

Introduction of Three Language Development Programs for New Immigrants in the USA*

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アメリカ合衆国における移民のための 3つの言語教育プログラム

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An introduction of three language development environments implemented in the United States for limited English Proficient (LEP) immigrant students provides a comparative insight into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs here in Japan. Specifically, these broad-based programs can be categorized into three types of curricula, and they are as follows: direct, naturalistic and nativistic methods. Each program has been organized to provide a basic perspective on how English is taught in the classrooms for non-English speaking students in America.

To further illustrate the need for such language programs that may be suitable for the next generation of Japanese students, a general opinion poll was conducted on Bunkyo University students taking the American Culture course (Fall, 2007-2008). These essay responses had been included in this paper in order to provide some insights from a student's perspective of how learning should be taught within the Japanese school systems.

In analyzing these general responses to the question relating to their opinion on "which development program would be an ideal method of teaching English in Japan," these general viewpoints provide a snapshot of how learning can be achieved through these language development programs. Finally, this paper will provide a general overview of context learning scenarios and its merits in teaching English as a second language for Japanese students. Through creative group-centered activities, and social interaction among students themselves in their native tongue, the Instructor may act as a facilitator of language instruction in order to stretch the student's proficiency levels at a higher intake level.

* This paper was written in memory of my father, Ben Ogawa.

Introduction

In response to major curriculum reform in Japan beginning with the 2002 school year, the Ministry of Education suggests that the schools become more flexible and responsive to individual student needs. While the profound cultural and social differences that separate American and Japanese school systems are quite apparent, the proponents of these language development programs in the United States may provide some general instructional guidelines in how English for non-native speakers are taught in three categorically different learning environments.

This paper provides a general overview of three distinct language development programs that have been instituted under law. Notably, the legal history of English as Second language in the United States has coincided to the waves of immigration, and has incorporated a diverse population pool that consisted of Europeans, Hispanics, Africans, Europeans, Middle Easterners, and Asians in the last century.

The legal history of language programs in USA

Over three million immigrant students in the United States have limited English proficiency (LEP). In response to the needs for these students who are struggling to learn English, many school districts had adopted bilingual education in the 1960s and 1970s. The main reason is to provide English learning immersion programs for students transitioning into an English-speaking educational system without undue hardships.

Fundamentally, the supporters of these bilingual programs suggest that language should be taught in a low-stress environment where students are allowed to utilize their mother tongue during classroom time. The critics of these language development programs have argued that language should be taught in a “sink or swim” method of language acquisition. Despite the ongoing debate about how language skills should be introduced and taught in America schools, the essential need for students is to learn English for communicative purposes within a situational context.

The start of these programs was due to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) that provided for alternative language programs necessary to ensure that minority students of national origin who have limited English proficiencies were allowed to have meaningful access to school programs in their state of residency. In further support for this law under the American Constitution, the Bilingual Education Act (1968) was the first federally recognized mandate for limited English speaking students to have special educational needs. In the interest of equal educational opportunities, these bilingual programs that had addressed those special needs would be federally funded under this law. In acknowledgement of these mandates, the 107th Congress (2001-2002) had voted to quadruple that amount within the budget to provide for bilingual education in all fifty states.

One notable case that illustrates the need for bilingual education was the *Lau v. Nichols* Case of San Francisco, California (1974). This case was the leading precedent in bilingual educational reform in the United States. In this case, there were 1,800 Chinese students who

were denied an equal education because of their limited English skills, and as a result, the school district was directed to provide special assistance in English to limited English proficient (LEP) students. The courts wanted to provide equal access for LEP students so that they could take “a meaningful part” in the American educational system, alongside the mainstream student population. In this judicial matter, the U.S. Supreme Court had mandated a Lau Plan (named after this case) for school districts with twenty or more students who are not proficient in English to be assigned to a special language development program.

