Postmodern epistemological paradigm（PmEP）and notions of truth in the Japanese tertiary content classroom: An introduction

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日本の大学の内容中心型授業に関する考察
―ポストモダン認識論のパラダイムと「真理」概念からのアプローチ：序論

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Abstract（要旨）

　真理とその定義は、教育と社会の中核をなすものである。真実性（Verisimilitude）、すなわち人が何を真であると信ずるかは、結果的に、我々がどんな人間であるかを規定し、私たちが形成する社会や人間関係に究極的な影響を及ぼすものである。教育、殊に大学教育においては、「真」とその定義は知識を基礎付ける礎石となるだけでなく、何がどのようにテストされるかということにも、さらに重要な副次的影響を及ぼす。授業の教室では、真理をどう観るかということは、知識のとらえかたを示すものとなり、ひいては「教えを説き教授する（teach）」のか、「学習を支援し進行する（facilitate）」のかという、最も根本的なレベルでの態度の差異をもたらすことになる。そしてさらに、この世界観（真理についてどんな考え方をするか）は、学習時の相互関係（学習者と教育者の関係）のヒエラルキーの中で、主体（すなわち学生）と支援者（facilitator）の相対的な位置関係を規定するものとなる。しかしながら、「真理」は極めて複雑な概念であり、注意深くアプローチする必要がある。全ての教育の幅広い分野の中でも、内容（情報、知識、あるいは事実など）に関わる教育は、その内容がいかなるものであれ、教育学を超えて認識論哲学に関わる複雑な課題に満ちた仕事なのである。筆者は、真実性の観念に触発された熱意あるポストモダニスト支援者として１３年間にわたり大学英語教育に取り組む中で、ポストモダン認識論へのアプローチを発展させてきた。本稿は、三部作「序論」「方法論モデルを求めて」「方法論モデル試案」の最初の部分である「序論」に相当する。本論では、筆者のポストモダン認識論的パラダイムの基礎を説明し、そのパラダイムの源流を示した上で、それがなぜ日本の大学での内容中心型授業（CBI）において適切で重要な方法論であると言えるのかを明らかにしている。知識と真理そのものについてだけでなく、日本の大学の外国語としての英語教育（JTEFL）の内容中心型授業で、何が、なぜ、どのように教えられているのかについても、批判的に検討することを通して、筆者はここに、内容中心型授業の方法論の一試案を提出し、議論の場を提供する。この方法論試案は、真理の概念そのものだけでなく、

日本の国内外の内容中心型授業における真理の位置についても問い直す試みといえる。

Keywords（キーワード）

Andragogy　成人教育学，Postmodernism　ポストモダニズム，Epistemology 認識論（哲学），
Japanese higher education 日本の高等教育（大学教育），Verisimilitude　真実性

Introduction

A diverse range of thinkers from the past to the present; from English writer and critic Jonathan Meades to the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni concur that 'Permanence is an illusion'（Meades, 2013）. This age old chestnut has challenged philosophers from Heraclitus to Freud, and lies at the core of knowledge, understanding, and thus education. Intertwined and implicit in the nature of permanence lies the notion of impenetrable Truth. Truth, however, as W.B. Gallie（1955, 1956）, would suggest is an 'essentially contested concept' something which, as a relative construct lacks definitive terms. This means that what constitutes absolute Truth is different for each of us and is extremely personal in nature. The very notion of absolute Truth is, therefore, highly questionable in terms of looking for exactitudes and imperial standards – especially in a post-postmodern epoch which postulates an underlying heterogeneity to societies. Philosopher Karl Popper（1902–1994）was vehement in his opposition to the classical justificationist account of knowledge, which he replaced with critical rationalism.

Except for certain cases within the hard sciences, most of what we believe to be True is either partially true, or transitory, as Dewey（1910）notes, truth could be defined as the 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it'（1910: 6）. For the most part, Truth is in a constant state of flux; think Thomas Kuhn's（1962）*paradigm shift* or Malcolm Gladwell's（2015）*tipping point*, and the history of hard science is littered with the remnants of debunked theories superseded by the next; from Einstein's advancement of Newton's Second Law, to the cosmological shift from a Ptolemaic cosmology to a Copernican one, as Hornborg observed, "'pre-modern', 'modern, and 'post-modern' people tend to deal with subject-object relations in different ways"（2013: 7）. Thus, the two examples above demonstrate how previously held Truths shifted, and how, despite our oft held belief otherwise, Truth is not unyielding over time, but flexible and malleable, as William Blake stated, "what is now proved was once only imagin'd." In the Arts & Humanities（A&H）- the *soft* sciences, the situation is all the more turbulent. Whilst in recent years A&H have been keen to emulate their academic cousins in the hard sciences, such emulation is, however, highly problematic, for, as Popper（1944）and Popper & Hudson（1963）suggests, despite their best intentions at being 'robust' and 'quantifiable' most of the theory espoused（especially in the soft sciences）is just that; *theory*. Whichever word one uses, be it a *hypotheses*, a *thesis*, a *postulation* or a *posit*, it is essentially nothing more than conjecture. Opinion or held beliefs which have entered the public discourse and are waiting to be proven true by not being refuted à la *modus*

tollendo ponens. Although this is not problematic per se, and does not make the theory less valid as a philosophical idea, it is important to be aware of and acknowledge this. Problems invariably arise when scholars or practitioners forget this. For example, some of the most widely believed theories of linguistics and education, e.g. Chompsky's *Universal Grammar* (1965), Krashen's *Input Hypothesis* (1985), Bloom's *Taxonomy* (1958), and Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* (1934), are not irrefutable facts or Laws, and should not be viewed as such, yet it often appears in certain circles and cliques, as if they are.

