Reforming English Teaching in Japanese Universities: Creating a Language Community

Arthur Allan Bailey

> [The modern social sciences] increasingly see themselves as marked out for the purpose of scientific ordering and control of society. They have to do with "scientific" and "methodical" planning, direction, organisation, development—in short with an infinity of functions that, so to speak, determine from the outside the whole of the life of each individual and each group.
>
> (Hans-Georg Gadamer, <u>Truth and Method</u> ,1976, p. 39-40)

When he found himself talking about events in his life that happened twenty-five or thirty years earlier, Philip Larkin (1990) wrote:

> It makes me breathless.
> It's like falling and recovering
> In huge gesturing loops
> Through an empty sky. (p. 184)

These days, I share this sense of falling through time, and I find the sensation at the same time frightening (don't let it stop too soon) and exhilarating (what next!), but in my academic life it has perhaps made me less patient with the excessively narrow focus we normally associate with journal articles, especially articles about language teaching, with their hairsplitting arguments, contrived surveys and tedious over-citation. I originally set out here to write just such an article describing and critiquing the situation of English language teaching in

Japanese universities today, but I find myself writing more self -reflectively-- in "huge gesturing loops". Perhaps the time is ripe for me to sum up my observation of the evolution of English teaching in Japanese universities. Although I have seen much improvement in organization and methodology since I began teaching in Japan more than twenty-five years ago, I suspect that some changes now happening may in the long run prove detrimental to language learning. These tendencies include a too ready acceptance of imported methodologies, pedagogies and curricula that often lead to frustration and resentment in the classroom. Let me make clear from the beginning that I distinguish English-language teaching in Japanese universities from that of other institutions of teaching, such as private languages schools or high schools. Language schools teach language, but universities must offer students a broader and more fulfilling learning experience that can contribute to developing understanding within themselves and furthering freedom in their society. Therefore, in this essay, I want to "paint with a broader brush," in a way that helps us view "the big picture" (and mix a few metaphors as well). First, I will talk a little about the historical development of higher education in Japan, and then about the role Japanese universities play in the wider society. Finally, I will discuss some worrying recent tendencies of reform. This mixture of history, contemporary fact and personal experience (sometimes referred to as "cultural hermeneutics") is academically a little unorthodox, but useful: educators can gain alternative perspectives on what is happening in Japanese universities, and find new horizons of possibilities for their classrooms.

Any summary of historical differences between the Japanese and

North American university traditions in this essay must necessarily be superficial, but my purpose here is simply to correct the common unspoken assumption that Japanese and North American universities are roughly equivalent. They are not. Although Japan has had universities at least twelve hundred years (Borgan 1984), since Heian times, and the history of universities in the West stretches even further back in time, it is only since the end of the Edo Period that the traditions have come to overlap in any serious way. The tradition in the West has roots in Greek rationalism, rhetoric, and Socratic questioning, with a later infusion of Mediaeval Christian theology and metaphysical questing for "truth." The tradition in Japan comes out of a system of Chinese imperial bureaucracy that stressed memorizing a canon of mostly Confucian texts that emphasize social harmony and deference to authority (Andersen 1998, Amano 1990). In the Edo period, some Japanese scholars began to take an interest in acquiring Western scientific knowledge, and eventually the Bakufu set up an institution to translate and study foreign texts, first mainly Dutch and later English, and this institution developed after the Meiji restoration into Tokyo Imperial University, which set the model for other developing universities, public and private. This tradition placed a heavy focus on foreign language learning, especially English.

English instructors may see in this admittedly simplistic sketch of the Japanese university tradition the roots of some of the common themes of complaint about language classrooms in Japanese universities today: the lack of logical debate and questioning (Socrates), an inability to give opinions (rhetoric), the impediment of group thinking, and the focus on memorization (*keju*) and grammatical rules

(Confucian order). It is not my purpose here to judge Japan's university tradition, but only to point out that the problems we struggle with in the classroom today often have long and deep cultural roots, and may not lend themselves to easy remedy, as a recent article by Mike Guest (2004) confirms. Moreover, if we seek remedies for the Japanese system's perceived failures, perhaps it would be best to seek them from within Japanese culture rather than try to impose imported methodologies that may never quite fit. That does not mean that we cannot aim at change in the system, or take advantage of Western thought, but first we should understand the problems of Japanese universities within their historical and cultural contexts, and not just assume that students who refuse to look us in the eye or find it impossible to give "a straight answer" in English are intentionally perverse and uncooperative ("Japan's Schools", The Economist 1990).

Japanese and North American concepts of education are in fundamental ways different. Although a university in Osaka may look much like a university in New York (a campus, classrooms, marks, lectures, libraries etc.), it is based on different underlying assumptions about the meaning of education. I first realized this many years ago, when a foreign colleague put up a number of travel posters in his university classroom. All the foreign English teachers were pleased with this effort to "motivate learning and brighten the classroom environment." However, his Japanese colleagues objected the posters were not consistent with the atmosphere of seriousness appropriate to university study, and after much heated debate the posters came down. Although I was indignant at the time, I have since come to believe that Japanese have valid suspicions about negative influences foreign

methodologies and pedagogies may have on their university culture (Matsuzawa 2004, Yoshihara 2004, Kimura 1988). Thus, we must remind ourselves continually that education is a cultural construct, a paradigm that differs from culture to culture—a mother in Tokyo and a mother in Toronto may both say they want a "good education" for their children, but they are not necessarily thinking about the same kind of processes and results (except that hopefully it will end in a good job).