Despite the idealized view of America as a mosaic of peoples of varying customs and blended cultures, the issues relating to LEP programs has undergone various changes in its implementation processes within the school systems, and the various rulings under case law. The notion that our pluralistic nation can achieve the ultimate goal of unifying all of its citizens and other residents under one language has been an issue of controversy within the educational systems. Even if there are ongoing discussions for U.S. educators on how the English language should be taught in schools across the nation, there is undeniably, the greater need for LEP students to learn English in order to survive and function adequately within American society, and to mainstream into the school systems. This was the critical factor for this language development programs to develop, alongside regular curriculum courses taught in America.

The fundamental goal is to learn English

In comparison to Japan's educational program for teaching English, once again, the issues revolving around the legality of bilingual education in America may have minimal or little effect on the educational curriculums at all levels of English instruction. What may be of interest for Japanese educators are the general teaching guidelines under these bilingual programs in order to meet the needs of students who do not have the necessary proficiency levels in English. In this regard, these generalities have substantial information to provide those who may be interested in understanding the needs of LEP students in three language learning environments. Based on ongoing research from various governmental sources, the underlying principles that are relayed under these programs have made some in-roads within the learning process for LEP students in the United States.

What is learning?

Learning is a purposeful activity among students, and whether the goal is to be more analytical or in voicing one's opinion, these forms of communicable expressions are vital to the educational process, especially within a contextual learning environment. In Michael Rossman's article in *the Saturday Review* entitled, "How We Learn in America?", his rhetorical question on learning is answered by this response:

What is a good learner? It seems useful to think of him as someone with a certain set of skills. He knows how to formulate

problems. He can identify the relevant resources. . . that are available in his environment. He is able to choose or create procedures and to evaluate his results. Beyond this, there is a set of higher skills, which we may call "meta-skills". Stated very loosely, they include the ability to know what he wants (or needs) to learn: the ability to see clearly the process of his learning; and the ability to interact with others to help learn these meta-skills. Out of all this, he is able to create useful knowledge.

Rossman's voice resonates what every educator is hoping to achieve among his/her students in each and every classroom where learning occurs.

In any learning environment, the instructor should provide the necessary tools in order for learning to be achieved as an encompassing goal. While traditional methods of instruction often relied on methods relating to content learning, the more flexible views of modern learning emphasizes a collaboration of both content and contextual learning to take place within classrooms. Another view is to have teachers become learning facilitators allowing for creativity and intuition to be expressed by students, thus allowing for more flexibility among individual students within a class.

Social environments or contextual learning

The process of learning can be very stressful, and the impact of positive or negative attitudes from the surrounding environment can be critical for students struggling to learn a second language. Basically, second language acquisition (SLA) has often been described

as developing the proficiency skills in communication by utilizing the target language in comparison to the first language for a learner. Though SLA has often been viewed as part of applied linguistic, it is typically concerned with language systems and the learning processes itself. In these educational scenarios, the learning comes more from the experiences of the learner, particularly in the classroom setting.

Generally speaking, the amount of input or learning of an language that takes place generally is the learner's contact with the target language to be learned, and in how that learner intakes or accepts the language as becoming a part themselves. Naturally, the attitudes of students or learners play a larger part in the process of learning, the stake for instructors in creating scenarios that promote more interactive learning among students in their mother tongue or learning styles that support an adaptive, dynamic, and more responsive exchange is encouraged. While there are conduits for learning such as media, computers and other sources of learning tools, the affective filters of students may some bearing in the rate of exchange between a student and a language instructor. These affective filters such as the beliefs or values that form the basis of a student's personality can be lifted within a low-stress learning environment according to the naturalistic language program.

General distinctions between ESL and EFL programs

In order to evaluate the student responses in this essay polls, the distinction between ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) must be addressed. Essentially, the

terminology referring to EFL in Japan has often been used in referring to a curriculum based on providing English lessons for Japanese students touring English-speaking countries. Typically, another part of the EFL programs is in teaching English for the specific purposes for students to pass examinations or in enhancing one's career paths while working for an organization or business with an international focus.

