

THE FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION CLASSROOM IN JAPAN

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Communicative Competency, Cultural Imperative, Dual System, Foreign Language, Language Acquisition, Learning, Paper English, Second Language.

ABSTRACT:

This paper is a study of the Foreign English teacher and the Foreign/Second Language Classroom experience in Japan. It will discuss and define language learning and acquisition, and examine language learning and acquisition in Japan. This paper will also examine the structure of language education in Japan, and the foreign English teacher's position in the educational matrix. This study concludes with concrete proposals for foreign English teachers teaching in Japanese language classroom.

1. Defining Learning and Acquisition in Foreign/Second Language Education.

Someone wise might have once remarked, "If God wanted people to be multilingual, they'd have been born that way." No, most people

aren't born that way. They try to learn or acquire another language by being taught. First, we will examine teaching, learning, and acquisition.

We look to Gage, who defines teaching as "Any activity on the part of one person intended to facilitate learning by another person."¹⁾ Thus the primary concern of a teacher may be to design instruction in such a way as to facilitate learning and/or acquisition of knowledge and/or skills. We cite Altman, who views second language teaching as consisting of "Essence" and "Convention." From Altman, we take "Essence" to represent any activity on the part of one person intended to facilitate learning by another person of a language that is not that person's native one.²⁾ The "Convention" of second language teaching is taken to be methodology, curriculum, materials, and equipment.

When foreign language learning occurs in a "host" country (a country where the target language is not spoken), both the convention and essence of second language teaching must be seen and approached differently. Things can not be done "the way we do it back home." Even "back home", approaches must change from one educational setting to another, one societal setting to another. More than 20 years ago, Finocchiaro emphasized that teachers and students are "culture bearers." She listed "gaining insight into the linguistic and cultural background of pupils", and "studying the educational and cultural backgrounds of their students" as the two most important skills new ESL teachers must have.³⁾ More recently, Brown notes the centrality of culture to the language learning environment, observing that "culture, as an ingrained set of behaviors and modes of perception, becomes

highly important in the learning of a second language".⁴⁾ Thus, the convention and essence of second language teaching must "fit" the cultural setting it is used in.

This study will examine linguistic, educational, and cultural background, behaviors and modes of perception found in the foreign/second language classroom of Japan. After 15 years of teaching English Conversation in Japan, this author would like to emphasize that Japan is a distinct environment, culturally apart from Asia, as well as the rest of the world. Because this distinctiveness is emphasized daily by the Japanese themselves, the foreign English teacher must study and deal with this notion of distinctiveness. In the foreign/second language classroom of Japan two major pedagogical challenges face the foreign English teacher. One is the directing of the Japanese language student beyond the traditional Japanese "learning" oriented foreign language classroom towards an "acquisition," i.e. "communicative competence" oriented language classroom. The second challenge is working with Japanese English teachers, and motivating Japanese students within the cultural and educational imperatives of Japanese society. We will further examine these two major pedagogical challenges later in this paper.

There is much research in western culture that deals with language acquisition. Krashen's Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis offers that there are two distinctive ways of approaching second language competency.⁵⁾ One is by way of "language learning," and the other is through "language acquisition." In Krashen's Affective-Filter Hypothesis, the role of personality, motivation, and affective variables such

as anxiety level and self-confidence are considered critical to "acquiring" language.⁶⁾ These variables are said to relate more directly to subconscious language acquisition than to conscious learning. Accordingly, learners in a less than optimal affective state will have a filter, or mental block, limiting language acquisition. Therefore, students who were nervous or unmotivated would not process second language input. Rejecting input would then block or terminate the acquisition process. Thus, it is believed that an optimal environment is requisite for allowing a low affective filter in the learner, thus facilitating language acquisition. Acquisition is seen as a subconscious process, dependant on external factors that are said to determine the student's mental attitude towards learning. Thus, the student's external environment (classroom, societal attitudes) is considered to be the important locus for facilitating linguistic competency.

