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The Effects of Culture on Language Learning and Ways of Communication: The Japanese Case

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**THE EFFECTS OF CULTURE ON LANGUAGE LEARNING
AND WAYS OF COMMUNICATION:
THE JAPANESE CASE**

Master's Degree Project

by

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars and researchers in the field of applied linguistics as well as language teachers have been addressing the need to incorporate cultural knowledge into second and foreign language teaching (e.g., Lafayette, 1988; Moorjani & Field, 1988; Patrikis, 1988; Robinson, 1985; etc.). A great deal of research has been done by socio-linguists, communication theorists and anthropologists concerning the strong linkage between the way the language is used and the cultural values which dictate this use (e.g., Hall, 1978; Hymes, 1962; Loveday, 1982; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; etc.).

Often times the crucial focus of second and foreign language teaching has been directed towards dispensing the rules of grammar and increasing the knowledge of vocabulary in the target language so that one can produce "correct" utterances in order to communicate. However, if the language use or communication style is heavily ruled by cultural values and norms, two people from different cultures trying to communicate with even the same language and with perhaps "correct" utterances would experience a gap between the message that is transmitted from the speaker and the one that is received by the hearer. In other words, competency in linguistic knowledge does not guarantee successful use of the language. "Cultural competency" (e.g., Alptekin, 1993; Beamer, 1992) is necessary in order to carry on fruitful communication.

As Smith (1987a) claimed in the introduction to *Discourse Across Cultures*, recognizing such things as the place of silence, appropriate topics of conversation, forms of address, and expressions of speech-acts (e.g., apologies, requests, agreement, disagreement, etc.) are perhaps more important to effective cross-cultural communication than grammar lexis or phonology, since the former are not the same across cultures. In international and cross-cultural communication in which English is

used as the main medium, one should neither expect the discourse strategies in English to be the same as one's own, nor interpret the language behaviors of others on the basis of one's own cultural presuppositions.

In this study, based on the premise that language production is culturally learned behavior, I will examine how cultural values, beliefs and norms could sometimes be a hindrance to one's learning of a foreign language and affect one's use of this language. Some of these features are observed as communicative transfers or interference.¹ I will mainly analyze these features as they apply to current Japanese methods of learning and using English. However, the implications of this study would be relevant to language teaching in other cultural settings, even literacy training in the United States.

The first part of this paper will introduce the concept of English for intercultural communication (EIC). Then, it will examine problems that presently exist in English education in Japan from the perspective of EIC. For the next part, I will present some verbal and non-verbal features of Japanese language behaviors. These need to be noted in order to analyze a peculiar Japanese usage of English which sometimes appears to be strange, or wrong to the ears of native speakers of English.

I am aware that there are many variations of English even among native-speakers, (On a macro level, there are British English, American English, Indian English, etc. , and on a micro level, there are Black English, Hispanic English or pidgin English and so forth as well as regional dialects) yet for the sake of contrast, I will make some comparison between American "standard" English and Japanese English when it is appropriate.

Finally, I will draw some implications for Japanese English education and recommend the teaching and learning of English from the perspective of EIC. I believe, however, that EIC should be modified to work more effectively in the

¹Communicative Transfer: the carrying over of learned behavior from one situation to another.

Japanese context. I have, through my research and personal experience as a Japanese person learning and teaching languages, developed ideas about the best way to teach English as an international language and will elucidate them in the section. I hope with this new approach to learning English, the Japanese can broaden their view towards different cultures. It is my hope that with this kind of learning, change can occur on two levels. On an individual level, incidents of ethnocentric remarks and stereotypes both disdainful and idolatrous towards people with a different cultural background would be reduced. On an international level, I hope that greater cross-cultural understanding would be achieved.

This study has a dual purpose. First, I hope that this study helps English teachers to understand certain difficulties that Japanese students might encounter due to cultural differences. Second, I hope that this study will help Japanese who study English or any other language to become aware of their own socio-cultural behaviors towards communication in order to reduce cross-cultural misunderstandings. By understanding one's own cultural presuppositions, I would hope that one can become more tolerant towards people with different cultural backgrounds.

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING - The relationship between language and culture:

There has been a heated discussion about the complex role of culture in language learning: Is it possible for one to learn a language without learning about its cultural aspects? Is it possible to "teach" culture at all? If a teacher believes in "teaching" culture in tandem with the language, what does the teacher mean by "culture"? Does teaching culture simply mean introducing some elements of surface culture such as customs, food or festivals, or does it mean raising the awareness of students towards the deeper culture such as beliefs, values and/or norms which are manifested in people's behaviors? Furthermore, which "cultures" should be chosen to be representative of *the* culture for the language? The list of questions seems to be endless and the dilemma involved insolvable.

However, it seems that people agree to at least one fundamental premise: Culture is not only inseparably related to language, but also plays an important role throughout the process of language teaching and learning. The question is not whether or not to teach culture, but, rather, what kind of teaching can promote students' understanding of the nature of the language, communication and human relations. Tucker and Lambert (1973) stated that the ability to communicate fully in a second language depends on the degree of non-ethnocentrism of the learner. The successful learner must develop "an awareness of and sensitivity toward the values and traditions of the people whose language is being studied" (p.246).

The importance of an understanding of the "culture" in which the target language is spoken for students of a foreign language has become clear. Here, I have to come back to the questions raised earlier; what do people mean by "culture"? In a foreign language classroom, when teachers talk about incorporating culture into language teaching, it often means simply introducing typical customs or traditions of the given

society. For example, in a Japanese language class, a teacher may introduce some Japanese customs or social rules such as when you receive a present, do not open it in front of the giver but instead just put it aside, or they eat raw fish, and so on. These are, of course, part of Japanese culture, and may be useful to know when visiting a Japanese home. Yet, it does not explain the reasons or beliefs behind all these social behaviors to which one must be introduced in order to understand Japanese culture. Usually in this kind of instruction, differences or peculiarities tend to be emphasized and stereotypes created.

In the case of the English language, problems arise about which cultures to introduce. This is because English is no longer, and indeed may never have been the property of certain group of people. Moorjani and Field (1988) stated the difficulty of choosing a culture to teach as following:

The heterogeneity of these societies is in itself an enormous stumbling block in the teaching of culture, for it imposes upon us a choice that can only be made on ideological grounds: what culture do we teach, or, rather, whose culture do we hold up as a model? On a superficial level, one would think that, since we are almost without exception teaching an educated middle class linguistic repertory, we ought, logically, to select for cultural teaching the "prestige" culture that this form of language subtends. But this sort of simplification and idealization, while useful for the teaching of language, is certainly harmful when we are concerned with culture, for it reduces the target world to a one-dimensional caricature...[W]e need to help our students understand the fact that none of our target cultures is homogeneous, that each exhibits a constant tension between the culture of the prestigious and the powerful and that of minorities and the dispossessed.

