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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the use of Japanese in the English language classroom in Japan proposes that whatever justification is given for the English-only classroom is based on two flawed arguments: (1) outright rejection of the traditional grammar-translation method; and (2) the false assumption that an English-only requirement is an essential element of current "communicative" methodologies. The translation element of the grammar-translation method has been blamed for the failure of Japanese-speakers to learn English; however, it is claimed here that the emphasis on grammar, which focuses on the referential meaning of a phrase rather than its social meaning, is instead at fault. An alternative "functional-translation" method is preferred because such an approach places emphasis first on helping the student understand and convey the meaning of ideas that are the most useful to him; only then is the appropriate grammar sought out as the framework in which to express those ideas. Materials and classroom procedures for the grammar-translation and functional translation methods are compared and contrasted, and some sample bilingual (Japanese-English) classroom activities are described. (Contains 39 references.) (MSE)

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Robert Weschler

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Uses of Japanese in the English Classroom : Introducing the Functional-Translation Method

Robert Weschler

Introduction

The teacher stares down at the wide eyes of his new students, "Class. We are here to learn English. As of today, you are *not* to use any Japanese in this room. This is an '*English-only*' class." And it is from that moment, I would argue, that the class is lost.

Where did we get this idea that "only English" should be spoken in the English classroom? Is it based on any cohesive theory or substantiated research? Or more likely, is it the result of blind acceptance of certain dogma which conveniently serves the best interests of native-speaker teachers? It is my purpose to show that, while our students are here to learn English (the L2), there are many possible means toward that end, that there is a time and a place for everything, and that one of those means is, without doubt, the timely use of the students' first language (the L1); in our case--Japanese.

I intend to show that whatever justification is claimed for the "English-only" classroom is based on two fundamentally flawed arguments: first, the premature, outright rejection of the traditional "grammar-translation" method, and second, the false assumption that an "English only" requirement is an essential element of more modern "communicative" methodologies. Finally, I intend to show that by combining the best of the "grammar-translation" method with the best of "communicative" methods, a new, more powerful hybrid can emerge in which the focus is more on the negotiated *meaning* of the message than its sterile *form*. I will call this method, "The Functional-Translation Method".

Part I - The Problem

But first a bit of historical backtracking is in order. Usually, whenever a new

methodology appears, it is presented as the promised solution to a perceived problem. This would seem to be the case with “English-only” methods. What was the problem? Quite clearly, Japanese college freshmen, after having studied English for six years in junior and senior high school, *simply could not speak English!* The logic that followed was as straightforward as it was wrong. How were these students taught English? Through the “grammar-translation” method. Therefore, the “grammar-translation” method doesn’t work. Period.

The solution to the problem seemed equally transparent. Throw out the “grammar-translation” method completely on the unstated assumption that it was *the act of translation itself* which lay at the root of the problem. From there, it seemed a simple step to conclude that to avoid the supposed evils of translation, one need only banish the mother tongue from the classroom and replace it with an “English-only” policy as the most direct means toward learning the target language. If only it were that simple.

I will now argue that this great leap of faith is based on some very dubious logic: first, false *conclusions* about the *shortcomings* of the “grammar-translation” method, and second, false *assumptions* about the *merits* of so-called “English-only” methods. In effect, a misdiagnosis of the initial problem has led to a prescription of untested medicine.

Part II - The Misdiagnosis

So let us first examine what presumably accounts for the failure of the “grammar-translation” method. Most arguments fall into one of the following four areas:

1) Thinking in the mother tongue inhibits thinking directly in the target language (where “directly” is the key word):

The main objection to translation as a teaching device has been that it interposes an intermediate process between the concept and the way it is expressed in the foreign language, thus hindering the development of the ability to *think directly* in the new language. (Rivers and Temperly, 1978)

This intermediate process, with its occasional misapplication of L1 rules to the L2, is sometimes referred to as *interference*.

2) The Japanese language only serves as a crutch; the more quickly it is disposed of, the better.

3) Too much reliance on the first language will result in the fossilization of an

interlanguage (Selinker, 1992), with the result being some of the hilarious Japlish we have all come to love and cherish.

4) The use of the first language wastes too much valuable class time that would be better spent on the target language. This is sometimes referred to as the *time on task* argument (Modica, 1994).

All of these four arguments can also be used against my proposed Functional-Translation Method, and together they act as a huge wall of resistance against any attempt to re-instate the use of Japanese in the English classroom. So each deserves a brief response, usually involving a reframing of the issue into a different, more positive metaphor.

1) No matter how much a teacher may wish it weren't so, so-called "interference" will always plague any learner who has ever learned one language before another. The term itself has a negative connotation, but need not; better to think of the inevitable influence of the L1 on the L2 as a potential aid or tool. For those who advocate teaching the student to "think directly" in the target language, an interesting philosophical question (well beyond the scope of this paper) would be, "Once having learned to think in one language, is it even possible to *not* think in that language?"

