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Cognitive Dimensions of Classroom Interaction

CUE's JALT98 featured speaker previews her preconference workshop.

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Studies on first language classroom interaction focus very much the language used by the teacher, the interaction generated and how they affect the kind of learning that takes place (see for example, Barnes 1969, Wells 1985, Wells and Chang-Wells 1992). The language used by the teacher has been discussed very much in the light of the opportunities that they open for learning for learners. For example, it has been pointed out that the constant use of "closed" questions, as opposed to "open questions", limits learners' opportunity to engage in "explorative talk" (Barnes 1969) which helps them to organize their thoughts as they verbalize their thinking. The constant use of "pseudo-questions", that is, questions to which the teacher already has the answer in mind, as opposed to "genuine questions" to which the teacher does not have an answer, will stifle learners' creative thinking and lead to their trying to guess what answer their teacher wants and not what they consider to be an appropriate answer. (For examples, see Tsui 1995.)

Studies on second language classroom interaction, however, focus very much on the linguistic aspects. For example, Long and Sato (1983) made a distinction between "display questions" and "referential questions" which is similar to the distinction made between "pseudo- questions" and "genuine questions". However, the focus has been mostly on linguistic aspects of responses elicited by these questions rather than on their effects on the cognitive development of learners.

Another example is teacher explanation. Studies in first language classroom have examined the characteristics of effective explanation. An often cited piece of work is by Brown and Armstrong (1984) who, on the basis of studying 27 student-teachers of biology, point out the importance of being able to provide understanding of a problem to learners in explanations. They found that student-teachers who were rated as effective explainers were those whose explanations contained higher levels of cognitive demand; more linked statements leading to a solution of the problem, each of which was understood by the learner; more framing statements outlining the sections of the explanation; more focusing statements highlighting the essential features; more rhetorical questions as attention-getters and more frequent use of examples and audio-visual aids. Furthermore they found that materials selection and presentation played an important part in effective explanations.

"Pseudo-questions" stifle creative thinking.

The way a teacher structures a lesson, whether he or she is able to correctly gauge the existing knowledge of students and use students' contributions in the classroom as a springboard for introducing new knowledge also affect the quality of learning in the classroom. Consider the following piece of classroom data which is an excerpt from a primary one social studies lesson.

(1) [Tsui 1995: 9]
The teacher is teaching the pupils the traffic lights and the different colours of the traffic lights signal.

1 T: Yes. It (that is, when the
2 green light flickers) tells us that pedestrians should not cross the road.

They should stay on the pavement and not cross the road because the light is about to change. It tells the pedestrians to stop crossing the road.

S: Teacher, I have something to tell you.

T: Yes?

S: There are three safe ways of crossing the road. The first one is the overhead bridge, and the subway and the zebra crossing. But if cars have not stopped completely, don't ever start crossing the road.

T: That's right, that's right.

S: You have to let the driver go first.

T: Thank you. Chi Chun. Good boy. Sit down. We'll talk about this later. Clever boy.

S: ((raises hand))

T: Yes, King Yin.

S: Some of them have got circles. Once the pedestrians step onto the road, the cars will stop.

T: Yes. Then children -

S: ((raises hand))

T: Yes, Ling Fung.

S: Some roads have traffic lights where there is a button which says "Wait". And when the green light comes on, the "Wait" sign goes off.

T: That's right. Okay. So children, you have to pay special attention. These lights ((showing the children one traffic lights model)) are for cars, they are for drivers. But these lights ((showing the children another traffic light model)) are for pedestrians. You have to pay special attention. Wait for the green light to come on before you cross the road.

We can see from the enthusiastic contributions from the pupils that they were bringing in their own experience and knowledge of world to relate to what the teacher was teaching. Unfortunately, the teacher did not use the pupils' contributions as a springboard for further discussion, thus helping the pupils to construct knowledge on the basis of what they know already and what they observed in their daily lives. Instead, she treated these contributions as digressions, as can be seen by her token acknowledgements and her attempts to return to her planned agenda, which is to teach what the three colours of the traffic lights mean (see lines 10, 12-13, 18). She finally succeeded in doing so in lines 24-28. It is ironical that the pupils' knowledge of road safety was far more sophisticated than what the teacher planned. In other words, the teacher's failure to gauge the knowledge of her pupils and to be responsive to pupils' contributions resulted in the loss of excellent opportunities for learning for the pupils.

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In second language classroom research, relatively little has been done in this area. Ramirez *et al.* (1986, cited in Chaudron 1988: 86) found that the most dominant functions of utterances in elementary bilingual programs to be explanations which could be divided into procedural explanations and explanations of concepts, names for things and grammar rules, and that two-thirds of teacher explanations had to do with the former. This may be the case for elementary classrooms which are activity-oriented. In secondary classrooms, explanations of concepts would take up a higher proportion of class time than procedural explanation.

Chaudron (1982) and Yee and Wagner (1984, cited in Chaudron 1988: 87) focused on vocabulary and grammar explanations, and pointed out the importance of avoiding over- and under-explanation.

In determining whether the teacher has over- or under-explained a concept, a grammatical rule or the meaning of a vocabulary item, the cognitive aspect of second language learning is crucial. Let us take for example the following piece of classroom data taken from a Secondary 5 (Grade 11) ESL class. The teacher was going over the compositions that students wrote and explaining the grammatical mistakes that the students made. Prior to this excerpt, the teacher explained the mistake in the sentence "So I think all students should be learn how to use computers." He pointed out that after the modal verb "should", an infinitive should be used.

(2) [Tsui 1995: 33]
The teacher wrote on the board a sentence taken out from one student's composition.

1 T: "You can write programmes, play
a game, doing calculations, drawing a
2 picture, etc." I like the idea very
much. You've got some concrete examples,
3 but it's not quite balanced so far
as gammar goes. O.K., what is the modal in
4 that sentence?
5 Ss: Can.
6 T: Can. Okay, and we see here the
modal (points at the previous sentence on the
7 board), now what's the infinitive
after should?
(Pause)
8 What's the infinitive after should
in this sentence?
9 Ss: Learn.
10 T: Learn, this is the infinitive.
Should learn. If you've got one modal in a
11 sentence, all the verbs which
follow must be infinitives. So pick up your
12 pencils and correct this sentence.
First of all, let's find the verbs. Which
13 are the verbs?
14 Ss: Write, play, doing, drawing.
15 T: Write, play, doing, drawing. Okay.
(Students correct the errors on the
worksheet.)
16 Okay, what did you change?
(pause)
17 What have you changed there?
(pause)
18 Do I change play?
19 Ss: No.
20 T: No. Do I change doing?
21 Ss: Yes.
22 T: Cross out -?
23 Ss: ing.
24 T: What about drawing?
25 Ss: ing.
26 T: Same thing. Okay, that's good. You
can see now how it works. You can have
27 many different verbs following just
one modal, but they must all be infinitives.
28 Now there's something else that
needs fixing up. Can anyone suggest what's
29 wrong?

