



英語教育を変えよう

TESOLへの招待

コロンビア大学大学院TESOL専攻グループ編



Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

東京校(サイマル)第1期生たちの体験と意見

サイマル出版会

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コロンビア大学大学院TESOL専攻グループ編

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6 English Education as a Three-Ring Circus—English Schools

Joseph Dias

To a foreigner involved in the teaching of English in Japan, English education here sometimes seems like a three-ring circus. There is much hoopla surrounding the topic. At speech contests there is no end to speeches which highlight the importance of its mastery. It is a pet of the media. Their attention on it overshadows their coverage of any other school subject.

Society at large is unanimously convinced of its necessity in the school curriculum to aid in 'internationalization' and in making the populace more 'sophisticated.' Many adults have dedicated themselves to a lifelong search for that elusive phantom—fluent English conversation. And 'conversation parlours' and Kent Gilbert endorsed salons have proliferated like *shiitake* mushrooms on the trunks of trees to accommodate the masses of would-be English speakers.

"I Cannot Speak English"

Even greater than their interest in the topic of English education is the conviction by most of those who have been through the six years of mandatory English classes (and perhaps a few years of college English classes) that their English is poor—that is, if they will admit to being able to speak the language at all. I have even encountered

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people who have majored in English or American literature at college, and who can communicate in English at much more than a basic level, say to me "I cannot speak English."

At first, I attributed this phenomenon to the legendary Japanese sense of modesty. Then I realized that they really believed what they were saying. They genuinely thought that they could not speak a language that they were indeed speaking—quite well at that. What is it, I wondered, that leads them to such an absurd misperception of reality? Or, are they really misperceiving their ability? Granted, many of those who plead ignorance of English are exaggerating, but I have come to understand that what they mean by the expression "I can't speak English" is that they cannot say what they want to say in the language because they lack basic sociolinguistic knowledge (eg. awareness of when an apology is appropriate, what components are necessary, and in what order—a very culturally specific process) and, more importantly but interrelated with the first problem, they do not have 'a feel' for the language.

To 'know' a language means much more than having a sense of the possible sentence structures, memorizing some rules of the language's regularities and exceptions, and ingesting some vocabulary. 'Knowing' a modern, living language—especially if one's goal is to eventually communicate using it—involves finding out how you can convey your own ideas along with the emotional baggage that goes with them in this new medium. Nothing that we express in our native language is emotionally neutral. To express one's self is by definition emotional. But, our second language, depending on how we have learned it,

may not carry the same range of feelings.

If we are raised in a bilingual household or live for some years in a foreign country we may be able to come close to being able to communicate with an equally rich range of feelings in both languages, but if our second language is one we learn in a classroom away from the communities that use it and separated from their culture, our success in capturing the feeling of the language will, most likely, not be as great. Special efforts have to be made by teachers and students to link feeling with the language.

Recently I was surprised when a Japanese friend of mine who is a high school English teacher confessed to me that she thinks she could be a much better teacher of the Japanese language than of English because she 'feels' Japanese, whereas, she just has a 'working knowledge' of English. Since she is a perfectly fluent speaker of English her statement suggested that there may be an emotional language competence that does not necessarily correspond to an ability to merely communicate one's ideas in the second language. If a teacher with her high level of fluency does not have confidence in her ability to convey the feeling of English, I suspect that this may be a problem common to many other Japanese teachers of English.

Does one have to be a native speaker of the language he or she is teaching to adequately convey a feel for the language as my friend seemed to imply? I think not. When I was a high school student I was taught Italian by a native of Italy for two years but I never got a feel for the language. I suspect that this was because the only 'communicative' interaction in Italian that transpired was

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the teacher asking students to say the date, day of week, and weather conditions at the beginning of each class—all things that we knew that he knew. I believe that imparting a feeling for a language to students has more to do with methods used than it does with whether or not the teacher himself has a feel for it.

Feelings cannot jump by themselves from the mind of the teacher into the minds of the students. Conveying feeling is a process of negotiation—much like the exchange of meaning. So, the question is now "how can we as teachers arrange circumstances in such a way that the language's form is taught fully associated with feeling?" But, first let's look more closely at the connection between feeling and language, and the role our senses have in this relationship.