Still, what do we mean by acquisition ? In this study, we consider that language acquisition is 'An unconscious and spontaneous process which results from first hand trial and error immersion in the target language (the physical environment) through a process of osmosis'. It is, unlike learning, observable. It is a 'process' as well as a 'product'. We believe that acquisition is 'performance', a term that is interchangeable with acquisition. Without acquisition there is no performance; without performance, there is no proof of acquisition. We need to think of acquisition as performance. Performance occurs simultaneously with acquisition.

Again, Webster's Dictionary defines performance as, "The production of desired results with a minimum expenditure of energy,

time, or resources, a power or skill that results from persistent endeavor and cultivation." We can say, "Acquisition is the subconscious change in behavior that results in linguistic performance." We can then attribute performance and changes in behavior to the influence of teaching efforts, the learning environment, and the individual's internal environment. In language, the educational aims, goals, and difficulties are unlimited. Depending on an individual's environment, individual differences, and/or educational goals, acquisition (a desired performance level) may take anywhere from six months to a lifetime.

Although many definitions of language acquisition stress "inputting", or "instilling" language through "language learning environments" conducive to the acquisition of language, most of our language acquiring happens in spite of the environment, from the learner, not the "expert" teacher. We have only to look to infants to observe the process of language acquisition "from the learner", and to look at the elementary school classroom to observe "teacherless" language learning. Infants and small children actively "acquire" language as long as someone or something is "linguaging".

Language acquisition can also occur without "teachers" and "teaching". In the July 24th, 1992 edition of the Chunichi Daily newspaper, reporter Masahiro Nagata quotes statistics from one Japanese language expert's research showing that children in Japan acquire language from 3 major sources: family, school, peers. According to that language acquisition study, five percent of a child's acquisition is said to be from family. Four percent is thought to be acquired from formal education (teachers). A surprising 91% of all language acquisition is said to be from peers.⁷⁾

Therefore we can say, "A learning environment offers learning opportunities, but the individual learner brings acquisition to the environment". There are many views on operational definitions of learning and acquisition. Our position is that all language education (first, second, and foreign) consists of two interdependent (but distinct) processes. We call one process "learning," and the other "acquisition." We take this view because although we know that acquisition cannot occur without learning, we can physically observe that language acquisition is not always the result of "learning" a foreign language.

In our study, learning refers to the obtaining of "explicit" knowledge, and being consciously aware of, and able to talk about this knowledge. We use the operational definition of "language learning" as "knowing about language," or "formal knowledge of language." We can consider learning an activity that occurs inside the individual. It is therefore, never directly observable. When we say, "We have seen a person learning." we mean that, "We have seen a change in behavior."

We are inferring that there is learning because we observe an improvement in a person's level of performance, over time. In a linguistic setting, we refer to learning as conscious, systematic effort to remember sounds, content, and rules of a target language, in a formal setting (the classroom), which may, or may not lead to communicative competency. One has only to look to other societies for remarkable degrees and variations of linguistic acquisition without "teachers" and "teaching". In many of these societies, the use of 2 or 3 languages is commonplace. Thus we are not convinced that "language teaching ex-

perts" are the best source to facilitate language performance in the classroom.

The 40-year presence of "foreign" English teachers in the Japanese English conversation classroom has not resulted in widespread communicative competency among Japanese. In Japan, a strong cultural bias towards monolingualism may de-emphasize fluency in a "foreign" language, while at the same time integrating the "learning" of a foreign language into the formal education system. In other words, a bias against foreign language fluency is conspicuously balanced by foreign language academic requirements, deliberate academic emphasis on learning. Many of the difficulties (technical and cultural) encountered in the English as a Foreign/Second Language classroom are amplified here in Japan. It is for this reason that today, Japanese society is a rich environment for research on the effects of cultural imperatives on language learning/acquisition. Next, let us examine these phenomena and their underlying causes.