In Japan, at least since the Meiji era, we can find two different concepts of "education" at work simultaneously. Japan's first Minister of Education in the Meiji era, Mori Arinori, distinguished the two as *kyoiku* (learning) and *gakumon* (scholarship) (Hall 1973). For Mori, *kyoiku* was a discipline involving the memorization of rules and facts, and the mastering of processes and skills; it was suitable for all productive citizens of the state and could be achieved through schooling. *Gakumon*, however, intended more sophisticated thought; it was a creative activity that required freedom and even nonconformity. It was seen, therefore, as a rather dangerous process that should be limited to a chosen elite and confined within a university campus. Even in the totalitarian stage of Japan's modern development, Japanese university students and professors were given unusual freedom of speech and action and the leisure to develop eccentricities (Mitchel 1983). Protests, idleness, loose-living, spouting dangerous theories, rudeness, unclean living and other socially unacceptable practices were tolerated in the university student, perhaps even expected of him. ("him" because at the time the vast majority of university students were male). Of course, Western and liberal concepts of education have been

taking root in Japan since the Meiji Revolution as well. Fukuzawa Yukichi, for example, praised Kyoto schools (then independent of the central government) for their development of a sense of self-reliance (1985 p. 77), and he eventually set up his own university, Keio, to offer a more liberal alternative to the national universities (Nakayama 1985); Keio, in turn, has become a model, especially for other elite private universities. Nevertheless, when a prewar educational reformer, Nitobe Inazo (the fellow on the five thousand yen note), tried to get his students to clean up, wake up and pound their books more in the manner of the American students he had seen back at Johns Hopkins University in the US, he was eventually forced to give in to student resistance (Oshiro 1985). His students had the weight of the educational history of Japan on their side, one that stressed a different meaning of "scholastic freedom," and they insisted upon their traditional "relaxed" privileges.

Of course, after the Second World War, much began to change in Japan, and education was only one area in which the American occupiers made efforts to achieve reforms, which accounts for why the Japanese educational system (6-3-3-4) looks so much like the American one (Tsuchimochi 1993). The American monopoly on Japanese culture was so complete in the first decade after the war that some scholars from other Western countries, such as Ronald Dore of Britain, felt bitterly excluded (Dore 1974). Nevertheless, despite the re-creation of Japan's educational institutions in the American image after the war, looks were deceiving, and in several ways the Japanese managed to preserve their cultural integrity. In particular, the Japanese use of rigorous entrance examinations, first at high school

and then at university, distinguished the Japanese from the American system. In junior and senior high schools, Japanese students still studied hard to memorize a vast quantity of facts: this was their "learning" stage, marked by great effort (one common saying a couple of decades ago was that only the student who slept less than four hours a night would pass the all-important examinations). Once the lucky few made it into university, however, the pressure was off: they could do more or less what they liked without fear of failure until time came to get a job. Within the context of Japanese culture, this made sense: such students had already proven their work ethic; they already had the necessary store of knowledge; what remained was for them to ruminate upon what they had learned—to take time to explore their world both socially and culturally, make friends, join clubs, find hobbies, discover politics and art, and discuss issues long into the night with comrades, even if it meant missing a morning lecture or two. This need for developing social skills accounts for some peculiarities of Japanese universities, such as the importance of clubs and "circles" (*bukatsudou*) in the educational experience of students, an importance foreign instructors are likely to underestimate (Cave 2004). Although we may scoff at this "easy-going system", it has served to support liberty in Japan and coincided with Japan's remarkable post-war economic leap forward. However, with the bursting of the "economic bubble," new weight has been given to the "more successful" American educational models, and we now see reforms intended to introduce more rigor, organization, "scientific" method and standardization to Japanese university education, and this "puritanical" tendency is especially noticeable in new language curricula.

These days, a lot more students study at university than in the immediate post-war period, and they are no longer overwhelmingly male. University has become big business, and since the bursting of the bubble economy, "Japanese-style business management" has lost prestige, and so new ways to manage universities have been sought. Moreover, a declining student-aged population means universities, especially private universities, must compete hard to attract students. It is a "buyer's market," and when it comes to studying English, the buyers want something different: first, because they found their high school English classes ineffectual and boring, and second, because many have some experience abroad (Willis and Onoda 1989) and have seen methodologies that appear more attractive. In response, some universities try to pattern their reforms on American classroom models.

Unfortunately, not all American ESL classroom practices are effective in the Japanese EFL language learning environment, if only because the lynch pin in the Japanese system, the entrance examination, remains in tact and guarantees the exclusiveness of schools and the rewards of the elites who graduate from the "best universities." These examinations have distorted the educational system in several ways. For example, it is often complained that the focus on entrance exams has left many of the most serious Japanese students socially inept: they have studied so hard and for such long hours under the watchful eyes of their "kyoiku mamas" that they have become cut off from social intercourse and have lost their ability to communicate well with other people even in their own language. (Anderson 1993, Bailey 1991) Trying to force such students to "communicate" in English discussion groups can be counter productive and even lead to resentment

or anger. Moreover, making them study for further tests, like TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and its occasional clones, including TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), will not serve to improve a student's ability at speaking English where tests were at the root of the inability to communicate in the first place.