The most effective way of teaching culture, ...may be a kind of triangulation by which American culture are allowed to interact with and reflect off both a "prestige" form of the target culture and an alternate culture within the target society (pp.27-28).

If this is the case, as language teachers we might at least be able to make students aware of their own culture. As Hall (1978) stated, in order to understand the other's

culture, "one must transcend one's own culture [which] can be done only by making explicit the rules by which it operates" (p.55).

Another problem with teaching language from a cultural perspective is that there is a clear dichotomy between native and non-native speakers of the language. One must decide how much, if at all, the non-native speakers should conform to the native speakers norm of language use or patterns of communication (Bentahila & Davies, 1989). It is especially important to bear this in mind given the reality of English as an international language.

It is recognized that second or foreign language speakers of English have already acquired communicative competence in their first language and culture. Sometimes this competence is viewed in a negative light since it interferes with the person's competence by transferring the first language competence to English and causes misunderstandings. Lado (1957) discussed the comparison of languages and cultures for the purpose of identifying and describing problems that second-language learners will encounter. His fundamental assumption is that individuals transfer forms and meanings, and the distribution of these, from their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture. As a consequence, there occurs miscommunication between people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. According to this viewpoint, miscommunication is minimized by maximizing conformity. To know English, you must be able to communicate in the language in a manner that native speakers will accept as their own (ibid., 1957). This view completely excludes the validity of the nonnative speaker's cultural background. Suppressing one's own cultural identity may not appear to be so traumatic, yet because the values of the English language clash with the values of one's own native language, the nonnative speaker may feel compromised.

ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE:

Although there are ethical questions concerning the way English has established its present status as an international language, it is hard to deny the reality of its dominance today. It is so not because English is inherently superior to other languages, but because it carries a "vehicular load"; it is a medium for science, technology and literature.

The problem of English-teaching today not taking into account the role of English as an international and intranational language was first raised by Larry Smith in 1976. Previously English-teaching has been classified as "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) and "English as a Second Language" (ESL). However, this classification does not adequately deal with situations where English has been used for other purposes. Today, it is estimated that there are over 600 million users of English throughout the world, of whom about half are non-native speakers of English (Kachru, 1984). Another study shows that there are as many as two billion people who have some ability in English (Crystal, 1985). As a result, the native speakers of English may well come to be outnumbered by the non-native speakers. In other words, it is likely that non-native speakers of English will communicate with each other using English as their common language.

The realization of the new role of English led to the philosophy of English as an International Language (EIL) which was advocated in order to emphasize the function of English for cross-cultural and cross-national understanding. The major premise of the EIL approach to English teaching is that "the use of English is always culture bound but the English language is not bound to any specific culture or political system" (Baxter, 1980, p.4). The EIL argument is that learners must be given basic skills for communicating with any potential interlocutors, of whatever national,

linguistic, or cultural background. This approach has taken English teaching much closer to an integration with intercultural training. The goal is teaching members of one culture to interact effectively through English with members of other cultures, with minimal misunderstanding.

ENGLISH IN JAPAN:

As has been discussed in the previous sections, the English language is not spoken only in so-called English-speaking countries anymore. It is the international language that is used by both native and non-native speakers alike, in order to fulfill global communication. It is a crucial skill if one wishes to function well in the international world. It is evident that there is a great demand to acquire English language competency in Japan as the world become more and more interdependent.

Learning English has been treated as one of the "academic subjects" in Japan for a long time. Almost all people learn English for at least three to six years. Quite a few even receive English education for as much as ten years in the formal school settings. However, because of the philosophical approach of learning language as an "academic subject," less attention is paid to promoting communication skills in formal school settings. In the Japanese school setting, English teaching is conducted in the pure form of foreign language teaching. It is treated as an academic subject by which students can explore and appreciate English literature or gain some knowledge through reading. Or even worse, it is used as a criteria for university entrance exams to screen out those who will not be accepted to certain universities.

According to the guideline from the Ministry of Education for secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 1988), however, the goal of foreign language teaching is to

make students understand the language, to build their ability to express their own ideas, to develop an attitude to communicate actively through the language, and to deepen an interest towards other language and culture for the purpose of international understanding. Contrary to these stated goals of the Ministry of Education, the teaching process is often times detrimental to the perceptions of students towards the English language. It results in an "allergic reaction" to foreign languages in general. This may be a reflection of Japanese educational beliefs that school education is a long period of endurance aimed towards building up self-discipline.

I would not completely dismiss the importance of English education which emphasizes reading and translation skills for academic purposes, since it may provide a certain degree of appreciation for different cultures and may satisfy the traditional goal of absorbing "great western knowledge" from books. However, this is not sufficient in an era when people as well as information flow from one country to another with the English language serving as the main medium. The role of the English language as a tool for communication needs to be redefined. For this reason there has been a growing concern in Japan about the incompetency of the Japanese in using English. This concern has resulted in a great number of private language schools proliferating all over Japan at an amazingly rapid rate.² It is almost a fad to learn English conversation in non-school settings.

The purpose of these institutions or programs varies from preparation for a short trip abroad to intensive in-house training for business people. Nevertheless, the emphasis is placed on the promotion of communication skills through English. Unlike the formal school setting, the teachers in these private schools are usually native

²The type and the quality of these private language schools vary. There are some schools which provide college equivalent education as full-time courses to train students to "use" English in real situations. However, most of the so-called English conversation schools are very low in quality because teachers are not required to have any qualifications, and there is no well-planned curriculum either. It is called "Saloon-style" where students can come in whenever it is convenient and "chit-chat" with native speakers.

speakers of English (more specifically, Anglo-American). It seems that many people in Japan have realized that school English does not serve the more pragmatic needs of the contemporary society. What has been brought about by this privatization of English teaching is the polarization of English education; on one end there is the traditional academic approach and on the other the private practical approach. The field of English conversation schools is, in fact, a growing "business", in which some of the institutions are purely profit-seeking and have nothing to do with "education." The formal schools which are free for junior high schools, and heavily subsidized by the government for senior high schools, should provide adequate English education rather than subtly encourage the privileged people to go to private conversation schools in their leisure time.