In this excerpt, the grammatical rule that the teacher tried to explain to students was that after the modal verb, the infinitive should be used even if there were many different verbs following. In his explanation, the teacher asked a number of linked questions to lead students to the answer. He also tried to relate new knowledge to students' existing knowledge. For example, he started off with "what is the modal in that sentence?" This is an important question which established that students knew what a modal is. He then ensured that students knew what an infinitive was by referring to the previous sentence that he went over with them. Having established that students had knowledge what a modal and an infinitive were, he asked students to correct the errors on their own. Instead of just checking the answers with them, he asked the students to identify all the verbs first, and then asked them what changes they had made. Upon getting no response from his students, he went over the verbs one by one and made sure that students had made the correct changes. Before moving on to the

next grammatical point, the teacher re-capitulated the grammatical rule. The teacher's explanation demonstrated an awareness of what the key concepts are in coming to grips with the grammatical rule, in this case, modal verbs and infinitives. He made sure that students understood these two concepts first before asking them to correct the mistakes. We can see here that the teacher was very much aware of the cognitive aspect of his explanation.

Given that teacher explanation takes up a high proportion of lesson time, and that in many ESL classrooms, teacher explanations involve a much higher proportion of explanation of concepts, grammar rules and vocabulary than that observed by Ramirez, it is an area that deserves more attention that it has been getting. Moreover, as teacher explanation has to do with the cognitive demand that it places on students, in the workshop that I shall conduct in JALT 98, I shall use more examples of various kinds of explanation in ESL classrooms as an example to illustrate the importance of paying attention to the cognitive aspect of second language classroom interaction research.

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Big Pictures

Response to Noble's "Digital Diploma Mills."

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[The last issue of ON CUE featured David Noble's longish philo-historical analysis, a dour challenge to technology enthusiasts to consider the "commodization" of higher ed. Hugh Nicoll first came across Noble's argument from reading, ironically enough, Red Rock Eater's News Service -- a Web-based resource referred to here.]

In a recent commentary in *The Guardian Weekly*, columnist Hugo Young confessed to an experience of culture-shock on hearing a discussion of social injustice and the immorality of the world economic system at an Easter sermon. He attributes the unfamiliarity of this discourse to the fact that these ideas do not play a sigificant part in any contemporary agenda of substance: certainly not in Clinton's America, Blair's Britain, G-8 Europe or post-bubble Japan. Young's piece describes disappointment at Noam Chomsky's failure (wearing his activist rather than linguist's hat) to articulate a text that would "arouse the multitude with the promise of something different" from the dominant values of American capitalism. It is doubtful such a voice will emerge in the immediate future, but if it does it will need to have been informed by the historical perspectives of thinkers like David Noble.

David Noble's "Digital Diploma Mills", published in the last issue of *ON CUE*, is a big-picture challenge to educators to examine the contributions we make through our participation in the educational system to the maintenance of the status quo. This sort of thinking is neither common or fashionable, nor is it the sort we are at leisure to contemplate, except perhaps in after-work or conference bull sessions. Most of us are too busy with the quotidian overhead of language teaching life to think at philosophical length about our place in the university system or that system's relations to the social order. Some of us, if Noble's warnings are corroborated by the continuing development of courseware, are participants in our own marginalization.

Most are busy with the overhead of language teaching life.

Professor Noble's contribution to current debates on the "commodization" of education grow out of his studies in the history of science, technology and education and their relations to and with modern industrial capitalism. These are themes he has explored at length in *American by Design* (Oxford, 1977) and *The Religion of Technology : The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (Knopf, 1997).

Despite Noble's informed skepticism about the utopian promises of education technology, the Education Policy Analysis Archives at Arizona State University <http://olam.ed.asu.edu/epaa/> contain articles addressing a broad range of educational policy issues around the world. The next time you're searching for big-picture perspectives for curriculum committee or even contemplative purposes, check it out. Other links to critical perspectives on education and technology policy are available through Phil Agre's Red Rock Eaters' News Service pages at <http://communication.ucsd.edu/pagre/rre.html> and at Steve Talbot's NETFUTURE at <http://www.oreilly.com/~stevet/netfuture/>. All these links are accessible at the CUE Web site.

Atlas: Learning Centered Communication

(Student Books One, Two, Three. David Nunan. 1995. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.)

A close reading and broader critique.

Michael "Rube" Redfield, Osaka University of Economics

Atlas: Learning-Centered Communication is the flagship general English textbook series for learners of English as a second language from Heinle & Heinle. It came out several years ago with great fanfare and a major publicity blitz.There were full page ads in leading publications in the field, such as *TESOL Quarterly* and *The Language Teacher*. Seminars and workshops introduced the series, and the author himself lead presentations on the material at conferences such as JALT.

Prominently featured in all the publicity was the author, David Nunan. Nunan is Professor of English and Chair of Applied Linguistics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Adjunct Professor at Hawthorne University, Dean of the School of Education of Newport Asia Pacific University, past Visiting Professor at the Temple University graduate program in TEFL, past President of International TESOL, author of numerous articles and books in the field of applied linguistics, and frequent presenter in Japan, both at academic conferences and commercially sponsored events. Nunan, one of the biggest names in our field, achieved 'Guru' status long before writing Atlas.

There are four student textbooks in the Atlas series, as well as accompanying student workbooks, teacher manuals, tapes (two sets), videos, and tests. The series is also supported through internet access via E-mail and a mailing list. This report is restricted to Books I, 2, and 3, the only materials I have first hand experience with, having used them for a year as class texts.

I chose Atlas as my main text in three classes two years ago: Atlas One for a large (100 students) level one English conversation class, and Books Two and Three for considerably smaller (5-15 students) levels two and three conversation classes. I chose Atlas because I like to use new materials whenever possible, and was swayed by Nunan's work with both task based and learner centered instruction. Having read Nunan's academic work and seen him present at RELC, JALT, and TESOL (he is a very impressive writer and presenter) also influenced me to use his much ballyhooed new series. When choosing new EFL teaching materials I try to concentrate on providing opportunities for massive comprehensible input in required courses and output based materials for elective, communication based oral English classes. Atlas seemed a natural for the latter. It did not in any way live up to expectations.

All three student books feature the same layout. There is a warm up page, followed by two pages of tasks (called 'task chain one'), a grammar page (called 'language focus one'), two more pages of tasks (called 'task chain two'), another grammar page (called 'language focus two'), a final page review page (called 'self-check') and a 'communicative challenge,' a pair and small group communicative activity, usually of the information gap variety. The format is logical and pedagogically sound, moving from a topical warm up through presentation, controlled practice and production. It is in the implementation where the materials fail.

Book One is simply not suitable for college learners in Japan. The material is far to basic and controlled. The language is stilted,

unauthentic, seldom communication based. Take the dialog found in page 59 (chapter 8, 'can you swim' warm-up).

A: Can you play any musical instruments?
B; Yes, I can. I can play the guitar. What about you?
A: I can play the piano. What about you, Sandy?
C: I can't play any instruments.

This scripted dialog is unnatural and not at all like normal speech. It therefore provides a poor model for actual communication.

Could it be that corporate publishing co-opted a respected name or just made an innocent mistake?

The tasks and the accompanying listening exercises (the strength of the book) are much better done, although uneven. They generally call for individual work, pair work and then group reporting. The group reporting is a regular feature and to my mind is much overemphasized (is reported speech nearly as important as face to face communication for EFL learners and users?), besides being hard to set up in large classes (the latter being hardly the fault of the author, however).