　　The point to be made here is that whilst there is nothing wrong with the above (far from it), the nature of information in flux, be it Kuhn's (1962) incremental shifts, or whichever lens is used, the fragility and fleetingness of Truth needs to be recognised, and this in turn has significant implications for education. Not least because of its ramifications for academic disciplines in the A&H which rely on teaching apparent Truth. In Japan, this has ramifications and implications for approaches and methodologies such as English as a Means of Instruction (EMI), which relies (in part) on examining apparent Truths. How does one 'teach' a subject whose knowledge base is not only in constant flux, but which is also relative? These are all interesting questions for the field of education, and surely the answer to these questions start with how we see Truth, (or truth).

Section One: Truth and its place in education

> The skills, competences and skills needed for identifying analysing and solving problems from multiple perspectives will require nurturing students who are curious and cognitively flexible can tolerate ambiguity and synthesis knowledge within and across disciplines.
>
> Suárez-Orozco & Sattin. C. (2007: 19)

As has been well documented (e.g. Postman & Weingartner, 1969; Freire, 1970, 1974, 1985; Dewey, 1938; Marx & Engels [1888], 2015; Giroux, 1983, 2001, 2002, 2004, McLaren, 1999, 2015; Goodman, 1960 et al) education is never a neutral pursuit. Education, whether state-sponsored or sponsored by a religious organisation is clearly imbued with an agenda and at the heart of that agenda lies how the sponsoring institution views the world and how they view truth. Durkheim (1858 - 1917) believed, as did Parsons (1902–1979) that the function of education was a means of socialization – of transmitting the agreed norms and values in a society, and that through this process roles could be established and the agenda of the State fulfilled. Embedded in these assumptions are the core Modernist principles of meta-narrative and homogeneity. As Durkheim notes, 'society can only survive if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity: education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands' (1956: 70). Both Bourdieu (1930 - 2002) and Marx (1818–1883) extended this idea and began to interweave the idea of Truth with control. Bourdieu argued that education transmits the culture of the dominant classes and maintains the status quo. As

Sadovnik noted in respect of Basil Bernstein's（1924-2000）considerable contributions to education, "Bernstein contributed to a greater understanding of how schools reproduce what they are ideologically committed to eradicating—social-class advantages in schooling and society"（2011: 610）. Likewise, Marx argued that education produced subservient pupils with limited value or potential（Bourdieu's *social capital*）. Michel Foucault（1926-1984）further argued that inseparable from knowledge（or Truth）is power; that the locus of power resides in information, because information shapes thoughts, which shape belief, actions, and ultimately society. If therefore, one can control what is considered appropriate knowledge or Truth, one can certainly influence society, and who is best placed to benefit from this, but the State. As Illich（1926 - 2002）suggested, notably in *Deschooling Society*（1971）, the power of State Education should not be underestimated as a tool for indoctrination, Bernstein too expressed the sentiment that state education is concerned with the production, distribution and reproduction of *official knowledge*. Henri Giroux（1943- ） has also written extensively on this topic. Contrasting with both Durkheim and Parson's viewpoints are Freire and Dewey（1959-1952）who argued that the purpose of education（and understanding of truth）should be to develop the individual's full potential and, pertinent to this research, should be to develop their higher order skills[1]. With that established, however, upon closer inspection the situation reveals how tenuous and arbitrary Truth can be in State Education. The following graphic illustrates how truth is not only the keystone of knowledge, but is also the point of departure for understanding how it ultimately influences and shapes society. In Section Two, this diagram will be explained along with the complex notion of 'State Education' - which is quite different in both the Japanese and English contexts.
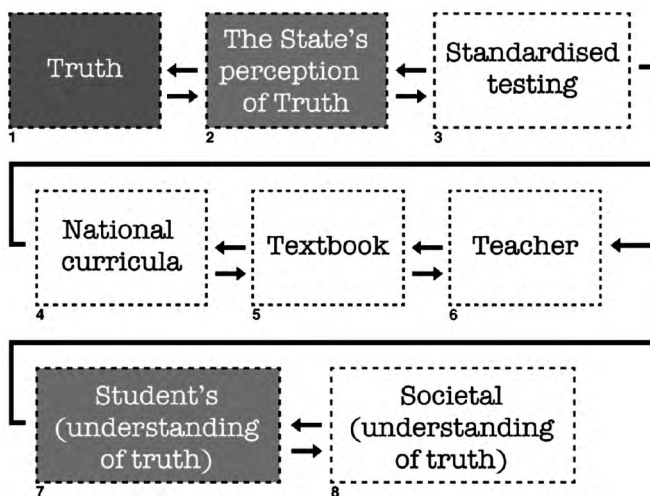

Figure 1: The chain of State Education

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[1]   Clearly to excel in some professions, certain professionals do need to have facts committed to memory. That said, however, even in the case of medical practitioners and engineers they are increasingly using technology in real time to check medicine prescriptions and calculate formulas in the field.

