by the reply at (14). They think the referent is Zed, the pop star being interviewed in this lesson (*Exchanges* A, Unit 3, Lesson 13), perhaps with some justification. Here, as in Chaudron's examples, the teacher's 'logical steps' seem to be at variance with the students'. His solution is to repeat the question, louder and more slowly (foreigner talk again). When he gets his answer at (18), he enthusiastically 'proclaims' it (falling tone: see Sinclair and Brazil 1982 for a full description of tones), and then makes another logical leap to 'some more sentences like that'. Like what? All of this has been a prelude to a particularly stultifying and 'use'-less (in Widdowson's sense) drill (*Exchanges* A, Unit 3, Language Study 3.5, p.40). A drill on what? Readers must have guessed by now, unless, like these students, they have had problems with the 'logical steps'. As a further exercise in 'beguiling the hours', the students are forced to go through this exercise not once but twice, the teacher not being satisfied with their level of enthusiasm the first time. They do not even do it as a purely aural/oral activity, there eyes remaining firmly anchored to the textbook, their sole source of language. Extracts such as (7) hardly seem congruent with communicative language teaching, which is what this school, its teachers, and the textbook all lay claim to. Nor does the following, from Teacher A's class of businessmen:

1 TA: fine. ok. right. mister Kato. I will interview you ok. ok so + fine. so + excuse me now. could you. could you please tell me ahm what your present job is

2 S1: I am a buyer and salesman
3 TA: ah ha. I see. and. ah. please can you give me your. ahm. full name
4 S1: my name is Kazuhiro Kato
5 TA: Kazuhiro Kato + h. how do you spell Kazuhiro please
6 S1: ahm K.A.Z.U.H.I.R.O.
7 TA: uh huh I see. when were you born
8 S1: I was born in six. in January. ah. six of January in 195. 54
9 TA: ok. what's the preposition. I was born +
10 S1: I was born in January
11 TA: I was born in January. and what's the day
12 S1: I was born in January sixth
13 TA: ok look. wrong preposition
14 S1: six
15 TA: on
16 S1: on + on. I was born on six + January. six of January
17 TA: ok on
18 S1: on + I was in the six
19 TA: ok on. what's this next word
20 S1: erm. the
21 TA: good
22 S1: on
23 TA: on
24 S1: the the
25 S2: the in
26 TA: [siks θ]
27 S1: [sik θ]
28 S3: aah
29 S1: on the. on the sixth
30 TA: next word
31 S3: of
32 TA: uh huh
33 S1: I was born on the sixth of January in 1954
34 TA: good. ok. say it again + whe. so when were you born
35 S1: I was born in the sixth ┐ of January
36 Ss: on on ┘

37 S1: I was. I was born on the sixth + of January + 1954
38 TA: good (8)

Here the teacher is 'role-playing', pretending to 'interview' a student in order to fill in a form. At first sight a reasonable procedure. He is demonstrating what he wants the class to do later in pairs. Notice how easily the pretence is dropped, and note the strange discourse that develops. Thus, at (1) the teacher announces his intention to interview Mr Kato, addressing him by name (again note the uncontracted form as a further example of foreigner talk). In mid-turn the teacher then dons the mask of 'interviewer', but because he has already used the student's name, he unnaturally asks for his present job first, postponing until second the more normal opening question about name. Of course the teacher already knows all the information he is about to ask for anyway, making this excercise of dubious communicative value.

On several other counts the discourse is also aberrant. Examples of foreigner talk were noted above. Also indicative of the classroom is the use of 'full-sentence' replies by the student. The use of 'excuse me' and other polite forms in the opening question (1) is also at odds with the initial directive. Even odder is the sequence after (8), where the teacher suddenly drops the 'interviewer's' mask and steps in to 'treat' an error. (Notice that had the student given a normal native-speaker reply, there would have been no error to treat.) The teacher signals the transition from interview to classroom by his tone choice on 'ok', the familiar 'yes, but' pattern which Sinclair and Brazil (1982:122-9) say is used to signal that the response is not actually wrong but is none the less unacceptable to the teacher. (They designate this as the dominant version of referring tone.) The 'treatment' sequence is initiated by an evaluation and plane change, where the teacher uses metalanguage to point out the error and then prompts another attempt. The student produces an acceptable

utterance at (10) which is repeated and accepted (11), but at (12) the student again gets it wrong. The teacher again gives the 'yes, but' evaluation and again uses metalanguage to point out the error. Unfortunately the metalanguage is beyond this student's grasp, so the teacher has to spell it out. In (16) the student tries to cope with increasing problems, in the process becoming even less fluent. Also, the error 'six' for 'sixth' persists, since by ignoring the student's attempt to check it at (14) the teacher has implicitly given it his approval. The teacher finds it necessary to repeat the preposition a further three times. The student's response (18) is meaningless, but the teacher merely repeats 'on' and moves on to the 'six' problem. Having 'treated' that one, he proceeds to another preposition and finally elicits a full-sentence response which is deemed acceptable. Presumably to 're-inforce' this (in the Behaviourist sense), he makes the student repeat it, but first switches back to the role of 'interviewer'. I know I was confused. The student too seems to be having problems, as he gets it wrong again, only to be corrected by the others. The 'correct' answer finally comes at (37) and is suitably rewarded. What would these students do if faced with a 'real' question, one which required them to answer from their own experience or knowledge? The data contain only one example of such a question during a lesson, and an analysis of the students' reaction to it is enlightening. This extract is from Teacher B's class:

1 TB: ok + fine + good + thank you Reiko + ahm + (clears throat), was Japan in the First World War
2 Ss: Ø
3 TB: I don't know + can somebody tell me
4 Ss: Ø (some discussion in Japanese)
5 TB: can you decide in English
6 Ss: Ø (laughter, more whispered Japanese)
7 S1: I. I don't think so
8 TB: no + ok + is that true. do you know David
9 Ss: (laughter)

10 O: there was the erm Rush. Russo-Japanese War just before + the First World War

11 TB: uh huh ok + right + + ahm + right. look back at the dialogue that we were doing on Tuesday + page 33 + **(9)**

At (1) the teacher marks the end of one activity and the start of another by using a framing move to indicate the boundary (this teacher favours rather elaborate boundary markers). Tone and key choice further emphasize the transition. (High key and 'proclaiming'–that is, falling-tone–Sinclair and Brazil 1982:148-51.) His 'solicit' (opening move of the sequence, requiring a 'response'–Fanselow 1977) refers somewhat obscurely back to the previous activity (see Extract 10 below). He employs a positive polar interrogative elicitation which under the normal rules of classrooom discourse requires a *yes/no* answer, based on guessing which one the teacher wants (Sinclair and Brazil 1982:60-63). The students' silence seems to indicate that they interpret it in this way but cannot answer as they have no idea what it refers to. It took me some time to work out the connection, familiar though I am with 'logical' steps. The teacher has clearly marked a boundary and the students are waiting for him to proceed, when he suddenly jumps back to the previous activity (which was particularly meaningless, as discussed below) and asks a question referring to the real world. The teacher's avowal that he really does not know produces a predictable response, especially since he follows it up with a nominating move (directing a named student to respond). In an attempt to resolve their problem, the students switch to Japanese. The teacher curtails this 'exploratory talk' (Barnes 1975) with a positive polar interrogative functioning as a directive, again a typical classroom move. Talk, in this classroom, is firmly under the control of the teacher. When a spokeswoman finally gives the group's answer, the teacher evaluates it as unsatisfactory, again applying classroom rules to what is meant to be 'real world' discourse. He tries again

with me, the observer (8), and in fact evaluates my attempt negatively before suddenly switching to a 'safer' activity (i.e. back to the textbook), leaving the students with blank faces and me wondering what was going on.

Extract **10** is another example of an activity which may at first sight seem reasonable:

1 TB: right. ahm have a look at the homework again + page 42 + ok. right ahm do it in pairs + you two. you two. and you three. ok so ah. ask the question. you answer + I think that there are two main reasons + I think that there are three main reasons + firstly. secondly + ok. ahm + Reiko + ok number one. you ask Chino. number two Chino you ask Midori ah Midori number three you ask Reiko. ok go

2 S1: wh. why. why are house prices going up

3 S2: I think that there are ah two main reasons + first of all ah first of all because. erm because. erm because ah. ah there are ah first of all because more and more people want homes of their own er sec. secondly because the rate of in. inf. inflation is high

4 S1: why. why did Hitler lose the Second World War

5 S2: I think there are two main reasons + + first of all because. ah he invaded the ah Soviet Union ah and secondly [bi:kɒs] the Americans entered the war

6 TB: ok [biˈkʌz]

7 S2: [biːˈkɒs]

8 TB: [biˈkʌz]

9 S2: [bikˌbiˈkɒsˌbiˈkɒs]

10 TB: ok

11 S1: why. why. why. ah people smoke cigarette + why do people smoke cigarettes

12 S2: I think that there are three main reasons + first of all + [biˈkɒsˌbiˈkɒs] they like the taste of tobacco + secondly because smoking is a habit and ahm thirdly because it helps them to. relax

13 Ss: (long pause: they look at each other questioningly)

14 S2: why are house prices going up

15 S1: I think th. there are two main reasons **(10)**

Again, this sequence begins with a long series of Structuring utterances (Fanselow 1977) by the teacher, after he has marked the boundary of the activity (1). That the teacher is very firmly in control can be seen from the explicit nature of the directives, which leave the students little leeway (once again limiting possibilities for exploratory talk). The first student utterance could, outside the classroom, be the opening of a conversation or an interview. It seems to be a genuine question and there is potential for real communication. S2 prepares the ground for an extended reply, a gambit typical of a radio or television interview. He cites 'two main reasons', which he then proceeds to give (3), albeit somewhat hesitantly. The register employed is rather formal perhaps, considering the backgrounds and ages of these students. Normally we would expect some sort of 'follow-up' move. In this exchange, however, there is another initiation on a completely different topic. A possible discussion of history (a rather sensitive issue in Japan) is precluded when the teacher intervenes to 'treat' an error. (This was not the most serious pronunciation error made. I have transcribed only this one, however, as it was the only one singled out for 'treatment'.) Treatment dispensed, the teacher withdraws and the questioning continues with an initiation on smoking (11). Given attitudes to smoking in Japan, this could have led to an interesting discussion. But not in this EFL classroom. Once more we have a claim-staking responding move, followed by three trite reasons. Notice too that S2 has been made aware of some problem with 'because', but does not seem to know what it is.

