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An Alternative Approach to Second Language Teaching

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An Alternative Approach to
Second Language
Teaching

Carol Yorkievtz
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Introduction

Language, as a universal human trait, is so second-nature to mankind that its subtleties in interaction have often been taken as a matter of course. Deeply ingrained folklore about language has existed from the days of the ancients and persists into so-called 'rational' modern civilization. The affect associated with language and its role in distinguishing in- and out-groups can be annotated by historical reference; for example, the ancient Greeks used the word 'baba' to describe the babblings of those unfortunates not gifted with the gods' own Greek tongue - hence the origin of the word 'barbarian'.¹ The supposed magical qualities of words, in spells and incantations, are thoroughly documented in anthropological studies. Today, we find numerous examples of the affect attached to words - language wars, name-calling, the informal definition of a cultured person as one who can converse in a foreign language, etc. These illustrations merely point out the complex and often under-the-surface relationship between language and other phases of human activity.

Research on language has not been confined to the sphere of any one discipline. One can be led into a myriad of viewpoints - within the traditional disciplines and of course, philosophy. This paper tends to be somewhat eclectic in its orientation toward language, as often the approach of one discipline proves to inadequate in insight or restrictive in treatment.

In reading in various areas, I have found a microcosm of the problems of science and the accumulation of knowledge - tension between objective and intuitive modes of knowing, the problem of discovering universals, accounting for their existence as well as for variation, the tendency for theory to determine the type of research and for methodological concerns to limit the range of possible theoretical approaches. Similarly, we find theory of language affected by the Zeitgeist, overemphasis on Western concepts and research, and polemic and narrowness, often characteristic of intra- as well as inter-disciplinary controversy. Research in this area must account for structured as well as unstructured aspects of language; an effort must be made to define the conditions under which language is a dependent variable and those under which it is an independent variable.

This paper will focus on certain aspects of theory and research on language and an attempt will be made to describe a synthetic approach to foreign language teaching, utilizing insight offered by various disciplines. Limited, experimentally uncontrolled efforts at utilizing this method will be discussed in reference to the teaching of Introductory Japanese in Oberlin College's Experimental College.

Linguistics has essentially arisen out of philosophical and grammatical concerns which can be traced at least to the ancient Greeks and the Aristotelian divisions of a sentence into subject and predicate. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, philology had a strongly historical bent, tracing the relationships between Indo-European languages. Parts of speech were defined by lexical meaning and believed to be valid conceptual tools for dealing with all languages. Study of non-Western languages stimulated a major shift in emphases from diachronic to synchronic (descriptive or structural) concerns. In the work of deSaussure, Bloomfield and others, "Every language, viewed synchronically, was seen as a coherent and unique whole. The purpose of linguistic theory, therefore, became to provide the methodology and concepts in terms of which the structure of any language could be discovered and described in its own right, rather than being distorted by the arbitrary imposition of Western habits of hearing of grammatical categorizing."² This approach was definitely anti-mentalistic (paralleling behaviorism in psychology) and was concerned with phonemic and morphemic analysis rather than meaning. The most profound question awaiting resolution is that of meaning - especially in this case, as it effects language teaching. Transformational grammar represents one of the latest developments which is concerned with this problem. Structural linguistics cannot as of yet account for the generation of unique sentences, the 'creative' aspect of both listening and speaking. Similarly, concern with the finiteness of language as a structured system leads to a

a problem in dealing with free variation within a speech community.

Treatment of language within a psychological framework has, to a large extent, been grounded in behaviorism. A great deal of research has been directed toward verbal behavior in an effort to gain insight into learned behavior, dealing with language in terms borrowed from conditioning - habit strength, reinforcement, stimulus generalization, frequency, etc. This particular tradition began with Ebbinghaus and continues now with Postman and others. Miller suggests certain inadequacies of a behavioristically grounded approach when he states that "...the crucially important human skills in arranging symbols in novel and useful combinations is largely ignored by the successive reduction of language to meaning to reference to conditioning."³ The differentiation out of the sub-discipline of psycholinguistics suggests the importance of language studies per se, although there has been increased interest in the so-called cognitive processes and their relationship to language in schools which are less behaviorist in orientation. This may be seen in the work of Piaget. The General Semantics Movement has a value orientation; its essential thrust is toward bringing the unconscious use of a rigid system into conscious awareness in an attempt to rid language of its seeming propensity toward confounding communication efforts.

The attempt to define the relationship between language and culture and/or language and Weltanschauung has been a

critical facet of anthropological research. Von Humboldt speculated that "man lives with the world about him principally, indeed...exclusively, as language presents it".⁴ The research on 'exotic' languages and cultures in the nineteenth century had significant repercussions in linguistics as well as in anthropology. Perhaps a major result of this was the development of the linguistic relativity hypothesis. Sapir writes: "The relation between language and experience is often misunderstood. Language is not merely a more or less systematic inventory of the various items of experience which seem relevant to the individual... but it is also a self-contained symbolic organization which not only refers to experience largely acquired without its help, but actually defines experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our own unconscious projection of its implicit assumptions into the field of experience."⁵ This, then, is language's 'tyrannical hold' on our perception of reality. This emphasis as elaborated by Whorf, is one which will be considered below. This approach, too, emphasized some of the determining facets of language and its uniformity, without discussing or touching upon intra-cultural variation.

A fourth level of analysis is that undertaken under the rubric of sociolinguistics. Grimshaw suggests that consideration of language is important in discussing change, social control, and small group interaction.⁶ To a certain extent, this approach seems characterized by stressing of the signi-

ficance of 'deviance' or variation as reflective of and supportive of or disruptive to the social structure and as a primary carrier of information in the complexity of social interaction.

Here, sketched very briefly, are four different approaches to language, all of which feed into an integrated treatment of language behavior.