Unfortunately, TOEFL and TOEIC are increasingly promoted in the Japanese university community (see "TOEIC classes now essential" 2005), partly because Japanese university administrators, themselves bred on exams, find even foreign examinations attractive. First, tests are consistent with their concept of "serious education." Second, commercial tests, with their "scientific image" and fashionable "foreignness", can be "sold" to students. Third, tests reduce the messy and mysterious process of language learning to a "measurable product," one that can be summed up in a single number. Rewards can be distributed appropriately: TOEFL 580 will get you this scholarship, 450 will get you into that college, and 350—"well, try again next time."

Teachers more familiar with the use of TOEFL in North America may see in it an elitist and even racist barrier against the many foreign students clamoring to enter American universities, a barrier Europeans, with languages and cultures more closely related to English, can get past more easily than Asians. Another problem with TOEFL is that it does not suit the main needs of Japanese students. In order to significantly increase a TOEFL score takes highly motivated students a lot of instructional time, preferably in an immersion environment. In Japan, although students are required to take English, it is not necessarily important for job placement (which usually depends more on the prestige of the university entered than the

grades achieved). Moreover, most students get only a few scattered hours a week of English instruction. Therefore, continuing the focus on test-taking that students have endured in high school by subjecting them to TOEFL is hardly a "reform" likely to improve English instruction and learning. In fact, this TOEFL *sukoa shinkou,* "score worship," (Yoshihara 2004) will likely discourage many students in their efforts to learn English.

Much of the popularity of imported teaching tests, texts and methodologies in Japan is due the prestige of simply being "American." American culture continues to pervade Japanese educational culture: Japanese stationary supplies are decorated with images of James Dean, Audrey Hepburn and Mickey Mouse; school textbooks have stories about Lincoln's boyhood; many American-published textbooks are used in university English classes. Of course, we foreign English teachers in Japan (especially, British, Australian, American, Canadians and other "English native speakers") tend to be a rather liberal-thinking lot, if not downright left-leaning, and so it is hard for us to appreciate our role as the vanguard of Western cultural imperialism in Japan. But Pennycook (1998 1994) and other scholars (Tanaka 1993, Susser 1998) remind us that it is so, and if anything, the influence of US cultural imperialism is strengthening. In the past, most foreign English teachers were recruited from abroad or from among visitors who had come to enjoy a Japanese cultural adventure, but with developing "globalization" and especially since the development of the JET Program which imports thousands of young, inexpensive (and little qualified) English teachers to Japan every year, there has been a huge increase in the supply of potential teachers. The JET

program certainly has many problems of its own, but it impacts university language teaching in two ways: first, many Japanese students have some "fun" learning English with JETs in their high school days (a learning environment largely devoid of fun), and, second, many of the foreign "teaching assistants" enjoy their experience (and salaries), too, and so decide to stay on in Japan or to return after first improving their teaching qualifications back home (Court 1998). As a result, universities can choose teachers from a much larger pool of "native speakers".

Universities can benefit from this larger supply of foreign teachers in two ways. One is that they can insist on more highly qualified instructors, and choose from among the many those with the best credentials and the most suitable experience. This sometimes happens. The other way is to take advantage of the supply to "get more for the money". This "rationalization" of the university business leads to a lessening of "quality", but is still attractive because it saves money and because it satisfies student demand for "native speaker" teachers. Especially private universities, competing for a declining student population, are eager to accommodate student expectations by hiring more foreign instructors. Not wanting to bite the hand that feeds me, I would still like to point out one thing: Japanese English-language instructors suffer a "bad rap." The reasons are partly historical. In the years after the war, the demand for English teachers was huge, but the supply was minuscule. As a result, many teachers could hardly speak English. The war and prewar social conditions were hardly conducive to training fluent speakers of English. Only twenty years ago, it was still seriously debated whether any Japanese could ever really

master any foreign language (Miller 1986, 1982). However, that generation of teachers deserve more respect for their efforts because of the great deal they achieved despite all that was against them. Unfortunately, the stereotype of the high-school English teacher who knows the grammar but can hardly squeak out a simple greeting in English persists. One side effect of this prejudice is a strong bias for hiring "native speaker" instructors, no matter what their relative qualifications or teaching ability. In recent years, though, the social situation has greatly changed, and there are coming onto the Japanese educational market many Japanese English teachers who speak English with near-native fluency. Ironically, while universities are still eagerly hiring foreign instructors, this new generation of English-speaking Japanese teachers has come available—teachers who could provide excellent role models for university language learners.