The long pause which follows is pure Beckett. What the students come up with to beguile the hours is hardly very daring. Off they go again, with S2 asking the questions and S1 giving the same old answers. And they continue in the same manner until mid-way through the third recital, when the teacher calls a halt. At no time does the real world enter the picture. The students are actually reading this exchange

from their textbooks and have done it in written form for homework. They are thus merely parroting someone else's meaningless words. The elaborate claim-staking is unnecessary, since there are only two of them and they can both see how many reasons there are. This kind of exchange, consisting merely of the rehearsal of pre-fed words, is disturbingly frequent in the data. Some might seek to justify it by classifying it as the 'controlled practice' stage of a communicative lesson, where the forms are practised before moving on to a 'less-controlled' or 'free' stage. In my data, however, there is no such stage. The sessons remain frozen in a highly controlled form.

Conclusion

It may be argued that the data from this study are insufficient, and that they are therefore unrepresentative. We may laugh (or cry) at these extracts and say, 'Yes, but in my lessons . . . '. I would ask the reader to consider the following:

> *Vladimir:* All I know is that the hours are long, under such conditions, and constrain us to beguile them with proceedings which – how shall I say – which may at first sight seem reasonable, until they become a habit.

I have looked at evidence from just three classrooms and come to the same conclusions as Long and Sato (1983):

> From the evidence here . . . ESL teachers continue to emphasize form over meaning, accuracy over communication . . . Indeed, on this evidence, NS–NNS (native speaker–non-native speaker) conversation during second language instruction is a greatly distorted version of its equivalent in the real world. (Long and Sato 1983:283)

Perhaps more teachers should actually examine what is going

on 'inside the "black box" ' (Long 1980), and ask themselves if their activities in it are indeed merely beguiling the hours. There is a need for teachers and teacher trainers alike to question the basis of habits which may have seemed reasonable at first sight. Otherwise we shall never attain a truly professional status for EFL/ESL teaching, and instead condemn our students to passing the time in meaningless discourse. I leave the final word to Vladimir:

> Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (Pause. Vehemently.) Let us do something, while we have the chance!

Notes

[1]This is a much-revised version of a paper given at the Japan Association of Language Teachers Seminar on *Discourse Analysis in Second Language Instruction*, Kyoto, Japan, 11-12 February 1984. I wish to thank Michael Long for his comments on the original paper and for his detailed criticisms of a later draft, many of which have been incorporated in this version, much to its improvement. I would also like to thank Patrick Buckheister for reading an earlier draft and making many helpful comments. Where I have chosen to ignore their advice, I am sure the work has suffered. I also owe a large debt to my wife, Aine Sharkey, whose close questioning at every stage of the work has forced me to clarify my thinking and expression in numerous instances. The errors, of course, remain solely my responsibility.

[2]All quotations form the play are from the Faber paperback edition.

[3]I wish to make it clear that this paper is in no way an attack either on the teachers concerned or on the institution for which they worked. The company concerned has a reputation for good teaching, based on many years of international experience. The teachers are, to the best of my knowledge and belief, sincere and dedicated professional teachers who devote much time and effort to their work.

[4]Transciption conventions: in an attempt to represent natural speech as closely as possible, I have dispensed with conventional punctuation in these transcriptions (except for the use of capitals for proper names to avoid confusion). The symbols used are as follows:

. + + + + + indicate pauses of increasing length
( ) enclose comments on the exchanges, or descriptions of non-verbal activity
[ ] enclose phonemic transcriptions
ah ahm erm uh uh huh represent various hesitation phenomena
] indicates simultaneous utterances

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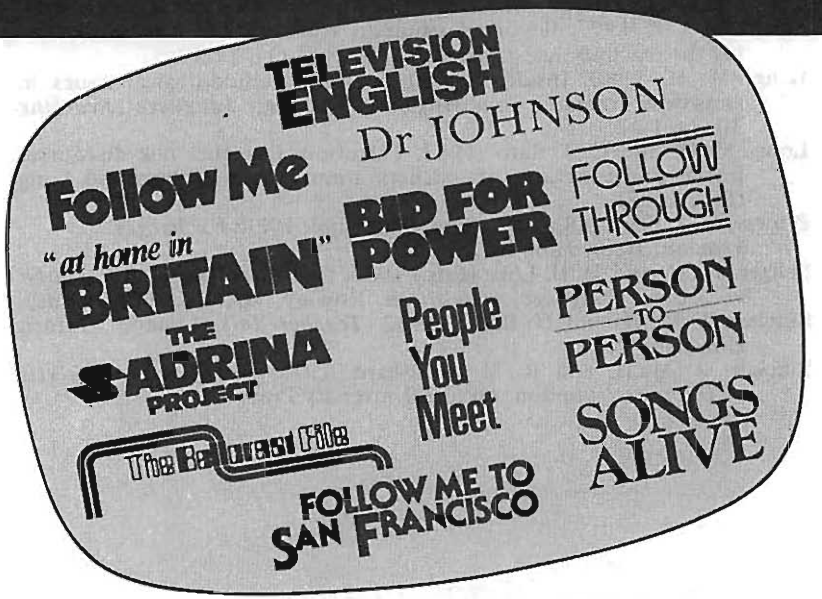

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INTERLANGUAGE AND THE COMPUTER

Bernard A. Mohan

Abstract

Second language acquisition research has questioned the value of formal teaching of grammar and emphasized the importance of language use. Accordingly, proponents of computer-assisted language learning have argued that computer software is valuable for second language learning to the degree that it provides practice in using the language rather than merely manipulating it. Theory and research on interlanguage indicates that language acquisition will increase with the quantity and quality of comprehensible input that non-native speakers (NNSs) receive. Preliminary analysis of language interaction of intermediate NNSs suggests that the quantity and quality of interaction is lower in computer use than in conversation. This raises questions about the role of the computer in language development.

Introduction

This paper will describe the language interaction (interlanguage) between non-native speakers (NNSs) of English during computer use, a typical situation being where two people use a program on a microcomputer and talk with each other as they do so. Recent developments in second language acquisition theory and knowledge about computer-assisted language learning indicate that these language interactions are

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essential research data for assessing the value of the computer for language development.

While computer-assisted learning has existed as a field of inquiry for at least two decades, it has only been relatively recently that there has been a large amount of interest in computer-assisted language learning (CALL). There is now a journal devoted to CALL, *CALICO*, which maintains a large database of relevant journal articles, language learning journals have devoted special issues to CALL (e.g., *System* Vol. 11, No. 1, 1983; *Medium* Vol. 9, No. 3, 1984) and a number of books have been published (e.g., Higgins & Johns 1984; Underwood 1984). These publications are concerned with second language development, but anyone interested in the more advanced levels of second language acquisition, particularly in reading and writing, will find a great deal of value in contemporary work on first language learning at the computer (e.g., Mason, Blanchard & Daniel 1983; Daiute 1985). An important issue emerging from discussion about CALL is how far practices in CALL are consistent with current research and theory in second language acquisition: Many CALL programs embody assumptions about language development that have been discredited by recent research.

The well-known work of Krashen (Krashen 1982; Krashen & Terrell 1983) encapsulates a number of trends in second language acquisition research and draws conclusions for language teaching policy. Making a distinction between conscious learning and unconscious acquisition, Krashen argues that formal language learning is not nearly as important in developing communicative ability in second language as previously thought, and conscious grammar rules have only a limited function in second language use. Rather, the operative factor in second language acquisition is comprehensible input: "The central hypothesis of the theory is that language acquisition occurs in only one way: by understanding messages . . . . We acquire when language is used for communicating real ideas." (Krashen & Terrell 1983:1, 9)

The immediate implication of this for language teaching programs is that "Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning." (Krashen & Terrell 1983:55). This implies an essential distinction between what can be called *formal* language teaching, which aims for conscious learning of rules through explicit teaching of them, and therefore focusses on the forms of the message, and *communicative* language teaching, which aims for acquisition of communicative competency, and therefore focusses on what is being said rather than the form of the message. The Grammar-Translation, Audiolingual and Cognitive-Code methods are to varying degrees examples of formal language teaching and the Natural Approach is an example of communicative language teaching.

But there are much wider implications of this position which go beyond language classrooms. Since second language acquisition can occur in any environment of comprehensible communication, we must consider all contexts in schools and the wider community where the second language is the medium of communication as potential environments for second language acquisition. We should distinguish between language teaching (formal or communicative) and *communicative language use* across the curriculum and community. These wider implications are discussed in detail in Mohan (1979). They require us to take account of how discourse varies in different social contexts. Mohan (1986) provides a framework for the analysis of functional variation in discourse, particularly with respect to the language demands made, and language opportunities offered, by the teaching and learning of content (i.e., subject matter). To the theory of "comprehensible input", then, we must add theory and research with respect to functional variation in discourse. Functional variation in discourse affects both what language is comprehended and what language competencies may be acquired.

CALL and SLA

Krashen's perspective has been applied in a state-of-the-art survey of CALL (Underwood 1984). Underwood contrasts an older approach to CALL with a newer, emergent approach. These approaches can be labelled formal CALL and communicative CALL because they are parallel to formal language teaching and communicative language teaching.

Formal CALL programs aim to teach rules and items of the language and then test this knowledge through questions, exercises and drills. They thus reflect a traditional concept of language teaching and focus on the form of language. The large majority of CALL programs are of this type (Underwood 1984:45). As Underwood points out, formal CALL assumes that CALL is a computerised form of programmed instruction whereby language material is broken down into small discrete points of grammar and vocabulary; there are simple techniques for providing feedback; and the computer is to be "an evaluative taskmaster that asks all the questions and judges all the answers." (Underwood 1984:46). He criticises this type of program as not providing any semblance of communication or conversation.