2) Again, seeing the mother tongue as a crutch implies that the second language learner is somehow disabled and needs to be supported. If one accepts this view of the language learner, which I don't, what's wrong with crutches? But perhaps a better metaphor for the learning of a second language would be the construction of a glorious new edifice in the mind of the student, wherein the mother tongue acts as the necessary scaffolding to be gradually removed over time.

3) One of the few ways I know for a person to truly acquire a foreign language is through the constant, trial-and-error negotiation of meaning, usually with a native speaker or target language materials, and a so-called *interlanguage* is the unavoidable result. So long as such language does not interfere with conveying the intended meaning, it should be considered acceptable. Those who fear the fossilization of such a transitory phase simply do not have enough faith in the analytic and self-corrective powers of the motivated student.

4) The total amount of time spent in the classroom in an entire, typical English language program is infinitesimal compared to what is necessary to obtain even a modicum of fluency in a second language. This is especially true if the teacher wastes half that time by limiting input to incomprehensible messages in the target

language. Having students engage in English-only, supposedly communicative output when they don't understand what they are saying is little better than the rote parroting of drills that has been so justifiably maligned in the audio-lingual method. Classtime would be better spent in training the learner in the strategies necessary for foreign language survival outside the classroom, beyond the reach of the real crutches; namely, teachers and textbooks. In that sense, the most efficient use of that very limited time is to exploit those tools she will have most readily available, especially the mother tongue. One could even argue that the time and energy expended by teachers on trying to keep their students from speaking the L1 is time taken from these more worthwhile pursuits.

Thus far, I have tried to refute some of the arguments against allowing the L1 into the L2 classroom. In effect, when the grammar-translation method was jettisoned, not only was it unnecessary to banish the *act of translation*, it was impossible.

Part III - The False Remedy

Let us now turn our attention to the supposed merits of "direct, English-only" methods which so conveniently rose to fill the tub when the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. I would separate these arguments into two groups: the first, what I would call the *unexamined tatemae*, and the second, the *hidden honne*.

Among the "unexamined tatemae", otherwise known in English as rationalizations, are the following two claims:

1) First and foremost, by simply *not* using the mother tongue, one avoids all the aforementioned problems associated with the "grammar-translation" method. Simple enough.

2) Children learn their first language directly. Why can't adults do the same with a second language? While this argument has a long history, its modern roots can be found in the work of the Frenchman F. Gouin (1831-1896) who created his Gouin "series", a sort of systematized game of charades and a predecessor to Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR).

Let us contrast these assumptions with the reality of what actually goes on in the classroom and in the students' brains.

1) As already mentioned, no matter how hard they may try, adult learners simply can not escape the influence of the first language. They will always be asking themselves, "What does _____ mean?" and decoding the answer *in their first language*,

if not orally where all can hear, then *mentally* where few can fathom. Just because the teacher doesn't see or hear the mental gears of translation churning doesn't mean it's not going on. Suppressing this natural tendency only adds to the counter-productive tension already in the class and raises the affective filter of the student that much higher.

2) To assume that adults can, should and will learn a second language as "directly" as children learn their first ignores some obvious distinctions. For one, children take years following a natural order of acquisition to master the concrete before the abstract. By contrast, already having mastered the latter, adults can take shortcuts. Recent research suggests that the very process of learning the mother tongue acts in hard-wiring the circuitry of the growing brain (Pinker, 1994). As anyone can attest who has marveled at the ease children learn language and struggled themselves in later years to learn a second language, an already wired brain is simply not as flexible. It may, however, have more underutilized analytic power. Secondly, children enjoy learning by trial and error and are unafraid to make "mistakes" since they don't consider them mistakes. They actively involve all their senses while anxiously seeking to discover the meaning of what they don't understand and are rarely judged on the appropriateness of their questions. Adult students in general, but Japanese in particular, are much less willing to risk losing face. They are more interested in learning as efficiently as possible the vocabulary and structures needed to express their abstract ideas. Those ideas are best accessed through translation. To quote Willis (1990):

The language of the classroom largely handles a world of concrete objects and observable events. The language needed outside the classroom is needed much more to create an abstract world of propositions, arguments, hypotheses and discourses. It may be that in learning our first language we move from concrete to abstract, but mature learners of a foreign language already have these abstract concepts as part of their knowledge of their first language. As mature language users they will want to understand and create similar concepts in the target language. We should provide them with experience of the kind of language they need in order to do this.

Could an English-only method work, even for adults? Clearly, yes; that is, given enough time, very limited goals, and the right circumstances. Take two well-known examples: the Berlitz Method and the aforementioned Total Physical Response (TPR).