Feeling It...a Step Toward 'Knowing' It

Feeling—like language—is part internal and part external. If someone is depressed it is something that he must experience alone (internally), but the depression may be so (externally) obvious that surrounding people notice it and are influenced by it. Language, in the form of thought or latent competence, is internal, and becomes external when an utterance is made or a letter is written. Language which is used in interpersonal communication, since it is a form of expression, it cannot occur without feeling—even if we may be unaware of the feeling we are experiencing.

In his fascinating and very readable book *Teaching and Learning Languages*, the language theorist Earl Stevick writes of what he rather visual-centrally terms 'images.' By 'images' he means the groupings of stimuli

that come in through our senses at any given time. As long as we are conscious (and perhaps even when we are sleeping) our senses do not rest. We are constantly hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and seeing—even though much of this goes on beyond our conscious awareness. These senses interact and influence our feelings in very complicated ways.

When we are acquiring our native language(s) the 'images' (that is, sense bundles) are generally well integrated with the language around us. For example, an infant may hear the word nose, have his nose touched by his father's musky hand, have his hand moved to his father's nose so that he can touch a nose for himself, and he may hear his older brother blowing his nose in the background. This is a rather exaggerated example of a well integrated 'image'. It is thought that part of the reason children acquire language as quickly as they do is that they are treated with so many extra-linguistic language-supporting goodies that the 'images' they form are extraordinarily rich.

Although comparison with adolescent or adult language learners has its limitations, there is no reason to believe that the richness of 'images' taken in by more mature language learners does not help their language development. The richer the 'image', the richer and more multilayered are the feelings associated with these 'images'.

Imagine the difference between hearing a teacher just give a translation of the word 'angry', and seeing the teacher pretend to be angry at a student for forgetting a textbook while expressing his anger at him in English and then writing the word angry in red chalk on the board. In

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which case would you most likely remember the word
'angry'? This brings us to the question "How rich are the
'images' in the typical Japanese classroom?"

It is usual for students to sit in rows that face the front
of the classroom. The teacher's domain is the front of the
class. He may walk, sit down, pace, or lean on a podium.
The students must generally sit in chairs and are
discouraged from talking to each other or from leaving
their desks—except in the case of an earthquake. The
students behavioral options are : look up at the teacher,
look down at their desks or books, glance out the window
from time to time, or muster the courage to ask the
teacher a question.

In my observation I have found that the option most
frequently chosen by students is looking down at a
textbook or at the desk. If what is being taught in the
English class is concerned with desks, pencils, walls, and
the backs of heads, the students are getting excellent
integrated language/sensorial' images'. If the content of
the lesson is something unrelated to these things then the
'images' formed are less than ideal.

Recently I gave some of my students (second year
students in a reading/writing course at Kanda Gaigo
Gakuin) a free association test to get an idea of their
relatively unconscious thoughts on education. The words
that they associated with education included : school(8),
elementary school (1), school teacher (1), foolish (1), effort
(1), teacher (2), difficult (1), pencil (1), important (1), Japan
(1), study (1), and hard (1). What is most notable about this
list is that practically all the words are tied to school in
some way, and most of those that are not—foolish,
difficult and hard, for example—have negative connota-

tions.

If learning is seen as simply a 'school' activity what happens when students leave the classroom? And, God forbid, what happens when they graduate from school? At the present time it seems that students are made to feel dependent on school for every morsel of 'education' they are thrown. And when the formal, mandatory education is over, people feel that, in order to expand their knowledge, they need to enter one of the multitude of language 'clinics' (so called conversation school) or buy one of the hundreds of electronic language learning aids.

Personally, I believe that if the initial six years of English education was successful students would not be in a state of perpetual dependency. I see the primary goal of English education in Japan at the present time to be to produce students who are capable of building on their own knowledge—which they clearly have no shortage of. This is where the cultivation of a 'feeling' for the language and the concomitant fostering of rich 'images' comes in.