Communicative CALL programs will aim to create a rich communicative environment for the learner. Learner activites will focus on communication rather than language form and result in original utterances rather than language manipulation. The intention will be to encourage the learner to use the target language naturally. To this end, correction of structural errors in language will be avoided, for successful communication should be sufficient reward for the learner (Underwood 1984: 52-4). Groupwork at the computer is a particularly important aid to Communicative CALL:

> "An important source of comprehensible input that is often overlooked in the discussion of computer materials is the communication that takes place,

> not between computer and user, but between users. Programs tend to be used by small groups, often pairs, of students rather than by students working alone. Invariably, the students get involved in much healthy discussion centering on how you get the thing to work or the best way to solve the problem." (Underwood, 1984:54)

A different category from formal or communicative CALL is *communicative computer use*. Communicative computer use occurs when a program provides an environment of comprehensible communication for non-native speakers (NNSs). A program designed to teach music or mathematics might be very successful with NNSs if they found it understandable and interesting. Communicative CALL programs are designed to promote language acquisition, but programs not specifically designed for CALL may do this as well or better. The difference between communicative CALL and communicative computer use is like the difference between communicative language teaching and communicative language use across the curriculum and in the community.

Communicative computer use – a category overlooked by Underwood – implies a radically changed perspective. It extends enormously the range and quantity of computer programs that may be appropriate for second language development, for CALL programs are only a small proportion even of educational software. We do not have to wait for the development of better CALL software; we make the best use of all software available now. *All* programs must communicate with their users if they are to be used successfully at all. *Any* program may promote communication with NNSs; it is an empirical question whether it does so or not. Furthermore, communicative computer use raises new research questions. Instead of limiting ourselves to questions of whether CALL

software is communicative and how it might be programmed to be more so, we can raise questions of how far the normal use of any program gives rise to communicative language use and what conditions of computer use (e.g., groupwork vs. individual work) increase communicative interaction between NNSs. In other words, we should enquire into functional variation in discourse during computer use. Consistent with this line of thought, Barker and Canale (1984) have argued for a variety of uses of word processors with second language learners and Greene (1984) similarly suggests uses of spreadsheets and other program types.

How can we know whether a computer program is communicative or not? We could ask "Does the program provide practice in using the language instead of merely manipulating it?" (Underwood 1984:94). More exactly, if computer software is valuable for language learning to the degree that it results in quantities of comprehensible input, we need to know whether one type of computer software produces more comprehensible input than another. Does communicative CALL actually produce more than formal CALL, for instance?

Besides comparing one type of computer use with another we should also compare language interaction *with* the computer and language interaction *without* the computer. Suppose learners communicated less during computer use than they did during conversation. If so, we would have to radically reassess assumptions about the computer as an aid for language development. It would not compare well to other alternatives. In more general terms we should examine whether there is functional variation in discourse between computer use and other types of language interaction.

This new perspective on software for second language acquisition, therefore, revolves crucially around the question of comprehensible input during computer use. To my knowledge, there is little, if any, published research on this question.

Interlanguage and Groupwork

Investigation of language interaction at the computer will draw on theory and research about interaction between non-native speakers, i.e., interlanguage talk during groupwork. This area has been reviewed by Long and Porter (Long & Porter 1985). Adding to Krashen's position on the importance of comprehensible input, they point out that there is substantial agreement between researchers that "Learners must be put in a position of being able to *negotiate* the input, thereby ensuring that the language in which it is heard is modified to exactly the level of comprehensibility they can manage" (Long & Porter 1985:214). Accordingly, a current focus of research in studies of NNS/NNS conversations is not only the quantity of language practice learners engage in but also the quality of the talk they produce in terms of the negotiation process. Typical measures of the negotiation process are clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and self- and other- repetitions.

Long and Porter's survy of research studies of NNS/NNS interaction shows that, when compared with teacher-fronted lessons and with NS/NNS interactions, NNS/NNS interactions provide more language practice opportunities and result in more negotiation. In other words, NNS/NNS interactions provide both a greater quantity and quality of comprehensible input. Studies also between participants increase quantity of talk and negotiation compared to "one-way" tasks.

The implications of this work for the study of computer-based language interaction are clear. If we study the language interaction of pairs of NNSs at the computer we are studying NNS/NNS groupwork. The use of a computer program provides tasks for the learners and we might expect the information exchange characteristics of these tasks will affect language interaction. We should study both the quantity and negotiated quality of NNS/NNS interaction at the computer.

As noted above, communication at the computer divides into computer-user communication and user-user communication. User-user communication should have research priority because it allows for negotiation, which we have seen to be theoretically and empirically a crucial aspect of the quality of comprehensible input.

Research Study

I will present some preliminary findings from a study (in progress) of NNS/NNS computer-based interaction. Subjects were eight pairs of intermediate proficiency adult NNSs; four pairs were female, four pairs were male. No pair shared the same first language. Each pair interacted in four tasks: informal conversation without the computer (10 minutes) and the use of three different computer programs (20 minutes each). One was a grammar teaching program which reviewed conditionals and then tested the learner's knowledge of them. Another was word-processing program (Bank Street Writer): Learners followed a tutorial on the use of the word-processor and then used the program to write a statement of their opinion of corporal punishment in schools. The third was a business management program which simulated the establishment and operation of a business franchise. In all cases, subjects were asked to work together to use the program cooperatively. Order of presentation of the tasks was counterbalanced and interactions were video-taped and transcribed.

Table 1 gives the results for a measure of quantity of speech (words per minute) across all pairs for the four tasks. It can be seen that pairs produced much more speech in conversation than in computer use. The rank order of quantities for each pair was tested using Friedman's nonparametric 2-way analysis of variance (Siegel, 1956:166-172) and found to be significantly different from chance ($p < .001$). As a rank-order statistic this does not take into account the size of the difference between conversation and computer

use: For every pair, quantity of speech in conversation was two to three times higher than any type of computer use.

	Conversation	Computer use		
		Grammar	Simulation	Word Processing
Words per min.	80	26	22	17
Comprehension checks (per minute).	1.01	.24	.26	.14

Table 1

Totals for interaction quality (words per minute) and quality (comprehension checks) across all pairs of subjects.

One measure of the quality of speech and the process of negotiation is the frequency of confirmation checks. Confirmation checks occur when one speaker tries to elicit confirmation that he or she has correctly heard or understood what was previously said by the other speaker. Table 1 reports the average frequency of comprehension checks per minute across the different tasks. On this measure conversation is again considerably higher than any type of computer use. Using Friedman's nonparametric 2-way ANOVA, the rank order of frequencies for each individual pair was found to be significantly different from chance ($p < .001$). Every pair produced more comprehension checks in conversation than in computer use.

This preliminary finding, that conversation was higher than computer-based interaction in both quantity and quality, is based on only two measures, but the large differences found suggest that other measures may arrive at the same result.

We cannot therefore assume that computer use will automatically produce the appropriate language environment desirable for second language acquisition, for it appears from these data that the quantity and quality of interaction may

actually *decrease* when NNSs engage in computer use. In fact, computer use may result in interactional discourse which is functionally different from conversation. If so, this difference is something which future research on NNS/NNS computer-based interaction will have to take into account.

Typical samples from one pair of NNSs will illustrate the nature of the data. J is a female Japanese speaker, S is a female Spanish speaker. Both had studied English at university in their home countries and were learning English in Canada.

Interpretation of Data

Simulation.

J: What do you think?"
S: I don't know.
J: I don't know. How much? I guess . .
S: Number 5.
J: Are you sure?

Grammar.

J: What is this thing?
S: "Would".
J: "You would have to"?
S: "you will have to reserve it. You want . ."
J: "Wanted". Yes. I am having some trouble with grainmar.

Word processor.

J: Type in upper case letters.
S: You try?
J: You do it.
S: No, you do it. You have practice.
J: No, no.
S: Yes, you have practice and I haven't.

Conversation.

S: How long have you been here?
J: About five weeks.

S: Just five weeks?
J: Yes.
S: Your language is very good. I came here, I think, March or April, but it was very difficult for me because when I came here I couldn't say anything in English. Just my name and "I am from Honduras". My teacher tried to talk to me, but I couldn't speak well enough, but I make a lot of mistakes.

These samples suggest possible reasons for differences between conversation and computer use. In conversation, speakers tend to hold the floor longer than they do at the computer. Most of the sustained turns of speaking in these data appear to occur in the conversations. A further point is that the computer interactions seem to be more limited to the "here and now", while in conversation speakers talk about their previous experiences. A related issue is that the conversation is more easily interpretable to the reader than the computer interactions, where it is often difficult for an outsider to understand what is happening. It may be that in conversation the participants are creating their shared focus of attention through the conversation itself, so that meanings are made explicit. By contrast, in the computer interactions the screen, and the videotape provides the key to understanding what is said. This could be summed up by speculating that the computer interactions are highly dependent on the context created by the computer, whereas the conversations to a large extent create their own context of understanding.

It should be stressed that this paper is a preliminary study, part quantitative, part interpretive. Its conclusions should not be overgeneralised. The data have not been fully analysed; the results have appeared only with intermediate speakers and other proficiency levels should be examined as well. We should explore other kinds of computer programs and we should investigate other arrangements of learners and tasks at the computer. Only user-user communication has been analysed, and while there are good reasons for doing this, ultimately

computer-user communication should be addressed. To do otherwise would be to ignore the considerable amount of reading that occurs during many computer programs. We should also treat the assumptions of the input hypothesis with caution. Cummins (1984) has drawn attention to differences between conversational language proficiency and cognitive/academic language proficiency. Competence in one does not imply competence in the other. It may be that the computer is more appropriate to the development of cognitive/academic language rather than conversation.

Conclusion

Current theory and research on second language acquisition now emphasises the importance of communicative language use rather than formal teaching. Debate on the use of the computer in second language learning also stresses communicative language use, but there is a lack of research which examines communicative interaction at the computer. This paper has shown that it is possible to research computer-based language interaction using theory and measures developed in the study of NNS/NNS interaction.

Emerging findings give preliminary indications that the quantity and quality of NNS/NNS interaction at the computer is lower than in conversation between the same speakers. This is a disturbing result. However, it does not mean that the computer has no role in second language development. Rather, it means that conceptions of the role of the computer may have to be revised radically and that much further research is required to examine closely the nature of language use at the computer under a variety of conditions.

Such further research will be valuable in at least three ways. Firstly, at a practical level, it will provide objective data for the evaluation of computer software for language purposes. Secondly, it will provide empirical evidence needed to develop models of appropriate computer use by second language

learners. Thirdly, and more generally, the study of language use at the computer is likely to increase our understanding of the role of context in language input and of the nature of functional variation in interlanguage.