According to Richards (1986), among the principles and procedures governing the Berlitz Method are the following:

- 1) Classroom instruction should be conducted exclusively in the target language.
- 2) Only *everyday* vocabulary and sentences should be taught.
- 3) Oral communication skills should be built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in *small, intensive classes*.
- 4) Never go too fast: keep *the pace of the student*.

If all of the above are adhered to fairly religiously as an integrated set of principles, then the method has the potential to work. However, for that to happen, an implicit requirement is continual monitoring of the individual student by the teacher. Furthermore, the teacher has to offer *constant, instantaneous and personalized feedback*, especially when the inevitable mistakes in production are made. This accounts for why the Berlitz Method has largely been limited to expensive, one-on-one tutoring of well-heeled students, or those supported by their deep-pocketed companies. The problem arises when the English-only ideology is blindly hoisted upon the rest of us as we toil in classrooms overstocked with large numbers of variously skilled and reluctantly motivated students. To be blunt, it's hard to give feedback to a wall.

As for TPR, while I myself enthusiastically use many of its techniques for beginner-level students trying to master concrete language, there comes a point beyond which abstract concepts simply cannot be conveyed through obvious gestures, pictures and commands.

“Give me an apple.” Yes.

But

“Give me liberty, or give me death.” Well.

The assumption that the English-only, direct method can be applied equally well to any size and type of class and any level or content of language is simply false. This fallacy is most clearly evident when an English-only policy is blindly transplanted from an English as a *Second Language* (ESL) to an English as a *Foreign Language* (EFL) environment. In the first case, as might occur in a *multilingual* classroom in the United States or Britain, students from many countries may be gathered wherein the only *common* language happens to be English. How convenient. So by necessity (or some might say default), the teacher can insist on an English-only policy since there would seem to be little other choice for eliciting communication, though even that is debatable.

By contrast, however, a *monolingual* classroom as we have here in Japan where 99% of the students share the same L1, presents an entirely different situation. There

is no reason why a teacher shouldn't take advantage of the students' shared knowledge in bridging the gap to what they don't yet know.

It is sometimes said that teachers should use "English where possible" and "L1 where necessary". We can perhaps say that the questions which teachers need to ask themselves are:

Can I justify using the L1 here ?

Will it help the students' learning more than using English would?

(Atkinson, 1993)

And as for the students' use of Japanese, the rule should be:

"Wherever possible, use English. Where not, it's OK to use Japanese to seek the help you need, so long as such use does not interfere with the learning of others." At some point, there developed the further confusion that modern "communicative" methods demanded an English-only approach. Yet if one assumes that a basic tenet of true communication should be "comprehensible input", then if anything an English-only approach for most students would be totally non-communicative. So as we can see, a fundamental cause of the failure of English-only methods, in my opinion, is their misapplication in learning situations where they don't belong.

Much of my frustration with direct methods comes from my own experience being taught Japanese in such a way. Countless times I would hear the teacher make a statement, feel I "understood" each individual word, but had no idea what the sentence as a whole meant. I realize there are those who say that certain things simply can't be translated. Word-for-word, of course not. But idea-for-idea, that's a different story. With all due consideration to the red herring of cultural differences, I would still argue that unless you can rephrase a statement in your own first language such that the essence of the meaning is maintained, you really don't *understand* it. And understanding of meaning is the key to true communication.

Make no mistake about it. Most students in English-only classes, if they're not totally confused and are still awake, are constantly asking themselves, "But what does it mean?" And they answer themselves *in Japanese*, no matter how much the teacher may want them to "think in English". In a fit of wishful thinking, advocates of direct methods assume that if the student doesn't understand something (which is more often the case than not), he will simply ask for clarification. But remember, this is Japan.

Yes, in an ideal world given unlimited time, perhaps a direct, English-only method would produce the best results, even for adult students. However, given the real-

world time constraints of a typical adult educational program, the use of the first language provides for *the most efficient use of limited class time*. In fact, it could even be argued that *time* is the one independent variable on which all other factors are dependent, and that the *lack of time* makes any discussions on the merits of various methodologies entirely moot.

Since the assumptions underlying much of direct, English-only methodology show serious flaws, why does it continue to be so commonly practiced, especially in teaching situations where it doesn't belong? It is here that we must return to the "hidden *honne*", or *real* reasons underlying so much dogmatic adherence to blind faith.

1) Most native speaker teachers, even if they wanted to in principle, couldn't hope to use Japanese simply because they aren't good enough at it. This is understandable, no cause for embarrassment and by no means precludes them from being potentially outstanding teachers. Yet by the same token, simply because the teacher may not understand the language of the students is no reason to *prohibit* the use of Japanese in the classroom.