Language Teaching

Now we shall turn to the consideration of the relationship between language teaching and the various disciplinary perspectives outlined above. Language teaching is often seen as a branch of applied linguistics and hence, has tended to reflect the dominant concerns of linguistics proper. It is my contention, however, that the teaching of a language in the most efficient and realistic way possible necessitates utilization of the insights offered by psychology, anthropology and sociology as well as linguistics and education methods. The question of efficiency is obviously an empirical one, but cannot be considered separately from the question of goals, both explicit and implicit, which are defined as such by language educators. To the extent to which teaching a language (particularly a non-Indo-European one) involves attention to cultural differences, differences in utilization of language to express the intricacies of socially and culturally determined forms of interaction, etc., it would seem necessary to revise both the process and content of language teaching. It is my intention here to point out some factors which should, by virtue of their empirical existence and demonstrable importance, be taken into account in the teaching of a second language. It may well prove to be an impossibly complex task, but one which merits empirical testing. First, however, we shall consider conventional language teaching.

for what purposes or goals?

Traditional language teaching methodology was based on an Aristotelian model, a form of grammatical analysis utilizing semantic differences rather than functional differences as critical features. In this scheme a premium was placed on reading and translation, along with a normative description of the given language. This tendency is still present today; as John Hughes suggests, "whenever modern linguistics revises or adds to Greco-Roman traditional grammar, many contemporary teachers (and writers) act as if sacrilege were being committed."⁷ (One can only speculate on the consequences of this type of reaction in other core areas of education.) The historical cast of early linguistic endeavor did little to alter this viewpoint and may indeed have reinforced it. The parallel approaches of behaviorism and structural linguistics provided a subsequent support to the grammar translation method. The opposition to these viewpoints was reflected in the development of another type of teaching methodology. Attempts to avoid (or define as non-problems) the 'little black box' and meaning essentially required the identification on language behavior with thought. Structural linguistics did, however, provide the conceptual tools of phoneme, morpheme, etc. which contributed significantly to exactness of description. As opposed to the older method of classification by part of speech and meaning, phonemes and morphemes "are not presumed to be a fixed set with constant semantic properties...found in all languages".⁸ The emphasis noted here

does seem to account for a slight modification of older methodology which is generally known as 'item and process'. This method, however, depends on an artificially constructed set of rules as well as on translation and is not related to the way in which a native speaker learns his language.

There have been, of course, numerous dissenters to both structuralism and behaviorism who account for a qualitatively different approach to many problems, language included. For example, Levi-Strauss, speculating on forms of social life including language, asks: "Do these consist of systems of behavior that represent the projection on the level of conscious and socialized thought, of universal laws which regulate the unconscious activities of the mind?"⁹ Vygotsky insists that "Those who identify thought with speech simply close the door on the problem", but he does not argue for complete distinction of language and thought.¹⁰ Perhaps the most controversial figure to oppose the identity of language and thought is Chomsky. He states that "it is because of freedom from stimulus control that language can serve as an instrument of thought and self-expression, as it does not only for the exceptionally talented and gifted, but, also, in fact, for every human being."¹¹ This position of non-identity of speech and thought leads to a different type of language teaching methodology - for example, the Berlitz and Direct Methods. Chomsky's transformational grammar similarly sets the tone for beginning with entire sentences,

hitting structuralism at its weakest point - that of syntax.

Although the Direct Method, for example, was introduced in this country in the early 1900's, traditional grammar translation methods continued to hold sway. Actual linguistically based analysis had little effect until Bloomfield's methods were partially adopted by the Army Specialized Training Program and were later encouraged by aid programs sponsored by the Federal government.¹²

More modern methods for teaching language are usually considered to be the direct method and the audiolingual method. The direct method attempts to reduce or eliminate interference from the native language, perhaps the basic problem of second language learning.¹³ This, and particularly the audiolingual method, emphasize learning of a pattern. Nelson Brooks insists that "pattern practice capitalizes on the mind's capacity to perceive identity of structure where there is difference in content and its quickness to learn by analogy".¹⁴ It is also suggested (in a Chomskian vein) that repeated application of rules within a pattern makes them 'subconscious', involving no further interference (i.e. in which a word or pattern in the foreign language is associated with one in the native language and then merely used as if it were the native word.) - this representing proficiency. Politzer notes that this method, while improving fluency and correctness in pronunciation, may only have relevance to the

Analogy

earlier stages of language learning and represents a conflict between the merits of understanding as opposed to memorization.¹⁵

In newer methods, vocabulary teaching is geared toward smaller counts, often using direct-association methods of meaningful context for presentation, and (ideally at least) based on word frequency studies (those from written material showing about eighty per cent of the vocabulary to be made up of about 2000 words).¹⁶ Similarly, a cue is taken from structural linguistics which stresses the descriptive rather than prescriptive view of a language and the necessity for acceptance of change.¹⁷ The imitation found in audio-lingual methods represents an increased emphasis on the spoken language and perhaps can utilize the short term memory traces postulated by Spérling.¹⁸ This is an attempt to reduce interference from the native language on what is, perhaps, its most stubborn dimension - the phonemic structure.

Obviously, even though the audiolingual method represents an increase in use of linguistic concepts in its goals and methodology, its effectiveness must be subjected to empirical testing. Studies reported by Hughes were inconclusive as to the relative efficacy of the audiolingual method over the grammar translation method. The audiolingual and direct methods seem to require more time for presentation. In the testing of efficacy, however, a probable bias toward the grammar translation method may have been evidenced in a

stress on reading and grammatical forms rather than speaking or comprehension.¹⁹ The seeming bias on standardized tests- such as the CEEB- toward the translation method may be a factor which impedes widespread adoption of the audiolingual method, as does cost, and a probable low teacher turnover rate. Politzer suggests that it is important to teach concepts of language in addition to (or rather than) mere skills with an eye to de-emphasizing rote memorization facets of education.²⁰

This outline is rather sketchy as I have not delved too deeply into research on language teaching. Other factors such as age differentials, ideal practice schedules, etc., should be taken into account. However, I should like to indicate some other gleanings which may tie language teaching into other goals of a liberal education as well as to educational reform.