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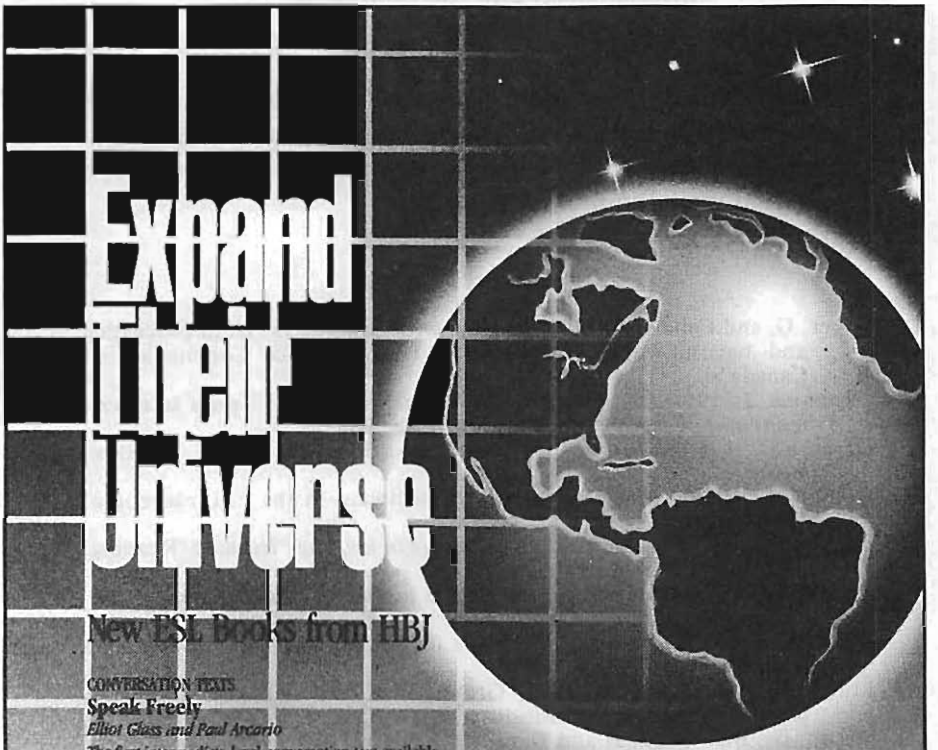

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RELATIVE CLAUSE DEVELOPMENT IN JAPANESE ENGLISH[1]

Neville J. Saunders

Abstract

Using data from a project involving 10 longitudinal studies of adult Japanese learning English in Australia, the development of the relative clause structure is analysed. Five stages of development are detected. Avoidance of specific types of relative clauses is postulated, and the significance of the developmental and interference explanations of learner difficulties is discussed.

Introduction

The focus of research into problems in second language learning has changed rapidly in recent years, moving from dependence on the tenet that interference from the native language is the source of learner difficulties (e.g. Lado, 1957) to acceptance of the possibility of a much wider range of social and psychological explanations for such difficulties. One of the approaches which developed as a result was the study of learner output (Corder, 1967) to determine the strategies and sequences in L2 development, and by comparing the results with the classic studies of development in L1 (e.g. Brown, 1973) some researchers have speculated on the existence of universals in language acquisition. Finding striking resemblances between L1 and L2 sequencing in a limited set of English morphemes, researchers such as Dulay and Burt

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(1974) concluded that there is a natural sequence of language acquisition applicable to L1 and child L2. On the other hand in a study of relative clauses produced by adult E.F.L. students with Japanese and Spanish as L1s, Bertkau (1974) found "little evidence of systematic learner language" which suggests that sequencing may not apply in adult L2, as sequencing implies systematic behaviour. Elsewhere the evidence supports the systematicity of L2 acquisition. Evidence of universals in types of relative clause use is found in Keenan and Comrie (1977) in the form of a hierarchy of accessibility. In addition, studies by Ioup and Kruse (1977), and Schumann (1980) found strong preferences for certain types of relative clauses within the acquisition process.

Further, the significance of interference has also been the subject of some controversy. Whereas Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) claim that there is little evidence to suggest that interference plays a significant role in second language acquisition, interference was found by Myhill (1982) using Japanese subjects in tests of grammaticality judgements on relative clauses to be of importance in explaining difficulties. Further, Schacter (1974), who examined the production of English relative clauses amongst Japanese and other subjects, found that avoidance strategies could be triggered by interference difficulties.

The present study re-examines the question of individual variation and sequencing within the relative clause structures produced by Japanese E.F.L. students and the validity of the interference hypothesis and the L1-L2 analogy as explanations of the source of learner difficulties.

Subjects and Data

The subjects (hereafter called the learners to avoid ambiguity with the grammatical subject) were 10 Japanese students aged 16 – 30 in intensive E.F.L. classes in an Aus-

tralian college. The five less able students, M, E, S, A and R, the standard group, were in a class where the purpose was to develop skills in speaking and writing for use on their return to their home country on completion of the course. The other five students, K, H, I, Y and C, the advanced group, were taking a pre-university programme of language and study skills. C had previously spent a year in Australia as an exchange student, and had acquired more colloquial language than the other learners. K produced no relative clauses[2], and is thus excluded from the analysis, except in so far as his sentences are included in the determination of the overall rate of use of relatives.

The data consist of transcriptions of recordings of 20 to 25-minute free conversations with native speakers of English, held at approximately monthly intervals for periods of 6 to 9 months. These conversations yielded an average of 95 sentences (sentences were determined on the basis of prosodic features – intonation and pause length) with a range of 43 to 221. Marginally more than 1% of these, 77 in all, contained relative clauses. Each of these sentences has been analysed for error, use and avoidance of the component part of the relative clause construction in English and a development pattern is suggested.

Relative Clause Construction and Predicted Difficulties

Relative clauses vary from language to language, not only in the formation of the rules, but also in their application (such as the distinction between optional and obligatory use, and the nature of the constraints on the rule). Two features of relative clauses are the focus (e.g., whether the pronoun is in the subject or object form) and the embeddedness (e.g., whether it is embedded on the subject or object in the matrix clause). For the purposes of this paper relative clauses may be considered to fit one of four types depending on the embeddedness and focus, characterised as SS (subject embedded, subject focus),

SO (subject embedded, object focus), OS (object embedded, subject focus), and OO (object embedded, object focus). The object is object of a verb or preposition. The following is a brief description of these rules in English and a comparison with the Japanese rules.

1. Relative clause position

In English the embedded clause follows the noun on which it is embedded while in Japanese it precedes the noun.

2. Relative Pronoun

The English relative pronoun appears in a variety of forms ("who", "which", etc.) the choice of which may be constrained by gender and/or case. In Japanese there is no relative pronoun and the entire phrase containing the relative pronoun is deleted.[3] Thus the relation of the antecedent (or "postcedent" in Japanese) to the embedded clause has to be inferred by the hearer, and may thus be quite ambiguous. This rule prevents the use in Japanese of a possessive embedding such as is found in the English "whose"[4], as it is not possible for the decoder to infer this relationship.

3. Relative positioning

The English relative phrase occurs at the front of its clause (pied piping), but in some cases the preposition may be retained at the end of its clause (preposition stranding). As the whole relative phrase is deleted in Japanese, fronting (or backing as Japanese is an SOV language) and preposition stranding are not applicable.

4. WH- deletion

In English the Wh- word is deletable in many instances when it is clause initial and in the objective case (object of a verb or stranded preposition.) In Japanese the deletion is obligatory in all situations.

On the assumption that the differences between English and Japanese structures would cause learning difficulties, and that similarities would result in ease of acquisition, a set of predicted difficulties for Japanese learning English

was drawn up as follows:

1. Locating the relative clause in the appropriate position.
2. Marking the relative clause using a relative pronoun.
3. Choosing an appropriate relative pronoun.
4. Retaining the preposition.
5. Stranding the preposition of the Wh- phrase.
6. Learning when not to delete the Wh- word.

It would be expected that this deletion would be over-generalised as an initial strategy as it is the case of learning the English limits to what is a general rule in Japanese.

Errors

Errors in the sentences containing relative clauses may be divided into two classes, errors in the relativisation rules, and secondary or trade-off errors (such as those involving verb forms or articles). Only the former are considered in this paper, as it is considered that trade-off errors induced by the complexity of the relativisation rules may only be interpreted in the light of findings for similar forms in non-trade-off situations. Further, information on the rate of error is included as the significance of an error lies as much in the frequency of occurrence as in the fact that it does occur. The following types of error were found:

1. Omission of an obligatory relative pronoun

Of the 70 situations requiring an obligatory relative pronoun 9 were omitted, as in:

S5: There are very beautiful flowers – isn't in bloom yet.

A1: I like the play – is black humour.

All cases were OS clauses and hence these sentences might be interpreted as either relative clauses with the relative pronoun omitted, or conjoined principal clauses with the "and" omitted, (the strategy of using "and" in lieu of the more complex relative clause construction was found in Bertkau's study). The sentences were judged as intended relatives on the basis of the suprasegmental features of pause and intonation. Japanese learners tend to mark sentence

intonation, whereas in the sentences under consideration the pause was not present, and the intonation resembled that of a single sentence. This error is found in 5 learners, with one displaying it 3 times, and another twice.

2. Wrong relative pronoun

This type of error had an unexpectedly low rate of occurrence, the sole instance involving a substitution of "which" for "who":

S6: A professor which is Japanese, he will come to Australia.

As this appears to be a random use as this learner had used "who" previously (in conversations 3 and 5) and did so again later in conversation 6, it thus might be classed as a mistake rather than a developmental error and as such is beyond the scope of this paper.

3. Omission of the relative phrase preposition

This error occurred in both the preposed and postposed positions, as in:

A5: . . Australians – who . . it's easy to get a job in Japan.

Y6: . . the tape recorder which I record my lectures –.

There was only one obligatory situation with the preposed preposition (and it was in error), but five postposed preposition situations were evident, with three omissions. The two correct forms were produced by one learner, who nevertheless in each produced what may be considered trade-off errors as forms were produced correctly in simple sentences elsewhere in the same session.

