

論文

Drama Teaching Methodology and its Usage in Reduction of Monitor Activity and Removing of Barriers to Second Language Acquisition

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要旨

本稿は、演劇理論とその教授法が、いかに日本の大学の教室環境で用いられるかを論じる。特に演劇理論によって、学生の既習の言語知識とその使用が向上する点を議論する。また、モニターの過度の使用は言語習得を抑制すること、インプット仮説が言語技能の向上に効果を及ぼすことを指摘する。演劇理論は、特にこれまで文法や読解中心の試験対策として英語を学んできた学生に、既習の言語技能を解放し、さらなる言語習得を促す。本論では、学生の既習の言語知識を同定し、それをもとにコミュニケーションスキルへの気づきを引き出すことを提案する。それは、自分自身や自己の技能への気づきが、外国語能力と自己アイデンティティとの統合のための大きなきっかけとなるからである。

Keywords: affective filter (情意フィルター), drama methodology (演劇理論),
input hypothesis (インプット仮説), language acquisition (言語習得),
monitor (モニター)

Abstract

This paper looks at the use of drama methodology and teaching techniques in the Japanese university language classroom. The issue

of students previously learned linguistic knowledge and its use in furthering progress in language acquisition is discussed. The overuse of the monitor, restricting language acquisition and the input hypothesis will be dealt with and the paper will look at its effect on language skill development.

The use of drama teaching methodology will be shown to release previously acquired language skills and lead to further language acquisition in students who have been oriented towards a grammar and textual based entrance examination preparation. The paper suggests that previous knowledge should be identified and used to lead to student awareness of communication skills. It is posited that awareness of self and personal skills and barriers are major factors in integrating foreign language skills into individual identity.

Key Words: affective filter, drama methodology, input hypothesis, language acquisition, monitor

In the Japanese university teaching context, we often find that students arrive in class seemingly eager but unwilling to give opinions, and willing only to respond to set questions delivered in a particular format. They seem unable to venture away from that format. We also find that students' replies are short and given nervously. In the first instance, it seems that a student's English ability is very low, but on looking at examination content and scores on university entrance tests, it seems that this is not the case. In written tests, the students can often achieve good results, but seem to be unable to use their knowledge in a verbal communication situation. We can see that the students lack communication skills, and not English skills and that they are unable to see English as a means of communication. Therefore, in this paper I will consider how to help the students integrate previously learned language into communication.

As the students have studied for at least six years when they enter university the linguistic rules and vocabulary already within the students themselves need to be exposed and reorganised, and not be ignored. Therefore it is important to identify each student's

linguistic identity in order to encourage further progress. Many textbooks encourage pattern and conversation practice but put no emphasis on recognising the student's individual lexical and linguistic stage in English. This is where drama methodology can be used to encourage release of language. It is beneficial to hold a mirror up for the students to make them aware of the natural acquisition of their mother tongue, and to encourage an approach to English similar to that of the natural acquisition of their first language. It is necessary not only for the teacher to see the full identity of the student but for the student to be aware of his or her linguistic identity.

The students put their failure to speak English down to a lexical inability rather than to a lack of awareness of communicative and people skills. There may be some initial regression after changing an overall approach due to confusion related to unexpected teaching methods, but using theories of play (Burton, 1955) and early child development (Piaget, 1974) to provide a nurturing atmosphere, using humor and improvisation will minimalise these. The teacher as a facilitator should release the students' English in front of their eyes, so that they can then be encouraged to reorganize it, and draw on it at appropriate times. For most students, work on English language acquisition psychology, and releasing language previously learned is more important than "teaching" new English. When the students open up, and can literally *see* themselves, using their current English without inhibition, they will be more open to acquiring new input. In my own experience, this does happen and the students are more eager to search for relevant new vocabulary and expressions to help their class room experiences or in a dramatic scene making situation. They do not hesitate to ask for what they need and to request assistance and do not worry about showing their needs to their peers. The result of approaching the language classroom from a different direction is a more natural use of the language already within the students' reference frames.