2) Fortunately for those same native speaker teachers, they have been given a handy excuse for not allowing the use of Japanese in the classroom by the very Japanese educational institutions that hire them. From the institution's point of view, the native speakers are being paid good money to supply the students with optimal exposure to natural English, something supposedly only a native speaker can do, forgetting for the moment the easy accessibility of audio-visual materials. Put simply, the institution wants to get its money's worth.

3) Most texts used by native speaker teachers (such as those published by Oxford or Cambridge University Press), coincidentally but conveniently, contain *only* English (thereby seeming to absolve the teacher of having ever to refer to Japanese). Yet at no point should we deceive ourselves. Those texts are not monolingual based on any linguistic theory. They are monolingual primarily because it is cheaper to produce them that way, because *multilingual* ESL classes could only use such a text and because they are designed for the largest possible audience, meaning a world audience. (The French might find Japanese annotations to *Interchange* particularly puzzling.)

And lest one thinks that it is our students who cry out for an "English-only" approach, a trip to a major bookstore should cure that delusion. Invariably, while native-speaker teachers gather among the mountains of foreign-published, monolingual texts, their students can be found elsewhere, packed in like sardines among the

bilingual language texts produced by Japanese publishers.

4) Historically, those bilingual texts have generally been written by and for the Japanese teacher of English, or for students' self-study. While trying to do their best, Japanese writing by themselves could never be expected to produce near native-like English. This alone accounts for deficiencies in the particular translations produced, and why the *act of translation per se* can not be held accountable. Aside from the fact that much of the English is questionable, those texts have not been designed based on the principles of modern, communicative classroom methodology nor with the native-speaker teacher in mind. Thus, even if she wanted to use such a text, the native-speaker teacher would find it difficult at best.

The important point is that while all four reasons above offer a good explanation for why an English-only methodology seems so entrenched, none are based on any solid pedagogical factors which would actually help the student to learn natural English. It's as though practical limitations and commercial interests have largely overshadowed the true needs of students.

To review, in order to lay the foundation for re-introducing the use of Japanese into the English classroom, I have thus far tried to show that:

- 1) what are commonly seen as inherent flaws in the grammar-translation method are not necessarily flaws at all and,
- 2) justifications for insisting on an English-only classroom environment are largely groundless rationalizations.

Part IV - A Second Opinion

So once again it is time to re-examine the initial problem. In effect, why can't Japanese students speak English? Is it simply because, as is so commonly assumed, their mother tongue was used in the learning process? Obviously, I don't think so. Yet if *the act of translation* doesn't account for the failure of the grammar-translation method, what does? A clue to this puzzle may come from examining the other side of the grammar-translation equation; namely, grammar.

In the headlong rush to indict translation as the culprit, many educators seem to have forgotten that even in English-only classes, the efficacy of a purely grammatical (or "structural") syllabus has long been in question. Beginning in the mid-1970's with the introduction of "notional-functional" syllabi (Wilkins, 1976), there came a realization that often there is a fundamental difference between the obvious, "refer-

ential" meaning of a phrase, as encoded in its grammatical structure, and its intended, "social" meaning. (Rubin, 1982)

For example, when a stranger asks in the dead of winter in an unheated room, "*Aren't you cold*", more often than not he couldn't care less about the answer. He simply wants you to close the window. Traditionally, a Japanese textbook writer might analyze the grammatical structure of the question and find its grammatical equivalent in Japanese, to be presented in out-of-context, deadly boring fashion to the student. In this particular case, he would have been lucky, for both the referential and social meaning roughly correspond when translated, as in, "*Samukunai?*"

But what about the case when that person's friend walks into the same room with a very sad expression on his face. As an English speaker, what would you say to the friend? Probably, "*What's the matter?*" Now a word-for-word grammatical analysis of that question would have the Japanese student running to the periodic table of chemical elements; not a very useful strategy. The resulting translation would no doubt be grammatically perfect, yet somewhat incomprehensible. Yet given the same situation, there must clearly be an appropriate question in the Japanese language that conveys the same general intended social message; in this case, "*Dō shita no?*" While the grammar is completely different, the meaning is roughly the same. So the moral is: translation is entirely possible so long as the focus is on conveying the intended functional or social meaning. That meaning will be presented in a form which may or may not show any grammatical correspondence between the languages.

Which brings us to the declining fortunes of *contrastive analysis*. This type of research involving the comparisons of two languages has suffered its share of guilt by association. This occurred when its findings were largely used to justify some of the excesses of both the grammar-translation method and audio-lingualism.