Section Two: State Education and Truth - a structural overview

As illustrated above in figure 1, irrespective of regime or culture, the mechanism of State Education remains relatively consistent, globally. **Governments**, through **civil servants** and department of education advisers come together to concur what they *believe* is Truth according to the **national benchmark**. This in turn determines what should (and should not) be taught by State Actors (**teachers**) and ultimately *learned* by students (or rather, remembered). These meta-narratives help establish the content of **standardised testing** which not only canonises the **body of accepted knowledge** into bite-size portions – what one might call 'information lite,' but which influences **societal discourse**, and ultimately **shapes society**. The mechanism by which this occurs is relatively straightforward. Firstly, once the content of these standardised summative memory tests (e.g. transfer tests, GCSEs, A' levels &c.) is determined and established in **national curricula**, it is then taught *towards* by teachers at the student-facing end of the chain. To propagate this State-sanctioned learning, and to ensure all the topics are covered in a controlled manner, **officially sanctioned texts** and other learning materials are employed to act as a point of references and something to study and revise against. Students then take these tests and are graded according to how close they regurgitated the pre-determined ideal response within the narrow confines of given parameters by means of a written response, cloze exercise, or what Bernstein calls "standardised reactions" (1961: 165) are elicited and measured. As Peter Tait (2015) notes, however, 'measuring intelligence through examination is, inevitably, as limited as the examination itself.' The end result of this in both the author's home nation of England and in Japan too, is that students invariably leave secondary education and enter higher education with certificates which indicate their compliance, complicity, and lack of criticality – not the level of their intelligence (Taleb, 2015). Furthermore, as Vygotsky would have argued, testing is all about the individual and negates any consideration for their propensities or proclivities for group learning or co-construction of knowledge. The net result of the reductive process noted above is that students often arrive in the tertiary classroom with their memory full of what they think are impenetrable Truths; when it could be argued that their memories are simply full of facts and ways of thinking which were pre-determined for them by the State and delivered by teachers through the national curriculum and standardised testing. Figure 2 below demonstrates this hypothesis that despite being valid or relevant in the wider sense, if the knowledge is not in the exact same shape or form and does not 'fit' the pre-determined requirements of what is tested and how; if it is information of a different shape or size, then it cannot be recognised by the system as being acceptable. This lack of qualification, however, does not necessarily equate to being 'wrong' or 'false,' rather, 'inappropriate' for the prevailing parameters or configuration of a given test or reference point against which it is to be measured, it is, "knowledge which is not situated as part of a relation" (Hornborg, 2013:7). "Proficiency (therefore) is the cumulative machine states - i.e.,specifiable configurations - of the assessed. The intentionality of the language learner - what the speaking person is all about - is secondary to the ranked

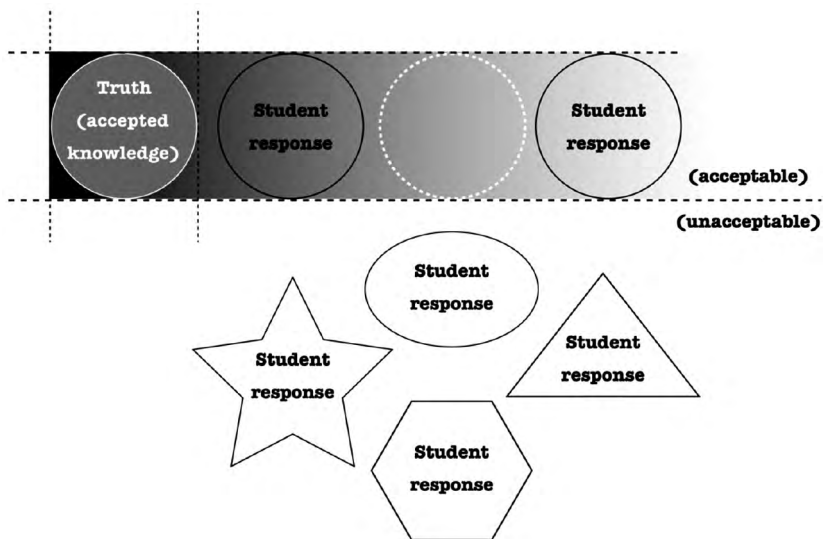linguistic intelligences that constitute proficiency"（Frawley, 1993: 323）.

Figure 2: Accepted Truth and the student response within State testing

This idea is what the inaugural philosopher of Critical Pedagogy, Paulo Freire（1921 - 1997）called "The banking model of education"（1996: 53）, what Laudrillard（2002）called the 'transmission model'（p. 20）and what Knowles（2011）likewise called 'transmission techniques'（p.62）– where deposits of 'knowledge' are made into the empty minds of students who are vessels to be filled or inscribed upon, à la John Lock's veritable *tabulae rasae*（1693）; where the collective sum of these 'deposits' become to some degree, what constitutes 'accepted' knowledge. One problem is, however, that this sanctioned knowledge cannot ever capture the entirety of a subject and by the inherent nature of reduction, much will be omitted. This omission will have many influencing factors such as: culture, politics, policy, power, historical relations, and religion &c., and it is important for learners especially at the tertiary level to realise that they are engaging with a very narrow slice of knowledge. As Popper notes, 'it is not possible for us to observe or describe a whole piece of the world（therefore）all description is necessarily selective'（1944: 127）. As intimated above and depicted in figure 2 above, truth, in many cases is really no more than 'consensus.' 'A singular historical statement [...]（is）not a universal law'（1944: 73）. If we, an academic community, or a society agree that something is the case and enough people side with this position, then it is easy to see how information transitions through folklore and opinion to eventually become canonised and taken as fact; nowhere is this more apparent than in the current debate around *fake news* epitomised by Stephen Colbert's *Truthiness*（2005）. Although situated at the peripheries of robust knowledge, this very idea of how, and why we arrive at apparent Truth has far-reaching ramifications for education, especially State Education and content-specific instruction.

