A Review of
For College Students: the Beginning of the End of Japanese English

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The book under review consists of an Introduction, twenty-five chapters or a hundred and fifty thickly typed pages of lessons, and ten pages of appendices. The Introduction is a miniature chapter designed to give the learner a general idea of how the twenty-five chapters are organized. The twenty-five chapters are practically identical in organization; they are made up of eight sections. (1) At the outset are four pictures which the authors call "Scenes," followed by four short narratives or conversations that are the verbal versions of the "Scenes." These narratives or conversations are intended for oral-aural exercises, mostly in the form of questions and answers. (2) The Grammar section that follows picks one elementary grammar point and explains it in English, illustrating the point with sample sentences. (3) Next come several of the nine kinds of grammar exercises (Substitution Exercise, Question-and-Answer Exercise, Transformation Exercise, Invention Exercise, Response-Invention Exercise, Context Exercises, Picture Exercise, Brief Essays, and Exercise Scenes) that are related

to the Scenes and Grammar explanation in one way or another. (4) The fourth part of every chapter is called "Common Mistakes," and points out grammar—sometimes vocabulary—mistakes commonly made by Japanese students, and provides some exercises on the point raised. (5) The section called "Related Response Group" is an exercise with slightly longer sentences that further drill the learner on the grammar point raised either in the "Grammar" section or in "Common Mistakes." (4) and (5) are missing in a few of the chapters. (6) Every chapter contains one or two more Conversation(s) that seem to be supplementary material loosely, if at all, related to the earlier narratives and conversations. "Questions" on the content follow each Conversation. (7) The Reading Selection is a passage written in a general or standard writing style varying in length from some 250 to 450 words. It is, in most cases, somewhat related in content to one or more of the earlier narratives or conversations of the chapter. Some of the more difficult words and phrases are explained in English at the end of the Reading Selection. (8) The Review is a short section consisting of a few questions or exercises selected out of many of the earlier sections of the chapter.

The nine appendices include (1) advice "On Writing Compositions," (2) a list of "Suggested Topics for Weekly Compositions" which refer back to each of the twenty-five Chapters, (3) lists of "More Common Mistakes," (4) a list of "Nationality Words," (5) a list of verbs with "Correct Prepositions," (6) several lists of verbs used with *to-* and *-ing* forms respectively, (7) a list of common "Phrasal Verbs," (8) a list of "Irregular Verbs" with conjugated forms, ending with (9) an almost blank map of "the Continental United States."

The book seems to have been written with an inexhaustible amount of enthusiasm and based on a wealth of accumulated and collective teaching

experience with the specific type of students for whom it is written. The present reviewers know of no other comparable text in existence in the recent history of Doshisha University, and in that sense and in many others, this is a welcome attempt indeed. We hope that the present book will be a beginning of a series of enterprises of similar kind.

As the subtitle suggests, the basic goal of the book seems to be remedial—remedial in a number of ways. The most ambitious task undertaken by the authors is to make the patently unattractive remedial work more meaningful for the student than just remedial. To what extent that ambition has been realized is difficult for the present reviewers to say, unless we have access to the student's responses to the text, for it is the students who are in the best position to pass judgment on that.

The subtitle has a way of chasing the reader's mind as he or she goes through the book. A chain of questions arise almost automatically regarding "Japanese English": Is Japanese English undesirable? If so, which part of it is undesirable? What do the authors think Japanese English means? In short, the subtitle has a stimulating, if not provocative, overtone, which persists throughout the book. It is effective in that sense. For instance, the section called "Common Mistakes" in each chapter contains a lot of good explanation, mostly on grammar and vocabulary usage, that a course like this might well offer in one way or other. Some of these "Common Mistakes," however, seem to the present reviewers to stem from insufficient English rather than from Japanese English.