4. Pronoun anaphora

In this situation a pronoun is inserted after the relative clause in SS clauses, as in:

A4: One of my friend who is studying how to speak Japanese, he attended to Japanese speech contest.

S1: . . one American woman who is a journalist writer, she is coming . . .

This anaphora occurs in six instances, and it is confined

to three learners, one of whom also produces one instance of a relative clause embedded on the subject without the copying. There are five further sentences without the anaphora in three other learners. Pronoun anaphora does not have its source in the transfer of Japanese rules (where pronominalisation is normally realised as 0). These sentences could be classified as topic-comment structures which occur quite naturally in Japanese (with the subject and relative clause as the topic, and the pronoun introducing the comment), but the inclusion of the pronoun would be highly unlikely in Japanese. It is unlikely that the learners were aware of the sociolinguistic rules for anaphoric pronouns in some varieties of colloquial English. It is however significant that all the subjects who produced the anaphoric pronoun did so only at a specific period of time and it is thus interpreted as a developmental phenomenon which assists some learners in the acquisition of a sentence structure where the subject is separated from its verb by a clause. It is interesting to note that all cases involved the third person singular, and the verbs were mostly in the present tense where the verb requires the /s/ morpheme attachment.

Use and Avoidance Strategies

1. General Use

The learners showed a reasonably even distribution of the relative clauses throughout the study, except in two instances. H produced his eleven relative clauses in two out of six conversations, and nine of these occurred in conversation 2. The reason for the high use in this particular conversation is not known. S produced six of her twelve relative cluases in conversation 6. This conversation is of particular interest in that it took place in a period of emotional turmoil a few days after she was involved in a car accident. She seemed to be using the conversation as counselling session, with the resultant emotional involvement leading to the produc-

tion of longer sentences with greater linguistic complexity than at any other time in the study. This supports LaForge's (1983) position that emotional involvement produces a higher level of linguistic output.

2. Relative Pronoun Selection

The use of relative pronouns is shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Use of Relative Pronouns

	case			
	Subject N	Direct Object N	Object of a preposition N	Learners Displaying: N
Pronoun:				
who	30		1	8
whom		1		1
which	20	4	5	6
that	3			3
where			2	2
(0)	9	2		5
Total	62	7	8	9

From this table it can be seen that there was a marked preference for the gender-specific pronouns "who" and "which" to the near exclusion of "that", and that subject pronouns were much more preferred to object pronouns which involve location in front of the verb. There were no examples of the possessive relative pronouns "whose" or other remote levels of the Keenan and Comrie accessibility hierarchy indicating possible use of the strategy of avoidance. The pattern of pronoun selection shows marked differences from that found for L1 acquisition as reported in Bowerman (1979) and Romaine (1984). There is, for example, no use of the relative pronoun "what" common in L1 and the omission of the object relative pronoun common in L1 was used by only a few learners towards the end of the study. The subject

relative pronoun omission is not reported in the L1 studies perhaps because such sentences are interpreted as consisting of two separate sentences, or as co-ordinate clauses lacking a conjunction.It is used only in the early conversations before the use of object pronouns, suggesting that the learners used the strategy of transfer of their L1 rule at first, deleting the subject relative pronoun but that once the rule was acquired, it was applied in all stituations without the optional deletion which was rather late in developing.

3. Relative Pronoun Phrase

The preposition in the relative pronoun phrase was highly unstable whether postposed or not, and the avoidance of sentences with such structures is suspected in line with the prediction of difficulty. There were five instances of obligatory situations displayed by three subjects only, two with preposition error and the third with a preposition but with suspected trade-off errors elsewhere in the clause.

4. Complex Relatives

There were no examples of relatives embedded within embedded clauses, but there were two examples of conjoining, one of conjoined clauses and one of conjoined nouns, each with a relative clause. There was also an example of a conditional within a relative, but as this contained a trade-off structural break it is not possible to make inferences from it with confidence. The more advanced leaners did not attempt these structural complexities.

5. Position of Embedding

Table 2 shows the use of relative clause types (relative pronoun in the nominative or objective case) by the case of the antecedent:

Table 2
Types of Relative Clause by Position of Embedding

	Relative Pronoun	
	Subject	Object
Antecedent:		
Subject	15	0
Object	47	15

Of the 77 relative clauses, 62 (81%) were O embedded, revealing a similar preference for position of relative clauses as found in L1 studies (Bowerman, 1979; Romaine, 1984), but the OO clauses show less variety and lower proportions in the present study because the learners did not achieve competence in the relative pronoun deletion rule until late in the study, nor did they use the empty head noun type, such as "things I got" (Bowerman 1979). The total avoidance of subject-object type embeddings as in:

Sentences which we avoid are like this.

is interesting in that many of the learners had already demonstrated that they had mastered all the rules required, but failed to produce the structure.

Development

From the error analysis and the use and avoidance analysis a pattern of development was apparent, consisting of five recognisable stages of development. The pattern is set out below and followed by discussion of the progress of each of the learners through the stages and the frequency of use of the structure.

Table 3
Development Stages in Relative Clauses

Stage	Relative Pronoun	Antecedent
1	omission	object only
2a	subject only	subject and object
2b	subject	subject and object pronoun copying: subject (some learners)
3	subject and object	subject and object. object pronoun with object only
4	optional deletion	"
5	use of prepositions with object pronoun	"

Stage 1

S dispayed this condition up to the fifth conversation, but thereafter made no such error at all. Other learners displayed the error occasionally, but only A, where the error was found in the sole relative in conversation 1, could even hesitantly be classed in this stage for any conversation (the others are considered transition errors). Avoidance of relative clauses by some learners may have meant that they did not display any stage 1 errors at all.

Stage 2a

T, E and S used the relative pronoun in subject position only, and A, who attempted the next stage twice (both in error), is classified in this stage too. C and H displayed the subject pronoun only to conversations 3 and 4 respectively when correct use of the object pronoun signifies the achievement of stage 3. This type of structure appeared as object embedded before subject embedded in most learners. R, A, E, M, I and Y displayed this order. H and C displayed both from the same conversation (conversation 2). Only S displayed the reverse order.

Stage 2b

The inclusion of the anaphoric pronoun occurs only while the learner is in stage 2, or in transition to stage 3. S was the only subject to exhibit both states of the rule in a single conversation (significantly the one relating to the accident), the form without the anaphoric pronoun occuring in that part of the conversation relating to the accident with its high level of emotional involvement, and with the pronoun in the later part of the conversation where the involvement level had decreased. Four other subjects used the construction.

Stage 3

This stage includes verb object relative pronouns and the word "where" used as a relative pronoun. These relatives occured only as object embedded. This stage is evident for M, K, I, C and Y.

Stage 4
This stage is shown in the sentences produced by R and I. As C produced a sentence which could have used the deletion but did not, she may not have achieved this stage.
Stage 5
This form was not used in correct relative clauses in the data, but C did display the postposed preposition in correct position in three sentences (albeit with possible trade-off error), in contrast with Y who produced the structure with preposition omission:

C5 . . tapes which (I) (have) listen(ed) to before.
Y6 . . tape recorder which I record my lectures (on).

It is possible that the order of stages 4 and 5 may be reversed in the light of further evidence as C, the learner who was most familiar with colloquial English and who achieved this stage, did not display competence in stage 4. Y, however, who attempted this structure though always with omission of the preposition, did display competence in stage 4. R and I displayed competence in stage 4, but R's attempt at stage 5 was in error.

Beyond Stage 5
The learners in the present study did not show competence in subject-object embeddings, nor in the use of "whose" or the more colloquial "what" as relative pronouns. The first two of these would be predicted from the accessibility hierarchy predictions, but the latter is not covered by that analysis.
Individual Development
The development of individual learners is shown in Table 4:

Table 4
Development in Individual Learners

Month / Learner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Rate	Rank Order
K	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		0.00	10
M	—	—	2a	2a	2a	—				0.54	8
E	2	1 2	2a	—	2a	2a	—			0.93	8
S	—	—	1 2b	1 2b	1	2 2b 3	— —			1.71	6
H	—	1 2a 2b	—	—	2a 3	—				1.79	6
A	1	2a	—	2b	2a	—	2a	3 (5)		1.54	4
Y	—	—	3	2a	2a	3 (5)	2a 3			1.67	4
I	2a	—	4	—	2a	2a	—	—		0.46	3
R	1	—	—	3	4	—	4 (5)	—	—	0.53	2
C	—	2a	2a 5	2a 3	2a 3 5	2a				1.57	1

Numbers under month refer to stages of development displayed.
Parentheses indicate stage attempted but error occurs.
Rate is the number of occurrences per 100 sentences.

Of the learners in the standard group, M and E displayed competence only to Stage 2, while the remaining three showed progress from the ungrammatical forms of Stage 1 to the grammatical uses of Stage 2 and 3 (and Stage 4 in the case of R.) The rank order was determined by stage reached at the conclusion of the study, and, within each stage, unsucessful attempts at the next stage were counted as more advanced than no attempts. The rank order within this group is parallel to that found in the analysis of questions from the same

corpus (Saunders, 1983), except for E who performed at a lower rank in the present study. The advanced group learners similarly maintained the same rank order, but they did not display competence compared with the standard group, as they did in the question study, nor did they show a greater frequency of use of relatives even though their rate of question use was far superior. All of the subjects apart from M, E and Y showed progress through at least two stages, and Y's attempts at Stage 5 in the later part of the study, though unsucessful, indicate that development was proceeding. Only M and E revealed no formal progress.

The rate, the number of uses per 100 sentences produced, provides a means of comparison of the linguistic output of individual learners on a specified structure, on their use of different structures, and on their performance in relation to other groups of learners (e.g., with different L1s). As Table 4 shows, the learners in this study form two groups – the group which produced less than 1.00 relatives per 100 sentences, and the group which achieved a rate of more than 1.50 relatives per 100 sentences (the overall average, including K, was 1.17). Unlike the question study the rate of production did not increase with progress through the stages, and the advanced group did not show a significantly higher rate of production. Further, the learners with the lowest rate (apart from K) both showed competence to Stage 4, while the two learners with the lighest rate barely showed competence in Stage 3. Low use is not, therefore, necessarily indicative of avoidance or incompetence: other factors such as progress along the developmental sequence must be considered as well.