The above point also introduces the debate between *knowledge* and *information*, or *wisdom* and *understanding*. That being, is what students 'know' often any more than remembered facts? For

the author, the joy of knowledge lies in its application, not its remembering; the *process* not the *product*. The problem is, however, that the process is difficult to 'measure' and cannot be readily evaluated by objective metrics which the current epoch demands. The author would further argue that the higher a student scores on any kind of memory test, merely indicates little more than how well they have remembered and retained what has been taught; it is by no means a measure of intelligence, in fact it is the opposite, as Nassim Taleb (2014) notes, 'school success is predictive of future school success. You hire an A student if you want them to take an exam' by which he means linear methods create linear thinkers. This is concerning when we discuss raising critical learners in accordance with the supposed function of higher education. Governing bodies such as the UK's Quality Assurance Agency For Higher Education (QAA), and scholars such as Bloom (1956), and Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) have all reiterated this concern. It is an indisputable fact that any given mode of testing will, by its inherent structure and configuration support 'achievers' who perform most closest to the metrics or algorithms of the configured test. If you design a test which has a specific profile, e.g. a cloze test, a true or false test, a multiple choice test, or a short written response test which allows for a singular or linear response i.e. a written response designed to elicit the test-maker's 'correct' answer, then you will find nothing more than a student who is adept at whatever skills you imbue the test with. And these skills are, in the current global academic environment, likely to be memory-based - retention of binary facts, no more. Of course, whilst memory retention may be one of a number of useful pedagogical strategies at the primary and secondary levels or in tertiary disciplines such as medicine, law or engineering [2], it comes completely unstuck in the tertiary A&H sector. In this arena, memory of apparent facts has little or nothing to do with the fields of discipline or the requirements of tertiary education with its emphasis on the higher order skills we are endeavouring to foster at that level, skills such as synthesis, analysis, deconstruction, criticality, and debate, intrinsic enquiry, informed skepticism, and metacognition &c. In fact the exact opposite is the case and moreover the types of reductive, regurgitative memory tests noted above are in fact extremely discriminative against those students who do not possess the propensity for such unquestioning retrieval, a fact which completely ignores any research pertaining to learner types, proclivities, modalities, and intelligences (see Felder and Silverman (1998), Barsch (1991), Kolb (1984), Gardener (1983), Spearman et al for further discussion of this). To fully understand the importance of this idea, and how it assimilates with the thesis presented here it is appropriate to first review the theory of postmodernism.

Section Three: Postmodernism, a brief overview

Gone are the halcyon days of the mid-eighties when postmodern thought momentarily reigned

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[2]   Clearly to excel in some professions, certain professionals do need to have facts committed to memory. That said, however, even in the case of medical practitioners and engineers they are increasingly using technology in real time to check medicine prescriptions and calculate formulas in the field.

supreme; a dynamic and infectious presence which influenced a wide range of creative pursuits such as: art, literature, music, theatre, performance art, and film. Postmodernism's demise was partly self-inflicted and partly due to a lack of understanding by both the general public and its critics. It is arguable that postmodernism was (and still is) a largely misunderstood movement whose loudest critics often appear to be those who understand it least. A common example of this inability to understand the Project is optimised by Halpin, who referencing Bauman, claims that postmodernism is 'a life without truths, standards and ideals' (Bauman, 1992: ix). Critics who believe that all postmodernism stands for is a solipsistic free-for-all, not only demonstrate a lack of understanding of what the postmodern project actually is, but more importantly where it comes from philosophically, and where it sits within the Academy and wider discourse. That stated, however, proponents of postmodernist philosophy and thought are often their own worst enemies in both taking the idea of interpretation too far, and in failing to lead the discourse on exactly what postmodernism is (and is *not*).

So, what is at the core of postmodernism, and how can a philosophy which apparently rejects labels, be labeled? From the author's perspective, the answer to this is located with the thinkers and texts which have most heavily influenced postmodernism thought. As a starting point a brief overview can be captured by the work of five great thinkers, all of whom have added key concepts to the very distinct lexicon associated with the postmodern movement:

French philosopher and literary theorist **Jean-François Lyotard** (1924–1998) is closely associated with the constructs of *plurality and multiplicity*. In *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* (1984), Lyotard posited that the monolithical meta-narrative (métarécit) or grand récit, the ultimate Truths which were espoused during the Enlightenment were moribund and no longer useful or sufficient to represent the world. He stated that rather than homogeneity being the norm, we were now living in an age of heterogeneity, where a myriad of micro-narratives or petit récit had replaced the singular dominant construct or idea.

Continuing this idea was another French literary theorist and philosopher, **Roland Barthes** (1915–1980). In his book S/z (1974) he propagated the concept of the *readerly text* (*texte lisible*) and *writerly text* (*texte scriptible*) (1974: 4). Barthes stated that whereas texts had previously been considered quite linear, that was no longer the case. He argued that whereas previously it was assumed that there was a direct transmission from the author to the reader (readerly text), he now argued that texts were in fact interpretive (writerly), and meaning was part constructed by the reader. He further posited that the author no longer had the right to define a singular (meta-narrative) reading, and meaning was no longer the sole property of the author. Barthe's theories are also heavily integrated with semiotics, the study of signs in the process of meaning-making. It is also worth noting that Barthes' ideas laid the foundation for other things, besides literary texts being considered as 'texts' – that different entities from cities to films and photographs (and academic subjects) could, according to his theory be *read* and interpreted and even translated.