Two grammar pages are both unnatural ("I can swim, play guitar, and dance. I can't play tennis, speak Chinese, or cook," page 62) and far too low-level for our Japanese college learners. They also call for 'project work,' unrealistic in our situation. For example, the 'group work' on page 65 says to "Plan for an entertainment evening for the school. Find out who can do the following things. Then make a program." This might be useful in a small private English school or even in a seminar, but our regular classes are made up students drawn from all the college classes and we certainly do not have 'entertainment evenings.' Dancing, juggling, doing magic tricks, and playing a musical instrument (some of the abilities cited) have little or nothing to contribute to language learning.

The self-check section calls for students to write down new words and sentences learned from the unit, and asks if the learners can "talk about abilities, identify people, and ask and say what people are doing," page 56). The idea behind the section is to develop study habits and strategies, which may or may not be effective in promoting learning Developing strategies is all the rage now, but there is no evidence that it actually leads to better, and long term language learning. It is also easy for students to copy words and sentences directly from the text, something our learners are well versed in already.

The 'communication challenge' calls for learners to read and then compare their understanding with a partner. These kinds of activities are useful, though their implementation throughout the book is uneven, some being interesting and others difficult to set up and/or simply boring.

Maybe it is unfair to blame Nunan for making Book One too easy for use with Japanese college freshmen. On the other hand, competing textbook series have aimed their 'book ones' directly at our college students. Equally famous applied linguists joining the publishing venture such as Jack Richards and Rod Ellis, have produced far better entry level texts, Interchange One and First Impact, respectively. These texts are at exactly the correct level for beginning oral English classes in Japan. After finishing their respective series both authors then went out and wrote pre level one books (Interchange Intro and Impact Intro). Nunan would have been wise to follow their example in naming and producing beginning level texts.

If Atlas Book One is really an 'intro' pre-beginner level text, then Book Two logically should correspond to Interchange One and First Impact. In point of fact, however, Atlas

Two is a true level-two text. The dialogues, listening material, and readings are all significantly harder than those of Book One. The format is exactly the same, but the material is much higher level. I used Book Two with a Conversation II class and found the level to be about right. Unfortunately, Book Two and Book Three (a more advanced oral English text) suffer from the same problems as Book One. The text is opaque, with many irrelevant exercises (the grammar sections and the ever present reporting tasks), the overall orientation is structure rather than communication based, and many of the topics are either unrealistic or boring.

Teachers in Japan expect their oral English textbooks to be transparent. 'Transparent' means that the activity sequencing and set up are self-explanatory and require little or no pre-lesson preparation. The aforementioned Interchange and Impact series are transparent, as is my current favorite, On Line, written by Japan-based EFL teachers specifically for use with Japanese college students. With these texts the teacher can glance at the lesson briefly before class and then go ahead and lead a very competent lesson. When you are teaching three or four classes per day, day after day, you simply do not have time to make detailed lesson plans. With transparent texts you do not have to, but with Atlas preparation time is a must. Few of the existing activities can be taught as such. Most require extensive adaptation and many others are so unsuitable that they should be dropped (the grammar and the self-check sections, for example). Along with its other faults, the opaqueness of Atlas makes it a poor choice for use in the Japanese college classroom.

I am not alone in thinking that Atlas requires extensive reworking before class. The Intensive English Program at Kwansei Gakuin University, for example, also selected Atlas as its main text when it first came out. They prepared a questionnaire for the students to fill out at the end of the year, asking the learners their opinions regarding Atlas. The responses (the ones I saw at least) were not favorable, but the program decided to stick with Atlas for a second year, ostensively because of all the preparation the instructors had put in to making the text usable! I believe that it is far better to spend time working directly with students rather than working on the textbook. With Atlas, however, you really do not have a choice.

Teachers expect oral English textbooks to be transparent. 'Transparent' means that the activity sequencing and set up are self-explanatory.

Despite all the publication hype accompanying the books, I found Atlas unsuitable for the three classes I used it with. For my thinking it is far too grammar oriented, uninspiring, and opaque. Oral English class students need opportunities to use authentic English. They need to use English, not study it (they have been studying it for six, seven or eight years). Some of the tasks in Atlas are quite communicative, but there should be many more. Given the opaqueness of the materials, the reworking of the text is simply not worth the time required for the results it produces. With all the other textbooks in the market, there is no reason why the instructor should be doing the textbook author's job. At best Atlas is half-baked. At worst, it is a commercially inspired fraud, far more 'earning-centered' than learning-centered (to borrow a phrase from Chris Toms). It promises much but delivers little. I dropped it after one year. If we had been working on a semester basis, I'd have dropped it earlier.

This ends the formal book review. The above begs the question of why such an eminent name in applied linguistics/TEFL would produce such unsatisfactory classroom

materials. Nunan is not first past president of TESL to produce at best a very mediocre but outwardly slick commercial series (does anyone remember H. Douglas Brown's series, one he came all the way to JALT to promote?). Could it be that the corporate publishing industry, in a selfish effort to maximize profits, merely co-opted a respected name like Prof. Nunan to boost sales? On the other hand, perhaps Heinle & Heinle just made an innocent mistake, assuming that Nunan's undeniably excellent track record in applied linguistics/TEFL and as a EFL teacher educator (I have heard glowing things about him from graduate students under his direct supervision) would automatically transfer to classroom materials production. If that is the case maybe we should not come down so hard on the publisher for selecting Nunan as its author.

We can and should, however, come down hard on Heinle & Heinle for producing a 'world-wide' text. I realize that publishers can drive up profits by producing a 'one-size fits-all' series (equally marketable in Japan and Brazil), but at what price? Short term profits (colleagues at Kwansei Gakuin University, Kobe City College of Commerce, and Kinran Jr. College, for example, also dropped Atlas as soon as feasible) over learner education and Nunan's good name.

Other major publishers have taken, in my view, a more enlightened approach. Although both Cambridge and Longman also selected leading figures in the field as 'main' authors for their respective series (Richards and Ellis), they showed the good sense to back these people up with co-authors with extensive classroom teaching experience in Japan. Longman even created their own regional affiliate (Lingual House), chose the estimable Michael Rost as production chief, and recruited my personal favorite materials writer, Marc Helgesen, as 'second' author for Impact. Other publishers have eschewed the use of 'name' authors entirely, using Japan-based writers to produce excellent texts for the Japanese market.

I believe it is about time for the professional EFL field in Japan to show its growing maturity and turn our backs on commercially hyped materials and outside 'gurus.' I for one have voted with my 1998/9 materials selections. I will only be using locally written materials in classes this year (Fifty-Fifty Intro, On Line, Office File, Passport, and Dynamic English). The authors are representative of the best in Japan-based EFL. After all, they and the rest of us in professional EFL in Japan (Japanese and non Japanese alike) are the real experts in our field, not the publishing corporations and travelling salesmen. We are in the classroom on a daily basis, teaching learners of differing ages, levels. We know the languages (English and Japanese), the learners, and the culture, both in and outside the class.