Fries set forth his principles in *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (1945), in which the problems of learning a foreign language were attributed to the conflict of different structural systems (i. e. differences between the grammatical and phonological patterns of the native and the target language). Contrastive analysis of the two languages would allow potential problems of interference to be predicted and addressed through carefully prepared teaching materials. (Richards, 1986)

As I will attempt to show later in my call for a new type of bilingual teaching materials, I would agree almost entirely with the above quote, with one major exception. Simply put, the focus of past contrastive analysis was misplaced. What should have been contrasted is not so much the differences in *structural* patterns

between languages (as in “How would one express the ‘present progressive tense’ in Japanese?”) as differences in *functional* phrases (as in “How would one express ‘concern’ or ‘frustration’ in Japanese?”)

Among other reasons for the continuing use of contrastive presentations is the fact that such comparisons are difficult to avoid if there is no transparent relation between a native and target language structure. (Odlin, 1989)

The popular belief is that one uses form and grammar to understand meaning. The truth is probably closer to the opposite: we acquire morphology and syntax because we understand the meaning of utterances. (Lewis, 1993)

Recent research, particularly through such massive computer analyses of the living English language as the COBUILD project, have shown that native speakers communicate most of their intended meanings with a relatively small number of words repackaged in various set phrases. In fact, the most frequent 700 words of English constitute a full 70% of English text (Willis, 1990). Intensive study of the thousands of words and structures beyond these offer only diminishing returns to the student.

What this implies for the Japanese learner of English is that rather than waste hundreds of hours on trying to master obscure grammatical points and rarely used vocabulary items, his time would best be spent on trying to grasp the various uses and meanings of this relatively limited, high-frequency set of items. This philosophy is embodied in what is sometimes called The Lexical Approach:

The Lexical Approach suggests that increasing competence and communicative power are achieved by extending the students’ repertoire of lexical phrases, collocational power, and increasing mastery of the most basic words and structures of the language. It is simply not the case that “advanced” users of the language use ever more complex sentence structures. (Lewis, 1993)

The problem arises in that those relatively few, high-frequency words and phrases are used to express an immense number of functional meanings. The solution to this problem would seem to be to focus on the most common, intended functions. And it is here where the efficacy of using translation in the classroom reappears. In a kind of reverse engineering, communicative bilingual materials can be designed in which those functional messages are first accessed through rough, idiomatic equivalents in the L1, always keeping in mind the unlikelihood of perfect one-to-one correspondences in meaning.

Many people mistakenly think that language learning entails learning to translate *word for word* from the native to the new language. Those who hold this basic misunderstanding of the communication process will find language learning next to impossible! (Rubin, 1982)

The above cautionary notes definitely do *not* mean translation should be avoided. After all, as already mentioned, mental translation is virtually unavoidable (Cohen, 1996). It merely means that the focus of translation has to be changed from the word or structure to the social or functional meaning of the complete, intended message.

We can now better account for why the traditional “grammar-translation” method has largely failed to produce good English speakers. Due in great part to historical forces, techniques designed for one purpose (namely, translating literary and technical, written documents) were simply misapplied or distorted toward a new and very different goal (that of training students in idiomatic English oral communication). By merely re-addressing this imbalance, it should be possible to still make full use of the students’ knowledge *of* and *in* their own mother tongue.

Part V - A Better Prescription

And so we are finally ready to establish the parameters for the proposed **Functional-Translation Method**. It is a “functional” method (as opposed to “grammar-based”), because the emphasis is first on helping the student to understand and convey the meaning of ideas most useful to her. Only then is the appropriate grammar sought out as the framework in which to express that idea. It is a “translation” method because it makes unashamed use of the student’s first language in accomplishing that goal. Planned carefully, it will combine the best of traditional “grammar-translation” with the best of modern “direct, communicative” methods.

What would such a “functional-translation” method look like? Its positive features can perhaps best be seen when contrasted directly with some of the weaknesses of the traditional “grammar-translation” method. These features can be broken down into four key areas. They are summarized in the following four tables:

- 1) Table 1: the **goal** of the method,
- 2) Table 2: the **type of language** being translated,
- 3) Table 3: the **materials** used to apply the method and,
- 4) Table 4: the **classroom procedures**

Table 1: The Goal

Traditional Grammar-Translation	Proposed Functional-Translation
1) To decode technical texts (arcane input)	1) To express one's own ideas (useful output)
2) To elicit only one correct answer	2) To "negotiate meaning" and train for "tolerance of ambiguity"
3) To prepare for absurdly detailed tests	3) To supply with useful language for communication
4) To promote accuracy	4) To promote fluency
5) To develop memorization	5) To encourage experimentation

Table 2: The Type of Language

Traditional Grammar-Translation	Proposed Functional-Translation
1) Word-for-word level	1) Chunked phrase/idea level
2) Referential meaning	2) Social-functional meaning
3) Literary, narrative or technical written text	3) Spoken conversational patterns and dialogues
4) Obsolete, stiff and formal language	4) Current, colloquial, idiomatic language
5) Irrelevant to students' needs and interests	5) Relevant to students' needs and interests
6) Grammar (i.e. Form)	6) Function (i.e. Meaning)
7) Many infrequent, useless words	7) Fewer frequent, useful phrases
8) Too complex and difficult	8) Simple and direct
9) Deductive, rule-driven	9) Inductive, discovery-driven
10) Out-of-context (discrete and indigestible)	10) In-context (embedded and memorable)
11) Bad-test driven	11) Necessary-language driven
12) Language no native-speaker would say	12) Correct, natural language
13) Lexis of formal composition	13) Lexis of conversational management

Using the categories established in these four tables, let us attempt to define the key elements of a Functional-Translation Method.