In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), yet another French philosopher **Jean Baudrillard** (1929–2007) propagated the notion of the *simulacral*. In continuing Lyotard's theory of a lack of

ultimate Truth, Baudrillard, like Barthes, argued that not only is truth (lower case 't') relative, especially in the soft-sciences, but that the subjective, or notional idea of something actually becomes more real that the 'original' itself. That in the current epoch *hyperreality* transcends actual reality; reality is in effect whatever you make of it. His famous analogy is that of Disney Land, which, he argues, is in essence, more real (hyper-real) than the actual America it stands for. This idea also brings into play ideas of cultural myths or 'social text' (Lefebvre, 1996: 148), and the construct of *self-referentiality* or *pastiche* – common postmodern tenets.

Historicism or the shredding of History was an idea proposed by American cultural theorist and literary critic, **Fredric Jameson** (1934–). In both *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, and *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Jameson, like Baudrillard argues, that in a postmodern epoch we turn away from absolute Truths. Austrian philosopher Karl Popper (1902–1994) in his seminal work *The Poverty of Historicism* also hypothesised both the necessity for plurality and the weakness of stating absolute Truths or canonising information into meta-narratives. Furthermore, specifically for the theory of postmodernism, through the rejection of absolutes, we move closer towards a state of parody (parody of self, or pre-existing truths), self-referentiality (not unlike simulacra) and pastiche. These idea also link back to Umberto Eco's (1990) concepts of *neo* and *paleo-television* (1990: 246). Insofar as the idea of neo-television which is self-referential and 'talks less and less about the external world,' and corresponds somewhat to Barthe's readerly text. Conversely paleo-television 'talks about the external world' and corresponds somewhat to Barthe's concept of the writerly text.

Finally, **Jacques Derrida** (1930–2004) a French philosopher and linguist worked on the idea of *deconstruction*, which can be seen as linking many of the aforementioned themes together. In both *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (1973) and *Of Grammatology* (1976), he argued that although meaning is relative and socially constructed it should not be misunderstood as a being a free-for-all. Rather, it should be read as an affirmation that meaning is in a constant state of flux, change, and development; and that what we as individuals bring with us in terms of our epistemological, ontological or cultural stance will colour how we perceive any given piece of information or 'knowledge.'

Other more minor tenets worthy of note are, for example, the notion of **blurring** of the interspace or liminal space (Van Gennep, 1960) that exists at the intersection between micro narratives. Where multiple truths or interpretations converge there exist not one overarching metanarrative but truth and interpretation dependent upon ones weltanschauung. **Liminality**, the transition between states also alludes to a state of change and flux, a lack of permanence and plurality. **Bricolage** (Lévi-Strauss' *bricoleur*), or **eclecticness**, again, hints at the idea of truth being relative and in an educational context students being able to draw together ideas from cross-disciplines; this is really no more than what is deemed synthesis in academia. The final point worth mentioning here is the shift from (singular) ideas of **nationhood** to a more **global** (pluralist) stance. Clearly in an increasingly globalised world, the arena of any national higher-

education can no longer focus purely on domestic perspectives and embracing the tents noted above, should be viewing any knowledge or discipline from not only a global or trans-national perspective, but also from a multiplicitous perspective too.

Section Four: Postmodernism and content teaching

Before examining postmodernism and content teaching it is worth pausing for a brief moment to clarify exactly what is meant by 'content' teaching. In global academia most 'content-based' learning and teaching takes place within the fields of EFL/TEFL/TESOL. This is because in other arenas it is not called 'content,' simply being referred to by the academic discipline under study. Because historically content-based learning has been linked to language learning（notably English）, theories have naturally coalesced around two binary positions; *language* and *content*, with one notable exception occupying middle ground. The various competing paradigms in the field place their weight either on language or content. On the language side of the divide are the following paradigms: English for Specific Purposes（ESP）, English for Academic Purposes（EAP）, English for General Academic Purposes（EGAP）, English for Specific Academic Purposes（ESAP）, Content-based Language Teaching（CBLT）, and Content-based Instruction（CBI）. Occupying a middle ground straddling both content and language learning are: Content and language Integrated learning（CLIL）and Content and English Integrated learning（CEIL）, whilst on the content side is notably English as a Means of Instruction/English Medium Instruction（EMI）. Thus for the purpose of this research the paradigm most closely aligned to within the fields of EFL/TEFL/TESOL is that of EMI which is defined as content or subject-specific teaching（and learning）which takes place through the conduit of the English language but it not necessarily intended to improve the students grasp of English, the primary focus being *content*. That stated, however, there is one extremely large caveat to note, and that is the word 'English,' for despite consistently being referred to throughout this paper, it should be made explicitly clear, that unlike Dearden's simple definition which states that EMI involves, "the use of English to teach academic subjects"（2015: 4）, in actuality, in the PmEP it is the subject-specific content which is of primary importance and located at the centre of the learning transaction, hence 'English' could just as easily be replaced with Arabic, Mandarin, or any language which will enable the content to be accessed, and it is this factor which makes PmEP a universal pedagogical/andragogical approach as it attempts to "erase the boundary between language learning and language use"（Lantolf, 1995: 116）.