The Monitor Hypothesis

As linguistic rules form a major part of previous learning in university students, an important consideration in language classes is the Monitor. It is important to analyse the Monitor in Japanese students and relate it to the English language education methods within Japan. It is important because the rate of language acquisition depends on the degree of Monitor interference during production.

According to second language acquisition theory and the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), the Japanese can be seen to be over-users of the Monitor as they tend to monitor all the time. They are continually checking output with their learned conscious knowledge of the second language. The typical qualities are that they speak hesitantly, often self-correct in the middle of utterances, and are so concerned with correcting that they have difficulty with “in the moment” communication. Therefore, It is necessary to plan classes which concentrate on content and not language and include the use of drama methodology to make students active so that they are so involved in the personal relationship and integration areas of communication that they have little time to consider that they are working in a foreign language.

Optimal Monitor usage is usually considered to be a point where knowledge of linguistic rules and self-correction do not interfere with language production. In Japanese students, the learned knowledge is so extensive that it is very difficult to achieve an optimum Monitor usage. Reorganizing the teacher’s attitudes to Monitor usage is necessary. It is necessary to consider the student as a holder of linguistic rules and then to encourage the student to use this language in authentic communication. The rules are often not viewed as part of a communication situation, but as the total communication. We need to help Japanese students to use acquired competence to supplement learned competence. Our students may not be used to this order of procedure and so this may result in the affective filter being raised. Therefore, a major function of the university English teacher is to encourage the lowering of the affective filter resulting from extreme monitor usage. We can do this by making it clear to our students that we are not correcting their English. Praise can be given for involvement in activities rather than language production. Stress should be put on behavioral techniques rather than on linguistics. This requires a distancing from English conversation textbooks and other such lingual-based texts and a realignment with the students everyday experiences and cultural investment identity.

The Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1980) suggests that comprehensible input in language learning will only be received in a low-filter context, and he refers to the requirement for extra-linguistic context, and knowledge of the world in its broad sense. I would suggest that world

knowledge be referred to as life knowledge to include a wider variety of world and cultural experiences for Japanese and to include their own experiences. It is necessary to ask students about their interests, worries and out-of-school lives, so that they can use English in a relevant way to their daily existence. Using drama to enact situations from their homes and their part-time job situations enables them to use English based on their own life experiences and does not require cultural transference as well as language transference.

With the assumption that language acquisition is desirable comes the theory that there is variety in rate and extent of acquisition. The acquisition rate in Japanese at university level will depend on the balance of their current level of knowledge and new input. The new input has to be appropriate to the individual student's personal identity stage. In other words, we have to consider our students' personalities, and the way they view themselves and the way others view them in their own society. We cannot stereotype them by expecting them to be at the same stages of development as American nineteen-year-olds. Some students are ready to give opinions while others have been taught by their teachers and parents that it is not appropriate for them to behave in this way. Some male students, for example are not ready to converse with young females but do not feel awkward with any communication involving a mother figure. Through role play communication may be achieved when such inhibitions are masked through transference analysis of family situations. Recently, many students are ready to clearly show their individuality and show this in various ways by fashion, dying their hair, etc. It is the personal identity stage that we often ignore when considering input. We need to know more about our students and to do this lessons should be centered around situations and value concepts which are safe for them, their interests, fashions and attitudes to things they came into contact with, e.g., the homeless at the stations, places, plants and living things they see every day. Also, It is necessary to balance this with their common cultural values, e.g., a desire to do the same as others, a desire not to ask questions in class as this results in shame from showing misunderstanding, and a desire not to speak first as this appears aggressive.

We must realize that our students need a chance to show their world (Japanese culture) using English, and that we should not impose texts on them about such stereotypes as John and Betty characters. We need to look at our Japanese students at play and in coffee shops and to notice their fashions and interests and to gear our input topics to their

everyday lives in order to get them impassioned and involved so that they forget they are using English. To this end it is preferable to physically involve the students making things, showing things and going out from the classroom and bringing in things that will engage them emotionally rather than encourage detachment and “foreignness”.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The affective filter is the part of the brain’s internal processing system that subconsciously analyses and screens incoming language and communication based on what psychologists call “affect.” In this definition, I think the important word is “subconsciously.” In my Japanese students it is the lack of awareness of this filter kicking into action, which is the filter’s most difficult aspect. The major part of our work as teachers should be to help our students become aware of the subconscious, e.g. by looking in mirrors and at their own photographs, and to help them remove their own barriers to language acquisition so that they can optimize their use of life energy. Many students are unaware of their own barriers and so are unable to attempt to remove them.