2. Language and the Japanese Language Student.

Why do Japanese call themselves "poor" language learners? The attitudes and behaviors a Japanese student brings to the foreign English teacher, and the Foreign/Second Language classroom in Japan are critical to acquisition. The Japanese student is a product of all that which consists of being Japanese, and of the Japanese educational environment. We will examine the student. What does the Japanese student bring to the Foreign/Second Language classroom culturally and linguistically? We must first look at what being communicatively

competent in the Japanese language entails. What is the experience of speaking in Japanese? The shy, seemingly unresponsive individual that walks into a foreign English teacher's classroom is actually a rich reservoir of language experience a la Japanese.

The massive amount of linguistic information necessary for socio-linguistic competency in the Japanese language creates an almost automatic educational bias towards learning how to memorize. It places extraordinary emphasis and importance on the ability to memorize. This skill of rote memorization is so highly stressed in the Japanese educational process that it overrides the preference for critical thinking and reasoning so highly emphasized in European and American education. It stands to reason that Japanese-style foreign language learning behavior is also memorization—rather than utilization—oriented. This memorization-oriented foreign language education follows the Japanese student from high school through university entrance examinations (an intensely concentrated and scholastically competitive 6-year period). Success in Japanese society will depend on how well a student can memorize a total of 6 years of data for two critically important entrance examinations.

The Japanese language is an extensive language. In the spoken dimension it can be spoken on many levels. Most Japanese will speak two types of Japanese, their "hougen" (local dialect), and what is called "hyoujun-go" (standard-language). Then there are several levels of language within Japanese (Standard, Honorific, Formal, Informal, Intimate, Exclusive, Male, Female). It usually takes the average native Japanese speaker 30 years or more to learn to use Japanese skillfully.

The Japanese student of English is, contrary to many foreign English teachers' perceptions, an individual rich in linguistic competence.

As ordinary competence in English is more easily accomplished with a short (26 letter) alphabet, the American cannot wholly appreciate the incredible need to memorize in Japanese society. In the written dimension, Japanese is seemingly endless. An average Japanese child must be able to read and write almost 200 Japanese phonetic characters by the age of seven! Then, Japanese is a very "situation-oriented" language. The native Japanese speaker must spend extensive efforts learning appropriate expressions, vocabulary, as well as behavior patterns that are coded to specific situations in daily Japanese life.

An example of "coded", "situation specific language" is the language of the Japanese Sushi restaurant. The "regular" Japanese words for Green Tea, Soy Sauce, and Ginger are "Ocha", "Shouyu", and "Shoga". Once you enter a Sushi Bar, they will be called "Agari", "Murasaki", and "Gari". A baby is not just "baby". Someone else's baby is called an "Aka-Chan", but one's baby is called an "Akanbou". Japanese is filled with thousands of these kinds of situational vocabulary and expressions.

Not only is there a multitude of situational terms and ways of expressing something at a particular time, in a particular way, but there is a huge writing system for all this as well. Through the first nine years of compulsory education, Japanese students must acquire a writing/reading language information base of two Japanese 100—

character (If all combinations are counted) “kana” syllabaries called “Hira-gana” and “Kata-kana”, and over 1,200 Chinese characters called “Kanji”, and their readings, compounds, and applications. To access the information available in a Japanese newspaper one must have a working knowledge of over 3,000 Chinese characters. This includes single and compounded Kanji character readings, meanings, and applications. A Japanese student will possess an incredible volume of linguistic information and knowledge, and demonstrate an incredible capacity for processing and storing more.

School is not the only place where Japanese are intensely educated. Throughout Japanese society, the family, company, and social activities, there is a heavy emphasis on watching, looking, seeing, and again, memorizing. What is being done, how it is being done, and who is doing it, combined with highly-controlled teaching environments are the way learning takes place in every type of environment in Japan. Traditionally, the arts and crafts are learned a certain way, according to a certain tradition. Even today, school clubs and leisure sports activities are very spartan by American social standards. Throughout their social experience, Japanese will be trained to “watch” and “memorize”. As a result of years of emphasis on watching and mimicking, Japanese are more used to being tested on their memories, than on their thought processes.