In spite of the eagerness of the Japanese to learn English, the resulting competency in communication skills is usually extremely low (Ramsey & Birk, 1983). Noguchi (1987) quoted Hayes in his article as following:

No nation upon earth seemingly has expended as much in resources, time, energy, and enthusiasm in the attempt to become bilingual and bicultural as has Japan. Japan, a nation geographically isolated, its people ethnocentric and homogeneous, where innovation and change is not without loyalty to one's superiors, to the corporation for which one works, to the State as well as to one's family, and whose ethnocentricity has occasionally led to periods of nationalistic excess, is a country where failure does not exist - except in its English language program. Students, even after instruction in the language from 6 to 10 years, still cannot comprehend or compose more than the simplest English sentence and cannot read, write, or speak with any kind of fluency (p.17).

Apparently, one reason for this Japanese failure at English learning is Japan's geographical isolation from the rest of the world. There is little interaction with people with different cultures and languages, thus opportunity for people to hear and

speak English on a daily basis is extremely limited. This is markedly different from the situation in European countries, where countries share borders, and people have both the opportunity and need to find a way to communicate through a commonly understood language. Furthermore, Japan's high level of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity makes it unnecessary to use English as an intranational language within the country. Another reason might be that Japan is a so-called "country of translation."³ Any kind of information that one might want to receive is often presented in the form of translation. In other words, because of their position as recipients of information rather than producers, most Japanese do not really need English as a communication tool.

I hypothesize two other reasons for the Japanese failure to produce competent communicators in English:

- i) the inappropriateness of teaching methods and materials;
- ii) the lack of incorporation of cultural perspectives in language training.

i-a) Teaching Methods:

I find the method of teaching English in both the formal school setting and the private non-formal setting very inappropriate. In the formal school setting, junior and senior high school as well as college, the grammar-translation method is utilized in most cases. Following are the major characteristics of the purest form of the grammar-translation method:

- 1) Students first learn the rules of grammar and bilingual lists of vocabulary pertaining to the reading or readings of the lesson. Grammar is learned deductively by means of long and elaborate explanations. All rules are learned

³Some findings indicated that "Japan ranks fifth in the world in translations of books into Japanese" (Kunihiro, 1973, p.106).

with their exceptions and irregularities explained in grammatical terms.

- 2) Once rules and vocabulary are learned, prescriptions for translating the exercises that followed the grammar explanations are given.
- 3) Comprehension of the rules and readings are tested via translation. Students have learned the language if they could translate the passages well.
- 4) The native and target languages are constantly compared. The goal of instruction is to convert L1 into L2, and vice versa, using a dictionary if necessary.
- 5) There are very few opportunities for listening and speaking practice (with the exception of reading passages and sentences aloud), since the method concentrate on reading and translation exercises. Much of the class time is devoted to talking *about* the language; virtually no time is spent talking *in* the language (summarized from Omaggio, 1986, p.55).

As it is clear from this description, the primary purpose was to enable students to "explore the depths of great literature," while helping them understand their native language better through extensive analysis of the grammar of the target language and translation. This method treats language as though it exists as a separate entity apart from people's life. Because of this lack in the practical aspect of language, the instruction becomes very dry and boring.

Teachers for the formal school setting are almost exclusively Japanese persons who themselves are the products of the Japanese English education system.⁴ It means certain kinds of problems that are particular for the Japanese will be inherited and then

⁴Nationally-supported schools, from elementary schools to university level, cannot hire foreign nationals as permanent teachers or members of a research staff. A permanent faculty member of a national schools is a civil servant, and a foreign national cannot, by definition, be so appointed. Although, private schools have been hiring foreign teachers as part-time staff members.

fossilized in the course of English education.⁵ The method does not provide training for students to speak English for the purpose of communication.

Another method, which is commonly used in the private non formal setting, is the direct method.⁶ This methodology is based essentially on the way children learn their native language: language is learned through the direct association of words and phrases with objects and actions, without the use of the native language as the intervening variable. The following are the major characteristics:

- 1) Language learning should start with the here-and-now, utilizing classroom objects and simple actions.
- 2) The direct method lesson often develops around specially constructed pictures depicting life in the country where the target language is spoken. These pictures enable the teacher to avoid the use of translation, which is strictly forbidden. Definitions of new vocabulary are given via paraphrases in the target language, or by miming the action or manipulating objects to get the meaning across.
- 3) From the beginning of instruction, students hear complete and meaningful sentences in simple discourse.
- 4) Correct pronunciation is an important consideration in this approach. Phonetic notation is often used to achieve this goal.
- 5) Grammar rules are not explicitly taught; rather, they are assumed to be learned through practice. Students are encouraged to form their own generalizations about grammar through inductive methods.
- 6) Reading goals are also reached via "direct" understanding of text without the

⁵Fossilization: (in second or foreign language learning) a process which sometimes occurs in which incorrect linguistic features become a permanent part of the way a person speaks or writes a language. Aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and grammar may become fixed or fossilized in second or foreign language learning (Richard, Platt & Platt, 1992).

⁶As it is mentioned, the types of the private schools varies greatly as do the teaching method they try to utilize. However, according to my personal observation and research, the direct method seems to be the one which dominates the field.

use of dictionaries or translations (summarized from Ommagio, 1986, pp.57-58).

Compared to the Grammar-Translation method, this method has its focus on practical aspects of language learning: listening and speaking. By not using the native language of learners, learners are exposed to the target language as much as possible. However, the drawback of this method is that it does not take into consideration the fact that most of the students are not children. They have already fully developed language skills in their first language, Japanese. Often, one's knowledge about the first language is transferred to the production of second language. This has positive as well as negative effects.

The encouragement of this method to make students communicate with the target language too early may sometimes lead to the phenomenon of fossilization. If this method is used improperly with insufficient provision for systematic practice of structures in a coherent sequence, it is potentially very ineffective.

i-b)Teaching Materials:

Teaching materials are another factor that needs to be examined to measure the effectiveness of teaching languages. The textbooks examined and authorized by the Ministry of Education for the use of junior and senior high schools, portrayed the images of English speaking people as almost exclusively Anglo-American and/or British people. They ignored the existence of English native speakers of any other ethnic groups. This is especially problematic in terms of cognizing the notions of who speaks English and what is to be "correct" English. The English language is believed to bring about modernization of the society. Therefore, the image of "English-

speakers" has a great impact on Japanese people's attitudes towards Anglo-people who are viewed as superior compared to other ethnic groups.