As we have seen, today's university administrators have to create English curricula that take into account four important factors: first, the increasing number of foreign English teachers in Japan; second, the increasing number of students at all levels who have some experience studying abroad; third, the economic pressure to "rationalize" university management and the resulting hunger for "marketable" products; and finally, the overwhelming prestige of the American university model, along with its methodologies and texts. Again, it is ironic that this wholesale introduction of American methodologies comes at a time when those same methods are being seriously questioned in North America as excessively rationalistic. For example, Ted Aoki, one of Canada's most respected educational theorists, questions rationalistic methodologies of language teaching. He says that they

are being severely criticized for their overly instrumental orientation, ignoring, as some are arguing, the meaning of second languages at the root level. Even the popular immersion program is being questioned for its monolinguistic/monocultural orientation. Some are advancing bilingual second language programs that are oriented toward a dialectic between the mother tongue and the second language. I foresee a paradigm shift of some consequence. (1988, p. 414)

In other words, just as many progressive North American educators are rejecting rationalistic methodologies, Japanese universities are "reforming" their language programs based on the outdated methods of a strongly "instrumental orientation." According to John Ralston Saul, in North America "The universities have become to a great extent the handmaidens of the corporate system" (1995, p. 67). Another strong attack on the rationalization of the American system comes from Herrnstein and Murray, who when describing the ever-increasing elitism of America's universities warn that

when people live in encapsulated worlds, it becomes difficult for them, even with the best of intentions, to grasp the realities of worlds with which they have little experience but over which they also have great influence, both public and private. Many of those promising undergraduates are never going to live in a community where they will be disabused of their misperceptions, for after education comes another sorting mechanism, occupations, and many of the holes that are still left in the cognitive partitions begin to get sealed. (1994 p. 50)

Herrnstein and Murray, Saul, Aoki, and others such as Lasch (1995)

and White (1993, 1987) all describe a similar tendency in American higher education towards corporatist, rationalist and elitist values-- that is, towards something very much like the commonly accepted stereotype of Japanese universities so often criticized in the past, for example by Miller, Cutts(1997), Thomas (1993) and Nagai (1971). As a result, the North American system of higher education may not offer the most suitable model for a reform of the Japanese system, not even of its language classrooms. In fact, excessive rationalization and standardization of university language classrooms may result in depriving students of the personal and intercultural understanding that a university environment should encourage.

One effect of this excessive rationalization in the Japanese university is a kind of MacDonaldization of the curricula that in its most extreme versions is almost "militaristic". One such approach is to design an extremely tight curriculum based on detailed "module" lesson plans and standardized tests (Sekiguchi 1993). In this system, any instructor can teach any class because there is no need for any continuity between lessons, and also no need for instructors to know anything about the abilities, interests or attitudes of students, or to offer anything from their experience or knowledge to the students. Teaching becomes a completely impersonal, mechanical process. Using this highly specific curriculum, a small elite of full-time professors can control the classroom content and procedures of a large contingent of foreign part-time instructors. The "efficiency" of this extreme rationalization is undeniable, but the pedagogical benefits are doubtful. Such an inflexible curriculum tends to come between the students and the instructors like a barrier: students are oppressed by the burden and

sterility of the materials, and instructors lose their sense of responsibility for what happens in their classrooms. Students and instructors become impersonalized cogs in the curricular machine, and they have little opportunity to engage and communicate in ways that might lead to intercultural understanding or any "real" language interaction that could lead to mutual respect on a personal level. This is a pedagogy that has its roots not so much in the liberalism of John Dewey and Yukichi Fukuzawa as in the production lines of Ford and Toyota.

The twin demons of this MacDonaldization are standardization and mechanization. I have already discussed the standardized lesson plan, and the standardized measuring of commercial tests like TOEFL. The fascination with machines also has a long history in the ESL/EFL classroom. I remember the pride my university took in its state of the art language lab when I was an undergraduate in Canada over thirty years ago (take that, Philip Larkin!). I also remember my boredom as I sat repeating transformation drills in Spanish. My Spanish never went anywhere, and maybe it is only my excuse for my failure to blame Language Labs, but they certainly did not help me. After about twenty years, much of the enthusiasm for language labs waned, but universities kept buying them because they were always useful for promoting programs—they looked good in brochures and impressed prospective students who had not yet had to endure them. Then in the 1980s, the labs got a new lease on life with the advent of video. Now we did not have to sit and just listen to drills and comprehension passages. Now we could watch cartoons, movies and news broadcasts. This was always fun, at least more fun than drills, but there is little evidence that it did much for student language learning (Ellis 1994). It

was great for instructors though: lesson planning was simplified, empty time was easily filled and restless students could be entertained. After a few years, however, many teachers came to see the over-use of video as a way certain colleagues could avoid real teaching. This is an unfortunate prejudice, however, because when used thoughtfully and with a clear purpose, video can be useful. Nevertheless, video is often misused. One example, is the use of "news broadcast", such as those from BBC, CNN, or ABC with intermediate-level student in Japan: I have studied Japanese for thirty years and think myself quite competent, and yet I still have trouble understanding the NHK News. News is a very specialized idiom, extremely condensed, full of political and cultural allusions, and rife with jargon. If intermediate-level students are going to watch videos, let them watch dramas or game shows that appeal to a more popular taste, and have simpler vocabulary, exaggerated expressions of sadness or sorrow and an advantageous redundancy. Anyway, getting back to our chronology, just when video was losing some of its shine as a teaching technology, along came the computer, and now the universities are rushing to computerize their language labs. Like videos and cassettes before them, computers can be useful for language learners, but they are not the cure-all some instructors hope for. Also, if not used properly, they too can be a "cop out" for frustrated teachers who do not want to deal directly with students.