There is a second set of questions that arise inevitably: Is there any part of Japanese English that can be tolerated, or even recommendable as a linguistic passport into the world community? What is American English, not as a national language uniting the American citizens, but as an inter-

national language spoken by non-Americans with or without Americans present? What is or should be the relation between American English as a national language and American English as an international language? When a textbook is of as comprehensive a nature as this one, the basis of what it prescribes and recommends would best be a thoroughly developed sense of direction, a philosophy if you please, as to what the end product is intended to be like. To the extent that that philosophy is congenial with the reader-learner the textbook will succeed in securing the cooperation and learning effort from the student. That philosophy, in short, is the key to success for a book like this one.

Teaching a language is by nature prescriptive, and in consequence, there must be a prescriptive philosophy, conscious or unconscious, behind all teaching material, but for a textbook writer, there is another, equally important task: that of embodying that philosophy in the text. If the theory is that an international language must tolerate numerous non-native versions of that language, and if the material does not include any non-native but tolerably standard models, then the reader might not get to see the philosophy at all. The book under review does include at least one piece of writing by a Japanese student, which is a welcome effort. Handled with care and caution, student writing can be effective teaching material. A student voice on the tapes could also be quite encouraging for the learner.

We presume that the book is designed for an intensive course in oral-aural English with some amount of reading and writing. Since the oral-aural part of language is the least taught in Japan, a good remedial course would be forced to offer a fair amount of it. Since most students have a natural and genuine interest in oral-aural training, it is an excellent idea to combine remedial grammar-diction teaching with the sournd (!) aspect

of English *along with* reading and writing. At present, we have no sound information as to how effective the oral-aural training is in developing a functional reading and writing ability. It certainly must be in some way, but to what extent and in what way are questions that could profitably be answered some day by the profession.

Probably because it is intended for an intensive course and also because the students bring to this course an enormous lot to be remedied, the sheer quantity of the teaching material is another striking characteristic of this book. Under what conditions and circumstances this much material can be covered realistically in one year, and what proportion of the covered material is well digested and retained by the learner are the first questions of those who consider adopting this book. We would like the authors to give us some notion about how to teach with this book.

The total quantity of teaching material is an important factor in pedagogical consideration: it must meet the need and appetite of the students, it must be right for their capacity of digestion and retention, it must help create a sense of gratification and accomplishment. And when all these requirements are met, the text will increase the learner's appetite for further learning. Experience has shown that too much is as bad as too little. There are, of course, individual differences both on the part of the teacher and the student. Perhaps the individual teacher and student should make adjustments out of a text that makes more than enough available for every potential teacher and learner. But then, there must be some indication in the text as to how much is the minimum required for proceeding to the next chapter. Once the text has been tested, there might emerge a general idea as to how much is optimal in terms of the objectives of the entire course or how much is too much for how many. When that general idea is formed, the optimal

amount can be placed in the basic obligatory section of each chapter with the rest of the material grouped in the optional section for the more zealous and needy.

Here, a somewhat far-fetched quotation from the film director René Clair might be instructive. He says that in filming a comedy, a director must think of the time span needed for the audience to be able to laugh comfortably, that is, a scene should last just long enough for the audience to laugh all it wants and not any longer. Once, in one of his films, a scene lasted one and a half to two minutes longer than the laugh, and that awkward silence seemed to him to "last a century." He thus cut that part of the scene, and the result was the successful "I Married a Witch." So far, language textbooks seem to have paid far too little attention to what great leaders of mass art such as film-making have always paid the greatest amount of attention to. There must be a certain quantity of exercises provided for a skill to develop, but the same exercise should not last longer than necessary.

We all know from experience that the tolerance quantity depends a great deal on the nature of the tasks, or more specifically, if the task at hand makes enough sense, a person can be amazingly patient. If, for instance, the drill sentences could be strung together to make some kind of more meaningful whole, a greater number of drill sentences might become bearable than if the same drills consisted of isolated sentences.