Finally, I hope that 'bashing' Atlas will not diminish Nunan's excellent ideas on task-based and learner-centered education (although see Foster (1998) for a report on the failure of tasks in an actual EFL class). Atlas may only be an aberration, a poor translation of well conceived ideas. It may also serve as a call to reexamine the role of commercial, profit driven, and culturally imperialistic education in EFL.

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BEYOND TRACKING

Assigning Students to Classes

Charles Adamson, Miyagi University

Questions of assigning students to language classes continue to cause confusion and disagreement, resulting from differences in terminology and presuppositions. The March 1998 issue of *ON CUE* raises these problems again. Doyon (1998, pg. 15) supports the assignment of students by oral proficiency, but suggests the appropriate test would determine "what one can and cannot do with the language." Heiman (1998, pg. 23 and 24) raises four objections to "streaming:" (1) students have no choices, (2) negative psychological effects of self-fulfilling prophecies, (3) effects of previous streaming, and (4) improved chances to negotiate meaning. I will address these five points and then give suggestions for assigning students to classes in Japanese universities.

First, we would be well advised to stop using the terms "tracking" or "streaming" because of the historical baggage that they bring to the discussion (see Simmons, 1997). Also much of the literature on streaming/tracking is irrelevant to Japanese universities because the courses discussed are criterion referenced rather than open-ended as are most English courses in Japan (see Adamson, 1997).

Assignment by oral proficiency Doyon (1998, pg. 15) says that "tracking" involves "dividing students into groups for high, average, and low achievers." The choice of the word "achievers" is unfortunate as it implies a value judgment on the students test score. When students come to our classes, we know nothing about their achievement in the usual sense. We do know their current level as measured by a specific test. If we were to compare two students at the same level, we would probably find that they arrived at that level by very different routes. One might have studied hard at a juku or language school. The other may have spent a year overseas. There is no way to tell their achievement, only their level.

Doyon recommends the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) as a vehicle for assigning students. OPI, according to Doyon, is an integrated test which assesses a number of abilities from a global perspective. Doyon does not indicate how much time is involved or what personnel is needed, but if we consider that we usually need to assign hundreds or even thousands of students in a very short time, OPI is likely to be impractical if not impossible. There is the additional problem of whether or not OPI addresses skills important in the course.

Although not discussed by Doyon, this method of assignment is only applicable to conversation classes or classes in which the ability to converse will be important. In following Doyon's ideas, other types of classes will obviously need tests of additional skills in order to group students at the same skills levels that are important for the course.

There are two problems with using a skills test, be it oral proficiency or another. (1)The first, which was touched on above, is the cost-effectiveness of the test. Consider a 'quick' test that takes five minutes per student, when we have 500 students. This would require 2500 minutes, or more than 41 hours, a figure that is prohibitive in most programs. A skills test that could be given to large numbers of students simultaneously would solve this problem, but most skills tests, especially oral, must usually be given individually. (2) The second problem is matching the skills tested to those necessary for the class. Most tests collapse various subtest scores into a single global score. This is unlikely, however, to give us the information for assigning students to similar groups. Two

students with equal scores might have obtained them through high scores on completely different subtests.

In saying students have no choices Heiman (1998, pgs. 23 and 24) seems to be making at least two unwarranted assumptions. (1) First she seems to assume that choice is automatically good. I would argue that choice is good when it is allowed by other factors such as student needs. This is the reason that universities have both required and elective courses. Also this argument ignores the administrative/economic factors. To offer the students choices, there must be more courses to chose from. More courses can only be offered by having current teachers teach more hours or by hiring more teachers. Since English teachers now usually have more hours than other teachers the first option is unlikely to be acceptable. The second option is unlikely in this age of limited budgets. (2) The other assumption she makes is that it is good to let students study with the teacher or classmates of their choice. The first option is administratively impractical as one teacher may be more popular than another regardless of his or her effectiveness. The second option may inhibit learning. For example, when I was an undergraduate, I would take any class that a certain young lady enrolled in, but I guarantee what I learned was not related to course content.

Another point here is that assigning students to levels does not automatically take away all their choices. If the school has a sufficient number of teachers, the students can be given options. A system of prerequisites would allow the students choices while insuring that the students were of the appropriate level. As to psychological effects of self-fulfilling prophecies, Heiman mentions the "adverse psychological effect which dampens both the teachers' and students' expectations and efforts." Nakagawa (1997, pg. 7) cites "self fulfilling prophecies" as a problem. Kotori (1997, pg. 8) worries about "self-stigmatization." These worries are valid and become self-fulfilling if the classes are viewed as smart, average, and dumb classes. However, another way to frame the situation is to be factual. First, the class assignments have nothing to do with intelligence, personal worth, etc. Classes are based on current proficiency levels. Second and more important, class assignments allow students and materials to be matched so that optimal learning can take place. This is a positive self-fulfilling prophecy that helps many of the low level students to advance. Added to the self-fulfilling prophecy is that, other things being equal, low level students in general make proportionally more progress than high level students and this extra progress reinforces the effect of the prophecy through the placebo effect. The use of a single test across classes usually shows that the low level students begin catching up to and occasionally passing the higher level students because of this phenomenon. Only teachers who promote the negative self-fulfilling prophecy have problems. Teachers who use the situation to develop a positive self-fulfilling prophecy add another tool to their kit, much to the advantage of their students.

Assigning students to levels does not automatically take away all their choices.

Effects of previous streaming, Heiman's (1998, pg 24) third objection, concerns the effects of streaming in high school programs. This may be a factor in some countries, but Japanese junior and senior high schools do not usually stream their students. In fact, the teachers of such classes are some of the staunchest opponents of tracking. They object on the grounds that it is undemocratic. Their concept of democracy dictates that students should all compete on exactly the same basis; there should be no special advantages given to any of the students. In any case, because of the lack of high school streaming, Heiman's objection is not

relevant in relation to most college-level classes in Japan, so in light of the length of this article I will discuss it no further. (See Cook, 1997, for a few additional comments.)

Improved chances to negotiate meaning

Heiman (1997) states, "Classes which have students who have a broad spectrum of abilities provide all students regardless of their level with a perfect environment in which to practice learning how to negotiate meanings." However, when there is a large difference in level between the students, it is not negotiation but teaching that must take place. The lower student will not know much of the higher student's vocabulary nor at least some of the grammar. The higher student has the choice of teaching the lower student or dumbing-down his or her language. Research by Community Language Learning advocates that showed that higher level students come down to the level of the lowest student when working in groups. This does not seem like the "perfect environment" for learning.

The lower student on the other hand will frequently not have the vocabulary or grammar to communicate their full meaning to the higher student. This leads to negative feelings and again a dumbing-down of the conversation, if not complete silence from the lower student. Again this does not seem like a perfect environment for learning.

My suggestions for assigning Japanese colleges students to English classes is to use the results of the TOEIC, TOEFL, or some other comprehension test. The test should cover areas that appear in the course and sub-scores could be used where more appropriate than the total. For example, students from a business related course could take the institutional TOEIC. The students would then be assigned to classes with other students who obtained similar scores. The range of scores will depend on the range of scores the students obtain, the overall number of students involved, and class size.

The advantage of this method of assigning students to classes is that at the beginning of the course the teacher will have a rough guide to the level of the students. For a single course, the students would be assigned to sections according to test scores and study the same material with the same overall goals. For grading purposes, a single test can be given to all students in all sections.