With regard to extending the above it is surprising, that despite the abundance of preeminent postmodern thinkers and the clear application of postmodern thought to pedagogy/andragogy and epistemology, there is no consensus as to what a postmodern epistemology might look like or how it might be applied to form a postmodern andragogy applicable for use in the content classroom. That stated, however, noting the two preceding sections, it is hoped that the general parameters for establish a working model are set in place. In contrast to standardised

testing and national curricula where information is invariably viewed in a reductive or binary sense, canonised into tranches of information to be taught and remembered, postmodern education uses the core constructs of plurality and ambiguity as leaping off points to gain awareness and develop understanding. Here education is seen not as transmission, but as a *transaction* (Miller & Seller: 1985) or a *transformation* (ibid; Freire, 1970). Antithetical to monolithical paradigms stands learning in the postmodern sense where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb 1984), where, as Richardson (1994) notes 'learners can themselves become important resources for learning [...] (where) the need to make sense of one's own life experience is often a major incentive for engaging in a particular learning activity' (1994: 321). Furthermore, the postmodernism epistemology or andragogy proposed here is concerned with the *asymmetry* of information, that is, information which is omitted from such practices as teaching, and which does not go on to form part of the dominant narrative of Truth within a given discipline. As noted earlier, Foucault, (1980, 1984), and Foucault & Deleuze (1977), were further concerned what is *not* taught and why is perhaps more important that what is, likewise, what information ends up on society's cutting room floor and who puts it there are also noteworthy questions if we are examining EMI and how this is impacted by notions of Truth. As intimated earlier it is these and other similar questions situated in challenging the role and locus of power and control which are important to note. Postmodernism, especially through derivative sub-genres like post-colonial studies and critical theory aims to deconstruct why certain knowledge is deemed 'worthy' and comes to represent a notional Truth, whilst other is not. And it is really from this starting point my theory of a postmodern epistemological paradigm was born.

As an educator the combination of the points stated above in *defining postmodernism* crystallise into one word, *uncertainty*, and for the author, the joy and interest in teaching content in the third-tier has always been how to process, deal with, respect, and embrace uncertainty in the face of summative testing and canonised bodies of knowledge, As Cunliffe (2002) notes the complexity of thinking is enhanced by exploring contradictions, doubts, dilemmas, and possibilities. Although this embracing of uncertainty/plurality/impermanence often runs counter to the current norms about knowledge in academia which relies on certitude (against which students can be tested), it is a fundamental construct in how to motivate students, how to make classes dynamic, and how to turn the extrinsic learner into an intrinsic one. By employing uncertainty as a core tenet of our classroom practice we allow for the voices of the students to be heard as they are not drowned out by a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. As Frawley (1993) notes, There is epistemological value in fostering a multiplicity of views. Furthermore the lecturer who adopts a critical approach to learning, is arguably asking for a critical approach to strategy, one of questioning, challenging, and considering various points of view (King 1995). This idea, is what Freire (1970) called *problem-posing education* which encourages learners to become independent scholars insofar as they then need to provide scholarly evidence to support of their position, or to refute that of the established norms. It is important to note that this is not a solipsistic free-for-all (Hornberg, 2013: 7) where 'anything goes' simply because someone says so. The points to reiterate and reinforce

here is that plurality and polyphony are most welcome, but they should be substantiated by research, philosophy and evidence which informs and undergirds a given position.

Section Five: Why is a postmodern paradigm useful or appropriate in Japan tertiary education?

From 2000 to 2013, the author was employed as both a part-time and full-time lecturer within Japanese higher education; located at several universities and colleges within the *Kan-sai* region of Western Japan, the author taught content to a wide range of first-year students. The theory described herein and the subsequent methodology which arose from those experiences germinated not only from a perceived need to find more appropriate methods to engage young adults in learning content through the medium of English, but also as a political reaction against the status quo in terms of dominant teaching paradigms prevalent in JTEFL. Furthermore this research was informed by a strong commitment to a genuine and sustainable belief in the postmodern project, and a desire to define and establish parameters and a working model for what *is* and is *not* a postmodern epistemology.

There are four main reasons why the author developed this methodology in Japan, and why they believe it works, these are: group-orientation, ambiguity, impermanence, and voice. Firstly, it is often said that Japan is a group-orientated society, and having lived and worked there for a significant period of time, the author would, to a large extent concur with this view, but this does not make student learners passive or mindless cogs in a machine, something akin to McKay and Wong's "generic, ahistorical 'stick figure'" (1996: 603). Certainly, due to many influencing factors such as their agrarian past (Smith, 1959) and *village society* - Japanese: *mura sha-kai* (村社会，むらしゃかい), limited land space, social hierarchy - Nakane's (1967) *ta-te-sha-kai* (縦社会，たてしゃかい), and high population density, most Japanese *are* highly conscious of others. In turn, this translates well into team-working and cooperation. In the Japanese tertiary classroom, therefore it is unwise to adopt methods which single out individuals, especially in the EFL/ESL classroom, where the learner may well lack confidence. As linguist, Jim King (2013) claims, many Japanese students suffer from xenoglossophobia or have a 'neurotic dread' their English is not up to scratch and feel that if they try to use it they may 'lose face [3]' among friends and peers. That stated, however, from considerable classroom time in the Japanese tertiary sector, spent at a variety of colleges and universities in different regions, the author can state that this is not as pervasive a situation as if often claimed, nor the 'silver bullet' to understanding participation issues carte blanche in the Japanese tertiary classroom. In actuality, there are a complex mélange of factors which can accumulate to create learning obstacles, many of which

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[3] The Chinese construct of losing face (Diūliǎn 丢臉), and various forms of face, (Miàn 面 , Yán 顏 , or Liǎn 臉) is often wrongly attributed to Japan as the defining reason why students are apparently 'inactive.' Whilst the sentiment has ramifications which to a lesser degree resonate with aspects of Japanese culture and thus the Japanese tertiary learner, it is, however, much more complex than simply *losing face*, as is often said.