A Different Perspective

While linguistics and psychology have paid some attention to questions of universality of linguistic forms and/or cognitive processes, there has been little attempt to examine another level of universality - that on the cultural or social level. Hayakawa suggests²¹ that widespread interspecific cooperation through the use of language is the fundamental mechanism for human survival.²¹ However, a facile definition or discovery of language's functions or utilization is not yet possible. We may find, with certain theorists that language has certain universal functions - some going so far as to suggest that language makes thought possible. But, it would seem that the range of each language's functioning is specific to its particular speech community. It may be hypothesized that language can have positive functions as a type of social cement in reaffirming the solidarity of the using group, that it has informative as well as directive, symbolic and expressive content. However some specification of this statement is necessary - i.e. the degree to which a language fulfills any of these functions may not be constant across cultures, but may differ according to degree of differentiation, etc. Hymes has suggested that "... language is only one semiotic system... a matter of language for one culture may be a pattern of gestures, plastic art, or ritual for another".²² Hall, too, in treating culture as communication, sees language as a basis for, but not the only form which communication may take.²³ While modern linguistics is concerned

with the uniqueness of individual languages, it does attempt to find degrees of similarity and differences on certain variables- albeit linguistic ones.²⁴ Greenberg treats such variables as analytic/synthetic, preposition/post-position, order of possessor and possessed, hierarchical relationships among phonemes, etc.²⁵, but these to a certain extent treat merely form or structure per se and tell little or nothing about use, content, etc. There is little as of yet to suggest a causal relationship between those structured differences mentioned above and other features of the particular culture or society as compared with those differing along other dimensions.

In another vein, however, Hall, for example, states that "there is a growing accumulation of evidence to indicate that man has no direct contact with experience per se but that there is an intervening set of patterns which channel his senses and his thoughts, causing him to react one way when someone with different underlying patterns will react as his experience dictates".²⁶ At this particular stage of research sophistication, this may be a moot point, which does to a certain extent hinge upon unresolved theoretical (and philosophical) questions - e.g. existence of 'mind', validity of the concept of Weltanschaaung, etc. However, if the position does have any validity, it has definite

implications for language teaching.

On another level, speech variation by class, caste, district, etc., has been well documented. It is suggested that in complex societies, "clues derived from speech performances serve an important function in evaluating what is said, in singling out some items as more important, and generally facilitating the processing of information."²⁷ (Of course, there are distinct advantages to lack of homogeneity, too, particularly in respect to the mobility of speakers of non-standard dialects or languages, but that aspect will not concern us here.) Similarly, culturally determined modes of address dependent on status consideration, definitions of proper men's and women's speech, jargon of various occupations and subcultures, although often not easily accessible to conscious elaboration by those using and subject to these informal norms, are information-carrying devices which may be relevant to language teaching.

The present orientation of modern language teaching seems to be fruitful in achieving its goals of imparting lexicon, grammar, syntax, and pronunciation and has potential for reducing interference, etc. If however, a socially and culturally organized frame of reference for language has empirical significance to communication and utilization of the taught language, it would seem that another basis for interference has been identified. This would entail inclusion of anthropological and sociological

(as well as historical) aspects of the language in question in the teaching process in order to insure maximum efficiency in communication (and, hopefully, understanding on a broader level). This is an extension of the attempt to understand a language in its own terms - in this case those terms being social and cultural as well as linguistic- and an extension of the potentiality of comparative research. An implicit value judgment here is the emphasis on a cultural relativist point of view. I should like to examine some of the research which supports the hypothesis of interference on different levels. An underlying question is that of the dependent variable/independent variable status of language.

The Whorfian hypothesis represents one pole of argument. Whorf based his theorizing on work with American Indian languages, particularly Navaho and Hopi, which he felt to be qualitatively different from Standard Average European, his standard of comparison. At times, his arguments tend toward a Jungian metaphysical approach which opens him to much valid criticism, although others liken his work to a Copernican revolution in linguistics. The scope of his concerns may be seen in the following statement:

When linguists became able to examine critically and scientifically a large number of languages of widely different patterns, their base of reference was expanded; they

experienced an interruption of phenomena hitherto held universal, and a whole new order of significance came into their ken. It was found that the background linguistic system...of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but is rather itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational... but is a part of a particular grammar and differs, from slightly to greatly, as between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare everyone in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds - and this means largely by the linguistic system in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe it the significance we do largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way - an agreement which holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory...."²⁸

The most compelling part of this statement is its insistence on the arbitrary nature of categorizing and the tendency to impute reality to what is mere convention. Whorf himself states that the ascertaining of the specific direction of interaction between language and culture is not ascertainable: "Which came first, the language patterns or the cultural norms? In the main they have grown up together, constantly influencing each other. But in this partnership, the nature of the language is the factor which limits plasticity in the more autocratic way. This is so because language is a system, not

just a mere assemblage of norms."²⁹ The strictest interpretation of this hypothesis would lead to an insistence that these factors determine what the user of a particular language could perceive, while a looser one would suggest that "language structure predisposes an individual to pay attention to some things more than others...".³⁰