Watanabe (1983) did some examination of the English textbooks that are provided for senior high schools by the Ministry of Education. According to his book, *Japalish no susume: nihonjin no kokusai eigo*, the number of the textbooks was reduced from 18 in 1962 to 5 in 1972 and remains the same today. In this almost monopolistic textbook industry, two textbooks, "New Prince English Course" and "New Horizon English Course", lead in distribution numbers. As for "New Prince," there are 31 pictures of children provided in its 3 volumes of textbooks. All of these children are "White." The pictures that are inserted in the text are exclusively of America with the exception of the Big Ben in England. As a result, this textbook, from its front page to its back, covertly promotes the distorted formula that English speaking people are equal to Americans who are only white people. The content of text books serves the same purpose. The topics are overwhelmingly about the United States refer only briefly to African and Asian countries. Even when Africans and Asians are mentioned, they are presented from the white perspective and are often portrayed as exotic and peculiar. Watanabe (1983) presented a small passage from "New Prince" for the second year for junior high school:

"Do you know that drumming is sometimes used as words?"
"No, I don't know." "It was when the Queen of England died in 1901...The news was spread quickly to the people in the village in Africa...When someone asked, 'how did that news get to the village?', the answer was 'the drum delivered it'" (p.183).

This story was accompanied by a drawing of naked Africans drumming under coconut trees. The traditional function of drumming is used as a communication tool, yet this is certainly not the main method of communication in modern-day Africa. They

introduce Africa only as a whole and not as a continent made up of many different countries. The text emphasizes only aspects that portray Africa as exotic and peculiar and ignores the dimension of material culture, city life or industry that are similar to its Western counterparts. This has a strong impact on the perception of Japanese students, causing the creation of stereotypes and racism.

This may not be a problem for the teaching of the English language if one only considers the linguistic aspect. The language introduced in the textbooks is correct and perhaps proper in a certain cultural context. The problem here is that students are exposed to a distorted image of the English-speaking world which would hinder them from functioning in a proper manner in other cultural contexts. This type of education does not provide students with understanding of the social structure and politics of English language. If English education in schools is to promote awareness in the students of different cultures, the way it has been practiced is a complete failure. According to his examination, the findings are almost the same for other textbooks.

Materials that are widespread in Japan for English teaching/learning in private settings are with almost no exceptions published in the U.S. or in Great Britain. These materials available in the market are targeted to second language learners. In other words, materials neither address the needs of particular language speakers nor have any particular cultural understanding. Because of these factors, when using ready-made materials, the teacher must find or create supplemental information and instruction. Unfortunately, this effort is often neglected. The information in the materials may be authentic but only if used in the proper cultural context not in the foreign cultural context because the information will be too foreign for the learners to contextualize. Another major problem of these materials is that they, like the school textbooks, only portray Anglo-Americans and British peoples as speakers of English.

So once again, a false notion of who speaks English and what is considered to be correct English is reinforced.

ii) The lack in incorporating cultural perspectives in language training:

Language is not culture-free. If one is to communicate effectively in a foreign/second language, one cannot ignore the cultural context which gives the words broader meanings. There is no argument about the importance of linguistic competency which is constituted with the knowledge of pronunciation, writing system, vocabulary and grammar syntax for the language production. What is often neglected is cultural competency, that is a kind of knowledge of all the other systems of ideas and beliefs shared by members of a community and transmitted through language (Bentahila & Davies, 1989). This knowledge of socio-linguistic rules is crucial in order to use the target language without creating misunderstandings. One may produce perfectly grammatical yet embarrassingly inappropriate sentences without this knowledge. Or one may have a sizable amount of vocabulary and have a good knowledge of linguistic competency yet produce only silence (Noguchi, 1987).

Cultural rules about when certain speech acts can be performed appropriately may differ. For example, there may be routine formulas such as greeting, leave-taking, thanking, apologizing and so on in any given speech community, yet one needs to be aware that it does not mean these speech acts are necessarily performed according to the same or even similar rules across communities. This is often problematic because one tends to transfer the socio-cultural knowledge of uses of language from one's native language to the new one. Certainly, there are many positive aspects of language transfer. The danger then is that "people may fail to recognize the source of the differences, and may wrongly attribute aspects of people's behavior to their own

personalities instead of realizing they are simply conforming to different cultural norms." (Bentahila & Davies, 1989, p.103).

Japanese who speaks English are no exception in this matter. The socio-cultural aspects of the Japanese language is often transferred by Japanese to their usage/style of English language. This sometimes causes misunderstandings and confusion, and may even be considered to be wrong by the native speakers of English. For the English teachers to be effective and empathetic, and for the Japanese learners to maintain motivations and self-esteem, practical analysis of Japanese patterns of communication and language is necessary. The next section will present some of the key features of socio-cultural linguistics pertaining to the Japanese language and reflected in Japanese use of English.

**JAPANESE SOCIO-CULTURAL PATTERNS THAT AFFECT THE USE OF
THE NEW AND THE NATIVE LANGUAGE:
Some comparison with English language behaviors**

How the language is used in a particular speech community is strongly related to the fundamental cultural values that the community emphasizes, how it believes human relations ought to be. After an extensive literature review and my own personal observations as a Japanese, and a teacher and a learner of languages, I came to realize that the following aspects are some of the important features of language behaviors:

- 1) the meaning of silence,
- 2) the use of direct vs. indirect statements,
- 3) politeness phenomena,
- 4) some routine formulas, and
- 5) other features of language behaviors.

1) The Meaning of Silence:

When comparing the two language behaviors, or speech communities - English and Japanese - one of the most striking difference is the attitude and belief towards the spoken words. What should be mentioned?; What should not be mentioned?; How much should be verbally spoken?; How much should be inferred?; The norms and appropriateness in these matters differ greatly between Japanese and English.

"To say nothing is a flower"; "Mouths are to eat with, not to speak with"; "Close your mouth and open your eyes"; "Born mouth first, he perishes by his mouth"; "If there are many words, there will be much shame." These Japanese proverbs are symbolic of the importance that Japanese place on taciturnity and the distrust of words. As Nitobe has written, "To give in so many articulate words one's innermost thoughts and feelings is taken as an unmistakable sign that they are neither profound nor very sincere" (cited in Barnlund, 1975, p.133). Kunihiro (1975) described Japanese beliefs towards spoken language compared to that in the West.

In Japan, language, communication through language, has not received the same emphasis as in the West...It has been considered poor policy to use words as a tool to express one's views, to persuade the other fellow or to establish any depth of understanding. Language as an instrument of debate or arguments is considered even more disagreeable and is accordingly avoided. Thus, in Japanese society, use of words becomes a sort of ritual, not often to be taken at face value. It is only one possible means of communication, not *the* means of communication as is often the case among English speakers (p.97).