reside with the facilitator who employs inappropriate or ineffective methods; most however, stem from prior history in the Japanese primary, secondary, and tertiary classroom. Regardless of their root cause, all are capable of being modified if an approach such as PmEP is used. An approach which not only tackles learning in a different way, but re-aligns the expectations of the facilitator, and uses more culturally sensitive and progressive methods. Irrespective of reason, direct approaches rarely work in Japan, therefore indirect approaches such as small group work or pair-work are effective learning strategies for the Japanese tertiary classroom where the idea of public appearance, Japanese: *se-ken-tei*（世間体，せけんてい）is important. Such strategies, and the idea of co-construction of knowledge are inherently postmodern in nature, where pluralism is an integral idea and assimilates well with the Japanese learning environment. Besides, as Lantolf notes, "meaning creation is a process that fundamentally arises in dialogue, either with others or with the self"（1995: 110）, one outcome of which is that in this constructivist or co-constructed environment the nature of absolute truth becomes diminished.

Secondly, although much of Japanese primary, secondary, and tertiary education is about rote memorisation of Truth, and line-by-line translation, （Japanese: *yaku-doku,* 訳読，やくどく）, in stark contrast, however, Japanese society and language often lacks fixed absolutes and definite meanings, and is thus highly ambiguous in nature. Linguistically Japanese is a very indirect language, largely without concrete absolutes, and much meaning has to be inferred, negotiated or 'interpreted' by the interlocutor. As a result of this, the author has found that Japanese learners at the tertiary level, respond well to ambiguity especially when working through a second language, provided they are guided correctly and the circumstances of use are clearly articulated. This openness, and freedom to construct their own discussions, combined with not having to used pre-determined sentence patterns or structures allows students freedom to express themselves as they wish, to say what they want to say; to communicate as they see fit. Finally, as Coughlan and Duff state "different learners react to the same task differently but that the same learner can react to the same task differently on different occasions […] that tasks are not constants but are at best "blueprints" for actions. It is the orientation of individual speakers as human agents that decides how tasks will be operationalized as activities.（1994: 111）. PmEP allows all students to approach tasks on their terms and personalise the learning.

Whilst not necessarily at the forefront of young students' minds, historically the Japanese, as an agrarian and quasi-Buddhist race was inspired, fixated, and preoccupied by notions of impermanence or ephemera; Japanese, *mu-jyou*（無常，むじょう）or *mono no awa-re*（物の哀れ，もののあわれ）. For example, the idea of remaking, rebuilding, and reinterpreting is still a fundamental part of the post-postmodern Japanese psyche. That the national flower is the cherry blossom[4], which represents fleetingness further suggests that the Japanese learner may perhaps, be more predisposed to notions of impermanence antithetical to absolute truths than students

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[4]   The cherry blossom; Japanese, *sakura*（桜）is not only a literal symbol of brevity and fleetingness in Japan, but also acts as a euphemistic trope to denote the beauty of youth and the impermanence of life.

from other nations might be. If therefore, we are to build educational models which are culturally-specific and respect the proclivities of students and their individual nations, then it certainly makes sense in Japan to incorporate the notion of non-specificity and ambiguity into our learning paradigms.

Because Japan *is* largely group-orientated, and because the Japanese language can be ambiguous, many students complain that because of cultural constructs like *hon-ne*（本音，ほんね）and *tate-mae*（建前，たてまえ）, literally, one's real intention and one's outward expression, they often don't really know their peers and colleagues, and much interaction is simulacral or notional in nature. Furthermore, if the facilitator adopts a performative, prescriptive or didactic approach where pre-established Truths or responses are required, students not only fail to hear a multitude of responses to a given question or idea, but more importantly, they may never actually hear an honest or personal response to any given problem or task. In contrast to this, through independent scholarship and self-directed questioning, the postmodern approach posited here allows the individual to articulate their own ideas in their own voice, and this allows other students and the facilitator to better understand them as an individual and for the development of "affective empathy"（Bernstein, 1961: 166）.

Furthermore, the freedom of not having to regurgitate Truths they may not agree with, allows for a much more flexible and individual learning experience. Clearly, since their defeat in WWII[5], Japan has suffered at the hands of (mostly American) *soft-imperialism* and neo-imperialistic tendencies which is still evident in the JTEFL classroom today and the materials widely used. In the author's opinion, far too much of the teaching and learning in the Japanese language classroom is from a 'West is best' perspective. Students, using Americanised, or Euro-centric textbooks, often believe they have to act a certain way or agree with their non-Japanese teacher's weltanschauung in order to appease them and obtain a 'high' score. In actuality, however, if one digs below the surface *tate-mae* and offers a robust platform for students to express their *hon-ne*（real views）the reality is quite different, with many students being extremely vocal and critical of both domestic and 'foreign' influence and policy, and in possession of very definite views on a whole range of subjects including, ironically enough, those considered taboo in the West. As a general rule, unlike their American or English counterparts, Japanese learners are refreshingly politically *in*correct, and given the right platform, many Japanese students in the tertiary sector can be savvy and quite opinionated on an array of topics from euthanasia and religion to abortion and immigration; much more so than many Western students of the same age.