Developmental and Interference Predictions

Some factors emerged as similarities in the comparison of L1 and L2 acquisition of relatives, especially the late development of SO relatives, but there were also a number

of differences: the omission of the subject relative pronoun (though this may result from differences in interpreting some sentences), the late development of the object relative pronoun deletion, preposition dropping, and the error types in relative pronouns.

Some of the predictions of difficulty derived from the *a priori* contrastive analysis are substantiated by this analysis. The omission of the subject relative pronoun in the early stages of some of the learners is evidence for one of the predictions of difficulty. In addition the high rate of error in prepositions suggests that both in stranding and pied piping prepositions are difficult for Japanese. However, the low error rate in pronoun selection, the lack of error in positioning of relative clauses, the appearance of unpredicted forms such as pronoun anaphora, and the late development of object relative pronoun deletion reveal the limitations of interference based on a contrastive analysis as a complete explanation of learner difficulty.

What is interesting is that neither the developmental hypothesis nor contrastive analysis predicted the late development of the object pronoun development.

Conclusion

In contrast to Bertkau (1974) who found "no evidence of systematic learner language", this paper finds a development pattern of five (or more) stages through which Japanese learners progress towards competence in English relatives. Over the nine subjects variation from the pattern was minimal, and classifiable as transitional instability between stages or in one case regression.

In relation to the sources of difficulty, interference was shown to be of importance, supporting the findings of Schacter (1974) and Myhill (1982). Moreover, the development pattern of L2 relative clauses contains major differences from the L1 pattern, supporting the view that some different

stragegies may be employed. However, some of the structures – pronoun anaphora, and the late development of object pronoun deletion – suggest that interference and developmental theories together are not sufficient as an explanation of all L2 learner difficulties.

The results were also in keeping with the findings of Ioup and Kruse (1977) and Schumann (1980) that sentences embedded on object were preferred to those embedded on the subject, though it was found that subject focus was preferred to object focus embeddings, and that the zero relativiser was an unexpectedly late development.

Notes

[1]This project was funded by a research grant from the Australia-Japan Foundation.

[2]K did produce the sentence:

K3: I know where I am going.

Within the Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) description this would be considered a relative clause without antecedent, but for the purposes of the present study it is classified as an indirect question. This is the only such clause in the corpus.

[3]Schacter (1975) claims that the WH- phrase in Japanese may be retained in some instances in a relative clause, but gives no further explanation. My own experience is that no such retention occurs.

[4]If a form of resumptive pronoun were available in Japanese this structure might be possible. Keenan and Comrie (1977) claim that such pronouns do exist in Japanese but give no examples. Tarallo and Myhill (1983), however, claim that these Japanese sentences illustrate the use of resumptive pronouns:

(1) watakushi ga sono hito no hon wo totta sensei ga okotta.
I SUBJ that person's book OBJ take PAST teacher SUBJ get angry PAST
= The teacher whose book I took got angry.

(2) watakushi ga hon wo totta sensei ga okotta.
I SUBJ book OBJ take PAST teacher SUBJ get angry PAST
= The teacher whose book I took got angry.

Their survey of 4 native speakers of Japanese found two accepting both forms and one accepting each of (1) and (2) only. A random survey of 6 Japanese academics at Oxford resulted in a nil acceptance of either sentence in the meaning given, and all reported that the sentences were difficult to assign meaning to. In (2) it is not possible to determine the ownership of the book, and in (1) the owner has to be a third party, not "watakushi" or "sensei". This, therefore, cannot be an example of a resumptive pronoun in a relative clause as claimed

by Tarallo and Myhill, and raises the problem of interpretation of studies of acceptability in relation to intended meaning. The comments elicted from the 6 Japanese in this survey support the view that Japanese does not have a possessive relative pronoun structure.

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The Modern Language Journal

Founded: 1916
Editor: David P. Benseler
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ISSN 0026-7902

Published quarterly at The University of Wisconsin Press

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COGNITIVE ABILITIES: VERBAL COMPREHENSION AND ITS MARKER TESTS

Joseph P. Boyle

Abstract

In all classifications of cognitive abilities a Verbal Comprehension factor is prominent. The nature of this factor is complex, and attempts to analyse it (Thurstone, 1938; Carroll, 1941; Guilford, 1972) have made distinctions between receptive ability (comprehension) and productive ability (fluency), and between isolated words (vocabulary) and words in context (discourse). The validity of these distinctions is discussed. The second part of the article examines what type of tests are the best markers for the Verbal Comprehension factor. The Educational Testing Service's kits of factor referenced cognitive tests (1954, 1963, 1976) give only single-word vocabulary tests, despite suggestions by Cattell (1971) and Carroll (1974) that other types of tests should also be used, and despite increasing doubts, especially in some ESL/EFL circles, about the validity of discrete-point language testing. The final part of the article describes an experiment with Hong Kong Chinese students. The results support the use of single-word Vocabulary tests as reliable markers of the Verbal Comprehension factor, but also support the contention that future Kits of The Educational Testing Service should include verbal tests of a more varied nature.

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Part 1:
Cognitive Abilities and the Analysis of Verbal Comprehension

The classification of human cognitive abilities has been a task which has engrossed philosophers and psychologists for centuries. In the first part of this century important advances were made by such as Spearman (1904), Thorndike (1921), Thurstone (1938), and Burt and Jones (1942). Spearman divided human abilities into a general factor ("g"), plus specific factors ("s"), describing the specific factors as Verbal, Numerical, Mechanical, Attention, and Imagination. On the same lines, Burt and Jones postulated a general factor, plus specifics, which they labelled Verbal Reasoning, Language Usage, Numerical Ability, Mechanical Reasoning, Abstract Reasoning, Space Relations, and Clerical Speed/Accuracy. Thorndike preferred to describe human abilities in terms of a few large group factors, including Verbal, Mathematical, Dexterity. Following Thorndike, Thurstone distinguished six Primary Mental Abilities: Verbal, Word Fluency, Numerical, Spatial, Memory, and Reasoning.

A glance at these lists reveals the presence of a Verbal factor in all of them. Cattell (1971) notes how the Verbal factor had a special status for many psychologists: For Spearman it was a "hierarchy breaker"; for Burt and Vernon "almost a general factor"; for Thurstone "an emphatic primary". In Cattell's own scheme for classifying human abilities, his Universal Index, the first ability on the list is Verbal Ability. Guilford (1967) too, in his Structure of Intellect model, makes much of the Verbal factor.

As psychological knowledge became more refined, the classification of cognitive abilities became more complex. There has been controversy among psychologists working in this area about which type of classification is appropriate for a scientific description of cognitive abilities, some suggesting a matrix type of model (Guilford, 1967), as in chemistry, others preferring a hierarchical type of model (Royce, 1973), as in biology. Guilford's Structure of Intellect model, with

its ingenious and detailed complexity, challenged the simplicity of previous models, but was itself challenged by Cattell (1971:55) who claimed that it was unconvincing, contained "too many arbitrary features", and was based on a method of factor analysis which was inappropriate.

The debate between Guilford and Cattell grew more fierce during the 70's, and reached a point in the 80's where even the titles of their articles reflected their personal animosity: Guilford (1980) scorned Cattell's idea of two general factors of intelligence, Gf (Fluid intelligence) and Gc (crystallised intelligence), in an article entitled, "Fluid and crystallised intelligence: two fanciful concepts", Cattell, with his colleague Horn, (Horn and Cattell, 1982) replied with: "Whimsy and misunderstandings of Gf-Gc theory: a comment on Guilford". Others have been less virulent, and possibly more effective, in their criticism of both Guilford (Carroll, 1968) and of Cattell (Eysenck, 1972).

The Verbal Comprehension Factor

Whatever disagreement there has been about the classification of cognitive abilities, there has been no disagreement about the central position of the Verbal Comprehension factor. Ekstrom, French, Harman and Dermen (1976) say such a factor has been mentioned explicitly in at least 125 published studies. Northrop (1977), in a history of the Verbal Comprehension factor, says it is a factor which does not easily break up into sub-factors. Nevertheless, there have been several attempts to refine and further analyse the Verbal factor.

Thurstone (1938) in his list of Primary Mental Abilities, included a Verbal factor (V) and a Word Fluency factor (W). He described the V factor as being logical in character, dealing with the understanding of ideas in discourse, rather than of isolated words. His W factor was associated with single, isolated words. Carroll (1941), in a study of the Verbal

Comprehension factor, re-analysed Thurstone's data and concluded that the V and W factors could each be further analysed. He divided the V factor into two, a C and J factor. Factor C was related to the understanding of vocabulary, the "verbal tokens" which underlie ideas, rather than, as Thurstone had said, the comprehension of ideas as they occur in discourse. This latter, in Carroll's analysis, belonged to a J factor. Thurstone's W factor was also divisible, according to Carroll, into an A and an E factor. Factor A was characterised by speed of word association, whereas factor E influenced the speed of production of coherent discourse.

Both Thurstone and Carroll, therefore, wished to make practical distinctions between receptive (comprehension) and productive (fluency) ability, and between words in isolation (vocabulary) and words in coherent text (discourse), Thurstone suggesting a simpler V/W distinction, and Carroll preferring the more refined analysis into factors C and J (=V) and factors A and E (=W).

Guilford (1972:132) also believed that Thurstone's V and W needed further analysis, and "should be regarded as verbal composites, each a confounding factor that represents a number of semantic abilities". Using the terms of his own Structure of Intellect model, he claimed that Thurstone's V factor represented no less than seven distinguishable factors. Inherent in Guilford's analysis too, were the distinctions between receptive and productive, and between isolated words and words in discourse. Both these distinctions, however, need examining.

The Receptive/Productive Distinction

One of the most widely accepted theories of the comprehension process is the analysis-by-synthesis model of Halle and Stevens (1964), which has survived, with modifications, for the past twenty years. According to this model, the listener generates a sentence on the basis of a hypothesis

about the grammatical structure of the incoming signal, and checks this against the actual input. Miller (1964:30) describes the process: The first stage is a guess about the stream of incoming sound; a response to this is then generated; the first guess may well be wrong, so another guess is made which will probably be closer; the listener keeps trying till a satisfactory match is obtained.