One reason for the Japanese belief in silence has its origin in Buddhism, especially in Zen teaching. Zen teaching reinforced the notion that oral expression was superficial if not superfluous. The message of Zen cannot be explained even with hundreds of words and enlightenment cannot be achieved by talking about it (Loveday,

1982; Ramsey & Birk, 1983; Tsujima, 1987). In addition, the historical fact of Japan's long feudal era (13 th century to mid 19 th century) is believed to have an impact on Japanese silence as well. In those eras, people subjected themselves to restraint and to the regulation of speech under totalitarian regimes (Tsujima, 1987). It was strongly emphasized that speaking out against superiors were strictly forbidden (Ramsey & Birk, 1983) and sometimes caused death.

The most significant social reason for this attitude can be, however, mostly explained by the high level of racial as well as linguistic homogeneity of Japan. Geographically, Japan is a small isolated island nation where a single ethnic group has been living for a long time using the same language throughout its history (Kunihiro, 1975).⁷ This made Japan function on what Hall (1976) calls "high-context culture." "A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (ibid., p.91). In other words, it is not necessary for Japanese to rely much on spoken words in order to communicate each other. With only a few words spoken, people are able to and expected to understand each other well. It is assumed that one needs to read the speaker's messages from what is left to be said. Things that are not mentioned are equally as, or even more important than what is overtly executed in spoken words.

This is especially contrastive to America where they have no choice but to fully explain and exhaust their words in order to overcome a variety of differences created by language barriers, different life-style, and different ways of feeling and thinking

⁷The assertion that Japan has a single ethnic group may be considered problematic. There are indigenous people as well as Korean and Chinese who have been forced to assimilate into Japanese language and culture. However, here, the point is not the ethical aspects of homogeneity. There is no argument that Japan is one of the most homogeneous countries in the world.

due to America's ethnic and language heterogeneity. The characteristics of language behavior for both societies is, in fact, required by the social context.

The Japanese may remain silent out of respect. Contrary to American horizontal social structure, Japan's is highly hierarchical and is vertically structured depending on an individual's status. One's status is defined by age, gender, occupation, and so forth. It is expected that one is aware of and remains at the assigned place in a social group, institution or society as a whole, based on one's social status (Lebra, 1976). As a result, one is sensitized to the status one holds relative to others on a hierarchical scale, to whether one is higher or lower. This belief is so strong that one automatically chooses the proper language and manner when communicating with others. Often times, one who is placed on a lower level in this hierarchy needs to remain silent unless asked to speak. This belief is often transferred to the situation when Japanese are talking with Americans in the English language. The Japanese feel uneasy talking without knowing the social status of the interlocutor relative to their own and it promotes them to be silent rather than actively involved in a conversation. It is also contrastive to the way Americans believe communication should be. Americans view talking as a way to get to know one another. It is logical for them to engage in a conversation with strangers since this is the only way to start human relationships. On the contrary, it is very difficult for the Japanese to engage in a conversation unless they know each other quite well. Without the background information of the person, they are not supposed to talk to each other, and if the situation forced them to talk for some reason, they would feel extremely uncomfortable.

Another reason may be that the Japanese remain silent in order to avoid any type of conflict or confrontations. The Japanese place the highest value on the group orientation. Their identity is almost always defined as a member of a certain group, not as an individual person. One is not viewed as an independent entity in a society as a

whole, rather viewed as "a part or fraction constituting an organic whole" (Lebra, 1976, p.68). Contrary to the American beliefs of individuality, conformity is strongly encouraged to maintain group harmony. In order to do so, one tries his/her best not to create any friction. What would be the best way to do so? The easiest way is not to oppose, not to argue, but to just remain silent; another sign of expressing politeness in the Japanese perspective. Let the one who is in the role of decision- making do the talking! Speaking up with one's own opinion sometimes is viewed as being selfish.

Whatever the socio-cultural reasons are, what implication does the Japanese silence bring about for intercultural communication and for one's performance and perception of the English language? Japanese speakers of English often do not realize how much distress is caused by remaining silent for long periods. According to Barnlund (1975), they are often regarded as "distant", "cool", and "cautious" by Westerners (also, Loveday, 1982). On the other hand, the Japanese interpret comparatively excessive verbalization of English speakers equally negatively. From the Japanese point of view, "the Westerner is the culprit who should rather be taught how to shut up" (Loveday, 1982, p.8). Both parties by their different language behaviors may unintentionally create a serious problem of communication breakdown.

Strongly related to the phenomenon of silence is the appropriate or acceptable duration of the pause between conversations which may differ greatly. Ramsey and Birk (1983) introduced the incident documented by Hoshino about the duration of silence of up to 30 minutes in a Japanese group. Also a study done by Wayne (in Ramsey & Birk, 1983) about the duration of silence of television dramas and radio programs in Japan revealed it was acceptable up to a minute. Based on my personal observation, English speakers take turns much quicker than Japanese performing in English. For example, in a class discussion, English speakers sometimes "grab" turns while the previous speaker has not even completed the statement or question yet. This

is considered to be extremely rude and aggressive in the Japanese context. This phenomenon sometimes made me wonder whether the "English brain" functions at a quicker speed than the Japanese one, or if one is not able to hold one's thoughts out of the urgent necessity for self-expression.

As should be clear now miscommunication or non-communication can be created due to the conflicting views towards the meaning of silence in the two cultures. Japanese silence should not be viewed as "stupidity," "language incompetency" nor "lack of self-opinion." English speakers might think that Japanese simply need to speak up. However it is not an easy task regardless of one's ability and knowledge of the English language, per se. The Japanese silence may have many situational meanings: time to formulate an opinion, time to consider the appropriate form or content of a remark, a gathering of courage to speak in English, a space while awaiting a senior to speak first, or a generally less confrontative, softer way to convey disagreement (Ueda in Ramsey & Birk, 1983). Pressuring Japanese to follow the native norm sometimes causes self-identity crisis and, could be called cultural imperialism.

The problems are that when people from different cultures try to communicate, they tend to "fail to recognize the conventionality of the communicative code of the other, instead taking the communicative behavior as representing what it means in their own native culture" (Loveday, 1986, p.116). Then, how can we communicate? When people start engaging in a conversation, there should be a common goal of pursuing understanding between them. If they do not want or care to communicate, there should not be conversation to begin with. If this is so, then, they need to negotiate how much they can deviate from their own rule in order to achieve equilibrium to maintain a conversation.

2) The Use of Direct vs. Indirect Statements:

Japanese use of indirect statements is another feature that is contrastive to American use of direct statements. Japanese statements are often criticized as inexplicit, ambiguous, pointless and roundabout. This is especially devalued by the Westerners who base their judgment on the rhetoric style of logic, assertiveness and articulation. The Japanese tendency of indirectness is fostered by the structures of the Japanese language.⁸ However, more importantly, this characteristic has its cause in their socio-cultural values. This is, again, derived from the Japanese beliefs of politeness or empathy to others, and repression of ego in order to avoid conflicts.