3. Foreign Versus Second Language Education in Japan.

The “target language”, or language being learned, can be either a “second language” or a “foreign language.” We find that because the

“target” versus “foreign” distinction baffles teachers, students, and most people in general, it is important to point out the difference. The difference between learning a foreign language and a second language is more easily understood by looking where the target language is being learned, and what social and communicative functions the language serves there. To a foreign English teacher working in Japan, Japanese language competency is needed in order to communicate to students, to live there.

Littlewood defines second and foreign language for us. A “second language” can be said to have both social and communicative functions within the community where it is learned. For refugees or immigrants, the target language must also become “second hand” (second language) in order to survive in their adopted country. On other hand, a “foreign language” is a target language that does not have immediate social or communicative function within the community where it is learned; we use it usually to communicate on the “outside” of our own community.⁸⁾ In Japan, many Japanese study English in order to communicate to others outside their community.

Second versus foreign is also a difference of “attitude”, the attitude one takes towards the target language. This point comes to mind from this author’s personal experience with the study of the Japanese language. The author began his Japanese language acquisition at the age of 22, in a university course, in the United States. He immersed himself in the language as best he could. His California apartment walls, personal things, even the food he ate, all took on a Japanesque theme. He attempted as much as possible to use Japanese in his daily

life. He even communicated to himself in limited Japanese. Japanese was to him, his "second" language, not a "foreign" language, even though he was very isolated in terms of location and use.

This study considers the differences between second and foreign language learning real, and having critically important implications for target language teaching and learning strategies in the Japanese language learning classroom. It is important at this point of our study to stipulate that we consider the study of English in Japan "foreign language education", as opposed to "second language study". We also recognize that, although their number is small, there are individual Japanese who consider English their "second" language. For the majority, the language classroom in Japan is a case study of "learning" English as a "foreign" language, and for too many, without achieving communicative competence commensurate their financial and physical effort.

There are reasons for this position. One is that, for most Japanese people, the mind-set towards anything that is not uniquely Japanese is "alien". Too many students tell us point blank that they cannot understand or perform well because, "I'm a Japanese". Many Japanese do not tend to view non-Japanese elements in anything as close as the "second" sense. Any language other than Japanese therefore, is "foreign" rather than "second". This attitude is further reinforced by the fact that the first six years (junior and senior high school) of foreign/second language teaching in Japan are directed at the "learning" of, rather than the "acquisition" of, a foreign (English only) language, by Japanese educators who have little communicative

competence themselves.

While scholastic achievement in a foreign language is required for competitive selection, fluency is not socially reinforced. In Japan, second language is viewed as "foreign". bi-Lingual and Bi-cultural individuals are seen as "half-breeds", rather than as "true" Japanese. The Japanese have a special word for the children of Japanese families who have lived 1 or more years in another society. They call these children "Kikoshijo" (literally = country-returnee-children-women). It a tern that connotes a negative feeling.

Whenever possible, among Japanese, Japanese will hide the fact that they have lived abroad, or that they are fluent in another language. In most cases, the identity of the group and its harmony are a priority to a linguistic performance that will set one apart from the group.

I recall my own daughter's linguistic experience in the local Christian kindergaten. Whenever she spoke English in the kindergaten, she was gently "corrected" for not speaking "normally", by the young teachers, and chided by her little pre-school classmates for "behaving different"! Even at 4, 5, and 6 years old, bilingualism is strongly discouraged in an educational setting. My daughter learned at an early age what she can do with her English speaking ability in Japan. Attitudes towards foreign language learning, viewed from this perspective, result in a powerful social-psychological force, what Krashen terms an "Affective Filter". We will further examine how social attitudes and motivation profoundly influence the results of foreign language learning in Japan.

Another reason for an “alienation” from acquisition-oriented language education in the Japanese students’ critical years is that foreign (English) language education is used in formal education settings solely as a competitive tool (juken English) for scholastic selection in entrance examinations. At the junior and senior high and school levels English language instruction exists primarily for senior high and university entrance examination testing. It is important to note that passing entrance exams means entering the “right” schools, which in turn, means access to the “right” employment opportunities. English test scores can literally expand or limit a student’s choices in life.