Clearly, technology has a place in language learning. Over the years, as I have taught English and studied other languages, I have continued to use taped materials. I found them especially useful when I was studying on my own and not in a university program. That is an

important point. Much of this technology can be used by the lone student or in high schools or private language schools that do not aim at anything higher than a functional use of a language. At universities we *should* be aiming higher, a lot higher.

Now that I have explained the unsettling tendencies I have noticed in English language teaching in Japanese universities, it is incumbent on me to suggest ways that offer promise. I should begin by pointing out that there is a tendency in academic articles on language learning to propose a kind of "us against them" or "good vs. evil" confrontation over methodology. This is unnecessary. Certain teachers prefer certain methodologies, and administrators and instructors have their priorities, but all of us want to create the best educational environment we can for our students. In the end, it becomes a question of balance. For example, I have already noted the attraction of video or computer labs for administrators and technology oriented instructors. Although I cannot share their enthusiasm, partly because I am a technological underachiever, I am willing to accept that technology has much to offer. I would, however, not put machines at the center of a university language program. Still, computers can complement the human element in language learning. For example, most university teachers would prefer smaller class sizes, especially when teaching writing or speaking skills, but administrators often balk at the cost. But we could take advantage of the technology (which facilitates a degree of self-study) to have interpretive skill classes (reading and listening) of forty students, balanced by productive skill classes (writing and speaking) of twenty without incurring much greater cost. My point here is not to promote the division of classes into such skills—that is another

question—but only to recognize that there are ways to use technology to profitable advantage. Surely, instructors proficient in the technology can offer other, better suggestions that can balance the sometimes conflicting interests of "bureaucratic rationalizers," the "language technocrats" and us "cultural interactivists."

The term "cultural hermeneutics" describes a language teaching methodology that prioritizes cultural awareness. "Cultural interactivists" are those teachers who see language learning in the university as a process of increasing self-understanding through engagement with other cultures and their peoples. One common misconception is that university language learning is fundamentally a linguistic exercise. In fact, learning to truly communicate in a foreign language has little to do with the study of how sentences work. It has much more to do with culture. Students can understand the meaning of each sentence in an English newspaper article and still not understand the article because they miss the cultural context: the idioms, ironies, sarcasm's, allusions, puns, historical prejudices and social assumptions. Language schools may dispense with these subtleties, but they are just the kinds of things university students need to learn in order to become leaders in their fields and to find a fuller self-understanding. When it comes to the social sciences, which in Japan is generally the locus of language learning, I agree with Richard Rorty who writes that "cultural anthropology (in the large sense which includes intellectual history) is all we really need" (1979, p. 381). Kittler (2004, p. 251), too, reiterates that "the humanities would best be known as cultural studies," but he also insists that even in the sciences "the cultural contexts of proofs, experiments, and hypotheses are in no way trivial and do

require elucidation" (p. 251). Language classes in universities should be designed above all as environments for an engagement with other cultures through language. The best way to achieve this goal is to begin by creating language communities.

A "language community" is an environment where using a foreign language is natural and appropriate. Let me illustrate the problem. Most teachers in Japan have asked a student a simple question and got a reply sounding something like this: "*I yamu going to banku ando to stoa.*" Now, if asked to repeat the same sentence with more appropriate English pronunciation, most students can usually do so. Then why do students use this "Japanese-English"? I believe it stems from the fundamental insecurity natural to learning a foreign language. I remember doing a similar thing in my French classes many years ago ("*mertsi bow coupe mon sewer*"). Somehow in my youth, having French come out of my English mouth surprised me, and speaking a foreign language did not seem quite honest, and so I Anglicized the pronunciation. We have to create environments in which it does not seem unnatural for Japanese students to speak in English, and this means getting a lot of other people to speak English to serve as role models, and this includes university staff, administrators, professors, as well as guests and special lecturers. During my many years of teaching at Japanese universities, I have often had the experience of using my awful Japanese with colleagues or members of the staff (sometimes for years), only to discover by chance that all along they could speak excellent English. If I had never before heard these "*kakure* (hidden) English-speakers" speak English, chances are that neither did my students. In other words, students do not have the benefit of seeing and

hearing the many on-campus models of Japanese who speak English well. Back home in Canada, when you walk into some banks in culturally diverse neighborhoods, the clerks have little badges with flags indicating what foreign languages they speak. Some such system among staff at Japanese universities ("I speak English/Yo hablo Espanol") would at the very least be a valuable symbolic gesture indicating the commitment of the university to the greater use of the foreign languages they teach. It would also be a courtesy to foreign guests, and, moreover, bring to the attention of students the many language role models on campus.

Another idea for developing the language community is to invite more "ordinary" English-speaking Japanese on to our campuses. For example, in most neighborhoods there are many housewives and company employees who speak foreign languages well but seldom have chances to practice or display their abilities. They are, in a sense, a wasted language resource. We should formulate strategies to get these people onto our campuses or into our classrooms so they can share their experiences abroad or in learning foreign languages. Of course, there are many other ways to strengthen the language communities on campus, promoting language clubs, movie festivals, special guest lectures, campus newspapers and other English publications, meetings with foreign groups, talks with our own alumni or students returning from studying abroad, debates and so on. Some of these things are already happening on campus, but haphazardly and seldom with a sense of community building. It requires budgets and organizers to build such communities.