In a useful scheme, Hymes categorizes four types of treatment of this question found in various research. He suggests that 1) language may be seen as prime mover, source, independent variable; 2) other features of culture may be viewed as primary; 3) culture and language are seen as jointly determining and influencing; 4) neither culture nor language is seen as primary, rather the two are thought to be determined by an underlying factor such as world view, Volksgeist, or national character.³¹ Grimshaw has adapted the above paradigm, substituting 'social structure' for culture and modifying the fourth point to include the human condition, organization of the human mind or the intrinsic demands of an ordered universe.³² Grimshaw's elaboration is interesting in that, although, he rejects all hypotheses except a co-occurring and co-determinant relationship between language and culture as unscientific and non-provable, the hint of universal process or structure (cognitive, perceptual) may be of interest. Osgood's work with the semantic differential falls in this last category, and though it gives

little support to a strict interpretation of the Whorfian hypothesis (which would stress uniqueness of patterns influenced by individual languages), it is another level of analysis whose insight may be useful. His own cross-cultural analyses show widespread existence of three dimensions of meaning, with slight, culturally influenced variation. Another factor of seeming universal application is also touched upon. "Peoples who use different languages and have grown up in different cultural settings also utilize meaningful opposition as a pillar of their logical constructions."³³ Further, "the phenomena which seem to display generality across all human groups, regardless of language are essentially connotative - the affective 'feeling' tones of meaning which contribute to synesthesia, metaphor and the like. The phenomena which display dependence upon the structure and logical categorizing seem to be essentially denotative".³⁴ This last statement seems to be in keeping with the numerous prosaic examples found in anthropological research - e.g. the Eskimos' many words for snow or the diversity of kinship naming systems - which lead to the insistence that "all languages show abundance of terms relating to areas of experience which are of particular concern to the members of the culture".³⁵ However, the fact that most languages utilize meaningful opposition or display "meaning tones", while having relevance to research on

cognitive structure, suggests virtually nothing about the range of differences which may exist or the parameters of restriction, degree of culturally determined consensus on meaning, etc., by linguistic, cultural or social factors. As of yet, this type of cross-cultural research has been confined to relatively small samples and has utilized only words which have some translatability. Surveys of lexical content of various languages, designed to show weightings along certain dimensions - e.g. abstract versus concrete lexicon - combined with frequency counts may prove to be a sensitive tool in cross-cultural research.

Lexicon seems to be the feature of language which has been most thoroughly researched - perhaps because of its relative easy accessibility. Parallel of lexicon with culture may exist to the extent that the particular society is dependent on nature and conditioned by the environment. The many examples of different linguistic divisions of the color spectrum lead Landar to speculate that "semantic habits provide no absolute, invariable means for distinguishing stimuli, but serve as a device for classification or articulation of a continuum and thus help us in many situations to find points of reference, anchorage for judgements."³⁶ Supportive of this is the work by Brown and Lenneberg in regard to categorizing

behavior. In studies of codifiability of color names, it was found that "culturally encoded colors require a shorter residual latency when they need to be named than do colors which are not culturally encoded - i.e. that require a phrase".³⁷ This is one example of ^{how} presence or absence of a particular linguistic convention may be related to behavior - as a concept is less clearly formulated, it may be less frequently used or expressed. Particularly to the extent that linguistic categories are on an unconscious level, it would seem that the tendency to accept cultural and linguistic convention as reality would be more pronounced. Whorf suggests that a fallacy of natural logic is that it does not recognize that "the phenomena of a language are to its speakers largely of a background character, and so, are outside the critical consciousness and control of the speaker...".³⁸

Phonology may also have demonstrable importance to the problem of perception. Lenneberg insists that language behavior seems to parallel closely innate kinds of behavior, determined genetically rather than experientially. His argument points to the disappearing plasticity (as a function of age) which makes it physiologically impossible to reproduce new phonemes after a certain critical point.³⁹ It would seem, however, that an alternative hypothesis of interference in equally plausible and an empirical inquiry seems to be warranted. In any event, Greenberg states that the phonology of a lan-

guage "seems to be the most autonomous and self-contained in its functioning and hence the most difficult to correlate with other phenomena."⁴⁰ He concluded that "...the phonological structure of one's own language, in respect both of constituent phonemes and permitted combinations, cited by Whorf as linguistic pattern par excellence, is a factor in the perception of unfamiliar sounds." ⁴¹

The many studies of memory for nonsense syllables consistently demonstrate that there is greater difficulty in remembering letter combinations which violate phonemic combination norms of the native language. The seeming impermeability of the phonemic structure has relevance to language change through loan words, as well as to the case of sound perception. Acquired distinctiveness of phonemes or gradual differentiation of them seem to be the process which occurs in children's learning of their native tongue,⁴² and it seems that the process of second language learning is somewhat analagous.

Can you illustrate?

A third area which must be considered is that of grammar or syntax. Henle (echoing Korzybski perhaps) suggests that the typical division in English between subject and predicate predisposes perception in terms of things and their attributes, perhaps as opposed to process.⁴³ Hoiwier implies, in his study of the Navaho, that due to the structure of the sentence, it appears that people

merely participate in or get involved in classes of action which are pre-existing, and he links this with the passivity and fatefulness he found in the overall world view.⁴⁴ It would seem that this leaves something to be desired empirically, both parts of his argument being based on inference. Other claims of syntactic influence do not seem quite so untenable. Ervin, for example, has demonstrated with a word association test, that subjects have a definite tendency to reply to the stimulus word with a member of the same syntactic category.⁴⁵ This finding seems to suggest that syntactic categories may influence the way in which new material is organized. Children too evidence an ability to abstract syntactic rules and apply them to nonsense words, even when they are utilizing un verbalized or nonconventional rules and categories.⁴⁶

The discussion above attempts to point out some of the cases in which language with cultural support arising from socialization patterns seems to have some discernible effect on perceptual and cognitive processes. This may only consist of making some patterns more easily distinguishable and insuring intra-speech community agreements on meaning, usage, etc. However, to the extent that this is a culturally determined matter, it would seem to become important in language teaching, to

point out the arbitrariness of that which is felt by a native speaker to be natural and to stress the cultural content of the language to be taught.