Kunihiro (1973) presented two types of Japanese statement which he believes to cover most of their statements. "The first type is a presentation of one item after the other in a highly anecdotal or episodic vein; conclusions are seldom articulated, or left unsaid...The second type is to present maxims and axioms as they are, often unaccompanied by actual data" (p.100). This may appear to be non-logical from the Western point of view which follows a rule of building arguments with a series of concrete facts and data, after which the speaker tries to involve the audience in the search for principles or laws that may lie beneath as a means of drawing conclusion (ibid.). Thus, evidently, the typical reaction to the first type of the Japanese statement by the Westerners is "So what?" and to the second type is "How, in concrete terms?"

The primary reason of indirectness is to avoid imposing one's will on others. Since the feeling of others are as important as the content of the message itself, and listeners have the role of filling in gaps in the message, it is left for the listeners to assume the

⁸For example, in Japanese it is grammatically acceptable to omit overt reference to any element in a sentence that the speaker assumes to be "understood"; frequent use of nominal ellipsis in Japanese discourse results in a much higher rate of potential ambiguity than in English. Since Japanese is a left-branching verb-final language, with negation appearing as a verb suffix, speakers may negate a sentence at the last moment, depending upon the addressee's expression. They may also nominalize and negate entire sentences upon their completion to make assertions less direct; when this is done with negative predicates, multiple embedded negations are created (Clancy, 1986).

contents most congenial for them and avoid conflict and confrontation. As a result, the conclusions are seldom articulated, and verbal expression tends to be fragmentary and unsystematic.

...Japanese people think that each and every one in this world has his own ideas, and so it must be respected. Since any value can be interpreted both as good as well as bad, and nobody can say that something is right or maybe wrong, we must write or express ideas, always keeping others in mind and respecting them. That, I think, is the reason why Japanese is said to be indirect, giving a very soft impression compared to the direct expression of English. These expressions are an indication of Japanese people's modesty in expressing their own idea (Harder, 1984, p.121).

A Japanese will rarely commit his or herself totally to either side of a subject. One prefers to examine a proposition from as many angles as possible with a great deal of tentativeness (Loveday, 1988). This is not only to avoid hurting the other's feelings, but also because of the strong fear that by committing oneself totally to one side, one might become isolated from the group to which one belongs. Much attention is paid to the adjustment of human relations in order to prevent quarreling with others and to avoid causing any kind of criticism from others. Kunihiro (1973) explained this Japanese psyche that "in the homogeneous society of former times, with a large population and scarce resources, limited opportunity for employment and no possibility to flee abroad,...isolation could have been tantamount to committing suicide" (p.101).

Another reason for Japanese indirectness as compared to American directness lies in a different view about what a conversation should be. In Japan, the essence of pleasure in conversation lies "not in discussion (a logical game) but in emotional exchange" (Nakane, 1970) and conversation is viewed as "a way of creating and reinforcing the emotional ties that bind people together" (Barnlund, 1975) with the

purpose of social harmony.⁹ Therefore, overt expression of conflicting opinions is considered to be taboo. Thus, even when the Japanese argue they will be vague about the point at issue and preferably focus on trivial points to establish a sense of agreement about the issues before mentioning major topics.

A good example of indirectness can be observed in their use of "no". Reluctant to disagree with another's opinion or refuse a request, the Japanese feel pressured to give their consent, even when they actually disagree or are unable or unwilling to comply. The Japanese try their best to avoid saying "no" directly. Ueda discusses "sixteen ways to avoid saying 'no' in Japan", which include silence, ambiguity, expressions of apology, regret, and doubt, and even lying and equivocation. According to the study, one used "no" at home, yet very rarely in public; in fact, lying was the most frequent means of declining requests (ibid. in Clancy, 1986). Americans tend to regard such behaviors as irresponsible or dishonest. However, from the Japanese perspective, it is one way not to anger or hurt the feelings of others by saying a direct "no".

This feature is especially problematic because it can cause serious misunderstanding between Japanese and people from different cultural backgrounds.

3) Politeness Phenomena:

The previous two features of Japanese language behavior are strongly linked to the Japanese politeness phenomena. In this section, I will only highlight some examples that are not included in the last two sections.

There are two forms in which one can show respect in the Japanese language, *sonkei* (honorific) and *kenjo* (humble), with varying degree of formality depending on

⁹These different views toward conversations between Japanese and American are quite similar phenomena to the attitude differences between men and women in America.

the context. For example, equivalent to the English verb "to come", are at least ten Japanese variations:

Will (you) go? - <i>Sonkei</i>	<i>O-ide ni nararemasuka</i>	Formal
	<i>O-ide ni narimasu-ka</i>	Less formal
	<i>Irasshaimasu-ka</i>	Less formal
	<i>O-ide ni naru (-no)</i>	Informal (by women)
	<i>Irassharu (-no)</i>	Informal (by women)
I will come. - <i>Kenjo</i>	<i>O-ukagai moushiagemasu</i>	Formal
	<i>O-ukagai itashimasu</i>	Less formal
	<i>O-ukagai shimasu</i>	Less formal
	<i>Ukagaimasu</i>	Less formal
	<i>Ukagau (-wa)</i>	Informal (by women)

(Goldstein & Tamura, 1975, p.142)

The most appropriate form is chosen depending on one's social status in relation to the interlocutor. Of course, English has many ways to express politeness using modal auxiliaries and manipulating the tone of speech. However, since English does not have the kind of variations that exist in Japanese, it is sometimes very difficult for the Japanese to choose a proper way to express politeness in English. The existence of such a complex differentiation of speech in terms of politeness is indicative of the Japanese sensitivity to the societal rank order. "In English, politeness axis is horizontal and based on intimacy vs. formality while the Japanese axis is vertical and based on status/age inferiority vs. superiority" (Loveday, 1988, p.140). The slightest difference in age, graduation time, the time of entry into a company, and so on, dictate their usage of politeness form. Because of this difference in politeness concepts, it is difficult for the Japanese to learn the appropriate way to express politeness. Sometimes, they are perceived as being overly polite and formal which may be considered a sign of unfriendliness to Americans. Morshack said as quoted in

Loveday (1988), "it is not considered particularly courteous to 'convey a few simple ideas...with as many polite variations as possible'" (p.140). On the other hand, English expressions sometimes sound harsh or impolite to many Japanese.