This studying of English under pressure creates a negative bias towards English. Thus, for most Japanese, 6 to 10 years of English study are associated with difficulty, fear, and failure. Some Japanese call it “English Allergy”, or “English Complex.” Then, after years of expensive “conversation” classes, a majority of Japanese students will still not demonstrate a competency commensurate with their expense and effort. It is this reality that forces a foreign English teacher in Japan to scrutinize culture, and re—think language pedagogy, and terms like “learning” and “acquisition”.

4. The Dual English Language Study System In Japan.

There are two major environments for learning English in Japan. One major environment is the “official” (formal Japanese environment.) environment. The other is the “unofficial” environment for learning English in Japan. Within the “unofficial” environment for learning En-

English in Japan there are two "subdivisions". The "unofficial" environment for learning English in Japan can also be thought of as "Extracurricular Education". This Extracurricular Education is offered by way of two major types of educational experiences. One type of "unofficial", or extra curricular education is called the "Okeikogoto" classes (private classes for social enrichment). The other is called a "Juku" classroom (supplemental classes for academic competition or "cram" school). These are offered both publically, through the community service centers in cities and towns throughout Japan, and privately, through individual neighborhood "schools" and large, profit-making education enterprises. Both educational environments offer "English for Conversation" classes. We will examine the learning of English in the "Extracurricular Education" environments later in this paper.

The first, we will examine the foremost environment for learning English is the "official" (formal Japanese education system) environment. This environment is comprised of the public school system, and the various private schools, and private language schools run by Japanese. In the Japanese public school system, 98% of the teaching of English is done by Japanese teachers of English. The public school system is part of the Japanese civil service sector. It is subject to budget appropriations. Once they begin their teaching assignments in the public school system, there is no provision for Japanese English teachers to take time off to go abroad (training sabbaticals) to facilitate their communicative competence. Since English in the public schools is being taught mostly through the Grammar-Translation Method, teachers do not have to demonstrate any level of communicative com-

petency. At any rate, their educational mandate and teaching mission is English for entrance examination test preparation, not communicative competency.

The average Japanese English teacher is a highly trained expert for teaching, English grammar, and its translation to Japanese. Teacher curriculum itself is highly focused on Grammar Translation pedagogy. Fluency is preferred, but it is not a prerequisite for employment. Since they are locked into time-consuming, high-pressure English-For-Entrance-Examination-Preparation curriculum, there is little incentive for Japanese teachers to speak English themselves, or to utilize it much in a foreign language classroom that must be totally focused on preparing for entrance exams. A city school board will pay "lip service" to "ideal" education by bringing in an occasional "guest Foreigner". For the most part though, a "highly credentialed" foreigner comes to a typical English classroom in Japan to offer everyone some "live" English. The foreigner is brought in to "shake up" teachers and students a little, a kind of "extra-terrestrial-encounters-of-third-kind" experience. For six to ten grueling years, foreign (English) language education is a little more than a "paper chase".

5. Paper English.

The authority to determine goals and pedagogy to be used in foreign language (English) instruction at the junior and high school levels lies with the Japanese Ministry of Education. At both the junior and high school levels, English will not be taught as a "second" language, but as a "foreign" language, by non-English speaking Japanese

teachers. English is the only foreign language taught at these levels. The GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD is the master pedagogy used for formally teaching English in Japan. It is applied uniformly, across the country. The foremost goal of English language education at the junior and senior high school levels in Japan is HIGH SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE EXAMINATION PREPARATION.

Because the key to educational, and most other kinds of success in Japan, lies in "getting in", there is an inordinate amount of pressure on children and their parents to strategically prepare, beginning as early as kindergarten and elementary school ages, for these two critically important exams for entrance into high school and university. Consequently, there is a huge "industry" in Japan for the purpose of preparing Japanese children for taking these exams. English language education at the junior and senior high school levels in Japan is English for Specific Purposes (ESP), or English-For-Entrance-Examination-Preparation (EFEEP). Because high school/university entrance examinations put a major emphasis on grammar and translation skills as opposed to communicative competence, the EFEEP classroom puts heavy pressure on teachers of these grade levels to be as specific as possible in their pedagogy, in order to successfully prepare their students for these socially important entrance examinations.