Another area of relevance is that of language's use in interaction and its variation with social structure. Goffman and others are concerned with the "situation in which speech behavior, along with gestures and other communicative symbols, defines social structure and thereby constrains subsequent social interaction".⁴⁷ A basic theme in this type of analysis seems to be the assumption that how someone talks may define the situation more importantly than what he talks about. Ervin-Tripp suggests that attention must be paid to personnel, situation, function of interaction, the topic and the message, and the channel as possible determinants of the type of language behavior in a given situation.⁴⁸

*a word
regarding
situation
here*

Brown and Gilman discuss historical trends in European societies with regard to a power versus solidarity semantic in the use of T and V forms of 'you'. The power semantic was usually evidenced by non-reciprocity, reflecting status differentials; the solidarity semantic, used reciprocally, tended to reflect intimacy or solidarity. They suggest that "the nonreciprocal power semantic is associated with a relatively static society in which power is distributed by birthright," while "the

reciprocal solidarity semantic has grown with social mobility and an equalitarian ideology."⁴⁹ This is important because, they feel, "A norm for the pronomial and verbal expression of power compels a continuing coding of power, whereas a norm for title and name permits power to go uncoded in most discourse".⁵⁰ (The problem is, however, does the lack of encoding contribute to non-recognition of power where it does exist, in support of an egalitarian ideology which prefers not to recognize such differentials?) Brown and Ford report on forms of address in American English, suggesting that alternatives are first name reciprocity or title and last name exchanges, unless there are age or occupational rank differences.⁵¹ It might be interesting to compare this with the supposed universal use of 'comrade' or its equivalent in socialist countries. The dependency of interaction upon these types of informal norms suggest that entrance into a geographically or occupationally distinct group will require re-socialization. This again would appear highly relevant to language teaching.

Similarly important are what Ervin-Tripp calls sequencing rules - utilized in such situations as leave-taking, summoning, invitations, greetings, etc. Haya-kawa takes a rather harsh view of such things: "...many of our social directives and many of the rituals with which they are accompanied are antiquated and somewhat

insulting to the adult mind.... There is still a widespread tendency to rely upon the efficacy of ceremonies as such. This...is due to a lingering belief in word magic,, by saying things repeatedly or in specified ceremonial ways we can cast a spell over the future...".⁵² His emphasis tends to fall on the individual's use or abuse of language and generally neglects social supports as a possible cause of persistence. He also ignores the possibility of any positive benefits accruing from conventionality. For example, in Goffman's terms, orderliness as sanctioned in small groups, may arise from the meeting of these types of sequencing pattern obligations.⁵³

Another important feature is what Ervin-Tripp terms co-occurrence rules (or Hall terms congruence). She says that "Whenever there are regular co-occurrences, deviant behavior is marked, and may carry social significance".⁵⁴ Hymes suggests that every society probably has at least three different style levels,⁵⁵ and this would indicate that co-occurrence rules exist to cope with these, varying from society to society, from interaction to interaction. Elaboration may be related to the level of formality, a marker for occasions in which personal relationships are minimized. The process of switching levels of formality also occurs between languages in the case of bilinguals. Fishman and Cooper suggest that there

is awareness on the part of bilinguals as to the use of different languages in different types of social interaction.⁵⁶ Variation, between languages and levels of formality, once thought to be unstructured, has been found related to intragroup norms of appropriateness, situational network and domain contexts.⁵⁷

Situational features include "the constellation of statuses and setting which constrain the interaction that should or may occur."⁵⁸ Depending on the situation, "cultural rules regarding speech events may include restraints as to the grounds for relevance."⁵⁹ Goffman treats these constraints as a means for managing affect, i.e. the unspoken agreement to treat certain properties, incidents as though they don't exist.⁶⁰ Thus, these unspoken norms may regulate content as well as variation in style. One further variable which I will touch on here is that of cohesiveness, as it too has a direct impact upon content as well as form of communication. It is suggested that "topics of discourse are likely to be different in cohesive networks as a result of differing values and interests."⁶¹ Similarly, this distinctiveness of topic is likely to work in the direction of enforcing cohesiveness. An examination of the maintenance of social marking systems, including linguistic ones, in these terms may be instructive.

The Japanese Case

Having thus assumed that attention to sociolinguistic and anthropological concerns has been shown to be warranted, I should like to determine what facets of the social and cultural systems of a particular speech community bear inclusion in language teaching. In this case, I have chosen to examine Japanese with an eye to at least begin to separate out relevant factors. This will undoubtedly be inadequate; it is intended as a first step towards meeting secondary goals of language teaching - i.e. teaching abstract concepts of language, utilizing comparative techniques to counter cultural 'interference' and contribute to the objective understanding of the language to be studied as well as the mother tongue. It is hoped that through partial analysis of one language in this framework, it will eventually be possible to develop a general scheme through which these goals may be implemented. This is to a great extent dependent on further sociolinguistic research as well as on a researching of the structure and channels of language teaching - e.g. discovery of information channels, sources of power, funds, potential sources of sanction within the discipline, etc. These concerns must necessarily be outside the scope of this paper.

