

談話と教授法の不一致  
— 教室場面における文化の影響 —

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Conflicts in Discourse and Pedagogy:  
The Affect of Culture in the Classroom

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Most EFL instructors at Japanese universities face cultural challenges in the classroom when they have western cultural expectations for student-teacher interaction, discourse, and pedagogy. Some of the results include lack of spontaneity and verbal/nonverbal feedback, silence, unnatural discourse patterns, and overuse of Japanese in the classroom. The term discourse includes not only speaking, but also that of behaving, believing, and a kind of thinking reflecting that of Gee's (2003) notion of discourse. Implementation of the Socratic style of discourse and pedagogy gets undermined by the difficulty of instilling the psychology of these ideas as an ESL classroom in what is unmistakably an EFL classroom situation. It is beneficial to analyze the different cultures of learning that produces their respective patterns of behavior in order to understand and address these issues to create a more effective model for English instruction.

**Socratic Based Pedagogy**

The western model of pedagogy and student teacher discourse has historical foundations in ancient Greece and the Socratic method employed by the seminal philosopher, Socrates. This method is enacted by a series of questions and answers by and to the teacher in order to arrive at a conclusion as Scollon (1999) has pointed out. The student is active in the discussion by answering and asking questions to the teacher. Thus, when this concept of questioning and answering is transferred from a one on one dialectic to a group situation, questioning and answering remains as the foundation for instruction. Therefore, students are expected to raise their hands when they have a question, whether or not this occurs during a lecture or during a free flowing group discussion. Sometimes an instructor will play devil's advocate to

challenge the students to justify and clarify their explanations. In particular, teachers often try to elicit answers from the students in two ways. One, teachers expect students to respond to questions that are directed to them individually or decline to answer by saying "I don't know." That is to say, if a student is addressed by a teacher, eye contact and a verbal response is expected. Secondly, if a teacher addresses a general question to the class as a whole, they expect someone to volunteer to answer. If no one responds, it is assumed that no one knows the answer. Furthermore, if a student doesn't understand something or needs help it is also expected that the student in question will ask the teacher for help or clarification. (Krieger, 2005) However, the fact of the matter is that most Japanese students have never encountered this type of Socratic based student-teacher discourse expectations by the time they have reached the university level, unless they have lived abroad or participated in a special English program while attending high school. As a result, there are several cultural factors at play here that inhibit the students from enacting in the typical western prescribed student-teacher discourse expectations.

### **Confucian Based Pedagogy**

One of the defining factors for classroom discourse in Japan, according to McDaniel (2003), is based on Confucian collectivism. This results in a strong bond of identity that facilitates interpersonal and intragroup familiarity. In Confucianism the teacher is the transmitter of knowledge rather than a facilitator as in Socratic based pedagogy. As a result, the students are expected to be passive, unquestioning, as well as silent. Teachers in this system are treated deferentially with silence as a sign of respect. There is misunderstanding and confusion in regards to these ideas of in-group inclusion and out-group exclusion. For example, the teacher being an out-group member, is often unaware of the inherent nonverbal communication taking place among the Japanese students or the teacher misses out on the realization that a high value is placed on group membership in collectivist societies which can result in the out-group member being treated inconsequentially (McDaniel, 2003 pp. 253-254). Doi (1985) has stated that in Japanese interpersonal relationships there is a clear distinction between "soto no hito" (outsiders) and "uchi no hito" (insiders). Thus, when this concept is manifested in the classroom this pronounced collectivism can result in a lack of verbal spontaneity due to the impact of distancing the educator from the students creating an atmosphere of sensitivity to the group that results in a lack of verbal spontaneity (King, 2005). Students who are verbally active stand out and are not in harmony with the collectivism of the group. As a result,

Japanese students have a tendency to show more restraint or *enryo* (see: Wierzbicka, 1997) in the classroom. In addition, verbally active students risk losing face from asking a too clever or too foolish question (Jin & Cortazzi 1998). Thus, students who are mentally engaged in the class often perceive themselves as being active. As far as silence is concerned, it is important to note that student response time or pauses (known as *ma* in Japanese) are often significantly longer than the western usage of pauses since the students often use this time to formulate an answer (McDaniel, 2003). As it can plainly be seen, most of these Confucian and cultural concepts are in direct opposition to those of the western based Socratic pedagogy and student-teacher discourse.