Though the active, constructive nature of the analysis-by-synthesis (A-by-S) mode seems to fit our internal awareness of the comprehension process, it was challenged by Katz and Postal (1964:167). Their objection was that in order to provide the syntactic analysis of even fairly short sentences, the number of independent operations required would be so enormously high that a human brain could not be expected to perform the analysis even in a lifetime. The trial-and-error process would have too many errors and could not keep up with the incoming signals.

Neisser (1966) attempted to confront this objection with two suggestions. His first suggestion was that the incoming flow of speech passes through a "filter" system which segments the flow, extracts a few distinctive features, and tentatively recognises some of the constituent elements or units. What comes through this filter system is the raw material for the listener's construction or synthesis of an internal message to match the actual input. Neisser's second suggestion was that the constructive process is not aimlessly trial-and-error, but bases its construction on contextual clues. The context thus ensures that the most probable "fit" will be tried first, and since this will often be the correct one, the trial-and-error process will be characterised more by success than by error.

Another objection raised against the A-by-S model was that of Straight (1976) who pointed to the ability people have to interpret input that they cannot themselves produce. He claimed that this argued strongly against the blurring of the distinction between comprehension and production.

He also rejected Neisser's (1966) and others' revised models on the grounds that they all necessitated some sort of structural analysis prior to the matching procedure, an analysis which itself required explanation.

This line of objection had really been met earlier by Stevens and Halle (1967) who pointed out that the criteria employed in the matching operation were probably not very stringent. Neisser (1976:36) agreed that the matching constructions, i.e. the guesses, would need to be fairly open and not too specific. Cooper (1979:40) describes the input data as "somewhat rough and noisy", and suggests that the matching process in comprehension is based on "rather crude information".

More recent attempts to analyse the comprehension process still favour active, constructive models akin to the A-by-S model, and accept that reception and production of meaning cannot be rigidly separated. Rivers (1980:2) describes listening comprehension as a process of selecting and matching our selection against the incoming signal. In an earlier work Rivers (1976:133-137) gives a detailed analysis of the comprehension process. She distinguishes three stages: the first, a forming of rough impressions; the second, a more detailed attempt to segment and recognise lexical and syntactic patterns; the third, a recording of the material to suit the requirements of long-term memory.

In Abbott's model (Abbott and Wingard 1981), short term memory is actively applied to turn the stream of incoming speech into internal meanings. It holds stretches of speech while it operates on them. Features of a present stretch enable predictions, often very accurate, about future stretches to be made. These predictions are a vital component of speedy comprehension. What Abbott terms "strategies for understanding", working on both the incoming data and the surrounding context, then turn the stretches of speech into meaningful phrases. These are passed on to the long term memory where they are attached to an already existing network of meaning.

It is apparent from these attempts to analyse the comprehension process that the distinction receptive/productive, while it may often be useful for practical purposes, is not really as clear-cut and straightforward as it may at first seem.

The Vocabulary/Discourse Distinction

The second distinction commonly made when analysing the Verbal factor is a distinction between words in isolation and words with surrounding context. Vocabulary knowledge might be defined roughly as "knowing the meaning of the words". The "meaning of a word" may sound a simple enough notion, and dictionaries are based on the idea that words can be defined in terms of necessary properties. However, linguistic philosophers in the 50's, like Ryle (1951) and Wittgenstein (1953), showed the difficulty of defining words in terms of necessary properties, offering as examples such everyday words as "games" and "work". Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957) also showed, by means of their semantic differential vocabulary test, the complex nature of the "meaning" of words, especially when the word has affective connotations, like the word "mother".

Clark and Clark (1977:45) observe that although meaning obviously plays a central part in comprehension, it has been given scant attention in the psychology of language. They suggest, among the reasons for this, the intrinsic difficulty of the concept, and the lack of an agreed framework in which to consider meaning.

For some kinds of words a neat, brief defintion, like a dictionary entry, works well enough. But the meaning of other words can be approached only by a lengthy discourse, more like the entry in an encyclopedia. Hence the distinction made in semantic studies between "componential analysis", which describes the meaning of words more like a dictionary entry, and "procedural analysis", which can be compared more with an entry in an encyclopedia (Moates and Schumacher, 1980).

The problem is that words are not self-sufficient, isolated entities. The "meaning of a word" includes the relations of that word with others. Semantic field theory is based on the fact that the vocabulary of a language does not consist of a random list of words, but of networks of relations between words (Channel, 1981). Wilkins (1972:124) notes that the traditional view of "the meaning of a word" is that each word "has" a meaning, which is the primary thing, and that any relations between the meanings of words ultimately derive from this basic meaning which the words have in themselves. Wilkins suggests that the situation is really the reverse, that words cannot be understood in isolation, and that it is precisely the complex relations between words which determine the semantic structure of the language.

It can be seen, therefore, that the distinction between vocabulary (isolated words) and discourse (words in context), though necessary for practical purposes, like the receptive/productive distinction, is not as simple and clear-cut as it may at first appear to be.

Part 2:
Marker Tests for the Verbal Comprehension Factor

One of the reasons why Carroll, Guilford, and others felt obliged to subdivide Thurstone's V and W factors was that the marker or reference tests which loaded on the factors were of very diverse types. On his V factor, for example, all of the following tests loaded: Vocabulary, Grammar, Spelling, Inventive Synonyms (give two words the same in meaning as the test word), Inventive Opposites (give two words opposite in meaning to the test word), Reading/Proverbs (select from alternative sentences the one which means the same as a given proverb), Reading/Quotations (select from alternative sentences the one which means the same as a given quotation).

A point of particular interest in Thurstone's data was

the type of test which loaded most heavily on the Verbal factor, in other words, the type of test which would be the best marker or reference test for the factor. The two best candidates seemed to be Vocabulary test or tests of Reading Comprehension. In Thurstone's original analysis the two Vocabulary tests had loaded on the Verbal Comprehension factor at .38 and .40– substantial, but not notably high loadings. However, using a different method of rotation on Thurstone's data, others found vocabulary to be much more prominent than in the original analysis. Zimmerman (1953) found the loadings for the two Vocabulary tests on the Verbal Comprehension factor increased to .68 and .76, while Wrigley, Saunders and Newhaus (1958) found the loadings for the Vocabulary tests .74 and .93– all very high loadings.

Northrop (1977), reviewing a large number of factor analytic studies which had found a Verbal Comprehension factor, concluded that the purest measures of the factor were Vocabulary test. Reading Comprehension test, on the other hand, seemed to sample broader aspects of verbal ability, like ability to extract the main idea, or to make an inference. Northrop (1977:7) gave a list of several studies in which the loadings of the Vocabulary tests on the Verbal Comprehension factor were higher than the loadings of the Reading Comprehension tests on the same factor. Four examples from the list illustrate the difference:

Table 1
Loadings of Tests on the Verbal Comprehension Factor

Study	Vocabulary	Reading Comprehension
Fruchter (1952)*	.71	.56
French (1957)	.66	.41
Kelley (1964)	.60	.48
Very (1967)	.89	.76

*all citations in Northrop, 1977

It is interesting that all three editions of the Educational Testing Service's (ETC) kits of factor referenced cognitive tests (Ekstrom, French, Harman and Dermen, 1976; French, 1954; French, Ekstrom and Price, 1963) give only vocabulary tests of the single-word, multiple-choice-type as reference tests for the Verbal Comprehension factor. This is somewhat surprising since the factor is defined in the kits broadly as, "the ability to understand the English language". Carroll (1974), in a preparatory paper for the third edition of the ETS Kit, commented on this and suggested that a more diversified set of tests for the Verbal Comprehension factor might be more appropriate. Cattell (1971) too did not think Vocabulary tests alone were adequate to mark the Verbal Comprehension factor, and he offers a fairly wide set of tests to measure the ability, including Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, and Syntax.

Experiment with Chinese Students

In order to obtain further independent evidence on the question of what type of tests could best act as markers of the Verbal Comprehension factor, a study was conducted in Hong Kong. The subjects were 285 students from the Chinese University, 144 males and 141 females, aged 18 to 20. All spoke Cantonese as their mother tongue, and had studied English in school for ten or more years.

The investigation of the best marker tests for the Verbal Comprehension factor was part of a broader experiment, involving a large battery of tests, and using the method of factor analysis. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss all the different tests and the reasons for their inclusion in the analysis. A brief description, however, of the eight verbal tests which are immediately relevant to the present discussion may be helpful.

1. *Vocabulary A*. This was taken from the *English Language Battery (ELBA)* (Ingram, 1964). It is a standard

single-word, multiple-choice vocabulary test, with a test word and four alternative choices.

2. *Vocabulary B.* In this test, adapted from the *Sequential Tests of Educational Progress (Educational Testing Service, 1979)*, another single-word Vocabulary test, the test word was in English, but the multiple-choice alternatives were translated into Chinese.

3. *Vocabulary C.* This was the *English Picture Vocabulary Test* (Brimer and Dunn, 1968). One word is given in English, and the candidate must choose which of four pictures best represents the word.

4. *Reading Comprehension A.* This was a standard TOEFL Reading Comprehension test with global comprehension questions on several paragraph-length passages.

5. *Reading Comprehension B.* This tested more detailed comprehension, the candidate having to choose from four sentence-length alternative answers.

6. *Dictation A.* This was a narrative passage, adapted from a newspaper article, about a sailing trip in a Chinese junk from Singapore to Java. The passage was read right through, then repeated in sections of about ten words at a time, then read right through again.

7. *Dictation B.* This was like Dictation A in length and manner of testing, only the style was very different, a literary description of a character in a novel.

8. *Cloze.* This was a standard cloze with deletions about every ninth word, the deletions being made rationally, not randomly, and scoring done on the acceptable alternatives method, rather than on the exact word method.

Results

As is usual in factor analytic studies involving verbal tests, a first large factor emerged, which could be considered as

the Verbal Comprehension factor. The loadings on this factor of the eight tests are given below:

Table 2
Loading of Tests on the Verbal Comprehension Factor

1. Vocabulary A.	*.53*
2. Vocabulary B.	*.58*
3. Vocabulary C.	*.65*
4. Reading Comp A.	*.53*
5. Reading Comp B.	*.45*
6. Dictation A.	*.69*
7. Dictation B.	*.73*
8. Cloze	*.63*

Factor loadings of .4 and above are normally considered of great interest.