As language teachers, we should develop methods that sometimes remove subconscious barriers without the student being aware of them, e.g., this can be done by setting up activities where the students knock down and rebuild physically, so they go through the actual process of reconstruction. Lessons which detract attention from English, the barrier creating element, will encourage a subconscious lowering of affective filters and so allow the input monitor to gain balance. Moreover, we should explain to our students about barriers and the reasons for working in certain ways so that they can consciously work on lowering their own barriers to language production to reduce their anxiety.

The affective filter hypothesis (Dulay and Burt, 1982) shows how affective factors relate to the second language learning acquisition process. In the diagram below, language input can be seen passing through the affective filter before it can be processed by the student’s natural mechanism for language acquisition, the language acquisition device. When comprehensible input can reach this device it is processed and is ready to be used as part of the student’s new acquired language competence. It cannot be processed if it is blocked by the filter, and therefore, will not become part of the student’s language communication skills.

Language
Input ~ Filter ~ Acquisition ~ Acquired Competence
Device

Dulay and Burt often refer to the affective filter in the singular, but I feel that the term should be used in the plural, as there are numerous filters that overlap at the same time. These may be anxiety (in my students related to fear of failure), family pressure, fear of teacher, fear of being singled out, or quite simply fatigue, (in Japanese students, due to part-time job commitments or long hours of travel to school).

The affective filter hypothesis implies that we should not only supply comprehensible input, but also create a situation that encourages a low filter. Stevick (1976) posits that classrooms with low filters are those that promote low anxiety among students, and as is most important in Japanese students, keep students from “being on the defensive.”

In Japan, acquisition techniques have not been employed through the high school level. Students enter university with an affinity to the Grammar Translation Method, rather than possessing an inbred tendency to use their natural language acquisition skills. Rote learning of grammar rules has been done over at least six years in compulsory English classes, and students have been tested at various points in their educational careers, but only in the form of written reproduction. The output of verbal communication has not been tested or encouraged and students are unable to produce language easily in natural communication situations.

The tendency in a native speaker’s university English class in Japan, is to immediately push students into unfamiliar territory without explanation (students are required to chat freely, give opinions, comment in front of the class or asked to perform skits). This often ignores each student’s personal barriers, which prevent usage of previous learned language rules. It can also result in a seemingly external lowering of the filter but an internal confusion accentuated because students will not admit their lack of understanding in the language classroom. This also results only in temporary success but not long term acquisition. Students often hide their insecurity behind the external front of the statement, “We enjoy conversation with foreigners.” as if this were different from conversations with friends.

The result is that the student feels inadequate in future instantaneous language production contexts after graduation. When previous patterns or whole conversations are

reproduced intact, the student feels successful, but when the context is changed or parts of learned linguistic sets are required, the student flounders. In my classes I have found that stressing content, in-the-moment experiences, and action through drama, break down this barrier and therefore, reduce the raising of the affective filter.

Research by Krashen (1980) posits that various affective filter variables relate to success in second language acquisition and places these in three categories:

Motivation—Students with high motivation tend to do better in second language acquisition.

In Japanese students, there may be a lack of motivation due to a feeling of lack of necessity for the language or having no practical use for the language, i.e. no chance to go abroad and meet foreigners, or from saturation due to rote learning, exam fear, etc.

Self-confidence—Students with a good self-image and self-esteem do better than students without.

While the Japanese do often have a positive self-image, their culture encourages them to deny this verbally. They will often say, “I’m not good at ...” as a matter of protocol. To deny the value of the self is in fact a way of increasing the value of self by *amae*, indulgence (Doi, 1973). In fact, in Japan, verbal patterns suggesting a negative self-image are considered signs of self-esteem. Indeed, humility is considered to be the quality of someone with a positive self-image. Therefore, activities that involve total self-esteem building or conversations involving immodesty or total exuberance may be totally “foreign” to the point that they cannot encourage internalising of the language experience but only increase detachment and performance rather than involved language production. It is therefore important to distinguish between linguistic humility related to self-esteem and linguistic hesitance based on a poor English esteem.

