

**Importing TESL Methods to JSL Classrooms:
Some Suggestions for Teachers**

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1. Introduction

This paper will discuss the problems of "importing" language teaching methods from English-speaking countries to classrooms teaching Japanese as a second language (JSL). The paper consists of four parts. After the introduction, I will discuss various problems which occur in importing these methods. I will then examine the three levels of language teaching methods and the problems related to the differences in these levels. Finally, I will conclude the paper with some suggestions for JSL teachers who want to import TESL methods through reading.

2. Problems which Occur in Importing Language Teaching Methods

The most popular way for JSL teachers to import teaching methods is to read either the Japanese translation of the books on language teaching methodology originally written in foreign languages or the books written by Japanese that contain information on teaching methods abroad. Table 1 below lists language teaching methodology books originally published in English that have been translated into

Japanese, in the last two decades.

Table 1. Language Teaching Methodology Books Translated into Japanese Between 1972 and 1992

Original (Listed Chronologically)	Japanese Translation
Rivers (1968)	trans. Temman (1972)
Wilkins (1976)	trans. Shimaoka et al.(1984)
Stevick (1976)	trans. Ishida (1988)
Widdowson (1978)	trans. Togo et al. (1991)
Johnson & Morrow (1981)	trans. Ogasawara (1984)
Stevick (1982)	trans. Umeda et al. (1986)
Krashen & Terrell (1983)	trans. Fujimori (1986)
Larsen-Freeman (1986)	trans. Yamazaki, et al. (1990)

2.1. Problems with Japanese Translations

According to Table 1, it normally takes at least three to four years for a book to be translated into Japanese. Although it may seem reasonable, given the difficulties of translation, it is also true that readers with little experience in the field may assume that the year of the Japanese translation's publication is also the year of the original publication, and so believe that the book contains the most recent information available at that time.

Not all books are translated into Japanese to give updated information to the readers. Widdowson's book (1978), for example, was translated and published in 1991, thirteen years after the publication of the original. It seems that this book was translated to

make the "classic" of Communicative language teaching (CLT) accessible to Japanese readers, a fact that many readers do not know. The following sections illustrate various problems that can occur if a reader reads the Japanese translation of Widdowson's book (1978) for the latest source of information available in 1991.

2.1.1. Changes in the Author's Ideas

After publishing Teaching Language as Communication in 1978, Widdowson stated that its title was misleading (1983, p. 215), and that Teaching Language for Communication indicated more accurately his ideas about language teaching. Whereas Teaching Language as Communication refers to the classroom in which the teacher is trying to make his or her students communicate in order to acquire the target language, Teaching Language for Communication corresponds with the classroom in which students are learning the target language in order to be able to communicate with someone in that language. It looks like the latter title better conveys Widdowson's views.

There may be a problem, however. If this Japanese translation (1991) is the reader's first encounter with Widdowson's work, he or she may regard it as his ideas in 1991 and therefore decide to apply them to his or her teaching, even though Widdowson himself has already

revised some of his ideas.

2.1.2. Translation of Titles

Any translation of a book involves the problem of translating its title. The title of the Japanese translation of Widdowson's book is Komyunikeshon no tame no gengo kyouiku (Teaching language for Communication) which more nearly typifies his present ideas about language teaching and which the translators took into account when giving this book this title. But this change may confuse many readers, since the book's contents still presents what Widdowson believed in 1978. In other words, the title contradicts the contents.

Another example is Stevick's Memory, Meaning & Method (1976), which was translated into Japanese in 1988 by Toshiko Ishida and entitled Atarashii gaikokugo kyouiku: Sairento uei no susume (New foreign language teaching: an introduction to the Silent Way).

The Japanese title indicates that this is a book about the Silent Way. However, only one out of ten chapters deals with this particular technique; the rest is devoted to general discussions on learning and memory, and teaching. Classroom techniques other than the Silent Way, such as the Community Language Learning are also treated in the same way that the Silent Way is. Again, the title contradicts the

content. Readers, therefore, are advised to check the title of the original book in order to get a better picture of what they are going to read.

2.1.4. Time Factors

As I mentioned earlier, translation takes time, and this leads to another, related problem. Stevick's book (1976) was translated into Japanese in 1988 as stated earlier, but the Japanese translation of his another book Teaching and Learning Languages (1982), came out in 1986. This means that the order of publication of the originals is not the same as that of the Japanese translations. Readers should be aware of this problem, and thus they should not update their knowledge of Stevick's ideas through the information in his older book.