The first aspect to be dealt with, the linguistic, may be utilized to teach abstract concepts of linguistics, necessary for comparative analysis of the two languages. These

might include minimally phoneme, morpheme, speech community; a discussion of the arbitrary connection between symbol and meaning might similarly be important. In the Japanese case, we are dealing with twenty-two phonemes - 16 consonants, 5 vowels and 1 pitch⁶² - those occurring being somewhat different from English and only permissible in certain combinations. The typical pattern is consonant-vowel, consonant-vowel; this presents particular discrimination problems to a speaker of English who is accustomed to consonant clusters and, often, words which end in consonants. Hence, makoto and matoko are liable to be confusing. Length of vowel is significant to meaning in Japanese: kita means 'came'; whereas, kīta means 'heard'. Length of consonant is similarly significant to meaning; ote, having syllables of 'o' and 'te', means 'hand', while otte, having syllables of 'o', 't', and 'te' with a glottal stop between the "t's", means 'pursuer'. Other than cases of a doubled consonant, only an 'n' can occur by itself without being followed by a consonant. Pronunciation of syllables beginning with 'r', 'f' and 'ts' requires considerable attention. Other subtleties of pronunciation will not be considered here. Drill on permissible sounds, stressing those which differ from English, is necessary in reducing interference from the native tongue; however, too much attention initially may result in hyper-self-con-

sciousness which may be detrimental to fluency. Minimal drill is required to insure discriminability. It also may be useful to have students count the number of syllables or beats to facilitate discriminability of long and short consonant and vowel distinctions.

The writing system of Japanese presents a particular problem to English-speaking persons. Several romanized versions of Japanese exist and are utilized by various audio-lingual textbooks, including that of Washington University and the Experiment in International Living. While use of romaji (romanized syllabaries) eliminates time and effort spent on learning the native kana syllabaries, it seems that romaji may be a source of interference. The familiarity of the Roman letters means that they carry the phonemic associations of English, as well as being an inadequate representation of consonant and vowel length and other phonemic features, depending upon which romanization system is used. The kana syllabary represents, in a unit, what would seem in roman letters to be separable sounds; thus かいた, kaita, represents three syllables (ka, i, ta), rather than the possibility of an "ai" diphthong. Each kana thus represents one syllable, consisting of a vowel by itself (a, i, u, e, o) or a vowel preceded by a consonant, there being a total of 51 kana. Each sound may be written in two alternate forms, one form being used for native Japanese words, the other for foreign loanwords.

Use of the syllabary, while useful in some respects, is not by itself representative of written Japanese except in a ^{partially} phonemic sense. Written Japanese consists of a combination of kana and characters(ideographs) which were imported from China at about the same time as Buddhism. The Chinese ideographic system was modified to fit Japanese, which at that time did not exist in written form. In order to explain the complexity of written Japanese it is necessary to contrast it with Chinese. Japanese is a member of the Ural-Altai family of languages and perhaps shows some Polynesian influence and is not a Sinitic language just as the Japanese are not ^{primarily ?} a Sinitic racial stock. While many important linguistic differences exist, one of the most important is the fact that Japanese is heavily inflected, while Chinese is not. Phonemic distinctions are also quite evident between the languages and Japanese does not utilize the tones which are such an important part of Chinese. These factors resulted in multiple readings for the imported ideographs, there usually being one or more on readings, Japanese approximations of the Chinese reading, and one or more kun readings, corresponding in meaning to the other reading for the most part, but being a pre-contact native Japanese word. Use of characters to form a compound word is common; which reading (on or kun) is to be used must generally be learned by rote. The peculiar

method of adaptation has resulted in a proliferation of homonyms, whose meaning must be determined from context in speech, but is unambiguous when written in character form. This circumstance has effectively put a damper on movements to simplify written Japanese into romaji or kana. The kana syllabaries themselves, were not developed until some five hundred years after the introduction of characters. Their development did contribute significantly to the writing of Japanese in a manner resembling the spoken style, rather than a literary style patterned on Chinese. In contemporary Japanese, the ideographs are used to write nouns and stems of verbs (whose sounds may be expressed in kana) and kana are utilized for inflections and many function words. Reischauer is among those who feel that adoption of the characters in the fourth century was a disaster,⁶³ and more objectively, it has been estimated that, despite a reduced set of 1,850 characters standardized by the Ministry of Education, Japanese school children must spend two more years in learning the mere mechanics of reading and writing than do children of the U. S. or Europe.⁶⁴ To some, this suggests a premium on rote memorization (since characters vary not only in unified shape, but also range from one to twenty-five strokes must be performed in the proper order) which may have an adverse effect on other learning processes.⁶⁵ Others, however, stress the aesthetics of

characters, in contrast with alphabetically written languages. In any event, the decision to teach the ideographs requires a recognition of the great difficulty and time involved. This aspect of Japanese will not concern us here.

Next, let us consider a few morphological and syntactical features of Japanese. As noted above, Japanese is a highly inflected language, verbs and adjectives being inflected. There are usually no distinctions made between singular and plural. Typical word order is subject (topic), object, verb, with modifiers preceding that which is modified. There are no relative pronouns. Particles or postpositions indicate the function of the word in the sentence. These features present some problem to the English-speaking student as they do not represent the normal transformational patterns of English. For example, any sentence may be converted into a question by the addition of the particle ka to the end of the sentence, this requiring no re-ordering of the other parts of the sentence or change in inflection. Similarly, separation of subject and verb by intervening modifying clauses, etc. tends to increase ambiguity of the sentence. Typical lack of specification of plurality or singularity initially confuses the student.

These linguistic features of the Japanese language are

intended to point out problem areas which are rather obvious to anyone familiar with the language. Now I should like to direct my attention to certain sociolinguistic features of the language, all or many of which may be controversial. For the most part, sources for these remarks are the Japanese themselves. Due to lack of research, many of these remarks are speculative or anecdotal in nature; some may be absurd, others, actually correlated with the reality of interaction among Japanese. Some of the authors represent a brand of linguistic determinism which is not empirically provable.

Subjectively , Japanese appears to have a weighting in vocabulary which is somewhat different from that of English-Japanese stressing sensory words, English being conceptually rich. This has of yet to be documented empirically. If this is true, it may represent an historical or cultural preference of importance. This will be considered below.