Anxiety—Low anxiety is conducive to language learning.

Krashen (1995) with Naimon, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco (1978) suggest that the effect of low anxiety levels are particularly relevant when considering language as a communicative skill rather than a learned reproduction of sounds and rules.

Japanese are particularly aware of surroundings and peer pressure to conform, so in reducing anxiety levels, it is particularly important to consider inner culture group conformity. Any activity encouraging separatism or individualism may in itself increase anxiety. Requesting responses from individuals rather than groups is often an anxiety provoking action in Japan. Therefore, one of the strongest affective filters in our students

is peer group identification. The individual student cannot be seen to question the teacher or to fail to understand. Therefore, the language classes should be student-centred and student evaluated and the students should set the level of language production guided by the teacher rather than be controlled totally by the teacher or text. This is achieved by giving freedom from required language production. For example in a “show and tell” style class a student can feel or touch and pass objects rather than talk about them if they wish. The use of objects, sounds, music and food, etc. should be central to lesson experiences and opting out should be treated as an option rather than a negative action, and in my experience this results in chosen participation at a later stage.

Native speakers often forget that in Japan it is not the lack of knowledge of English that raises the affective filter, but anxiety, the lack of motivation, or self-confidence that restricts communication. We have to consider the individual student as a person with a “personal social identity” (social self-image), and “communicator identity,” (image in relation to others), in any communicative verbal practice. We have to work to reduce barriers to language acquisition and production. In the next section I will explain these barriers and suggest ways to remove them.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN THE CLASSROOM

The English teacher at university entrance level rarely approaches his or her work from the point of view of analyzing barriers. These barriers have been put in place by previous language learning experiences and society’s attitudes to pedagogy and foreign language learning in general. Concrete “here and now” topics are essential for language acquisition, e.g. the classroom is actually put into disarray and students must tidy up and discuss how to go about this; groups are sent out to carry out various tasks and must come back with attained information. Many teachers use patterns from English conversation texts without applying them to a meaningful context in the students’ lives in the here and now.

In Japan, some of the common barriers to language acquisition are more easily recognizable than in most countries due to cultural conformity, but many students are unaware of their own barriers to language learning. Therefore, the first work I do in my classes is to encourage students to list their own personal barriers. Students list their barriers after a simple explanation and question and answer routine, involving questions

such as;

Do you enjoy speaking English? Why? Why not?

Why are you afraid of making mistakes?” and statements of support are introduced such as;

Remember no one cares if you make mistakes.

Other students are happy if you ask questions because it helps them.

Some barriers to speaking English my students listed are:

“ Negative thoughts that I can’t do.”

“ I’m afraid of mistakes when I learn with other students.”

“ I’m ashamed of making mistakes.”

“ When I think the lecture is no use for my future.”

“ In the class, I do not like making a mistake and being pointed out in the presence.”

“ If I have the class whose teacher I don’t like, I feel stupid, before class begins.”

“When I have a big anxiety, I can’t hear the teacher. I can’t think anything.”

“ I don’t remember how to do the grammar.”

“ I am not good at solving question quickly, it barriers to speaking English.”

Some students are simply satisfied by comments referring to their shyness, lack of knowledge, and inability in language production. However, they are rarely aware of why they are shy, etc. These reasons can be discovered as the term progresses, so students should keep adding detail to their barrier lists, and should note their progress in breaking down the barriers. Further work on barrier breaking in the practical context can be done by the teacher on observing and analyzing students’ discoveries.

Another fundamental problem in the language classroom, which actually occurs before the student enters the class, is that the labeling of the class as “English” creates a barrier to language usage. Students in Japan have a particular attitude and reaction to the label “English,” as they relate it to a demand for perfection of utterances, accuracy, grammatically correct sentence structure, and the necessity to achieve high scores or even as, quite simply, a time for chatting with a foreigner. So, one of the ways to remove a major barrier to language acquisition is to re-name the language class and to label it more particularly to its life-value content, e.g., “Meeting People” or “Relationships with People with Different Languages.” A class entitled “How do others think?” or “Yourself and

Beyond,” would be much more effective in preparing the student to consider the receiver and not only the sender of a communicative message. These titles would also suggest new horizons to the students.