The merits of the ESL learning environment is that students in these programs already have some command of their first language. Thus, the need for learning English becomes a part of their secondary language resource for these students in an English-speaking environment. In applying these language development programs here in Japan, the information that may provide some useful benefit for instructors is that learning can be created in varying classroom environments, thus allowing a more creative exchange between the instructor and students on group-related projects. In doing so, such learning takes on a more immediate intake among students in developing his/her proficiency skills.

Guidelines for three language programs

The guidelines for the three language programs have been provided in the following pages for review. These language development tables are a modified version of the bilingual program originally submitted by Phillip C. Gonzales in this paper presentation entitled, "Reform in Bilingual Teacher Education" at the National Association for Bilingual Education (1989). In isolating the relationship between the instructor's roles in teaching and the assumptions underlying each program for

the barriers that students face in learning a language, these tables may provide a basic framework in creating a new course paradigm for instructors in structured language learning. With regard to the direct, naturalistic and nativistic approaches, it may be of interest for instructors to consider combining these approaches in an integrated context-based course for language learning.

Category "A": direct language development

<p>What is the direct method? Language is taught directly as a requirement to any involvement in subject matter instruction. Language is the content of the ESL/bilingual education lesson.</p>
<p>What are the goals for students to learn? Mastering words, phrases or sentences thought to be an integral part of communication. The student in this type of instruction meta-cognitively focus attention on form and function of the language studied and practiced in class. Learning the accurate use of the target language is central to the student's study.</p>
<p>How does the Instructor teach this method? At times, the Instructor provides linguistic descriptions of the target language in order to create the pathway for the student's eventual use of the language. Specifically, reading and writing are also taught as content subjects. By understanding the class material, the student may be able to communicate in the target language.</p>
<p>What does the Instructor expect from his/her students? The Instructor expects adult-like production of the language almost immediately. They often ask students for the rules and patterns of acceptable usage of the target language. Whenever a student makes an error in class, the teacher asks the student to correct his/her mistake immediately with respect to the rules and forms of the target language.</p>
<p>What are the conditions for language development under the direct method? 1) Students focus attention on language forms and accuracy. 2) Formal knowledge about the structure of language is necessary for a student to fully engage in this learning environment.</p>

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Category "B": naturalistic language development

What is the naturalistic method?

The assumption under this program is that the barrier in participation in language situations is the lack of language competence. Since students are encouraged to overcome these situational barriers, attempts are made in class to recreate the conditions and circumstances that will promote language experimentation and development. During the class, the students face cognitively demanding lessons which is the basis for the context in which language is nurtured to develop among students.

What are the goals for students to learn?

The focus is to have the students understand the target language in grouped settings according to their linguistic level. Since the language utilized in the lesson is considered "natural" to the speech pattern in a given situation or lesson, the student learns the subject matter taught in a participatory manner. In doing so, the student will become more engaged in the lesson, and are given time to prepare so that they can interact in a natural manner during the lesson.

How does the Instructor teach this method?

The Instructor adjusts the syntax and introduces common for students in a given exercise based on a situational context. Difficult vocabulary is explained for students during the lesson. In addition, for each grouped level, the Instructor provides comprehensible linguistic input at a point slightly ahead of the student's known language level. This is to guide the students to utilize the target language correctly and without undue stress.

What does the Instructor expect from his/her students?

Since target language is nurtured in a cognitively demanding lesson in order to instill language development.

What are the conditions under the naturalistic method?

- 1) A low stress environment
- 2) Comprehensive input-language adjusted to be within the listening range for students in each group.
- 3) Involvement in cognitively demanding subject lessons.
- 4) Participation in class activities.

Category "C": nativistic language development

What is the Nativistic method?

Language is developed at an innate level. Peer group interactions are encouraged during class, and the Instructor provides students with an environment that is linguistically challenging. The assumption is that barrier in language learning is due to the context, and not on the language itself per se.

What are the goals for students to learn?

Students are allowed to create their own links to the target language in order to participate in the lesson. In this learning environment, the students are allowed to create language on their own terms, and to make sense of the message that allows communication to flow from interactions with the Instructor.

How does the Instructor teach this method?

The Instructor will always respond in the target language for students during the lesson. Language is taught learning the content-based lesson and through social interactions. The instructor goes over the context in which the target language is employed and the message contained in that content of the lesson.