With this method of assignment, one can provide separate glosses and simplifications for each section so that all the students can understand the class material. Activities that are based on the material would be different in each section and designed to optimize the students' learning. This is in contrast to randomly assigned sections where the top level students will find much of the material too easy and the low level students will find it incomprehensible. Both situations are far from optimal and limit the learning that can take place, in spite of the possibility of students helping each other. Since with this method the students are assigned by only their comprehension level, the distribution of all other factors will be more or less random as recommended by many teachers.

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BEYOND TRACKING

Tracking and Equality Revisited

Jane Joritz-Nakagawa, Miyagi University

I enjoyed Doyon's article about tracking in *ON CUE* 6:1 (1998). It appears we agree on many points, such as the need to consider the psychological well being of students and its effect on learning, potential problems of placement vehicles, skepticism about educational research, and the need to evaluate teaching situations in their complexity before making important curricular decisions. However I would like to discuss further or expand upon if you will certain more specific points he raises.

First of all, Doyon mentions that in many Japanese universities students are starting out on equal footing and thus ability groupings are perhaps not necessary or desirable. In my experience this has often appeared true. However, where I work currently incoming students showed a good deal of diversity in our first year of operation. Students reportedly ranged from still being at JHS level to having bilingual competency. This low level was not a few students but perhaps anywhere from roughly 1/6 to 1/4 of the incoming class. There was a large intermediate group, perhaps roughly divisible into a low intermediate and an intermediate group, plus a high intermediate to advanced group including some bilinguals (a number of these "shakaijin" in their mid to late 20s and 30s), the so-called high group being perhaps roughly as large as the so-called low group. It would have been possible to consider the students to be of 3 (or even 4) levels. Unfortunately (in my opinion) these students were divided into 10 classes and believed they were at one of ten levels based on their class number.
There was reportedly considerable lack of confidence and a sense of inferiority at the low levels, and a high feeling of security at the high end. Attendance was high in the lower levels and relatively low in the higher levels. All students were expected to meet the same criteria on the TOEIC at the end of the first academic year to pass the first year course (a score of 380).

The TOEIC was used as a placement vehicle. TOEIC scores ranged from below 200 to over 800. TOEIC of course doesn't test productive skills and the reading section (including grammar) focuses on practical readings such as business letters, faxes and charts, not the kind of reading students presumably do in Japanese junior and senior high school. The practical focus of TOEIC reading could be one reason incoming students had higher listening than reading TOEIC scores. However teachers felt the TOEIC did a fair job of broad discriminating as to vocabulary level and passive skill, but teachers also noted that TOEIC wasn't reliably predictive of speaking ability. Still, the teachers (all part time) felt continuing to use the TOEIC as a placement vehicle was better than no vehicle.

Having such a broad range of students, would it be good to randomly place them or use a placement device? I think the answer depends on many factors. Certainly the teachers being in favor of a policy is an important criteria to consider among others. One thing that is certain is that a teacher or materials-centered class would not be appropriate if the students were randomly grouped. A truly student centered course would have to be implemented with a very large range of students in the same course; a self-access type course might be the most effective or other similar course where students would be working somewhat independently (individually or in groups) on different projects. Incidentally, I disagree that a pair of same ability is necessarily the perfect pair (see Doyon's reference to Murphey); rather I would say it depends

upon the kind of activity. For some kinds of activities, yes, for others, no. A teacher would be free to group students in a heterogenous class into the type of group or pair structure which fits the task.

One reason teachers might be against a self-access course or student-centered heterogenous class might be simply they don't wish to teach such a course. Why? It may be because they have never done so or because they perceive such a course as involving more teacher preparation time. It may be because they don't see the value of such a course.

I hope other teachers see heterogeneity as a resource, and promote curricula and courses that alleviate problems of tracking.

One potential value is the potential to have students working together, helping each other, and working on that which interests and suits them. But such a wonderful course will occur only if the teacher creates the proper environment for such peer teaching and collaboration to occur and with the availability of appropriate instructional materials, perhaps equipment and so on.

Personally I have taught mixed level courses in Japanese universities (mixed even where students had actually been given a placement test and had been grouped on the basis of it) using just this kind of self-access or semi-independent structure. I found my preparation or evaluation time no greater and often considerably less than for a teacher- or materials-centered course such as I have taught previously. However I also find that the class time tends to be more challenging (both more stimulating and more tiring!) as my role is to deal with, fairly spontaneously, whatever comes up with whatever materials a student group (students working primarily in cooperative learning groups) is working on. In such a class I find it necessary to be very much on my toes, flexible, attentive and resourceful during class, versus just going through some predetermined routine with a textbook for instance which takes relatively little energy if the routine and/or material isn't new to the teacher.

I think missing from the discussion of whether "are homogeneous groups better" is an acknowledgment of the fact that hetereogenous classes require specific approaches, often different approaches than those possible with homogeneous courses. You can take a very teacher- or materials-centered approach, test it in both a heterogenous and homogenous class, and conclude the latter kind of class is better. Diversity has to be managed and mined for its strengths. Interestingly the approaches necessary for heterogenous courses also work well with homogenous groups. The ability of a teacher of a homogenous group to choose a single set of materials for all students doesn't always work out so wonderfully in reality of course; one size doesn't usually fit all, in terms of so-called "ability" level as well as the individual interests of students, which is why "student-centered learning" is such a big topic recently in language teaching. Further, of course, we know that all courses are "mixed ability," including homogenous ones, though heterogeneity can differ in kind and degree from class toclass, curriculum to curriculum, school to school.

The kind of problem that Adamson (1997) mentions (quoted in Doyon, 1998) of students at the low or high end becoming alienated in a mixed class where the teacher is "aiming for the middle" is not a problem in the non-teacher centered, non-materials centered class where appropriate methodology, etc. is being implemented. This kind of problem is thus not a weakness of heterogenous classes per se but a warning

of what could happen if the diversity is not capitalized upon. In fact the aiming for the middle is a typical technique of lecture style classes, but lecture style classes are pretty much frowned upon in 90s style language teaching. I would not recommend such an approach for a heterogenous class.

Doyon states that while the heterogenous class may work in Japanese universities (again, I would say "that depends," and I think Doyon would agree), they are probably a necessity in language schools. At least one significant difference should be noted between language schools and other schools. In language schools, if the customer is not satisfied with the level of the class s/he has been assigned to, s/he will be free to voice her/his disapproval and probably change classes. In short, the customer will be accomodated. Not necessarily so in universities, high schools, junior high schools, etc. One university in Japan I worked at discouraged students being allowed to change courses even if they voiced strong and apparently reasonable complaints because if we moved the students it would prove the placement tests wrong!

Though, as I've stated previously (Joritz-Nakagawa, 1997), my ideal class is a heterogenous class (with a humanistic, student-centered approach such as cooperative learning artfully implemented), I agree with Doyon that many factors must be considered. Indeed, I said in my earlier writing on this topic that "each teaching situation must be judged individually." However, while some teachers continue to resist the heterogenous class, I hope other teachers will see heterogeneity as a resource versus an obstacle, and continue to promote curricula and course types that alleviate the problems of tracking systems, specifically the cycle of lowered expectations and the damage to the individual psyche and to interpersonal relations. We can see, feel, and of course read about in academic books and journals the effects especially with those targeted as low achievers and those as superachievers (who tend to suffer a different but related set of problems of their own).