"The humility principle" (Makino, 1988) as a reflection of politeness is emphasized in Japan. When a Japanese receives a compliment, instead of saying "*Arigatoo*" or "thank you", s/he is supposed to deny any merit even though s/he actually welcomes the compliment. In Japan, one is not supposed to express appreciation for a compliment in any explicit way. The same type of phenomena occurs when a Japanese gives a present to another person. One may most likely say "*tsumaranai mono desuga, doozo...*", or "this is uninteresting stuff, but please take it", which does not make any sense if taken literally. Both are examples of how Japanese culture forces one to say something humble about oneself, one's family members, or one's possessions, regardless of one's true feelings (ibid.). When a Japanese speaks English, these language behaviors are transferred and may cause confusion to others. English speakers may perceive these comments as either a lack of pride or as an act of deception.

4) Routine Formulas:

Conformity to group norms are an essential aspect of Japanese communicative style. Related to conformity, there exists a great number of routine formulas that are used extensively in daily interactions in Japan. For example, there is a standard formula to be said before starting to eat, "*itadakimasu*" or "I will receive it." One says "*gochisousama deshita*" or "It was a great food" at the end of a meal, and "*ojama shimasu*" or "I will get in the way" when entering someone's house, and so forth. These expressions cover a much broader range of situations as compared to English

routine formulas (Clancy, 1986). For the Japanese, these expressions are dictated by social rules, rather than by individual choice.

Loveday (1982) pointed out, that in Japan, routine formulas are used very frequently without fear of sounding unoriginal or insincere. In contrast, Americans tend to prefer to use individualized, and therefore personalized expressions.¹⁰

Goldstein and Tamura (1975) explained, "[for the Japanese] the form is not regarded as a barrier to expression of the self but is rather the technique by which two selves are connected in standard intercourse - meaning must then be inserted below or beyond the word. The idea of cliché is absent in the Japanese world." (p.95). The Westerner may interpret the Japanese heavy usage of routine formulas as artificial and affected since little or no personal comment is observed in their speech.

To the American, the Japanese method of standard messages, such as *congratulations* with only name, the presentation of a gift with a standard phrase, a refusal with a standard phrase before acceptance...may seem very bare indeed and perhaps somewhat insincere. The American may wonder if the giver or receiver really believes what he is saying... Words must be personally manipulated by the American speaker to create the impression of himself, his feeling, and the connection between himself and the hearer that he wishes to give (Goldstein & Tamura, 1975, p.91).

To the Japanese, however, the Westerner's overindividualized expressions seem to demonstrate that they lack in credibility and suggest wild abandon, social carelessness or shallow flamboyance (Loveday, 1982). Clancy (1986) also analyzed these different tendencies:

¹⁰The Japanese stress on the non-personalized use of routine formulas is demonstrated in a questionnaire reported in Loveday (1982). The Japanese and English native informants were asked: (1) What would you say to someone who saved you from drowning? and (2) What would you say to someone who gave you a birthday present? The majority of Japanese used the same formula for both (1) and (2), while many of English informants responded with a great difference in the degree of gratitude between reactions for (1) and (2).

the Americans are relying upon the words themselves to communicate their feelings to the listener, and therefore find the verbal formulas inadequate. In Japan, there seems to be an extensive codification of contexts in which particular feelings are expected; speakers need only indicate, by means of the right formula, that they are experiencing the appropriate reaction, without expressing any more personal, individualized response (p.216).

These different attitudes reveal the clashing views about communication itself between the Japanese and the American. For Americans, the speaker is responsible to carry on successful communication by explicitly expressing one's thoughts and feelings in words. However, for the Japanese, the main responsibility lies with the listener who must know what the speaker means regardless of the words that are used (ibid.).

5) Other Features of Language Behaviors:

There are many more language behaviors that are contrastive between Japanese and English. Some of them are, the address system, the use of "thank you" and "I'm sorry," the way to make imperative statements, use of body language and facial expression, tone of voice and pitch, the depth of conversation and so forth. I will not analyze these features and other relevant features because this goes beyond the limits of this study. The previous discussion makes it clear that there are quite distinctive differences in values, beliefs and norms about what is considered to be appropriate language behaviors between two different language communities.

One should bear in mind, at least, that these are only stylistic differences that are dictated by socio-cultural factors. There are usually sincere wishes to carry on communication from both parties. In order to reduce and minimize the cross-cultural and intercultural misunderstanding, both parties need to recognize the conventionality of the communicative code of the other, instead of taking communicative behavior as representing what is meant in their own native culture. The content of the

conversation, rather than the convention of the conversation, needs to be acknowledged in cross-cultural and intercultural communication.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH EDUCATION IN JAPAN: Recommendation and Implementation

As is shown in the previous section, it seems logical to think that there is a huge stumbling block for a Japanese who wants to gain competency in "Western" style communication. Some of the features are totally opposite from the Western perspective in values. Thus, in order to communicate appropriately in English, the Japanese may need to repress their cultural attitudes towards language. The Japanese have been repeatedly criticized for being bad at learning new languages. They, themselves, have internalized this criticism and have come to believe they are deficient in this area. Most Japanese are not eloquent in their opinion with even their own language, so how could they be articulate in the English language. Of course, as the saying "practice makes perfect" indicates, talking in English is the best way for Japanese speakers to improve. However, the Japanese tendency for long silences means less talking and this leads to less practice of the English language. This results in difficulty in the manipulation of the English language.

The approach of teaching English as an international language, however, provides some validity for the Japanese way of using English. If the notion of eloquence and articulation is viewed as only one of many cultural patterns in using English, then the Japanese way of communication with English should be viewed as only another pattern. This understanding would be especially beneficial for the Japanese since it gives them confidence that their communication patterns are as valid and acceptable as

any other style of English. They do not need to conform to the native-speakers' value systems. Achebe (1965) asked himself the question referring to the English usage in Africa: "Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing?" And he answers "certainly yes." But then, he qualified this answer saying "if on the other hand you ask, 'can he [an African] ever learn to use it like a native speaker?' I should say, 'I hope not. It is neither necessary, nor desirable for him to be able to do so'" (p.222).

In the situation of intercultural communication, both parties need to learn how to be patient with each other and learn new attitudes about what is acceptable language use. One might be concerned about the problem of international intelligibility, if the language evolves differently according to regional needs, but as Smith (1987b) said,

...[N]ative speakers are not the sole judges of what is intelligible nor are they always more intelligible than nonnative speakers...[t]he greater the familiarity a speaker (native or nonnative) has with a variety of English, the more likely it is that s/he will understand, and be understood by, members of that speech community (p.266).