Practical Ways of Linking Feelings with Language

So, let's get back to the question "How can we breathe feeling into the English taught in the classroom"? First of all, I think that we need to think about the kind of interaction that typically goes on in the classroom and some alternatives to it. As mentioned above, in English classes in the usual junior and senior high schools—and probably in most colleges and vocational schools—the type of interaction engaged in is teacher to student. The teacher lectures or explains and the students listen. This is not the only type interaction that we can exploit.

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Students, because they have a lot in common, are naturally motivated to communicate with each other. Just observe what happens if the teacher leaves the room for a moment. The students instantly start to engage in animated conversation. It is a waste for a language teacher to ignore the great desire students have to interact with each other. Tasks can be set up that require students to work in pairs, small groups, or with their entire class. If the tasks are organized well and the students understand clearly what is required of them, there is not a great danger that chaos will ensue.

Students in Japan, as well as those in most countries, expect the teacher to take the lead and be the focus of attention. It takes some time for students to get used to the idea that they can help each other learn. It also takes time for teachers to accept a loosening of their control on what's happening in 'their' classroom.

At first, teachers can experiment with various student to student interaction patterns for just 5 or 10 minutes of the class until they and their students feel more comfortable with it. In pair or group work, when the activity is going well, some striking changes take place. There are fewer yawns, the eyes of the students brighten up, students can be seen actively doing such things as looking up words in their dictionaries and asking each other questions, and they may be asking the teacher more questions now that he or she is free to deal with them individually.

If a teacher feels that too much time would be taken away from 'instruction' by these methods, he or she should check to see how much time is presently spent in such activities as calling roll (which can be easily

dispensed with if there is a seating chart) and calling on students individually to answer questions or repeat something. If just some of the time dedicated to these activities could be sacrificed for the sake of interactive work the positive change in student attitude and opportunities for substantial practice would be ample reward.

Any of the four skills—including reading and writing—can be done in pairs or groups. Even a traditional method such as dictation can be altered so as to become interactional (see the book entitled *Dictation—New methods, new possibilities* by Paul Davis and Mario Rinvulcri), and the possibilities for highly motivating games are endless (the book *Grammar Games* by Mario Rinvulcri provides some good examples of how even something so dry as grammar can be made fun and interactional).

Creativity Breeds Creativity

I personally feel that a teacher can put the most feeling and enthusiasm into the teaching of materials that he or she has some hand in making. Granted teachers are often required to use Ministry of Education or supervisor approved texts, but there is nothing stopping a teacher from supplementing the text in some way. If the supplementation is done on a regular basis as part of the normal preparation for class, a great deal of time need not be spent at the beginning of the school year hurriedly putting together materials.

At the school where I currently teach, since many teachers teach the same course, we have material pools easing the work burden on all of us and giving us access

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to ideas that may not have occurred to us. In the Spring semester we offer students special teacher (as opposed to supervisor) designed courses. Two years ago I taught a seminar optimistically entitled "How to Improve Your Mind." Since the intention was to bring the four skills—reading, writing, speaking and listening—into the course as much as possible, and the text that was chosen did not provide many opportunities for interaction, some supplementation was necessary.

Part of the course dealt with techniques for improving memory, so I designed a story about a young person who developed amnesia after getting into an accident. Her job was to try to discover her identity. The story has parts of it left out so that students, with the help of their classmates can fill it in on their own. It's necessary for them to read and understand the story before they write anything, so they become highly motivated to read the text and the fact that they co-author a story excites them. This is an example of the work that one student did on the first page of the story (as per instructions, she added the underlined information and the paragraph written in the box):

Chapter One

"How do you feel?" asked the nurse.

"What?... What?... "I responded from my bed while rubbing my eyes. "Where am I?"

"You're OK. You're at Mt. Sinai Hospital," the nurse reassured me.

"Where!?"

"Mt. Sinai... in New York City."

"What's the date today?"

"It's the 12th of January."

"What year is it?" I asked.

"Well, of course, it's 19—," the nurse answered smiling.

"Why am I here?"

"No one knows for certain. It seems you suddenly fainted while walking down a corridor in La Guardia Airport. You didn't wake up until a few minutes ago. You weren't carrying any identification, so no one knows who you are. May I have your name please?"