The English portion of the entrance exam and examination process is very serious and highly secretive, consisting of large amounts of grammar, long sentences, and translation-oriented problems that are intentionally difficult to answer, even by native teachers of English. The mechanism that fuels what is called the "Entrance Examina-

tion Hell” in Japan is the existence of an “ACCEPTANCE QUOTA” on applicants, which binds high schools and universities to accepting only a set number of students each year regardless of the number who actually pass the rigorous gauntlet of entrance exams. A university in Japan may have over 3,000 entrance examination applicants for testing, but may only accept, successful or not, a ceiling amount of, say, 250 from those students who successfully “pass” the entrance exam.

As a result of this educational structure, English is taught as a foreign language with Japanese English teachers who can, and/or will speak almost no English in the classroom. Many of the foreign (Native) English teachers working at these levels will be used to teach the teachers. Still, too few Japanese teachers of English are communicatively competent. The fact that most Japanese teachers of English can not, and/or do not use English in the classroom, is in itself, an implicit statement of the low priority given to foreign language education for communicative competence in Japan. For the foreign English teacher, it can be a perplexing experience to witness that most Japanese English teachers will not “speak” to their students in the language they are teaching, or require their students to speak to their teachers in the language they are being taught.

6. The Second Environment Of English Teaching—The “Gaijin—San” Teacher.

The “second (lower priority) environment” of English teaching in Japan is the “English Conversation” classroom. “Second” environment

refers to the fact that, within the formal educational system, English for Communicative competence is desirable and necessary on a philosophical and intersocial level, but it is not a priority within Japanese "mainstream" education. Consequently, foreign English teachers may be hired mainly for assistance and/or mood-making, depending on the educational institution's program priorities, rather than for actual language competency education. Since the early 1980's, the tenured hiring of foreign English teachers has steadily increased throughout Japan, at private language schools, and at the universities. Private high schools have also begun providing foreign teacher instruction. However, the public school system still remains largely closed to tenured hiring of native speaker (foreign) English teachers. At most public junior high and high schools, foreign teachers are used as temporary staff, and teaching assistants to tenured Japanese personnel.

As foreigners in a foreign country, we have, as language teachers, the added challenge of dealing with our students in their society, in their culture, in their native language environment. We are working within a "Japanese" set of cultural imperatives. Unless we are visiting instructors, or temporary fill-ins for main teachers, we must know of and understand the Japanese cultural milieu, and have a relatively high level of communicative competency in Japanese, or we will not, regardless of our experience and credentials, be operationally functional. Foreign professionals arrive in Japan, and are told by their employers not to worry about their lack of communicative competency in Japanese.

They are assured that their students want to, and will have to,

meet them in English. After all, they are told, "they are not being paid lucrative salaries for speaking Japanese". At this stage, the foreign professional is relieved, and the foreign English teacher charges into an assignment. Six months later and the "professional" begins feeling that something is wrong. All that training and experience in other countries, all those qualifications, all the "techniques that worked elsewhere" and yet, at the end of a term when the foreign English teacher's evaluation time rolls around, 95% of the students do not go beyond saying greetings and goodbyes. At the end of a year, the contract will be either extended for another year, or politely declared over.

Communicative competency in Japanese, in Japan, is necessary for performing on two levels, the professional and the personal. However, even those foreign English teachers who can speak the dominant language of our students have only half an advantage over those of us who cannot speak the language of their students, without a workable knowledge and understanding of Japanese culture and the educational imperatives discussed earlier. The advantage of fluency in Japanese does not guarantee the teacher any results in the Japanese foreign language classroom, but at the very least, a teacher's confidence in fluency in the students' native language can offer students an example of language acquisition that may be respected, and even inspire a few to "learn" (but not necessarily "acquire" more from their teacher.