The grammar and vocabulary explanations especially under the rubric of "Common Mistakes" are extremely interesting for the teachers to read, for they seem to reveal what native speakers of English are quick to notice in a foreigner's English or insufficiently learned English. Pedagogically, we should consider carefully and probably laboriously just what the best strategy might be to get these points across. Experienced teachers all know

that explaining and drilling do not always eradicate, let alone prevent, the mistakes the students make. Sometimes the students make mistakes despite the fact that they have the pertinent points well planted in their memory. We must make concerted effots to develop insights as to why students repeat the same mistakes despite their knowledge of grammar rules. After that, we must learn to translate those insights into concrete and acceptable exercise procedures. None of this is likely to happen very easily.

Sometimes, detailed explanation of fine grammar points makes the situation worse by further confusing the student (and even the teacher, which is not to be neglected) or by making him more nervous or self-conscious about relatively minute grammar points. This latter case applies to far too many Japanese speakers of English, when they find themselves in real communication situations; so much so in fact that this constitutes a major obstacle in functional use of a foreign language. A textbook writer must be aware of this tendency in the Japanese character and must cope with it. In other words, precisely because fine grammar points suit the Japanese tastes and hurt them most when they fail to observe them, a great deal more insight and tact are needed to invent ways of teaching them without falling into the trap of the Japanese love of studying minute details only for the sake of studying them.

We could, of course, make a fairly long list of sample sentences to be replaced, explanations to be modified, context to be provided for sample sentences, etc., but doing so would, we fear, disclose the same quibbling inclination we have just warned against.

Perhaps native-speaking teachers of English drill their students on fundamental sentence patterns with a belief that the students will start speaking English if and when they have learned those sentence patterns by heart.

If that is the case, a great deal of time and energy might be wasted by making the students repeat what they already know, for a major reason why Japanese students do not say anything in class, in a lot of cases, is not so much that they do not know the sentence patterns, but rather because they want to say something of relevance, for which their overall proficiency and communicative imagination are too limited. Japanese students often feel insulted and become resentful and do not utter a word when they are required to repeat what they consider meaningless—things that have little to add in terms of information or thought—in an artificial situation. An example might illustrate a difference in attitude between English speakers and Japanese. An English speaker who has little knowledge of Japanese might say that he speaks "a little" Japanese, while a Japanese who has learned some English—even when his knowledge of English is better than that of the English-speaker's Japanese—would say he cannot speak English "at all." A textbook writer may well bear this cultural difference in mind, if he intends to make his efforts bear fruit; it is essential to learn to cope with the basic Japanese psychology. The fact that the students cannot speak the target language with comfort should not automatically mean that they should be drilled on the "chitchat type" of questions and answers. These may be necessary to get the student prepared psychologically at the beginning of a class hour, but should last no longer than the bare minimum. The students should quickly be led on to the type of exchange, for instance, that moves them to the reading passage or their own writing, so that creative and intellectual stimulation will always be right there in the drills.

The present reviewers feel that the same sentence patterns as those found in the text could well be taught within a frame of more informative or "meaningful" content regarding, for instance, the English-speaking world.

For example, comparative and superlative adjectives can be taught in conjunction with demographic infomation about the United States, or who did what when can be taught along with events of historical consequence any English-speaking college student might well know. If the drills were coupled with useful historical, geographical, sociological, and cultural information that the student might benefit from knowing, then the student response will less often be "Who cares whether this fictitious character prefers tea or coffee, strong or weak, for his breakfast?"

Experience has shown that students have little tolerance toward language drills unless they are coupled with some kind of intellectual reward, that is, a sense of arriving at something of consequence. It is one thing to argue that they ought to be more realistic and learn to face their present proficiency level when it comes to learning a foreign language, but it is quite another to impose on them the simple mechanical drills that their intelligence and intellectural readiness almost inevitably resist. Since this text is written for a required course, the students have no choice but to undergo a good quantity of the drills provided in the book. The reviewers hope that the instructors concerned will constantly be attentive and remain sensitive to the students' state of mind in assigning drill exercises, for if language drills are to take any effect on the learner, he must understand, accept, and fully cooperate with the spirit with which the drills were designed in the first place.