While I join those who lament the negative psychological effects, this is not the only reason to be against tracking. Another is the evidence, both intuitive and that which can be found in published writings, that the heterogenous class, if thoughtfully and competently utilized, will produce more and better ideas and discoveries, better human relations (upon which some kinds of learning depend) and hence, finally, the goal we should be after--more and better learning. The student-centered course where students are involved in the process of learning, exercise choices and make decisions about their learning can prevent the negative effects of teachers, courses and/or curricula who or which push their students to aim lower, higher or in another direction than that which the student is interested in and ready for. The non-tracked curriculum can and should challenge each student. Tracking systems which tell students where they purportedly are at and where they purportedly should end up (either providing the same one size fits all goal to students which doesn't fit all, or, worse, providing often ridiculously low goals for the "low"students and goals which promise career success for others) do not fit the concept of a free and equal education for all. One of the problems is that such programs often make important, and sometimes irrevocable, learning decisions FOR the students, decisions that many students should be making themselves.

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What Do Our Clients Want?

Whose motives need be examined?

Val Maxwell, from New Zealand

A number of years ago I was given the responsibility for coordinating the planning for a multicultural course for final-year students at the Dunedin College of Education. One visiting lecturer was a woman who taught Dunedin's refugee Cambodian community English. It was a fascinating talk enlivened with vivid stories of her student's experiences during Pol Pot's obscene rule; of trekking to Thailand and the the dead time they spent in Thai refugee camps and how all these impacted upon trying to adjust to the bewilderingly strange haven they had landed up in; and of trying to learn English, a language with cultural overtones totally unfamiliar and sounds impossible to frame.

Find out the aspirations of students.

The students were given many useful tips they could use in their own classroom. At the end she summed up her philosophy for ESL teaching. Most points were pretty run of the mill, largely familiar to the students from their training to teach young children. For example, to attempt to teach standard pronunciation, worse, to expect it as an end product of ESL teaching was totally unacceptable. Just as there is British English and American English with distinctive dialects, vocabulary, pronunciation and, to a lesser extent, grammar, equally acceptable are Chinese English, Maori English, Black English each with unique and wonderful forms. Teachers should examine their motives; to attempt to standardise was symptomatic of the colonialist mentality, class and racial intolerance; in brief, bigotry.

The speaker was astonished to find she was most vigorously challenged by a mature student, a Samoan woman who stressed that she was speaking on behalf of all whose spoken English was "less than perfect". This student and her group felt that the lecturer's attitude amounted to condemning people like herself to permanent second class status and grooming their children for failure in both the academic and business world. "What," Mrs Tolofea demanded, "was wrong with trying to prepare students for success rather than just accepting failure." Mrs Tolofea wanted to make her meaning clear, not have it obscured by poor grammar, poor pronunciation and incorrect intonation. The reply was a lame appeal that there are always differences of opinion. In private, the lecturer commented to me that the student was "a typical Samoan. A pushy lot by and large". The lecturer ignored a basic principle of ESL teaching: find out the aspirations of your students and make meeting these a key objective.

Inclined to opt for the currently unfashionable politically correct view, I might have accepted the caution against expecting perfect pronunciation, albeit with some reservations, had it not been that I: struggled for years to overcome a minor speech effect; taken four years to pass Italian Reading Knowledge and thus complete my under-graduate degree; begun studying Japanese in my mid-fifties, a task which many who know me view as a forlorn hope. Mastering a foreign language oneself should be a compulsory undertaking for all who aspire to be ESL teachers. Trying to master and distinguish between the Japanese "tsu", "su" and "zu" sounds will soon teach tolerance when native Japanese speakers struggle with the stopped labials (b, p) and aveolars (t, d) and those infamous liquids l and r. Guess what I am saying is that, failure always precedes learning, theory is no substitute for experience, practice and a dash of hard learned tolerance are essentials in any ESL teacher's cocktail of skills.

Examining International Sister School Relations

Original research on a touchy topic.

Steve McCarty,
Kagawa Junior College

One type of international, multicultural program is the sister school relationship. A vast topic, even confined mainly to post-secondary institutions in Japan, there are thousands of such formalized exchanges. From private junior colleges to public universities, most often linking Japan with native English speaking countries, many schools have a large number of agreements, not to mention informal partnerships. That is, the notion of a sister relationship does not seem to be constrained in practice by exclusive loyalties. We might therefore ask why so many sister school relationships exist, and what purposes they serve. This may in turn shed some light on the subtexts of institutions, priorities of administrators, students desires, and the role of faculty members who maintain exchange programs.

Methods

Available data will be presented, not exhaustive of the variety of institutions and partnerships involved, but providing information on a rough cross-section of sister schools and study abroad programs.

Methods of gathering data, besides first-hand experience, included questions to electronic discussion lists, E-mail correspondence and telephone calls, in Japanese if the informants preferred. The fact that very few people responded to pleas for information, even when E-mail was directed to individuals, indicates the sensitivity of this topic.

Informants were given the option to remain anonymous, and a few took this option. However, WWW URLs and other sources of fuller information are provided in the References. An attempt has been made to qualify most assertions, so readers are encouraged to verify the tentative findings presented and to draw their own conclusions.

Schools and International Relations

Japan has a proportion of post-secondary institutions to population similar to that of the U.S. However, two differences are that most Japanese junior colleges are privately owned, for-profit institutions, and Japanese national universities are among the country's most prestigious. Sister school relationships overlap with the vaster topic of study abroad programs. A first impression of international sister schools is that they are synonymous with exchange student programs. Study abroad, nevertheless, involves movement of people and transfers of large sums of money, and may eclipse the sister school relationship *per se* in importance. We then ask whether all motives of the sister school relationship are reflected in written agreements and institutional goals of internationalization, or are there unstated purposes?

This small investigation met the obstacle of scant response to E-mail inquiries and pleas for information on electronic discussion lists. The responses were proportionally more from women and native speakers of Japanese, but the numbers involved are too few to argue that sister school relationships are taken most lightly by male native speakers of English. However, as the flow of students is mostly from Japan to Western institutions, there may be an assumed hierarchy in the flow of knowledge. There may exist a temptation for the providers, the native speakers of English, to assume a stance of superiority over the recipient group. Similarly, when the flow of students is from Asian mainland countries to Japan, a hierarchy may be assumed, with the leaders in technology tempted to take Asian institutions lightly. (A letter I translated from

Japanese to English, from a junior college owner to a Korean university president, seemed patronizing in wishing for the South Korean institution's "development").

Sister school relationships presuppose the mutual respect that makes partnerships equal and free of ethnocentrism. On the opposite pole of taking these agreements lightly, the beneficiaries of study abroad programs may be secretive to protect this lucrative source of income. Any sort of investigative reporting may be seen as a threat to this market. A Dean of Continuing Education at a flagship Australian university confided to me in 1996 that he did no academic work but just made money for his university, to make up for revenue shortfalls typical all over Australia.