2.1.5. Bias in Importing Methods

The final point that I would like to make about books translated into Japanese is obvious, but nobody has really talked about it. Very often, books are translated only because the translator is a former student of the author, or vice versa. If someone is coming to Japan to give a talk, his or her books are quickly translated without regard

for the order of their publication. Readers should also know that the books translated into Japanese are not necessarily those highly respected in English-speaking countries and/or the country where the author resides.

2.2. Problems with Translating Terminology

Because the fields of applied linguistics and language teaching are relatively new in Japan, there are many new concepts which do not exist in Japanese. It was not until 1988 when the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (Richards et al. 1985) was translated into Japanese that some standards were established for translating this new terminology. Until the advent of such standards, the multiple Japanese translations of a particular term in English could cause some readers a great confusion. Table 2 below illustrates the lack of consistency in translating terms from English into Japanese.

Table 2. Translation of Sample Terms: A lack of consistency

<p>Total Physical Response (TPR) Zenshin hanno kyoujuhou (Nagara et al. 1989; Larsen-Freeman, trans. by Yamazaki et al. 1990) Zen shintai teki hanno kyoujuhou (Ezoe 1987) Tootaru fijikaru resuponsu (Krashen and Terrell, trans. by Fujimori 1986) Tootaru fijikaru risuponsu (Takamizawa 1989) Total Physical Response (in English) (Ishida 1988)</p> <p>Suggestopedia Anji shiki kyoujuhou (Nagara et al. 1989; Larsen-Freeman, trans. by Yamazaki et al. 1990) Anji teki kyoujuhou (Ezoe 1987) Sajesutopidia (Stevick, trans. by Umeda et al. 1986, Takamizawa 1989) Sajesutopedia (Tanaka 1988)</p>

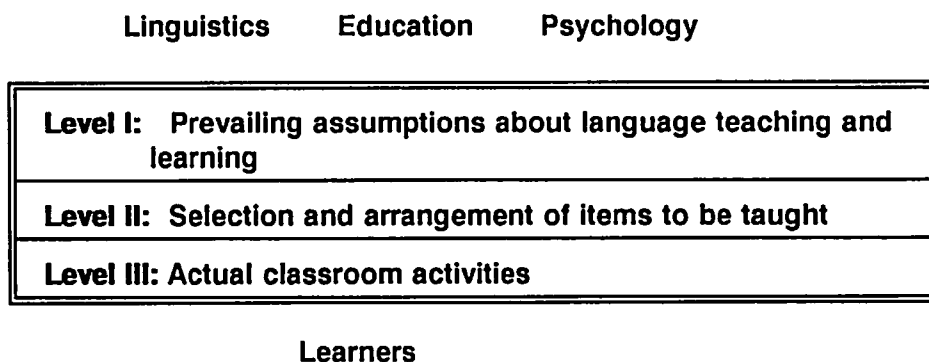
2.3. Summary

In this section, I have presented various possible problems with importing language teaching methods. I would like to stress that when reading a Japanese translation, readers should always know the year of publication of the original version and also the reason that the book was translated into Japanese. Because there is no single correct Japanese equivalent for each linguistic or pedagogical term in English, readers should concentrate instead on the book's contents.

3. Problems with Levels of *Kyoujuhou*

Those who have had formal training in language teaching in English-speaking countries are familiar with the difficulty of translating the Japanese word *kyoujuhou* into English. In a broad sense, it serves as an umbrella term that includes the "approach," "method" or "design," and "technique," or "procedure" of language teaching (cf. Anthony 1963; Richards and Rodgers 1986). In my attempt to translate *kyoujuhou*, I will divide language teaching and learning into three levels, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Levels of Language Teaching and Learning



Level I refers to the prevailing assumptions about language and learning or teaching. Level II refers to how the teacher selects the items to be taught based on the assumptions prevailing at level I and how he or she sequences them; and Level III corresponds to the

actual activities used in the classroom. Note that in a much narrower sense, the word *kyoujuhou* refers only to Level II, or "method" in English.

3.1. Level I: Prevailing Assumptions about Language Teaching and Learning

Any well-established language teaching style is based on particular theories of linguistics, education, and/or psychology. Audiolingualism, which was popular in the 1950s, was based on the belief that learning a language is a habit-formation, a belief derived from behavioral psychology and structural linguistics. In the same way, early Communicative language teaching (CLT) in 1970s was evolved from the assumption that it was important for learners to acquire the meaning and function of the target language in addition to its structure. This theory was based on developments in sociolinguistics in the late 1960s and the notion of communicative competence (cf. Hymes 1967). Clearly, assumptions about language teaching and learning change in accordance with those developments in linguistics, education, and/or psychology on which they are based.