Most drills are what might be called "modified pattern drills" where key items and/or patterns are provided in the text and the learner is expected to "respond" to the set of stimuli called "prompts" by the authors. They are "modified" pattern drills in that somewhat more guessing is required of the learner as to what the right response might be than in the traditional behav-

iorist pattern drills where the expected response is much more obvious. In this text, the provided set of stimuli is often at quite a distance from the expected response, so that a good deal of work goes into the guessing process. Failure to respond in these cases may be due to slow guessing rather than lack of language proficiency. Most students will go to the recorded tapes to take down the expected responses, which might or might not be what the authors want to encourage them to do. To determine which sets of stimuli are more obscure in this sense, the authors might get suggestions from students.

Partly because the response drills are designed for a pair of students, one asking questions and the other answering them, we notice an unnaturally high frequency of question sentences in general. This may or may not be a bad idea. However, many of the questions require just one straightforward sentence for an answer, and rarely more than two. Also many of the questions are devised for instant verbal responses in rapid succession. Drills of this sort are probably necessary for developing fluency. Now, fluency is one of the most important language skills. In fact, fluency may perhaps be the key element that leads a learner eventually to proficiency. Particularly when we teach our own native tongue to foreign learners, we see fluency standing out as a most serious problem in the students' general proficiency. We have yet to obtain, however, a precise analysis of whether fluency leads to proficiency or proficiency leads to fluency and to what extent and in what way the two are interrelated. In the meantime, native teachers around the world must do their best to develop a personal sensitivity, an evaluation-analysis mechanism, for overall proficiency rather than for superficial fluency. In the long run, solid, intelligible, and somewhat less fluent speech about matters of consequence is worth far more than empty but marvelously fluent chitchat. Also, it is a mark of some pro-

ficiency to be able to form more than two sentences at a time that make some unified sense to the listener. It might be useful, therefore, to develop the drill section of each chapter in such a way that the learner will go from more obvious single-sentence to more challenging several-sentence responses.

The topics that appear in the listening and reading passages are quite familiar to the intended readers. They reflect the authors' close contact with them. Also, the topics are strategically arranged so that the book begins with a description of high school topics, goes through numerous college-level topics and ends with future careers and the employment market. As far as these topics are concerned, the textbook could be used over a longer period of time than one year, all through the college years in fact. Some of these topics probably create more active response from the students than others. Each chapter is organized in such a way that the more successful topics might remain in the future editions and better ones could be substituted for the rest.

It is not very clear to the reviewers how the four oral-aural passages are related and why there have to be four of them in every chapter. If four aspects or views on one topic were placed together, or if the four passages were more clearly graded or varied in grammar, diction, styles, etc., the number of passages and additional conversations might make more sense. The relation between the oral-aural passages and the reading selection is also largely unclear, except that the reading selection is intended to serve as a model of a written style. It would be useful for the students to have clearer indications about the differences between the spoken and written styles, and for that purpose, at least one of the four oral-aural passages might be much more closely related to the reading passage, or vice versa.

In general, the attitude represented in the reading selections is of extreme

caution and reservation. The authors have made very effort possible to avoid ethnocentricism. In some of the reading selections, however, the authors might be able to put forth their views more boldly and clearly, which will make the passage more exciting and, again, more meaningful reading. The writer could, and perhaps should, be identified for each reading selection; the few times this is done, the views tend to be stated more clearly, and it gives a refreshing feeling.

The comprehensive nature is a unique quality of this textbook. That will be the most challenging and demanding characteristic for most teachers who use this text in a classroom. In the final analysis, language learning is a very comprehensive task and might as well be approached as such, although that approach is quite an adventure in itself, at this stage of affairs, into so many unknown spheres of foreign language teaching and learning. The present reviewers are unanimous in wishing to see this endeavor develop into a two-, three- or even four-year program that might allow the students to come up to the proficiency level of their sociological counterparts in the native and non-native English-speaking world.

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