Actually, "community language learning" has a comparatively long

history as a teaching methodology. Its main tenant is rather simple: make the classroom a friendly place where students can relax and speak English and make mistakes without fear or embarrassment. Simple though this may sound, it is often hard to put into practice; problems are as diverse as scheduling and teacher training. Schedules should allow students and faculty to take advantage of intercultural events as they arise. Moreover, in many universities, students are sorted anew for each class, and their instructors are usually all different; plus, many instructors are part-timers only briefly on campus. Ideally, a class of students should meet together often enough, and with the same teacher(s) to be able to get to know each other and develop trust.

But conducive scheduling will be futile if teachers do not have the social and cultural skills necessary to building a language community. These days, most universities prefer to hire teachers with a TESL or TEFL degree, but these degrees often neglect cultural training. A teacher with a good humanities degree may in fact have as much or more to offer Japanese students. In this island country noted for its "homogeneity" (a doubtful concept, I admit—see Bailey 2002, 1997), students need teachers who are more than "language technicians," they need teachers who can act as "cultural bridges" and "social organizers." Therefore, teachers need training in the workings of cultures, and they must be made conscious of their responsibilities as language community builders. Creating a language community requires a purposeful strategy aimed at establishing a classroom atmosphere where students learn from and support each other.

Teachers should, of course, provide students with lots of opportuni-

ties to get to know each other and to work on projects together. This is not quite the same as just doing "group work." Much of the "group work" I see going on in classrooms is unfocussed and ill-organized, and often it becomes an opportunity for the teacher to disengage from students. To develop a language community, the teacher should be actively involved with the class at all times, and group work should aim at reinforcing a sense of trust and mutual respect among students, and between students and the teacher. This is especially important when the teacher is a native speaker.

Having a native speaker instructor rush through a busy program based on a sophisticated textbooks and cassettes or computer software is most often a missed opportunity for intercultural understanding. The greatest value of the native speaker is his or her cultural difference. Difference is what many students are really curious about and want to explore. Of course, the student-centered classroom is all the fashion these days, especially in the newly-imported North American-based methodologies. But in Japan, where direct contact with foreign culture is still limited, we should allow more time for teacher-centered activities, as this may provide the best opportunities to explore cultural differences through English. Naturally, to achieve better cross-cultural trust and understanding, it would be helpful to have class sizes suitable for students to sit looking at each other and to be able to remember each others names. In the end, the goal of the language community classroom is to create a relaxed and friendly environment where students can use English to develop self-understanding though cultural awareness and interaction.

Creating an effective language teaching methodology is a matter of

finding balance. The demands of administrators, the hopes of parents, the objectives of educators and the aspirations of students must all be considered. There was a time (many years back, Phil) when I, too, thought this could be achieved simply by greater organization and rationalization of the curriculum: placement tests, leveled classes, standardized exams, foreign textbooks, native speaker instructors, English-only policies, skills focused curricula. In recent years, many universities have implemented much of the above, and some improvements have clearly been achieved. Nevertheless, I still hear teachers and students grumble about each other, and many classrooms are still rather rigid and lifeless. It may be time to hold back on the rationalization process, and to reconsider the developing social context within which we teach. Students come to university looking for something new, eager to learn. We must find ways to satisfy their desire to broaden their cultural horizons. After over a quarter century of teaching in Japan, I find that busy curricula, burdensome textbooks, and more tests only dampen curiosity. Sharing thoughts and experiences with students, on the other hand, brings classes alive. But only so much can be achieved within the strict limits of any one classroom. What we need to do now is to create language communities that function both within the classroom and throughout the campus, where teachers, staff, guests and students can participate in exploring cultural differences, and work together in English in ways that allow us to improve our self-understanding through the better understanding of other peoples and cultures.

Selected Bibliography

Abe, Yoshiya, ed. (1992). *Kokusaibunka to eigokyoiku* [International culture and English education]. Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press.

Ackroyd, J. (1979). Told round a brushwood fire: the autobiography of Arai Hakuseki. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Amano, Ikuo. (1990). Education and examination in modern Japan. W. K. Cummings and F. Cummings, eds. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Amin, Nuzhat. (1997). "Race and the identity of the nonnative ESL teacher." TESOL Quarterly, Vol., 31. No., 3. Autumn. pp. 580-584.

Anderson, Fred E. (1993). "The enigma of the college classroom: nails that don't stick up." In Paul Wadden, ed., A handbook for teaching English at Japanese colleges and universities. New York: Oxford University Press.

Andersen, James A. (1998). "The examination system in Quing China: a failed system." (unpublished).

Aoki, T. Tetsuo. (1993). "Legitimating lived curriculum: towards a curricular landscape of multiplicity." Journal of Curriculum and Supervision. Vol., 8. No., 3. (Spring). pp. 255-268.

Aoki, T. Tetsuo. (1992). "Layered voices of teaching: the uncannily correct and the elusively true. In William F. Pinar and William M. Reynolds, eds., Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text. New York: Teachers College Press.