### **The Influence of “Amae” in Discourse**

Another cultural factor that comes into play regarding student-teacher discourse involves the Japanese cultural tradition of “amae”, described by Doi (1973) as a feeling or need for dependence. This is a cultural tradition which suggest that people expect to be taken care of by others, who are inherently aware of the needs and desires of individuals:

This Concept can be seen in the classroom, where Japanese students seem to be overly dependent of the instructor. Students expect the teacher to monitor their weaknesses and address them. Furthermore, students don't ask questions or comment in class, because they expect fair and equal treatment from the teacher in regards to being called on and being responsible for identifying their weaknesses. It is a sort of passive learning in which they are dependent on the teacher provide them with knowledge and tools needed to master the content of the course. (McCoy 2005, pp. 125-126)

This over dependency on the instructor affects student-teacher discourse, especially if the instructor is operating on assumptions of discourse rooted in a western-based model.

### **The Problem of Implementing Western Pedagogy**

The elephant in the room, so to speak, is the limitation of the psychology involved in trying to create an ESL classroom environment in an EFL classroom environment. The psychology is based on pretending to need to negotiate and communicate in English. Student may try as hard as possible to pretend that their classmates aren't Japanese and cannot speak Japanese. Inevitably, the desire to set up a comfortable discourse frame familiar to the students as well

as falling back on familiar forms of student-teacher discourse frequently manifest themselves in class. (Guest, M. 2005) As a result, students often resort to silence, consensus taking with neighbors before answering a question, frequent use of Japanese-especially in interactional language during conversation games and activities.

### **Possible Solutions For Promoting Socratic-based Discourse**

There are a number of things that can be done to overcome the collectivist Confucian discourse that inhibits English language learning. (1) Institutional support is necessary to expose students to native speaker led classes as early as possible in their English language learning. This means English teachers need to act as cultural mediators by incorporating Socratic-based discourse and pedagogy. Therefore, it would be beneficial to train more native Japanese English teachers to conduct classes using a Socratic-based discourse style. This would mean that English classes led by foreign instructors (or Japanese teachers employing these methods in class) would take place in either the elementary school or junior high school level. (2) Teachers and schools can create an Only English Area (OEA) where students must interact with everyone using English to serve as a limited ESL environment.

The second set of suggestions can be implemented or adopted by individual English teachers. King (2005) suggests that teachers need to overcome the negative effects of a deficit in shared experience and influence of a Confucian-based collectivism by showing (a) patience, (b) creating a supportive learning environment where students feel at ease communicating in English, (c) making students aware of cultures' discourse norms, and (d) increase student awareness of the pedagogical rules of engagement in the classrooms of other cultures. Teachers can teach think time strategies to combat the long pauses and silences that often occur in discourse. For example, students should be introduced to paralinguistic devices such as "ummm..." "errr..." or "well..." (King 2005). These expressions would be useful in replacing Japanese think time devices such as "etto..." or extended silences. However, it is important for teachers to extend their wait time for responses in the classroom as well. Furthermore, a teacher can incorporate strategies that play to the Confucian-based behaviors. For example, instructors can engage in error correction that doesn't single students out through repetition of the incorrect response or recasting and correcting the student's utterance, rather than eliciting, explicitly correcting, giving metalinguistic clues, or making clarification requests. This way it avoids putting a student on the spot and the students who are not participating, but are mentally engaged in class can benefit from the

error correction as passive listeners. In addition, word puzzles and games like hangman allow students to collectively participate without risk of singling out themselves with responses. The cultural challenges of classroom discourse and pedagogy aren't insurmountable. However, the realization of the potential pitfalls and solutions for these problems are important for successful classroom instruction and management.

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