What does the Instructor expect from his/her students?

The students are expected to be responsive during the lesson through social interactions that allow the students to practice the target language. Further, the students are free to utilize their own native tongue during class

What are the conditions for the Nativistic method?

- 1) Attention is on the meaning and not on linguistic accuracy.
- 2) Language is embedded in the teaching of the content.
- 3) Students are involved in real life situations.
- 4) Idiosyncratic understandings and interpretations are allowed for students to explore the language within their own cultural background.

Research data collected on opinion essay

In the interest of researching this subject of ESL programs further in Japan, general guidelines were provided to Bunkyo students in how English was taught to LEP students within the context of an American Culture course for Fall semester of 2007-2008. In teaching these concepts relating to the three development programs (direct,

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naturalistic and nativistic), the students were assigned in groups to provide a lesson designed for young children by utilizing these concepts into a practice presentation. Further, an essay was given for students to express their individual opinions on what language program would be the best approach in teaching English for Japanese students.

The following are the in-class polling results, and based on the total of 136 short essay responses:

Polling results of the direct language program:

Male	Female	Total
12	14	26

Polling results of the naturalistic language program:

Male	Female	Total
16	38	54

Polling results of the nativistic language program:

Male	Female	Total
17	28	45

Polling results for combination or general viewpoints:

Male	Female	Total
7	4	11

The data collected from this course may be useful in providing an overview in how students perceive how the classroom environment may affect learning another language, specifically in a non-stressed environment.

Concluding remarks

Although, the results of this general opinion survey among Bunkyo students may not be representative sampling for purposes of statistical research analysis, the results have some merit in providing instructors some insights into understanding the basic needs of a given student population.

The general opinion among these students with competence in their own language, and in learning English as a second language is that English should be taught in a more naturalistic learning environment. In this approach, the need for group-centered activities has been a general theme in the answers provided in these student essays. The close second is the nativistic language program where students have expressed that having language targeted through social interactions in real life situations may have some impact on enhanced learning scenarios. The last method relating to the direct language program provided opinions relating to the need for structure and in learning forms and the accuracy of the English language.

As a result of collecting this data from this class size of 136 students, the percentage breakdown has been illustrated as follows:

Percentage breakdown of naturalistic language program

Total: 40.0%	Male: 12.0%	Female: 28.0%
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Percentage breakdown of nativistic language program

Total: 33.0%	Male: 12.5%	Female: 20.5%
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Percentage breakdown of direct language program

Total: 19.0%	Male: 9.0%	Female: 10.0%
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Percentage breakdown of non-specified language program

Total:	8.0%	Male:	5.0%	Female:	3.0%
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The general findings for this inquiry

These results have some significance, in that, these university students have provided their viewpoints relating to how they perceive the English language should be taught in Japanese schools. The research in this field in acquiring a second language is quite extensive. Much of the information today provides us with varying impacts relating to the content-based instruction in relation to the contextual aspects of the population of student's personalities, along with their motivational desire to learn English as a second language. Most certainly, the overwhelming majority of essay responses revealed that students feel most comfortable in a group setting of instruction, rather than in bearing the burden of learning the language onto oneself.

Moreover, the low stress climate within a classroom for interactive situations among students with their instructor may produce better results in building the foundation of language learning while prompting students to speak in real life scenarios. In view of these findings, the open-ended approach utilized in seeking the opinions of students learning a second language may support the need for learning environments that promote less stress for students, and more interaction among students in a group-related setting. As indicated in the naturalistic learning environment, the instructor provides the target language to be learned as a facilitator of that learning process, and providing information just slightly ahead of the student's own

language proficiency. The students are allowed to stretch instead of being expected to jump into language acquisition environments. This provides students a chance to grow within their own comfort zone.

In essence, the vital part of this inquiry was to understand the fundamental needs of Japanese university students, and in regard to these responses, the concurrent theme revolving around the nature of the learning environment revolves around how students perceive learning a second language requires instruction that may be tailored to their individual needs.

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