"My name?... It's... It's... I don't remember my own name. Oh my God! What's happening to me?" I held my head in my hands and began to cry.

"Calm down!" the nurse soothed. "You've just had a bad shock. I'm sure everything will come back to you soon."

"Can I see a doctor?"

"Yes, certainly. I'll call Dr. Lethe right away."

When the nurse left my room I dried my eyes, got out of bed, and walked over to the mirror that was hanging on the wall near the window. I looked at myself as if for the first time.

"Who's this? Is this me? I know I'm not a European or an American 'cause this girl who's reflected in this mirror has brown eyes, a flat nose, a little yellow skin and is small. Wait a minute..... But I may be a nisei or a half blood. I can't decide the nationality now. Anyway, I look like a cat....."

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In later chapters there are more opportunities for interaction. Before the students were to do the sixth chapter in class they were asked to bring in five or six items that have distinctive smells. They alternate with another student pretending that they are first the doctor and then the patient. The 'doctors' let the students who are playing the 'patients' smell the scents that they have brought to class and ask them to report on anything that the smells remind them of. The 'patients' then write down their recollections in the story. Here is an example of the work of another student:

Chapter 6

After Dr. Absinthe explained my 'doodles' to me I felt that I had a clearer idea of what kind of personality I had. But, I still could not remember my name or anything about my past. This was my biggest worry. "Doctor, now I know something about my personality," I said, "but I still don't know my own name. Can you help me to remember my name or something about my past?" I asked desperately.

"There's something you can do. This may seem strange to you though," Dr. Absinthe replied.

"That's OK! I'll try anything if there's a chance that will help me to get my memory back. What shall I do?"

"Well, it's very simple." the doctor said. "Just smell these things and tell me if they cause you to remember anything. Scientists have found a strong connection between memory and very nice or very bad smells. Some people can remember events from 50 years in

the past after they smell certain odors!" Dr. Absinthe then took some glass jars out of his briefcase. He asked "Are you ready, Jean?" Then, one by one, he opened the jars and put them under my nose. Some of the smells were strong, some were subtle, and—much to my happiness—some of them brought back memories.

First Odor

"It smelled like apple. It caused me to remember after dinner when my mother often cut it and gave me for desert."

Second Odor

"It smelled like flower. It caused me to remember in spring time. I played with my friend in my garden there are many flowers and trees."

Third Odor

"It smelled like coffee. It caused me to remember a coffee shop. I sometimes visited it with my friend after school. We talked about our boyfriend and school. I enjoyed there."

Fourth Odor

"It smelled like smoke. It caused me to remember my father. He was always smoking in his room. When I took coffee his room there was very smoky. So, I don't like smoke."

Fifth Odor

"It smelled like grasses. It caused me to remember park. I have often went there with some friends. We ate lunch on the grasses."

Work on the story took place just in the last 10-15

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minutes of each class period, but it did much to motivate the students to learn new vocabulary on their own or with the help of other students, and to give them a chance to express things that they wanted to say and a forum for presenting this expression. When their stories were completed they were asked to read them onto cassette tapes at home and then bring them into class to exchange with other students.

I brought up the above story/cloze exercise to make the point that a small amount of extra work on the teacher's part to supplement a dry text can do a lot for student morale and to aid the students in forming more powerful 'images' that will stay with them longer. Teachers should always think about how their prepared texts are lacking and how they can fill in the gaps themselves.

The shortcoming of many of the Ministry of Education approved English texts is that they provide meagre opportunities for practice and for student interaction. Before this state of affairs is remedied some ingenuity on the part of teachers to enliven texts is called for. *Making the Most of Your Textbook*, written by Neville Grant and published by Longman, is a practical book detailing how to go about adapting, replacing, omitting or adding to textbooks that, for better or worse, you are stuck with. It attempts to empower teachers so that they do not have to feel like they are slaves to their textbooks.

Problems with English education in Japan can be and have been blamed on many factors: entrance exams that do not test for 'communicative competence', teachers who cannot speak English, the fact that Japan is an island nation that was separated from the rest of the world for many centuries, and the widespread use of the grammar/

translation method.