Observations and notes from the field

As mentioned above, the author has, since the mid 2000s been developing and trialing PmEP in

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[5] It is arguable this process actually began much earlier with the 'opening up' of Japan by Commodore Perry in 1854

the Japanese tertiary content classroom, this facilitation has taken place both in Japanese and in English. Interestingly, comments which repeatedly came through student feedback were not simply how well the postmodern class worked, and how dynamic the learning process was, but also (and perhaps just as importantly), how well students got to know each other and how many friends they made. This, they commented, contrasted with other classes where they were 'taught' and where there was little or no opportunity to interact with their peers, or facilitators beyond mere greetings or exchanging dialogue from conversation scripts in prescriptive textbooks. Furthermore, given that one of the main motivations behind tertiary education is the opportunity to make new friends, to hear new ideas, and fresh opinions which will hopefully form and shape development of the *self*, it is important that the facilitator creates a class environment in which students not only want to be, and feel enabled to participate at a level which suits them, but also which allows them to find out who they are, what they believe and think. And from a philosophical or epistemological perspective, one which allows their own voice and ideas to be heard. One notable detraction however, which is a sad bi-product of experiences with PmEP, is that it contrasts so sharply with 'traditional' university classes in Japan which (regardless of the nationality of the facilitator) send to be extremely static, didactic, and passive reiterations of secondary-level pedagogy, not tertiary-level andragogy. As a result of this many students have expressed their deep discontent with their other, 'old' style classes and teachers, and, as is the nature of consciousness raising education, students can become very vocal and militant about having to be 'taught' in university by methods and material which they encountered in their secondary (and sometime primary) education. Of course, the antithesis of this is perhaps the majority of students. The traditional directionless Japanese university students, who, not entirely at fault, arrive each April, passive, lazy, and, disinterested in a random university faculty they would rather not be in, yet (largely because they have never been asked) don't know where else they would rather be, or what they would rather be doing instead. Given the prevalence of this type of student, who, twenty-years before might have gone straight in to the workforce, efforts need to be undertaken to explain this facilitation style, the expectations of the class, and the position of tertiary education in a continuum. That stated, however, because this approach uses homework/self-study as the foundation, and small-groups in class, it does allow room for the passive learner to hide in plain sight, the result will simply be that they likely won't get a score far above average, won't get value for their parent's school fees, and more importantly, they won't improve their output or cognitive faculty. Of course, the best approach would be a restructuring of any faculty's delivery method (irrespective of skill or discipline) to have a unified faculty-wide PmEP delivery, that however, would require a genuine willingness to educate learners properly and require motivated staff who were prepared to unlearn bad habits and be open to learning new ways to facilitate. Summing up these observations we draw on Lantolf who notes that

Students then play a major role in shaping the goal and ultimate outcomes of tasks set for

them by their teachers. Thus […] while task-based instruction could yield positive learning outcomes, there can be no guarantees, because what ultimately matters is how individual learners decided to engage with the task as an activity. As people participate in different culturally specified activities they enter into different social relations and come into contact with, and learn how to employ and ultimately appropriate, different mediational means.

（Lantolf, 2010:13）

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to lay the foundations and present a working hypothesis for a postmodern epistemological and andragogical paradigm. It has attempted to clarify what the core tenets of postmodernism are and how they might be applied to form not only a working model for a postmodern epistemology and thus andragogy, but also how that epistemological stance can be employed in the tertiary sector to interject ambiguity, uncertainty, and plurality into the content classroom, and ultimately to impact upon the teaching of content. As Siún Hanrahan notes, 'Engaging in conversation is not about arriving at consensus, it is about understanding the complexity of perspectives within the conversation'（2013）she continues, 'Through conversation I endeavour to arrive at my decision with *care*, to enact my decision in light of the point of view of the other, and to treat the moment of decision as provisional – potentially subject to revision at some future moment as I return to the conversation to acquire and develop new understanding." This is really the sentiment which lies at the heart of my postmodern epistemological paradigm, and what informs my andragogical practice. Not only is such as idea highly appropriate for the tertiary classroom, but it also serves to foster intelligent, critical, and creative students capable of taking their place in an increasingly fragmented and volatile world. Moreover, it is increasingly the case that to secure employment in an ever competitive marketplace, students（of all disciplines）are required to demonstrate their cognitive ability and capacity with higher-order skills. Given that part of any university's ranking or their desirability is derived from their propensity to help graduates find meaningful employment, it is a moot point to suggest that the acquisition of transferable skills should not be merely be a superficial 'add-on' learned in workshops or seminars, but where possible, should reach back, germinate, and be formed in the tertiary classroom. It is arguable that this is the responsibility of the tertiary facilitator, that through the learning process/experience, students are exposed to, and encouraged to adopt an intrinsic, critical, evaluative and creative epistemological approach; and this is one such approach. As Einstein is often quoted as saying, 'We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.' This method of facilitating content in the higher education classroom is not the silver bullet, instead, in keeping with its postmodern pluralist stance, the idea outlined here is but one tool in the toolbox. That stated, however, it points to the direction in which both universities and facilitators can head if they wish to uphold the expectations of higher education and foster critical and creative learners to

meet the complex challenges ahead. Of course, this is not a simple task and will require much adjustment on behalf of faculty members who seek maintain the status quo and protect their positions of power, as oracle of truth, as Bernstein suggests:

"the social organisation must enable the person, as well as the function, of the teacher to be felt and perceived. In an important sense the teacher [...] is much more exposed, physiologically, if he is to teach efficiently. He cannot retreat into his formal role and impersonalise his communication. [...] There are only two types of teachers: those who can and those who cannot"（1961: 175）.

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