Its goal is to allow students to learn the useful English *they* want to learn as efficiently and enjoyably as possible. This entails taking advantage of the knowledge they already possess in their first language as well as their innate, higher-order cognitive skills. Ultimately, the goal is to empower students with the mental tools

Table 3: The Materials

Traditional Grammar-Translation	Proposed Functional-Translation
1) Produced by Japanese speakers working alone	1) Produced by Japanese and native-speakers working together
2) Awkward or incorrect English	2) Standard, correct English
3) Explanatory lecture-based, for teacher-fronted presentation	3) Exploratory, collaborative, for student-centered discovery
4) Dull, written-text, reading-based	4) Stimulating, graphically-based
5) Decontextualized translation and fill-in-the-blank exercises	5) Contextualized, bilingual, jigsaw puzzles and information gaps
6) Designed for solo student work	6) Designed for pair or group work

Table 4: The Classroom Procedures

Traditional Grammar-Translation	Proposed Functional-Translation
1) Present-Practice-Produce Paradigm (see Lewis, 1993)	1) Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment Cycle (see Lewis, 1993)
2) Teacher input-driven (What we think they should know)	2) Student-output driven (What they want to say)
3) Teacher-centered lectures	3) Student-centered pair/groupwork
4) Bottom-up, micro-analysis (Focus on the part)	4) Top-down, macro-synthesis (Focus on the whole)
5) After-the-fact analysis	5) Warm-up L1 brainstorming
6) Prepare for intimidating tests	6) Allow for peer and self-correction
7) "What does _____ mean?"	7) "How do you say _____ in English?"

necessary to take over their own learning based on their own needs and interests.

The **type of language** in the syllabus will vary according to the needs of the students; thus it will be relevant, colloquial (or academic, as the case may be), challenging and approached from both sides of the bilingual equation. Modeled on recent trends in "grammar awareness" exercises, "interference awareness" exercises will be devised in which students will be led to discover for themselves differences between the L1 and the L2 in the ways various communicative needs are expressed. A heavy emphasis will be placed on a comparative analysis of the language needed to manage a conversation.

The **materials** (few of which exist yet) will be designed along the lines of the latest in "communicative" theory. Thus, they will be primarily task-based. They

will include such activities as holistic listening exercises, jigsaw puzzles, warm-up brainstorming templates in both the L1 and L2, idea cluster charts, role-plays, and information-gaps. In fact, it could be argued that the most natural information gap of all is the one that exists between what the student knows in the L1 and what he wishes to express in the L2. To the degree possible, most activities will be structured for pair and small-group work. However, unlike prior “communicative” materials, a conscious effort will be made to incorporate the Japanese language as an integral element in the type of information being transferred between students. A sure way to enliven a class would be to make it topic-based where the task is for students to first transfer what they already know, even if that means beginning with the mother tongue.

Thanks to past studies on so-called “interference” and reams of convoluted student essays, we already know which lexical, grammatical and functional items cause students the most problems (Webb, 1988). For example, such seemingly simple, everyday English expressions as, “How have you been?”, “What happened?”, “What’s going on?”, “Where were you born?”, “How tall are you?”, “What’s she like?”, “I’m home”, and “Help yourself” all have, as one would expect, rough equivalents in Japanese, none of which bear any grammatical resemblance to their English counterparts.

Traditionally in many “grammar-translation” classes, such basic expressions were simply not taught as part of the syllabus, being considered too pedestrian for an academic program. By contrast, monolingual English texts presented them as almost too obvious to merit comment. The result: Many Japanese who can read the Wall Street Journal struggle with these expressions. So one approach would be to first present rough Japanese equivalents in a contextual setting, ask for a translation—in effect, set the trap—and then let the learner fall in. Necessity being the mother of invention, he will then struggle to free himself by racking his brain for the English, which when presented by his partner will now, and only now, have lasting meaning. For once, he is “ready” to receive the new-found wisdom.

Bilingual, communicative texts should be so designed as to allow for easy use by any teacher, from the Japanese high school teacher with little or no English-speaking ability to the native-speaker with no Japanese-speaking ability. In other words, the texts should include self-contained, student-accessible translations and answer keys.