The most salient feature of sociolinguistic interest is the stress on the social relationship between two or more people rather than the relating of individual to individual. Professor Jackson Bailey of Earlham talks about this in terms of you-centeredness as opposed to the American pattern of I-centeredness. Linguistically, this is reflected in the compulsory choice of verb ending (and sometimes lexicon) to indicate the relative status of

speaker and addressee, as well as their relationship to a third person who may be mentioned. As Yamagiwa points out:

The study of levels of usage (honorific, polite, ordinary, and humble forms) ... is directly related to certain differentiation within Japanese society. Undeniably, spoken Japanese traditionally contained a great wealth of expressions which denote relative social position. It is probably true that until modern times, no 'egalitarian' form of speech existed. Every expression made by one person to another automatically sets the speaker in a relationship to the second as being superior, inferior, or equal and of being of one sex or the other.⁶⁶

a critical question here is the effect such linguistic forms may have on direction and speed of social change, especially in spheres of social stratification.

Personal pronouns similarly reflect dimensions of intimacy and strangeness as well as of politeness. For example, Japanese reported to me that there are thirty-three forms of the pronoun "I" in spoken and written Japanese, indicating the perceived status relationship, degree of intimacy, and sex of the speaker. Ruth Benedict similarly insists that "Every greeting, every contact must indicate the kind of degree and social distance between men".⁶⁷ The conclusions which may be drawn from this are not clear. It seems evident, though, that for Americans with an egalitarian bias, it is difficult to conceive of relating to someone in this manner. It would seem helpful in teaching this concept to point out some of the understood rules of American address which illustrate that even in a supposedly equali-

tarian society, some status distinctions are manifested linguistically. Also necessary is an explanation of linguistically expressed status distinctions in an historical framework. One author traces the idea of "individual" historically and suggests that ~~from~~ feudal times the concept ie, household, stood above the individual as ethical reality, and that even now strong self-assertion is deemed ugly.⁶⁸ Nakamura Hajime in Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples elaborates on the importance of the social nexus as opposed to the individual and points out the universal sense of social rank "... as evidenced in the use of language."⁶⁹ It is even suggested that "...when this type of thinking is predominant, consciousness of the individual as an entity appears less explicit - i.e. always in the wider sphere of a consciousness of personal relationships".⁷⁰ While this claim may not be substantiated, it is evident that "Users of Japanese must develop a special adeptness in selecting alternative styles of speech according to the requirements of the social situation."⁷¹ Of course, it is also necessary to point out differences in patterns of today the Tokugawa Era patterns which seem to form the basis for analysis like that of Benedict. Older Japanese report that "the young people of today don't seem to show the proper respect any more these days". Yamagiwa suggests that fewer distinctions of politeness exist in modern speech and "...

In these mobile times, the requirements are not so readily known. Results?

in fact, it is sometimes not clear how much respect or deference is intended by the use of honorific and humble terms".⁷²

A second distinctive feature of Japanese which seems to be related to status considerations is that of indirectness or ambiguity. Several rather anecdotal accounts suggest that in a society in which status considerations are so important, there cannot be an emphasis on openness or directness. For example, a Japanese reports that "To give in so many articulate words, one's innermost thoughts and feelings...is taken among us as an unmistakable sign that they are neither profound nor very sincere."⁷³ Kato, a sociologist, compares the ambiguity of Japanese communication to a Rorschach test, but says that "unlike Rorschach, there is supposed to be only one meaning in the ambiguity."⁷⁴ This is evidenced perhaps in the tendency to omit the subject whenever possible, the rare use of pronouns of direct address, and in a broader cultural framework, the favoring of go-betweens in many phases of life, including marriage arrangements. This is another feature of the language which may present interference for Americans who insist on "Speaking one's mind" as a positive and valued form of interaction, whether or not they actually operate according to their own rules. Again, it is important to stress changing patterns. In the Zengakuren, for example,

we find considerable intolerance of traditional norms of indirectness and politeness. Their extreme leftist politics are accompanied by an insistence on totally egalitarian forms of expression and their female counterparts often use forms of speech considered in the whole society as unmistakably masculine in an effort to proclaim their 'liberation'.

As suggested above, sexual differences in expression are institutionalized in the language's lexicon. These differences must be taught along with regular grammatical and syntactical features of the language. There is a marked tendency for women to use more often the humble and honorific forms as opposed to the plain forms, depending upon their economic strata. Pause markers, question forms, and exclamations are marked by different particles for men and women, their varying use connoting some sense of masculinity or femininity. Women also tend to use the honorific prefix 'o' much more often than men. Younger educated women express some dislike of all the trappings of femininity, linking it expressly with the pre-war status inferiority of the women. It has been suggested that in these and other cases that "language perpetuates social norms which contemporary society may wish to discard",⁷⁵ although this is arguable since, for example, metaphorical expressions (among others) often lose their original meanings while persisting into contemporary speech.

In this case, too, it seems necessary to point out the norms in American society which place a premium on softer speech for women and often taboo certain vocabulary words for them.

On a more abstract level, there are many hypotheses proposed as to the nature of Japanese expression. While these are often purely subjective evaluations, there may be some value in considering them, even heuristically. Charles Moore, in editing a symposium on the "Japanese mind", suggests that "...the two most fundamental characteristics of the Japanese thought tradition and of Japanese culture even today, may be summed up in the expression 'direct' or 'immediate' experience, the general experiential point of view, and 'indirect thinking', 'indirectness', or 'indeterminateness in thought', called variously irrationalism, anti-intellectualism, etc..."⁷⁶ In support of the theme of immediacy, Kishimoto implies a direct causal relationship between the nature of the language and the Weltanschauung of the Japanese. It is, for example, unnecessary to express a subject. In the case of the word "solitary" or "lonely" (sabishii, 寂しい), it is permissible merely to say "Sabishii", without indicating whether it is the scenery which is desolate or lonely, or 'I' who is lonely. "Without such analysis one's sentiment is the result of the collaboration of the subject and the object".⁷⁷ Another author suggests that the beginning of