There is also the strong possibility that students here will have, at the very least, "enjoyed" their learning, even without any noticeable

change in the level of communicative performance. Then at the end of the assignment, Japanese superiors will politely apologize for (pay lip service to) their students' poor attitudes, and things will roll along as they are. At any rate, teacher effectiveness will be judged more on the 'popularity' of the foreign teacher, and maybe the amount of "knowledge transferred" to tenured Japanese staff, than on performance of students.

Because of the importance of entrance examination success, the foreign English teacher's role and/or range of activity at the junior and high school levels is extremely limited. However, with pressures on the "outside", for greater "communicative competence", many high schools and the public junior high school systems of many cities, are bringing in "guest" foreign teachers, from English speaking countries to assist in creating an "environment to language acquisition". One such program is called the "JET" (Japan Exchange and Teaching) program. The JET program is run by the government, administered through the Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs, and Home Affairs. Here, a preferably young, blonde, Caucasian, just-graduated, teacher is invited to spend a limited amount of time in Japan, as an assistant to Japanese English teachers. As we noted earlier, the officially employed "Gaijin-San" teacher may spend a year, moving weekly, from school to school throughout a city's, or Prefecture's school system, acting as a "catalyst", or sometimes merely as an "attraction" for a more exciting English class. Many foreign teachers have noted that they felt more like "zoo attractions" than teaching professionals, during their assignments.

7. Conclusion

In this study, we have examined and defined language learning and acquisition. We have language and the Japanese language student's background, and Japanese cultural imperatives which regulate language study behavior in Japanese society. We have discussed the attitudes towards multilingualism in Japanese society, and examined the application of terms "Foreign" and "Second" language, identifying which stance is found more commonly applied in the Japanese language classroom. We have examined the Japanese language education structures, priorities, and the Japanese English teacher's role. We have discussed foreign teacher roles and positions within the classroom and Japanese society. And, we have examined the foreign teacher's position contingent to Japanese colleagues.

Cultural aspects, educational priorities, physical, structural constraints, lack of access, limited class hours per scholastic year, all contribute to different, if not lower performance parameters and expectations of the language learning environment in Japan, on the part of the foreign English teacher. For better or for worse, most of the class time for teaching/training English conversation will be spent in the regular classroom. With the current conditions and present assumptions of language learning and pedagogy, the efficiency level and ratio of language experience per student, in the Japanese language classroom will continue to be far less than we can be getting. We need to approach the Japanese language classroom with new assumptions. We need more research in the Japanese language classroom. Because Japanese language classroom experience fundamentally challenges the

most basic assumptions of the foreign English teacher about the functions and desired results of the teacher and the learner, the problems we learn to solve, the approaches we develop in Japan may be applicable in Europe and America as well. Otherwise, the growing presence of foreign English teachers in Japan will become a source of conflict, stagnation, and alienation, rather than internationalism, understanding, and growth.

Working in the Foreign Language classroom of Japan in the 1990's, foreign language teachers, need several things:

- 1) **A workable knowledge** (of Japanese society, workable competence in the Japanese language, as many institutions are now hiring only foreign teachers who can speak at least some Japanese).
- 2) **A re—evaluation** (of language competency goals to reflect the limited conditions of the English Conversation classroom in the Japanese education system).
- 3) **A flexibility** (to make new assumptions about what can be accomplished here in Japan, and how to accomplish it).
- 4) **More Communication** (with language teaching Japanese colleagues).
- 5) **New Classroom Pedagogy** (development of extraordinary approaches and materials to match the Japanese classroom).

Japan is the place to find new ways, create new approaches. With time and understanding, students in Japan are among the world's warmest and most appreciative. They never forget their teachers.

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日本における外国語および第二言語学習の現場と 外国人英語教師の経験

この論文は日本における外国語および第二言語学習の現場と外国人英語教師の経験に関するものである。筆者は、まず語学学習とその修得を定義し、次に日本における語学教育の構造と外国人教師の機能・役割について検討する。この論文が日本で外国語教育を行っている外国人教師にとって一つの示唆となることができれば幸いである。