In order to take advantage of these new materials, “communicative” **procedures** have to permeate the classroom. The teacher is no longer a lecturer dispensing in-

formation. She is a facilitator organizing the flow of activities and a resource to whom the students can turn for guidance. In the course of those activities, *the content of ideas in Japanese will precede the form of their expression in English.*

Part VI – Sample Bilingual Activities

Thus, for example, it will be totally permissible for any group discussion to begin with a brainstorming session in Japanese (recorded on tape or by class secretaries) to be later converted by the group to the appropriate English. In this regard, many of the procedural elements would resemble those of Community Language Learning, as formulated by Charles Curran and his followers. And for those who would still object that any such class time not spent directly in the target language English would be a waste of time, I would ask, what greater waste of time is there for the student than to listen to a stream of meaningless noise? In the words of Rod Ellis, “teachers and teaching materials must adapt to the learner rather than vice versa” (Ellis, 1990, p.53)

In “Bilingual Dialogues” (see Appendix 1), students are paired. Student A receives an English dialogue while student B receives the Japanese equivalent. Each is given about five minutes to translate the dialogue, line by line, back into the other language. On completion, they compare their translations with the originals of each language, circling in pen any discrepancies and writing the original above their own translation. Then and only then, they act out the dialogue. Among the revealing morals of this exercise: there are many ways to say the same thing!

In “Lost in the Translation” (see Appendix 2), students are seated in circles of up to ten students each, counting off 1 to 10. Even-numbered students each receive a piece of paper with a different English sentence written across the top. Odd-numbered students each receive a piece of paper with an unrelated Japanese sentence written across the top. All sentences are chosen to focus on specific translation problems. Each person reads their sentence, translates it directly below as best they can, folds the top of the paper over so only their translation shows, and passes her paper to the student to her right. The process continues with translations on the same page going back and forth between English and Japanese at least six or seven times. Finally, each student unravels the page they’re left holding and, one by one, reads it aloud to the class, from the top down. Invariably, the ways in which the meaning of the original sentence gets “lost in the translation” leads to enlightening

revelations.

In “The Dumb Interpreter”, four students are seated facing each other in a square. Student A receives the Japanese half of a dialogue, Student B the English half, Student C (“The Dumb Interpreter”) nothing at all, and Student D (“The Know-it-all Computer”) receives both halves. Re-enacting the real life situation wherein a Japanese has to try to interact as best he can with a native English speaker, Student A (the Japanese) tries to express his lines in English, Student C tries to correct him, Student D gives the definitive correction to all, and on and on. Time-consuming, perhaps. Challenging and educational, definitely.

Once the decision is made to allow Japanese back into the classroom, the type and range of activities is limited only by the imaginations of the teacher and students. The atmosphere should be one of cooperative learning, wherein the teacher and students work together to “negotiate meaning” and “resolve ambiguities”; in other words, a real, language learning environment. Students will be encouraged to generate their own materials with the text and teacher merely providing the framework. And given supportive bilingual materials, teachers will be freed to do what they do best (that is, Japanese teachers analyzing sentence structure through traditional grammar-translation techniques, native-speaker teachers using communicative prompts), knowing that in either case, the students have been supplied with the necessary materials to aid in comprehension.

Part VII - Areas for Further Research

As I have tried to show, the question is not if, but rather to what degree, students “think” in the L1 when trying to comprehend and express themselves in the L2. In fact, it could be argued that the road to fluency in a foreign language involves the progressive shortening of the timespan during which that thinking takes place, until it virtually disappears altogether. If one accepts this premise, then any number of potentially interesting experiments should be performed, each designed to narrow in on the exact mental processes that occur as the learner tries to think “directly”, but only partially successfully, in the L2. Specifically, to what degree of detail can we map out “interference”, and more importantly, how can we use that new-found knowledge to design better materials and procedures for learning the L2?

Conclusion

In summary, it should now be apparent that the use of Japanese *in and of itself* in texts and in the classroom is not the problem. For the student, it can act as an obstacle or a tool in the struggle to master English. And like any tool, it can be used skillfully or misused. It can have good or bad effects. Whether it is useful or detrimental depends entirely on the **goal** to which it is applied, the **type of language** being translated, the **materials** used to apply the method, and the **procedures** used in the classroom. In the end, no teacher can learn the language for the student. Each student chooses for herself whether to take on that monumental task. I have tried to show that with careful planning, Japanese can and should be used as an integral element in an English language program. It can supply the student with the essential sense of need to learn the language as well as the tools and motivation to do so effectively. Finally, the teacher can begin his first lesson, "Class. We are here to learn English. Let's do whatever we need to do."

Appendix 1
A Sample, Completed "Bilingual Dialogue"

Directions: This is a typical phone conversation.

Do not look at your partner's paper.

Step 1 (5 Minutes):

a) Partner A: In pencil, translate each line into English.