Aoki, T. Tetsuo. (1988). "Toward a dialectic between the conceptual world and the lived world: transcending instrumentalism in curriculum orientation." In William F. Pinar, ed., Contemporary curriculum discourses. Scottsdale, Arizona: Garsuch Scarisbrick.

Bailey, Arthur Allan. (2002). "Moving beyond 'groupism' and other cultural myths in Japanese university English classes." Ritsumeikan Journal of Business Administration. Vol., 40, No., 6. July. pp. 171-185.

Bailey, Arthur Allan. (1997a). "Intertwining cultural myths in Japanese and North American educational reform." Ritsumeikan Journal of Educational Research. No., 4. March. pp. 93-112.

Bailey, Arthur Allan. (1991). "How their early education makes it difficult for

Japanese university students to learn to speak English." <u>Bulletin of the Faculty of Humanities of Aichigakuin University</u>. No., 20. March. pp. 7-20.

Borgen, Robert. (1984). <u>Sugawara no Michizane and the early Heian court</u>. Honolulu: University of Hawaii.

Campbell, Karen L. (1987). "Ultranationalism in the English-language classroom." <u>Japan Quarterly</u>. Vol., 34. No., 1. January-March. pp. 46-50.

Cave, Peter. (2004). "*Bukatsudou*: the educational role of Japanese school clubs." <u>Journal of Japanese Studies</u>. Vol., 30. No. 2. pp. 383-415.

Clark, Gregory. (1987). "Why the Japanese find it hard to learn foreign languages." <u>Mainichi Daily News</u>. December 15.

Court, Ben. (1998). "The JET Set." <u>Kansai Time Out</u>. No. 251. January. p. 13.

Cummings, W. K. (1980). <u>Education and equality in Japan</u>. Princeton: Princeton University.

Cutts, Robert L. (1997). <u>An empire of schools: Japan's universities and the molding of a national power elite</u>. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

Dewey, John. (1944). <u>Democracy and education</u>. New York: Free Press.

Dore, Ronald P. (1974). "*Toshi no nihonjin wo kaita goro no koto* [About the time I wrote <u>Toshi no nihonjin</u>]." In Gen Itasaka, et al., eds., <u>Modern Japanese: an advanced reader</u>. Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Duke, Benjamin. (1986). <u>The Japanese schools: lessons for industrial America</u>. New York: Praeger Scientific.

Ellis, Rod. (1994). <u>The study of language acquisition</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fukuzawa, Yukichi. (1985). <u>Fukuzawa Yukichi on education: selected works</u>. Eiichi Kiyooka, ed., and trans. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, 1985.

Gadamer, Hans Georg. (1994). <u>Truth and method</u>. Second revised edition. J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, trans. New York: Continuum.

Guest, Mike. (2004). "The debate about opinions." <u>The Daily Yomiuri</u>. November 26. p. 14.

Hall, Ivan. (1973). <u>Mori Arinori</u>. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Herrnstein, J. H. & Murray, C. (1994). <u>The bell curve: intelligence and class structure in American life</u>. Toronto: Free Press.

Horio, Teruhisa. (1988). <u>Educational thought and ideology in modern Japan: state authority and intellectual freedom</u>. Steven Platzer, trans. Tokyo: University of Tokyo.

"Japan's schools: why can't little Taro think?" (1990). <u>The Economist</u>. April 21-27.

Kelly, Curtis. (1993). "The hidden role of the university." In Paul Wadden, ed., <u>A handbook for teaching English at Japanese colleges and universities</u>. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kimura, Hidenori. (1988). *"Amerika no daigaku ga yokute Nihon no daigaku wa dame ka* [Is it true that American universities are good and Japanese universities are bad?]." <u>Yoron Jihou</u>. March.

Kittler, Friedrich. (2004). "Universities." <u>Critical Inquiry</u>. Autumn. pp. 244-255.

"'*Kodomo no kokomienu' 39%: nikkyoso ga sensei ni nayami anketto* [39% 'cannot understand what they are thinking': Japanese teachers union survey into the worries of teachers]." (1998). <u>Asahi Shimbun</u>. February 19. p. 30.

Kramsch, C. (1993). <u>Context and culture in language teaching</u>. New York: Oxford University Press.

Larkin, Philip. (1990). <u>Collected Poems</u>. Ed. by Anthony Thwaite. London: The Marvell Press.

Lasch, Christopher. (1995). <u>The revolt of the elites and the betrayal of democracy</u>. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

Liu, Dilin. (1998). "Ethnocentrisim in TESOL: teacher education and the neglected needs of international TESOL students." <u>ELT Journal</u>. Vol., 52. No., 1. January.

Matsuzawa, Midori. (2004). "Taking a stand over compulsory English." <u>The Daily Yomiuri</u>. Tuesday, January 18. p. 16.

Miller, Roy Andrew. (1986). <u>Nihongo: in defense of Japanese</u>. London: Athlone.

Miller, Roy Andrew. (1982). <u>Japan's modern myth: the language and beyond</u>. New York: Weatherhill.

Mitchel, Richard H. (1983). <u>Censorship in Imperial Japan</u>. Princeton: Princeton University.

Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. (1998). <u>Re-inventing Japan: time, space, nation</u>. New

York: M. E. Sharpe.

Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. (1995). "The invention and reinvention of 'Japanese Culture.'" The Journal of Asian Studies. Vol., 54. No., 3. August. pp. 759-780.

Mouer, Ross and Yoshio Sugimoto. (1990). Images of Japanese society: a study in the social construction of reality. London: Kegan Paul International.

Nagai, M. (1971). Higher education in Japan: its take-off and crash. Jerry Dusenbury, trans. Tokyo: University of Tokyo.

Nakayama, Kazuyoshi. (1985). "Introduction." Fukuzawa Yukichi on education. Eiichi Kiyooka, ed., and trans. Tokyo: University of Tokyo.

Norton, Bonny. (1997). "Language, identity, and the ownership of English." TESOL Quarterly, Vol., 31. No., 3. Autumn. pp. 409-430.

Nozaki, Kyoko Norma. (1993). "The Japanese student and the foreign teacher." In Paul Wadden, ed., A handbook for teaching English at Japanese colleges and universities. New York: Oxford University Press.

Oshiro, G. M. (1985). Internationalist in prewar Japan: Nitobe Inazo, 1862-1933. Vancouver: University of British Columbia. (unpublished dissertation).

Passin, H. (1982). Society and education in Japan. Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Peak, Lois. (1989). "Learning to become part of the group: the Japanese child's transformation to preschool life." The Journal of Japanese Studies. Vol., 15. pp. 93-123.

Pennycook, A. (1998). English and the discourses of colonialism. New York: Routledge.

Pennycook, A. (1994). The cultural politics of English as an international language. London: Longman.

Reischauer, Edwin O. (1988). The Japanese today: change and continuity. Harvard: Belknap.

Rohlen, Thomas. P. and Gerald K. LeTendre, eds. (1996). Teaching and learning in Japan. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rohlen, Thomas. P. (1989). "Order in Japanese society: attachment, authority, and routine." The Journal of Japanese Studies. Vol., 15. pp. 5-40.

Rohlen, Thomas. P. (1983). <u>Japan's high schools</u>. Berkeley: University of California.

Rorty, Richard. (1989). <u>Contingency, irony, and solidarity</u>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Said, Edward W. (1979). <u>Orientalism</u>. New York: Vintage Books.

Saul, John Raulston. (1995). <u>The unconscious civilization</u>. Concord, Ontario: Anansi.

Saul, John Raulston. (1992). <u>Voltaire's bastards: the dictatorship of reason in the West</u>. Toronto: Penguin.

Sekiguchi, Ichiro. (1993). <u>*Keio shonan fujisawa kyanpasu gaikokugokyoiku e no chosen: atarashii gaikokugokyoiku wo mezahite*</u> [Keio Shonan Fujisawa campus foreign language education challenge: towards a new foreign language education]. Tokyo: Sanshusha.

Shields, James A., Jr., (ed.). (1989). <u>Japanese schooling: patterns of socialization, equality, and political control</u>. University Park: Pennsylvania State University.

Smith, Patrick. (1997b). <u>Japan: a reinterpretation</u>. New York: Pantheon Books.

Stephens, M. (1991). <u>Education and the future of Japan</u>. Sandgate: Japan Library.

Stevenson, Harold W. & James W. Stigler. (1992). <u>The leaning gap: why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education</u>. New York: Simon and Shuster.

Susser, Bernard. (1998). "EFL's othering of Japan: orientalism in English language teaching." <u>JALT Journal</u>. Vol., 20. No., 1. May. pp. 49-82.

Tanaka, Stephen. (1993). <u>Japan's Orient: rendering pasts into history</u>. Berkeley: University of California.

Tang, Cecilia. (1997). "On the power and status of nonnative ESL teachers." <u>TESOL Quarterly</u>, Vol., 31. No., 3. Autumn. pp. 577-579.

Thomas, J. E. (1993). <u>Making Japan work: origins, education and training of the Japanese salaryman</u>. Sandgate: Japan Library.

"TOEIC classes now essential at universities." (2005). <u>The Daily Yomiuri</u>. Wednesday, February 9. p.3.

Tsuchimochi, Gary H. (1993). <u>Education reform in postwar Japan: the 1946 U.S. education mission</u>. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Van Manen, Max. (1990). <u>Lived experience: human science for an action sensitive pedagogy</u>. London, Ont.: Althouse Press.

White, Merry. (1993). <u>The material child: coming of age in Japan and America</u>. Toronto: Free Press.

White, Merry. (1987). <u>The Japanese educational challenge: a commitment to children</u>. New York: Kondansha International.

Willis, David and Eriko Onoda. (1989). "Facing the shock of coming home: worldly Japanese test nation's ability to internationalize." <u>The Japan Times</u>. Wednesday, October 4. p. 18.

Yoneyama, Toshio. (1986). "The importance of peer groups in Japanese society." <u>Review of Japanese Culture and Society</u>. Vol., 1. No., 1. October.

Yoshihara, Reiko. (2004). *Kenteishiken henchou de ii no ka*. (Is it good to make too much of official tests?). <u>Asahi Shimbun</u>. September, 18.

Yoshino, Kosaku. (1992). <u>Cultural nationalism in contemporary Japan: a sociological inquiry</u>. New York: Routledge.