Another problem with the English language classroom is that there is a suggestion of a lack of reality in the label, and the student’s behavior is often found to be unreal and unnatural in the language classroom. Therefore, one of the major requirements of a communicative approach language class in a Japanese university is for the student to be encouraged to bring her or himself into the classroom. Students need to be aware of themselves, their emotions, their natural potentials, and capabilities and to use these to produce language. Drama rehearsal techniques and improvisation can be used to promote these qualities within a lesson.

It is drama methodology, the main purpose of which is to find the “why” of life and to discover the individual, which would be particularly beneficial in the initial stages in the Japanese university, language classroom. One of the mistakes a native speaker makes on first arriving in Japan is to presume a lack of individuality because of superficial use of accepted speech patterns and uniformity. Recently, with the reorganization of Japan and the influx of world knowledge through the Internet, and the watering down of traditional customs and values in young people, individuals are looking for new beliefs and values on which to base their lives. Therefore, this is the ideal time to approach the teaching of English through drama in this analytical and therapeutical way. Krashen (1980) refers to a student “finding himself” and thus gaining more self-confidence and self-assurance. Through drama we can help our students to find themselves, so that they can present their identity to others rather than simply draw on others.

CHOOSING A TEACHING METHOD AIMED AT LOWERING AFFECTIVE FILTERS AND BARRIERS

It is vital that the input in an English class is interesting and relevant, and that the language study element of the classroom should not be dominant (Krashen, 1980). One of the main difficulties for teachers is introducing topics which they feel will be relevant to the students, especially in the early stages of a course where the students’ goals, interests and backgrounds differ tremendously from those of the teacher’s. It seems especially difficult for the foreign teacher in Japan to gain information on young Japanese people’s

interests and thoughts without spending considerable time in the host country. However, a few hours watching and note taking in a university coffee shop or cafeteria will give the teacher plenty of information.

We should also remember that unlike ourselves as educators, most students have no interest in linguistics and language derivatives. However, a point that the student and foreign teacher have in common is that of life experience. Even though they are different nationalities, they share common emotions, desires, frustrations, and joys. Therefore, a starting point in educating students from a different culture is that of common human emotions. Finding out *what* the students find joyful or sad should be a major part of the native speaker's observation work in order to enable the teacher to evoke these emotions in the classroom. A teacher often expects the students to react to situations in the same way as they do. In drama methodology we try to observe and evoke these emotions rather than impose them through our own concepts of humor, etc.

Stevick (1976) suggests that many students in a language class are put on the defensive and shows that teaching methodology should not merely reveal weaknesses but should help the student acquire more confidence. In other words, the affective filter should be kept low, keeping the student open to input. One of the main ways to do this is to supply comprehensible input focused on the message and not the form. If the subject being studied is of interest and provides a source of enjoyment in itself, the pressure of language learning will be removed. So activities based on "things I like, my favorite place, my favorite music," etc., are preferable. Krashen (1980: 74) writes, "I think a desirable goal is that the student forget in a sense, that the message is actually encoded in another language." This is also another argument for the use of emotional experiences in the classroom rather than the use of false situational language practice.

Stevick (1980) also suggests that the teacher should not insist on early language production, but should wait until the student is ready. It is argued that the Total Physical Response Method allows students to avoid early language production and so reduces the filter. However, it only does so in this one area. We must not consider that students producing language when they are ready is a similar concept to that of using natural patterns of communication possessed from childhood.

Students should be encouraged to experience and to look at themselves as human beings with natural rhythms, physical qualities and powers, and should be encouraged to be aware of the living environment that surrounds them. The initial role of the foreign

language teacher in Japan is to help students to see and hear life patterns. Within this realization comes an awareness of silence and stillness as a productive force, rather than it just being a gap in communication. Students are often unaware of their use of silence in English classes and therefore cannot see how to reorganize it to create positive communication.