	電話で ^{Associated Press}	< on telephone >
1	はい、共立女子大学です。	Hello. ^{It's} Kyoritsu women's college.
2	もしもし (AD) News Service の John Smith と申します。ウエシュウー先生を願います。	Hello. I'm John Smith of the AP News Service. Can I speak with Mr. Weschler?
3	申し訳ございません。ただ今、外出しております。	Sorry. He is out now.
4	何時ごろお戻りですか？	Do you know when he comes back? What time he'll be back?
5	ちょっと分かりません。何かご伝言は？	Sorry. I can't guess. It's not sure. Can I take your message?
6	お願いします。お戻りになったら、ウエシュウー先生がノーベル文学賞を受賞したとお伝えて下さい。	Please. Yes. When he gets back, please tell him that Mr. Weschler won the Nobel Literature Prize.
7	また？	Really? Not again?

b) Partner B: In pencil, translate each line into Japanese.

	電話で	On the Phone
1	はい、共立女子大学です。	Hello. Kyoritsu Women's University.
2	もしもし AP ニュースサービスのジョン・スミスです。ウエシュウー先生をお願いします。	Hello. This is John Smith of the AP News Service. Could I speak to Mr. Weschler, please?
3	申し訳ありません。ただ今、外出しております。	I'm sorry. He's not here at the moment.
4	何時ごろお戻りですか？	Oh. Do you know what time he'll be back?
5	ちょっと分かりません。何かご伝言は？	I'm not sure. Can I take a message?
6	お願いします。お戻りになったら、ウエシュウー先生がノーベル文学賞を受賞したとお伝えて下さい。	Yes, if you would, please. When he gets back, please tell him that he just won the Nobel Prize for Literature.
7	また？	Not again?

Appendix 1 (continued)

Step 2 (3 minutes):

Working together, compare each line on both your translations.

In pen, circle any differences with the originals.

Write the original version above yours.

Discuss the differences in pairs.

Step 3 (2 minutes):

Discuss the differences as a class.

Step 4 (2 minutes):

Practice the correct, original English versions in pairs.

Step 5 (2 minutes):

Practice again, substituting in real information about yourselves.

Observations from Results

- 1) There are many, correct ways to say the same thing.
- 2) Many of those ways have little, if any, grammatical correspondence to each other.
- 3) Meaning derives as much from context, tone of voice, gestures and facial expressions as from the content of words.
- 4) "Interference" from the L1 is unavoidable, but awareness of that interference is the first step towards self-correction.
- 5) Lame attempts at humor don't translate.

Appendix 2

A Sample, Completed "Lost in the Translation" Exercise

Directions to Class: Ten students, sit at desks to form a circle.

Individual Directions: Read the sentence at the top of this page. Translate it into English. Fold over the top to hide the original sentence. Pass it to your neighbor on the right, who will translate your sentence back into Japanese... continue folding and passing to your right, each person translating the sentence above.

君のおしゃべりは、もうたくさんだ。
<i>It's too much talking with you.</i>
君と話をしな。やめよ。
<i>I can't get along with you.</i>
私はあなたと一緒にいることができない
<i>I can't stay here with you.</i>

Observations from Results

- 1) There are many ways to interpret the same out-of-context word, phrase or sentence.
- 2) Sometimes, there aren't even semantic equivalents between languages.

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Uses of Japanese in the English Classroom: Introducing the Functional-Translation Method

Robert Weschler

Abstract

For many years, there has been an accepted policy among most native-speaker teachers that only English should be spoken in the English classroom. This paper calls into question the assumptions underlying that policy and attempts to show that there is a rightful place in the classroom for use of the students' mother tongue; in our case, Japanese.

It will be shown that an English-only policy has grown out of false conclusions about the shortcomings of the traditional "grammar-translation" method, as well as false assumptions about the merits of so-called "direct" methods. The focus will be on the four key areas of learning goals, type of language being translated, materials and classroom procedures. In so doing, it will be shown that Japanese can indeed be used as a powerful tool in a new method to be called, "The Functional-Translation Method."

要 約

長年、多くの英語ネイティブ・スピーカー教師の間では、英語の教室内で「英語のみを使用する」という教育方針が受け入れられてきた。本論文は、この教育方針の根底にある前提に対して疑問をなげかけ、教室内で学生の母語（この場合は日本語）を使用することが適切な場面もありうるということを示すものである。

「英語のみを使用する」という教育方針は、伝統的な“Grammar-Translation”方法の欠点と“Direct Method”の利点に対する誤った解釈から生じてきた。

学習目標、使用言語、教材、授業の進行といった重要な4項目に焦点を当てることによって、日本語は“The Functional-Translation Method”という新しい方法の中で、実に強力な道具として使用されうることを明らかにする。

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