Let me use CLT as an example. Recently, its emphasis shifted from function to interaction; that is, the "negotiation of meaning" has

become the center of focus, because of sociolinguists' increasing interest in discourse analysis. Indeed, the notion of communicative competence has been changing since Hymes' "On Communicative Competence" (1967), and the principal changes are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Communicative Competence

<p>Hymes (1967)</p> <p>Linguistic competence: Knowledge of structure and vocabulary. Communicative competence: Ability to use the language appropriately.</p>
<p>Canale and Swain (1980)</p> <p>Grammatical competence: Knowledge of structure and vocabulary. Sociolinguistic competence: Ability to use the language appropriately. Discourse competence: Knowledge of the conventions of cohesion and rhetorical organization. Strategic competence: Ability to use existing language ability maximally effectively.</p>
<p>Bachman (1989)</p> <p>LANGUAGE COMPETENCE</p> <p>Organizational competence: Ability to control the rules of the language. --<i>Grammatical Competence</i>: Knowledge of structure and vocabulary. --<i>Textual Competence</i>: Knowledge of the conventions of cohesion and rhetorical organization.</p>

Table 3. (Continued)

<p>Pragmatic competence: Ability to determine how the language is actually used in given contexts.</p> <p>--Illocutionary Competence: Knowledge of functions.</p> <p>--Sociolinguistic Competence: Ability to use the language appropriately.</p> <p>STRATEGIC COMPETENCE Ability to use existing language ability maximally effectively.</p> <p>PSYCHOPHYSICAL SKILLS</p>

Level I appears to be very close to the notion of "approach" and is the level that includes the presentation of the proponent's or the teacher's belief about language teaching and learning in general.

3.2. Level II: Selections and Arrangements of Items to Be Taught

This level corresponds to the Japanese word *kyoujuhou* in a narrower sense. It is the stage at which the items to be taught in class are selected and arranged, based on the assumptions prevailing at level I. A small change in the assumptions at level I, will affect what takes place at this level. We often hear the terms "syllabus design" and/or "course design," which refer to Level II. If assumptions about language teaching and learning at Level I were something like "emphasis on function," a notional-functional syllabus would be the most appropriate at Level II. If emphasis on the development of a learner's ability to discuss particular subjects were the prevailing

theory at Level I, a topic syllabus would be the most suitable.

As pointed out earlier, the term "Communicative language teaching" refers to any language teaching evolved from the belief that the development of the learner's communicative competence is the ultimate goal of language teaching. According to Table 3, however, the definition of communicative competence itself has been shifting over the years. As a result, there are many different types of communicative language teaching, with little in common. Consequently, we can now regard them as being based on different assumptions at Level I: They are independent language teaching styles, or *kyoujuhau*, that just happen to have the same label.

3.3. Level III: Actual Classroom Activities

Level III is much more clear-cut than the other two, as refers to what actually takes place in the classroom and is synonymous with "procedure" or "technique". Pattern practice in the Audiolingual method, role-plays, information-gap activities used in CLT all are actual classroom activities at this level. Total Physical Response (TPR) can also be included here. Note that a method at Level II may have more than one technique at Level III.

3.4. Sorry, Wrong Level!

When new ideas about language teaching are introduced to teachers, they often misapply them by choosing the wrong level. The introductory literature on language teaching usually deals with either specific classroom activities at Level III or Levels I and II in combination.

This does not mean that books on specific classroom activities never talk about other levels; however, the discussions of Levels I and II are normally limited to those directly related to the specific cases at Level III.

When a new classroom activity is introduced, often only what takes place in classroom is discussed without including the method and approach that should accompany the activity. For example, teachers attending a TPR demonstration watch the learners reacting to the commands given by the teacher in the target language and believe that the same will happen in their classroom and so try it the next day. But this demonstration may have been of something at Level III. Without sufficient information about the other levels that should accompany this particular classroom activity, these teachers may think that this is a "TPR method" or "TPR approach" and try to conduct their course entirely by using TPR, which would not be successful.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I discussed the problems of importing language teaching methods to JSL classrooms, especially focused on those problems regarding translations, and different interpretations of the levels of *kyoujuhou*. When reading the literature in this field, readers should know the level of language teaching being discussed and also background of translation. In addition, readers should know whether the book was written for language teachers in general or for those teaching a specific language. Finally, I would like to stress that nobody is perfect. Rather than accepting the contents of a book uncritically, we should read them more skeptically, considering how our classroom can benefit most from the ideas we are thinking of importing.

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