It can immediately be seen that all the single word vocabulary tests loaded substantially on the Verbal Comprehension factor, and therefore can be said to be good marker tests of the factor. They seem to be better markers than the reading comprehension tests, whose loadings, though fair, are not so high. However, the Cloze has a higher loading than two out of the three vocabulary test, while the highest loadings are achieved by the dictation tests.

The conclusions therefore of this study are as follows: First, single-word vocabulary tests can still be considered good markers of the Verbal Comprehension factor. Second, however, the best marker tests appear to be tests such as the dictation tests which call on a wider range of verbal abilities. This second conclusion is in agreement with Oller and Perkins (1980) and others who prefer integrative tests to discrete-point test. The first conclusion – the abiding efficacy of single-word Vocabulary tests – might constitute a call to caution for language teachers lest, in overemphasising the communicative and discourse aspects of language, they reject too readily a type of test which is considered by psychologists

to be extremely reliable.

On the other hand, the message which emerges for psychologists investigating the Verbal factor in cognitive abilities, is to diversify the types of test they use, instead of relying solely on single-word multiple-choice vocabulary tests as they have tended to do in the past. While this type of test is attractive in its simplicity and speed of administration, and while it has proven reliable as a marker for the Verbal Comprehension factor, nevertheless it is hardly adequate as the only marker of a factor broadly defined as "the ability to understand the English language".

Conclusion

Within the wider framework of attempts to classify human cognitive abilities, the Verbal Comprehension factor has been discussed. Attempts to analyse this factor have been described, and some distinctions commonly made have been seen to be inadequate.

Given the complexity of the factor, it is hardly surprising that there is disagreement on what kind of tests are the most appropriate marker tests for Verbal Comprehension. The practice among some psychologists of using only single-word Vocabulary tests would be challenged by many language teachers, who themselves, however, should not be too cavalier in dismissing this type of test from their test batteries.

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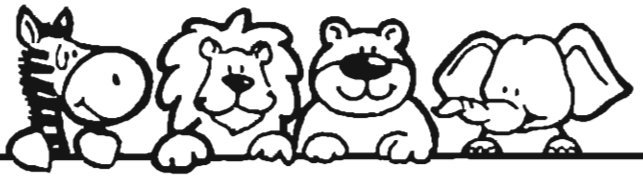

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JALT Journal, Volume 7, No. 2 (1986)

ERRATUM

During preparation of Dr. R Schulte-Pelkum's paper, 'How Total Physical Response can be made more attractive: A 36 hour TPR Course in German at the Goethe-Institute, Tokyo', for publication in the July 1985 edition of the *JALT Journal*, an error was made during pasting-up. The corrected version of page 80 of that issue is reprinted below.

JALT Journal, Volume 7, No. 1 (1985)

speak at natural speed with a natural intonation, they are ready to speak.

Transition from listening to speaking

After having made sure that the class was ready to speak, I began the next class with a short review of the material from lesson one and two. This was the tenth time that the class met, that is, at the beginning of the 19th hour. Then I divided the students into three groups and gave each group an appropriate number of props. I told them that they would have a chance to practice for themselves for ten minutes and that I would leave the room for this period. Although I left the room the students could be observed from a small window that is usually used for film projection. They seemed to be completely relaxed, and there was much action going on because they were eager to try the commands they had been listening to for so long. When I entered the room after 15 minutes, the students did not take any notice of me but just continued until I announced the break.

Visual aids

A new feature in this course was that I wrote some of

the important new structures on large charts at the end of each class. These charts were hung up on the walls of the room and left there for the rest of the course. Usually the students did not ask any questions about this new structure when it was put up for the first time, but quite often during the break they formed groups in front of a chart that had already been on the wall for a week or so and started discussing it. This seems to prove that it takes a certain lapse of time before new structure is really understood.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

JALT is . . .

An organization of professionals dedicated to the improvement of language learning and teaching in Japan.

A vehicle for the exchange of new ideas and techniques in TEFL/TESL, Japanese as a Second Language, etc.

A means of keeping abreast of new developments in a rapidly changing field.

JALT, which was formed by a handful of teachers in the Kansai area in 1976, has grown to an organization of some 2700 members throughout Japan with a broad range of programs. JALT was recognized as the first Asian affiliate of International TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) in 1977. It is the Japan branch of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language). JALT members teach at all levels, from pre-school to adult, in public schools, colleges and universities, commercial language schools and industry. All share a common commitment to the betterment of language teaching in Japan.

PUBLICATIONS

- JALT JOURNAL – A semi-annual publication of interest to language instructors at all levels.
- THE LANGUAGE TEACHER – JALT's monthly publication with 36 to 72 pages per issue, containing brief articles on current issues and new techniques, interviews with leaders in language education, book reviews, meeting announcements, employment opportunities, etc.
- CROSS CURRENTS – A Journal of Communication/Language/Cultural Skills, published by the Language Institute of Japan (LIOJ). Subscriptions are available to JALT members at a substantial discount.
- Publications through IATEFL – JALT members who join IATEFL through JALT may subscribe to the following publications at a substantial discount: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING JOURNAL, WORLD ENGLISHES, MODERN ENGLISH TEACHER, EFL GAZETTE.

MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

- JALT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING – An annual conference providing a forum for the exchange of new ideas and techniques similar in aim to the annual TESOL conference. The program consists of over 100 papers, demonstrations, workshops and mini-courses given by the membership and invited guests. An exhibition of language teaching materials from all major publishing houses covering an area of over 500m^2 is held in conjunction with this meeting every year.
- SPECIAL MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS – Special meetings or workshops, often conducted by a distinguished educator especially invited from abroad. The following annual worskshops cater to the special needs of the members and to the teaching profession as a whole: Summer Institute – Primarily for secondary school teachers, aims at improving their language proficiency while studying effective techniques for the language class. Seminar for the Director of Language and Preparatory Schools to keep administrators informed on current trends in language teaching and learning. Seminar on In-Company Language Training – Provides businesses with the opportunity to exchange information for the betterment of language education programs in industry.
- LOCAL MEETINGS – Local chapters organize monthly or bi-monthly meetings which are generally free of charge to all JALT members regardless of their chapter affiliation.

LOCAL CHAPTERS – There are currently 22 JALT chapters throughout Japan, located in Hokkaido, Sendai, Yamagata, Ibaraki, Omiya, Chiba, Tokyo, Yokohama, Shizuoka, Hamamatsu, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, Okayama, Hiroshima, Tokushima, Takamatsu, Matsuyama, Fukuosa, Nagasaki, and Okinawa. Chapters are now being formed in other areas such as Aomori, Utsunomiya, Mito, Omiya, and Maebashi.

AWARDS FOR RESEARCH AND MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT – JALT allocates funds annually to be awarded to members who apply for financial assistance for the purpose of conducting research into language learning and teaching, or to develop materials to meet a specific need. Application must be made to the President by September 1. Awards are announced at the annual conference.

MEMBERSHIP – Regular membership in JALT includes membership in the nearest chapter. Joint memberships apply to two members sharing the same address. Joint members have full membership privileges, but receive only one copy of JALT publications and other mailings. Group memberships are available to five or more people employed by the same institution. One copy of each JALT publication is provided for every five members or fraction thereof. Group memberships are transferrable by submitting the former member's membership card along with the new name and particulars. Contact the JALT Central Office for further details.

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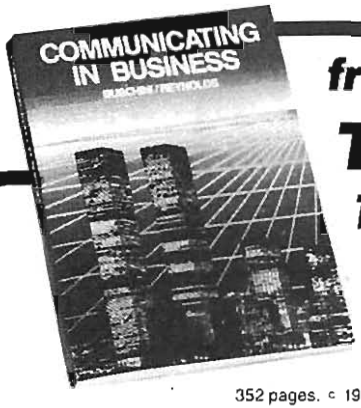
Application for membership may be made at any JALT meeting, by using the attached postal money transfer (*yubin furikae*) form or by sending a check or money order in yen (on a Japanese bank) or dollars (on a U.S. bank) accompanied by an application form to the JALT Central Office.

JALT Central Office: Yumi Nakamura, c/o Kyoto English Center, Sumitomo Seimei Building, 8F., Kafasuma-shijo Nishi-iru, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600; tel. (075) 221-2376.



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THE LANGUAGE TEACHER 第10巻 6号 特別増刊号
JALT JOURNAL 第7巻 第2号

昭和61年 4月25日 印刷
昭和61年 5月 1日 発行

発行人 全国語学教育学会(JALT)事務局長
THOMAS N. ROBB

発行所 JALT本部
〒600 京都市下京区烏丸四条西入ル
住友生命ビル8階K.E.C.内
TEL (075) 221 - 2376

印刷所 厚進社
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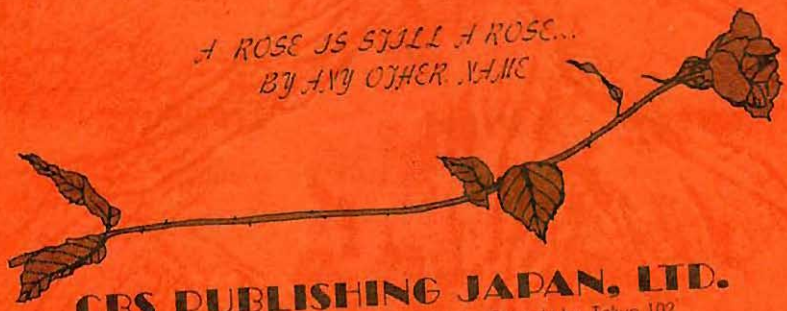

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May 1, 1986

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Best Regards,

Toshi Misa

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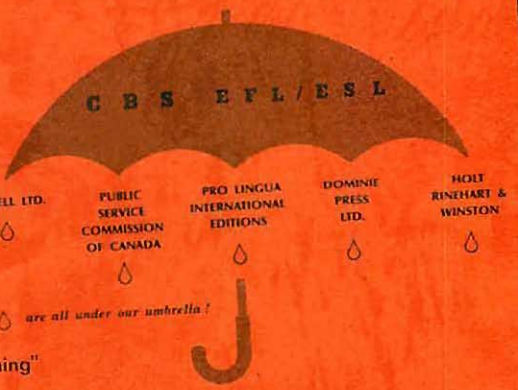

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