The more egregious instances of degrees for sale or exploitive study abroad programs no doubt function outside of sister school agreements, but bad publicity could affect the decisions of parents in Asia to finance such studies in general. In the sensitive Hong Kong market, on one weekend the *South China Morning Post* ran two articles critical of study abroad practices. One subtitle was, "Plans to raise their fees to counter a budget squeeze have foreign students in Australia angry at their status" (Staff reporters, 1996b). The next day it was reported that Kensington University had been shut down by the California government but transferred its foreign students to its one-office campus in Hawaii. Kensington's certificates were judged fraudulent and of no academic value. Some foreign students did not mind, because their bosses could not distinguish accredited from unacccredited institutions. Some were able to transfer from Kensington to Master's courses in Britain (Staff reporters, 1996a). Surrounding these newspaper articles, ironically, were advertisements for study abroad at Australian and British universities.

Sister School Cases

Let's look at some specifics from various educational institutions in Japan. Enquiries were posted to e-mail discussion lists, including <net-lang@clc.hyper.chubu. ac jp>, where internet applications to EFL are shared, usually in Japanese.Keiko Hayasaka of Hokusei Gakuen University, Sapporo responded to my message: "Sister School Relationships (shimai ko nado no kokusai koryu)" in part as follows: "Our college has sister school relationships with 14 colleges in the U.S. plus one with a foreign language institute in China. We send about 40 students to those schools every year and receive some students from some of those schools. We have had quite active programs for these ten to fifteen years" (Hayasaka, 1996). There was no response to follow-up questions by E-mail, but her discussion list post shows that more is considered better, rather than sister school relationships implying any exclusive loyalty.

Nagasaki Wesleyan Junior College is Japanese-owned, but has sister school relationships with six colleges in the U.S., partly through parochial connections. Toshihiko Shiotsu was recommended to me as an informant, and he transmitted the answers to my e-mailed questions given by his colleague Joseph Romero, who is in charge of exchange programs: "In response to your questions RE sister college relationships: 1) Yes, we do have formal written agreements. 2) Yes, we do have exchanges besides students. (See 3). 3) The relationships are mutually beneficial and balanced for the students (we have an annual exchange of students; 2 from Australia, 2 from Canada, 1 from Brazil, 4 from South Korea, 1 from the Phlippines, 2 from Thailand, and 8 from the US.), but not for the faculty. We receive 2 teachers on a yearly or 2-year basis, but we don't really send any from our side. 4) The basic purposes are language and culture learning. 5-6) Our school is not on-line, thus, no URLs" (Shiotsu, 1996).

A former teacher at Nagasaki Wesleyan,

interviewed by telephone, paints a different picture of the sister school exchanges. Students come to learn Japanese and are unhappy with mostly part-time teachers who are not in communication with each other. Some Chinese students disappear [this often happens at my college] and work illegally. Students from the U.S. have gotten rowdy in public. Exchange students are mostly male, while the junior college is 95% female. Having sister schools is a key to the college's success, as over half the students major in English, and many plan to study abroad. American schools for their part want the money of the Japanese students when they transfer. Tennessee Wesleyan recognizes their two-year degree and exempts them from required classes, "which they should not." Elon College planned to open an MA program and send their teachers for the summer, but the informant, who prefers to remain anonymous, wondered how a junior college could offer a graduate program.

Faculty member Yoshiko Fujisaki, interviewed by telephone in Japanese, said that Kochi University has formal partnerships with Cal State Fresno, Queensland University in Brisbane, and a university in China that she knew nothing about. This could be because she teaches English and does not administer the exchange programs. Kochi University has WWW home pages in Japanese (1996b), English (1996a), Spanish and Chinese. The Japanese home page mentions the Chinese university, but the English version does not. The writers may not have known how to render it in English, as Chinese characters are customarily given only Japanese phonetic readings in Japan. My colleague Mao Young identified the university as Xibei Gong Yie Xiu Yuan, or Northwest Institute of Technology in Xian. Mr. Mao thinks the Institute is online, but while the Japanese language uses Chinese characters, we cannot read the Chinese home page because of software incompatibility. In any case, Kochi's home pages include links to American and Australian partners, along with an explanation of government and private funding sources for Kochi's students who wish to go abroad. Both Kochi National University and its sister schools accept transfer credits earned at partner institutions so long as the students are are on leave temporarily in formal exchange programs (see Kochi University, 1996a & 1996b).

Having sister schools is a key to success.

As a public university, Kochi's PR needs are minimal, but the sister schools are prominent on its home pages.However, no sister schools are mentioned in the home pages of the University of Queensland (1996b) or Cal State Fresno (1996b), although these URLs detail their study abroad programs. E-mail enquiries to relevant contact people at these universities went unanswered. But with students from 71 countries by 1994, Cal State Fresno (1996a) may not wish to call attention to its relations with certain schools. Incidentally, over 75% of their foreign students are from the Asia-Pacific region.

Cal State Fresno is a public school and advertises itself as a bargain for studying abroad, but estimated expenses for a year total over US $17,000 (1996b). Multiply that by over 670 (1996a) at one relatively economical program and the scale of expenditures on studying abroad is immediately apparent. The University of Queensland (1996a) has a formal statement of objectives for its outreach programs, but finances are not mentioned. Earlier, however, we heard from a Dean at another flagship university in Australia that money was the whole point of his work, which included traveling to sister schools abroad.

Effects of Internet Access

Will sister school agreements increase when schools go on-line, or will the ease of global

communications render them anachronistic? Only one respondent addressed this question, so we cannot draw any conclusions, particularly about higher education, as the exchanges involve secondary schools. But this gives us a greater diversity of examples, demonstrating that the possibilities for sister school programs are indeed expanded by internet access. International exchanges are increasing exponentially, whether or not formalized sister school agreements remain a principal means to organize them.

Rodney Ray of Kyoto Nishi High School writes: "our school has sister-school relationships with four high schools in Boston. Every year, about 40 of our second-year kids go over there for a four-week exchange/sightseeing trip called the Boston Seminar. This year, we're making an online version of the little self-introduction book that we always make for the homestay families in Boston. This year that project is going to be called something like The Kyoto Teenagers' Manual of Style. Each student will write a page, and this time, that page will be accessible to anybody on the Web ... That kind of thing could lead to more international connections if, for example, the students' E-mail addresses were on their web pages. Furthermore, when the kids go over to the States, excerpts from their daily journals will be posted (1996d).

"The Kyoto Nishi High School's Course of International and Cultural Studies is sending 37 second-year students on a three-week exchange program at four high schools in Boston (USA) beginning October 18. For the first time, the Boston Seminar is being documented on the web. The students have written an online self-introduction called the Kyoto Teenager's Manual of Style, a series of pages about their daily lives--fashion, food, daily schedules, loose socks and pocketbells. Also included in the project will be journal entries and images from the students, and teacher commentary as the seminar unfolds" (Ray, 1996c).

The Boston Seminar URL (see Ray, 1996a) includes links to the four Boston-area secondary schools. One is public like Kyoto Nishi, while the other three are private schools. Rodney Ray added the following in E-mail correspondence:

"We're just starting to communicate with our sister schools via the Net. The kids themselves aren't doing it at all yet. In setting up our exchanges this year, it's been really helpful for the coordinating teachers, because we could reach each other right up until the day we left, which turned out to be absolutely necessary this time! Personally, I can't imagine the Internet replacing exchange trips, simply because we can't get the level of immersion we want that way" (Ray, 1996b).