I believe this realization is a starting point for English education in Japan. Needless to say, it is almost impossible for the Japanese to speak English as the native-speakers do, in terms of pronunciation or use of logic, and teachers should not force students to conform to impossible standards. I do not suggest devaluing the training of pronunciation or articulation. However, I strongly believe that a tremendous amount of time and energy has been spent and wasted for some piece elements of language learning which do not lead students to an appreciation of functional aspects of the language as a whole. As an unfortunate result, I often see many Japanese try so hard to become and act like "a little American" in order to feel superiority over other Japanese people whose English does not sound like a "correct" American version.

This belief that "sounding like American is better" has created much tension amongst the Japanese and between the Japanese and people from non-western countries.

I think Japanese and other nonnative speakers need to abandon their inferiority complex and have pride in the maximum attainment of their version of English language use. More importantly, though, native speakers need to realize that English is not "their" language and replace their linguistic chauvinism with an attitude of linguistic tolerance. The most crucial point in language education is to train the students to have sensitivity towards other cultural points of view and to help them build appropriate cultural and psychological attitudes.

Following is an excellent example of what I mean by cultural and psychological attitudes, illustrated by Trifonovitch (1981) about a typical yet problematic attitude of native speakers. He was attending an international conference which included participants from Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and the United States. He noticed the different reactions in terms of acceptability between the papers presented by native speakers of English and by educated non-native speakers of English. This issue came to a climax when a participant from Japan presented her paper in educated Japanese-English. After the paper was presented, two irrelevant comments to the basic thesis and topic were presented. These were immediately followed by two other native speakers of English who came to rescue the Japanese presenter by paraphrasing and explaining to the rest of the participants the intent of the subject of the paper she presented. This may seem to be a normal attitude for the native speakers to take and indicate an interest in elucidating in "better" English. However, the reaction infuriated a participant from Korea who immediately took the floor in a very dramatic gesture, hit the table with his fist, and exclaimed,

We will no longer tolerate this kind of attitude!... We clearly and fully understand what our colleague from Japan had to say. It was absolutely

insulting when two of you made comments which were completely irrelevant to the topic of the paper. It clearly indicates to me that because our colleague spoke with a Japanese accent that immediately you thought the paper was not worthy of your attention. And then the other two gentlemen, with their condescending attitude, were trying to paraphrase for us the intent of our colleague's paper... This is an international conference. It is about time that we lay down our linguistic chauvinism and restore it with some cross-cultural tolerance (p.212).

This incident illuminated the problem of the attitude of native speakers. They may have good intentions, and not realize the implication of their actions for the non-native speakers. On the other side of this coin, non-native speakers apologize for their inability to speak English "correctly," make excuses for their poor English, and ask for the native speaker's indulgence and forgiveness. In this scenario, there is a clear power relation between native and non-native speakers, superiority for the former and inferiority for the latter.

If education is to educate people to transform the society to a more humane and just one, Japanese education needs to go through a major reform, especially in terms of English language education. In the current system, English education is promoting the Western perspective of language use and supporting the status quo of a hierarchy of types of English that are spoken all over the world. By conceptualizing the English language as a common tool shared by people in the global village not bound to power relations between nations, we could be more empathetic to each other and pursue intercultural and international communication.

Following is some recommendations that I suggest from the perspective of English as an international language in order to reform English education in Japan:

1. Since we will need contact with a variety of cultures with English as the main medium, it is very important for us to develop an awareness of the other cultures and, at the same time, develop a cognitive awareness of our own culture. In order to do so, materials need to include as many cultural perspectives as possible rather than only introducing American or British perspectives as a model. Also, readings should focus more on Japanese culture so that one can be more knowledgeable of one's own cultural presuppositions.

2. Since we need to accept the different varieties of English, it would be helpful to encourage students to study other languages in addition to English. This is especially important in Japan where in formal educational settings there is no choice but English which is the required foreign language, and occasions of being exposed to other languages are extremely rare in daily life. Familiarizing oneself with different languages would help students to be aware of different cultures and to be tolerant towards many variations of English.

3. Instead of exposing students to only "standard" English, provide opportunities to listen to as many variations of English as possible for the purpose of comprehension, not necessarily of production. Teachers should not have any value judgment about which types of English the students ought to acquire. Some teachers might believe training students to speak "standard" English is their mission since there exists a hierarchy in types of English. However, this hierarchy is based on false ideology. Education can be the force to eliminate this false ideology and to change the existing societal value.

4. In addition to the verbal aspects of communication, non-verbal clues of communication should be incorporated into language teaching. Teachers should train students to be alert to the context in both verbal and non-verbal communication. This should not be a difficult task for Japanese since they tend to be over-sensitive to the social environment. Some practical introduction of varieties of non-verbal clues would be beneficial, however.

CONCLUSION

Much has been discussed in this study concerning the relationship between language and culture, more specifically the English language spoken by Japanese and the cultural presuppositions they bring to the communication. I have also attempted to explore the approach of English for intercultural communication by applying it to the Japanese context. In theory, this approach promises one important political aspect of the English language: a validation of varieties of English use which would hopefully lead to equity among the people who speak English.

There needs to be much more study done in order to implement the philosophy of English as an international language, however. One can imagine a strong argument from both the native and the nonnative speakers of English that nativization or localization of English is an unbearable deterioration of the language itself. Especially for the native speakers, emotional resistance might be strong. I understand this as natural reaction, however, language cannot remain static and has been and will be evolving its form affected by historical, social and cultural contexts. This time the degree of diversification may appear to be too great, but it is the fate of English since it has achieved the status of an international language.

Issue of the international intelligibility of English variations is the major concern that needs to be explored more extensively. Also, this approach does not provide for teachers and trainers a concrete sense of what kind of cultural training they should facilitate since this approach conflicts with the cultural-specific way of training. Attached to this new perspective towards teaching English is a whole new set of problems. One thing that I can say with confidence is that it is up to learners to decide what kind of English they would like to be competent in, which culture(s) they would like to be most familiar with, on the basis of their own unique reason and purpose for learning English. No one should impose their own beliefs or styles on them as the "correct" ones. Therefore, it is the role of the teacher to provide the students with the knowledge necessary to make this choice.

In the case of the Japanese English education system, it is hard to bring about reform since the system is strongly controlled by government standards and there is not much space leeway for the teachers to implement the new practice. As a first step, while proposing to include new perspectives into formal education settings, pseudo-English language schools need to be reformed completely from the present function of selling a dream and transmitting the image of "white middle-class Americans" to training the learners to be real international and intercultural people. Easier said than done. There is still a long way to go. However, the change has to come from within the field of teaching English, from both teachers and learners so that they can participate and contribute to the greater global communication.

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