No matter who or what is blamed for the inability of many of those who pass through six years or more of English education to communicate in the language, it is teachers who have to face the students and who have the primary responsibility for helping them get a feel for the language they are learning. Since the time teachers have with students is usually very limited, the 'help' that the teacher provides can be in suggesting to students how they can add to their knowledge when he isn't around — which is, after all, most of the time. Before vacations, for example, I usually give students hand-outs like this one:

How can I KEEP what I learned this semester in
our English class?

(and perhaps learn something new!)

It will be a long time until we meet again. In two months it is possible that you will forget EVERYTHING that you have learned this semester if you make no efforts on your own to practice (at least) listening to English. You are lucky in that the Tokyo area has many resources for those who want to learn English. Here is my advice to those of you who want to keep in practice:

* Listen to J-Wave (FM Japan 81.3 MHz) : This radio station has DJs who speak Japanese, English, French, Portuguese, and many other languages. Most of their broadcasts are in English mixed with Japanese. They play a variety of music, but mostly the latest and classic rock hits. On Sunday mornings (at around 10:30 A.M.) they have an interesting

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program that features a popular singer. Some of the old songs of the singer and then some of his or her recent songs are played. Some interesting information about the singer or group is also given. It is good practice for you to record this on a radio/tape recorder and then listen to it again later to try to pick up what you didn't understand the first time.

* Listen to FEN (810 KHz): This radio station has American DJs and features the latest American hits. A very good American public radio news show comes on every weekday at about 11:30 A.M. There is radio theatre every Sunday night starting at 9:00 P.M. News comes on every hour on the hour (for example, exactly at 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, etc.) Try to record some radio program and listen to it several times to get a general understanding of it.

* Read the English Journal. It's a magazine for studying English. It has interesting articles and interviews with famous movie stars, writers and singers. A tape comes with the magazine. The speaking speed and difficulty level of the taped articles varies so that you can find something to match your level.

* Read English magazines and books. When you read them you not only learn new vocabulary and idioms, but you also learn about Western culture. Anything that you learn about the culture will help your listening and speaking ability. Enjoy reading. Read for general understanding. If you have to look up more than 10 words per page in your dictionary the book is probably too difficult. Save it for later. Try something a bit easier.

- * Speak English with friends from this class if you meet them during your vacation. See how long you can communicate with each other without using any Japanese.
- * Listen to taped stories. Kinokuniya in Shinjuku and Maruzen in Nihonbashi, as well as some other good bookstores, have a great variety of famous stories on cassette tape. Find an interesting one and listen to it as a bedtime story or find the book that it was taken from and read it as you listen to the tape.
- * Write a letter to your pen pal. If you don't have one try to find one in a magazine or newspaper. One of your friends may also be able to tell you how to get in touch with a pen pal.

I really believe that regardless of what pressures are on us which we have little control over such as choice of textbook, the existence of the college entrance exams in their present form, and the limited class time that we have with our students, there is still much that we *do* have control over and I think that we can surmount the limitations of our situation and give our students a genuine feel for the language that they are learning.

Just think of the things that we as teachers have control over. We can determine the types of interactions that go on in our classrooms; we can add, omit (in some cases), replace or adapt parts of the textbooks we are using; we can advise students how to add to their ability to communicate in English outside the classroom; and improve our understanding of that which we are trying to teach by further study or by traveling abroad. It may be a three-ring circus but the situation is by no means

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(北里大学・当時, 神田外語学院)

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7 学習意欲と学ぶ喜び——通信教育

折橋 義

62歳のNさんは、辞書や放送テキストを詰め込んだ大きなリュックを背負い、それにも入り切らなかったノート類を風呂敷に包み込んで、せっせと学校に通ってくる。授業のない日にも、朝から晩まで図書室にいて勉強していく。授業中は、一番前に陣取り、教師の説明を食い入るように聞き、理解できないところでは授業の流れをとめるのも気にせずに、平気で質問する。家ではNHKの高校講座を定時にかかさずに聞き、ビデオにとって、何回も繰り返し視聴する。体の弱かった彼女がやっと学習する機会を得て、毎日がまさに「学ぶ喜び」の連続だという。

中学時代、英語の授業ではいつもお客様で、3年間の彼の成績は