My Experience

In 1996 owners of my private junior college looked for sister schools in Australia and Hawaii for their combined junior-senior high school, finally settling on a New Zealand school. A partner school was sought, like the high school in Kyoto, as a place to receive groups of students. This then becomes a prestigious, photogenic selling point for the school, if my college is any indication.

Ten years ago in 1986, the owners asked me to find a sister college in Hawaii. We were about to enter into an agreement with Hawaii Pacific College, when it became apparent that they were only looking to attract study abroad students and were not willing to send any students to our school. We then formed oursole sister school relationship with Windward Community College, a public school in the University of Hawaii System. While the opposite imbalance would have occurred with Hawaii Pacific, in this case my college seems to benefit more from the relationship. My college sends groups once a year, with photos of Hawaii and non-Japanese gracing

PR materials. Windward has sent small groups to our school every few years. Once students from Hawaii were shown a PR video featuring their school, and I said that we would probably be filmed watching this video. Peals of laughter greeted the cameraman when he arrived seconds later.

However, although we saw little evidence that the sister school relationships surveyed earlier involved more than student exchanges supervised by faculty, our exchanges have also been among faculty and administrators. This is despite the paucity of English speakers on our side, which may be explained by the value of the Japanese language for tourism in Hawaii, along with the interest in Japan, particularly among Americans of Japanese Ancestry. University of Hawaii Regent Kenneth Kato has visited us, as has Joyce Tsunoda, Chancellor of all community colleges in the state system. In a presentation at our faculty meeting she praised Japanese colleges for recognizing research activities as part of the role of faculty. I had been asked to interpret, and when she switched to Japanese at one point, I unhesitatingly translated it into English, evoking a round of laughter rare in staid Japanese academia.

Teachers benefit least while putting the most work into exchanges.

Another unique accomplishment was a joint exhibition by art department faculty from both schools, held in Japan and then at several prominent locations in Honolulu. Afterwards, however, it seemed unnecessary to me when my colleagues gloated over their superior works, as if a shutout in a sports competition had been won by the Japanese side. There was also a misunderstanding over who would pay certain of the sizeable shipping costs. In face of budget cuts, Windward has asked that the relationship be scaled down, but the groups keep coming every year from Japan.

Within the spirit of the sister school agreement it should be possible for faculty at the two schools to switch jobs, even houses, while being paid as usual by their own institutions. The Japanese school year, however, runs from April to February, with a summer vacation from mid-July to mid-September, so there would only be a window of a few months in the fall for such an exchange to be possible. Sabbaticals are generally the time for faculty in Japan to go abroad, but faculty cannot readily take such entitlements that distance them from factional patronage networks and so forth, while some schools such as mine simply do not offer such luxuries.

Tentative Conclusions

A guest editorial in *The Japan Times* advocated a five-day school week and a fall to spring school year (McCarty, 1987). But whereas Saturday morning classes will be gone by the year 2000, changing the school year to the international norm would be financially prohibitive, particularly for the many privately-owned institutions already struggling with a decline in the college-age population. There are many issues involved that would take us too far afield, but it is evident that international exchanges would not be important enough to institutions in Japan if they involved sacrifices. Earlier we saw how a college in the U.S. was unwilling to part with a single tuition-paying student even temporarily. Sister school relationships could not be as ubiquitous as they are without tangible benefits to each school. Noble notions such as internationalization seem to add the frosting of altruism to the cake of self-interest. Inasmuch as benefits accrue to formalized ties such as sister school relationships, with increasing ease and convenience of implementation, growth in such partnerships will continue.

One factor that has not been mentioned is that the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture regulates all colleges in Japan and influences their funding. The Ministry gives colleges incentives to engage in the national cause of internationalization. The forms that individual teachers and institutions regularly submit to the Ministry show the types of activities that are encouraged. Quantifying international programs in terms of the number of foreigners present presupposes that more is better, and rewards may be measured out to institutions and individuals with larger numbers in the categories considered accomplishments. This reportage and the competition among peer institutionscould help to explain why national universities as well as private colleges engage in formalized rather than informal international exchanges.

Let us finally look at the role of the different parties at each institution involved with international exchanges. We have seen that administrators establish lofty educational goals and seek mundane benefits for their institutions, while having little more than a ceremonial role in the actual exchanges. Nonetheless, the net result may well be positive, as compared with not having sister schools. The students clearly enjoy the exchanges in most cases. At any educational level in Japan, having a trip abroad as an official school activity makes it more likely that the parents will pay most or all that the students are charged, while travel costs of faculty and administrators are largely underwritten by their institutions.

While every party tends to win something, the work and benefits are not evenly distributed. It can be observed that, among the large numbers of young people studying abroad, some make substantial progress in terms of measures such as TOEFL or TOEIC scores, while others are wasting their parents' hard-earned money joyriding abroad with their peers, never becoming functional in ESL.

A bit of classroom research in Japanese (McCarty, 1991) aimed to find out the priorities of students if they joined a group going to Hawaii and our sister school there. Of the suggested activities that would be feasible for the group during eight days in Hawaii, going to the sister school fell in the middle range of activities that students would like to spend one day or more doing. Of three who had actually gone on the Hawaii trip, one was negative about going to the sister school at all. Overall, there was far more interest in shopping and going to the beach among the 56 students.

So if sister schools can provide somewhat of a pretext for the more important goals of administrators and students, then what about the teachers? They seem to benefit the least while putting the most work into the actual exchanges. They can enjoy professional development and trips abroad, provided they do all the groundwork and take responsibility for large numbers of students. If anything goes wrong in the relationship, with students visiting as well as going abroad, teachers are liable to suffer adverse consequences. Thus the role may not be welcome by teachers, who would rather avoid risks and enjoy a true vacation abroad at their own expense. Teachers are caught in between students and administrators, trying to satisfy expectations, planning idealistic activities as if there were no ulterior agendas. Teachers meet the most people and learn the most from international sister school relationships and study abroad programs. Costs and benefits differ, but as usual teachers are in the front lines.

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CUE News Briefs:

Fresh Links; JALT98; Gillian Kay.

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CUE activities at JALT98. CUE will sponsor a preconference workshop (cosponsored by the Teacher Ed SIG) and a featured speaker presentation at JALT98. Both programs will be conducted by our special guest Dr. Amy Tsui of the University of Hong Kong. Professor Tsui will also participate in CUE's Annual General Meeting at JALT98. Additionally, we will be conducting the first CUE Forum on Higher Education, featuring, Cheiron McMahill, founder of Women in Education and Language Learning, who will outline grassroots feminist and women's concerns; David McMurray, former president of JALT, comparing initiatives toward creativity in Japan and other Asian countries; Brian McVeigh, addressing the roles of women's colleges and of non-Japanese; and Ivan Hall, author of *Cartels of the Mind*, who will explore bureaucratic attitudes affecting higher education. To find out more and to preview the preconference workshop, visit CUE Online and choose "JALT98."

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