Also acquisition research tells us that errors in early language production are inevitable and therefore, should be accepted as such. Problems with the students inherent grammatical training are very evident at the university level where the filter created by the desire to be grammatically accurate comes into action immediately the student speaks. Error correction has the immediate effect of putting the student on the defensive. Therefore, it is quite obvious that the Grammar Translation Method is a method quite contrary to a search for an approach devoted to lowering affective filters. The methodology of the audio-lingual method, using drills and repetition is also contrary to a methodology aimed at lowering students' affective filters. However, repetition by the teacher in a correct form to reiterate content is often not seen as correction, but is viewed as reinforcement and can be used to lower affective filters.

Another element, which raises the affective filter, is a method requiring the instantaneous reproduction of language. This is often required in the so-called "English Conversation" class in Japan and while many foreign teachers lower the affective filter through creating a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, they at the same time heighten the affective filter by demanding instant conversations or group discussions. Another demand of the English conversation class can be to require performance in front of the class, which in itself is barrier creating. Language lessons should require involvement, a necessary quality of drama classes, but not performance.

The Natural Approach could be considered as the method most true to the input hypothesis and could be thought to reduce sources of anxiety and tension. While this is very true, the Natural Approach tends to avoid the issue of creation of natural patterns of acquisition. Students are rarely allowed the freedom to produce language as and when they think necessary, according to their natural emotions. In considering a suitable method for teaching Japanese university students, we should be careful to analyze what approaches and methods do not cover as well as looking at what they do cover. It is very easy to be shortsighted and ignore missing elements.

Suggestopedia is an approach seemingly aimed at lowering the affective filter.

However, the authority of the teacher is considered central to the flow of the classroom. In Japan, the authority of the teacher is also a strong factor in raising the affective filter. Therefore, while a suggestopedia approach may be suitable in a teaching context, adjusting the role of the teacher is essential. According to drama methodology, the teacher can play an authoritative role in an improvisation, e.g., the teacher can keep control by being a conductor collecting tickets while the students experience an improvisation on the train, or the teacher could be a policeman dispensing a group of homeless or could be one of the homeless themselves.

In Japan, another area rarely discussed is the administration of homework. Often homework is viewed as an appendage and adds barriers to those set up in class. We must remember that we should support an affective filter reduction approach used in the classroom by setting homework related to the observation of people and surroundings. Work related to observing surroundings is preferable to that which stresses language practice, and revision for testing.

Having looked at other approaches to teaching language, and the role of homework, I would propose a teaching methodology for Japanese university students based on the criteria below, which have their roots in the drama methodology of Copeau (Rudlin 1986), Stanislavski (1924), Burton (1955) and Brook (1972), and their methods for training truthful and natural actors based on the natural development stages of young human beings and their tendency to play.

Drama Methodology in the Language Classroom

1. Input is based on opening the eyes of the students to themselves, and their own natural body-flow and rhythms, co-ordination, balance of verbal and non-verbal skills, and their relationship with surroundings and space.
2. Input is based on giving students awareness of their own vocal cavities and ability to change flow of sound, volume and pitch.
3. Input is based on freeing human emotions, joys, desires and frustrations.
4. Language production occurs as and when the students feel ready, and instantaneous production is not required.
5. Input is based on the natural instinct to play.
6. Homework should be related to awareness of birthplace, environment, and empathy

through observation of others, to link the classroom with reality and should not be linked to language practice.

7. Performance is not required unless students really insist on showing their work.
8. The teacher acts as a mirror or as a support means.
9. The class concentrates on “in-the-moment experience” and not contrived projections.
10. All language production in the students is a result of the above. The above should not develop from language practice activities.

I would suggest that the above criteria be used as the basis for English courses with university students, and used effectively will open up the students' previous learned language skills and will encourage rapport and freedom within the classroom. Work on recognizing and removing the students' barriers to English usage and spontaneity should be of prime importance. Teachers will need to practice with drama methods and the methodology involves a great deal of risk and spontaneous decision making by the teacher but the key to success is observation and fine tuning during the class and the development of great sensitivity to non-verbal messages from the students during the initial stages. Progress may also not be visible initially but will lead to a more natural usage of English communication in the long term.

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