logical consciousness requires cognizance of the relation between the whole and the part, the universal and the particular and that "the Japanese have trouble in understanding a concept apart from particular or individual circumstances."⁷⁸ He traces this tendency to historic aspects of Japanese, insisting that prior to the introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism from China, native Japanese vocabulary was weighted toward expression of aesthetics and emotional states of mind and evidenced very few abstract nouns.⁷⁹ Others suggest that the "syntax of Western languages requests, in their construction, more full and distinct indication of the subject-object relation than does Japanese. Suzuki suggests that the Japanese prefer to deal with reality in its 'suchness' rather than in terms of absolutes or universals."⁸⁰ This may perhaps be related to old Shinto concepts of purity and impurity as values, since the "Japanese in ancient times had no category of good and evil in the Christian sense of the words. It is under the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism that these categories have come into existence...(while) morality in ancient times was aesthetic."⁸¹ This seems to imply that the lack of this conception of 'good' was correlated with lack of linguistic coding. Moore suggests that it is still true that the Japanese world view is characterized by practicality and this-worldliness which are found in the eclecticism of

Japanese culture and in its religions; he suggests that the major concerns of adapted and native Japanese religion seem to be found in a value on achievement of inner tranquility in facing all problems of life, and that these religions lack much concern with the transcendental.⁸²

This idea might be elaborated in suggesting that the ethical basis of religion is grounded in problems of social living rather than in metaphysical or philosophical ideas.

While the point of view espoused by Moore is at best arguable, several others have attempted to sketch the infusion of Western political concepts into Japanese society, contrasting these with the older concepts of the Japanese. Masaaki describes the creation and translation into character combinations of such concepts as "human right", "nation", "democracy", "reason", etc., implying that these concepts did not exist commonly prior to their coining. In traditional Japanese society, the relationship between individuals or ie was expressed in terms of on and giri (indebtedness and duty in inadequate translation). Kawashima says that in the Western world there is a tension between legal rules and the social world, and that the former is used in the evaluation and control of the latter. "In Japan, however, a statute is considered, according to the prevailing view, to be nothing but a denka no hoto (a sword handed down from ancestors as a family treasure)

which means that it is not for actual use, but for symbolic manifestation of the prestige of the family."⁸³

This was correlated with the lack of the concept of right-particularly in the sense of the possibility of the governments's infringing upon private persons and in the sense of being something which could be demanded. Debate of the translation of the French Civil Code in the early Meiji Period included the question: "'What on earth does it mean to say that a citizen has a right?'"⁸⁴ To some extent this lack of linguistic coding may only point out a different frame of reference - i.e. the value on harmony in social relationships, the interest of the collectivity recognized as having primary importance. "In principle it is expected that social obligations will be fulfilled by a voluntary act on the part of the person under obligation - usually with particular kindness or benevolence."⁸⁵

These values have an effect on behavior even today. A survey conducted in 1963 showed extreme reluctance to resort to the courts. Even among urban dwellers, twenty-five per cent reported that this was because "to make a distinction between black and white with respect to a dispute is not proper or that both parties have their reasons".⁸⁶

The above mentioned arguments may be somewhat unsubstantiated, but they point to some of the differences in

general value orientation which merit investigation, as their presence is likely to be accompanied by different kinds of language usage.

One other area which deserves a little attention in passing is that of 'civilities'. The politeness of the Japanese is mythical, but as often with stereotypes, there is some salient feature which seems to give them their tenacity. In Japanese, there are a multitude of polite expressions which form the basis for any social interaction. There are myriad ways of expressing 'thank you', depending upon the particular context in which something is done for someone. Seward suggests that "A cardinal rule to remember about salutations in Japan is that you should first thank the person you are greeting for whatever he did for you at the time of your previous meeting... Even if you were the host or the giver of the gift or the doer of the good deed, it would not be inappropriate for you to make first mention of the occasion, the idea being that you are apologizing for not having done as much as possible."⁸⁷ Similar formalities are required with the giving of omiyage, the souvenir brought back from a trip to help the receiver share in the experience or a delicacy given as a hostess gift. One presents the small present with a barrage of apologies. This same sanctioned display of humility is found in the offering to a guest of some refreshment, etc. These sequencing rules of Japanese seem

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to the student to be much more rigorous than those of English; this again is best examined within the framework of the culture.

The above is just a tentative outline of a few points whose inclusion in Japanese language teaching would hopefully benefit the student in overcoming 'cultural' interference. Many or all of these ideas were developed during my teaching of an introductory course in the Experimental College and my own experience in learning Japanese. Time does not permit a detailed discussion of the course. Its relative unstructured character was somewhat determined by the goals of the Experimental College; tests and written evaluations were not required. Feedback was, however, easily available due to the permissiveness of the classroom situation, the peer status of the instructor, and the sincere interest of those who participated as students, their work for the most part being above and beyond that required within the framework of the regular college curriculum. Classes met twice weekly for an hour and a half; I directed Ann Cary in the running of a second section. Several attempts were made to utilize direct methods in addition to dittoed work-sheets presenting grammar, vocabulary, patterns and comprehension passages. Methods of using slides with a prepared commentary in Japanese after a month of study and serving tea

and Japanese pastries in conjunction with the introduction of vocabulary and concepts met with a good reception by the students. These both proved effective in supplementing vocabulary and providing a living learning situation. Discussion related to cultural differences was encouraged subsequent to the first class meeting in which some of these areas were touched upon as a focal interest. Results of this technique can not be evaluated at this time; however, I feel that if developed, this method has some definite potential for working with college age students.

You have studied the topic widely and well. What you have gained in scope you have lost somewhat in depth; but that seems appropriate for what you wanted to do. I'm sure you can build well on this foundation. I was sorry you did not explore more fully your work with the experimental course.

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