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# Ways; Socio-Cultural Aspects of TESL in Japan

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WAYS; SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TESL IN JAPAN

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WAYS; SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TESL IN JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to present aspects of the Japanese society and culture which may directly or indirectly affect the ESL class, specifically in a Japanese college or university. An analysis of these facts and their relevance in the ESL class and teaching techniques which have been used to meet the specific needs of the Japanese ESL students are also given.

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## Introduction

"All in One and One in All." The noted Buddhist scholar, Daisetz T. Suzuki interprets this phrase as "what is is" which is the final fact of experience. He also states that this phrase is an "intuitive or experiential understanding of Reality which has been verbally formulated."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly John Dewey, in Philosophy of Education, states "human is as human does" in his discussion of human nature and scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

I believe that these two statements contain the essence of the philosophy underlying experiential learning. Experiential learning has been the foundation of my personal learning process. It is an ongoing cycle of reflection and evaluation of my life as an individual, as a non-Japanese member in the Japanese society, and as a teacher of ESL in Japan.

<sup>1</sup> Suzuki Daisetz T., Zen and Japanese Culture (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Dewey John, Philosophy of Education Problems of Men (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adam & Co., 1975), p. 163.

In this paper, I would like to present some of my observations and experiences of the social and cultural aspects of Japan and the Japanese which I believe may directly or indirectly affect the ESL classroom, specifically in a Japanese college or university. These observations and experiences have been encountered as a teacher of Freshmen English in Japan at Kanazawa Institute of Technology, a four year college with an enrollement of approximately 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students. I would also like to share these observations with you, seen through the eyes and mind of a bilingual-bicultural member of both the Japanese and American society.

#### The Vertical Society

The Japanese society is described as a "vertical society" by Chie Nakane in her comprehensive survey of the society in Japanese Society. In the "vertical society" there is a relationship similar to a parent (superior) and child (inferior), rather than a sibling (equal) and sibling (equal) which exists in a "horizontal society" such as in the American society.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Nakane Chie, Japanese Society (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), p. 23.

The vertical society is highly structured and hierarchical. In the Japanese society, there is a prescribed niche for each individual but the focus is placed upon the union of individuals, the group, rather than the individual.<sup>4</sup>

As a member of this vertical society, a Japanese student in our ESL class may not only be confronted by a foreign language, but also by the assumptions and values of another society brought into the classroom through the language and the teacher. Condon defines values as that which members of society believe is good in contrast to beliefs which society believes is true.<sup>5</sup>

For some students this is a welcome opportunity to explore another society and allows them to leave the prescribed roles of their own society. However, for others, this may be an intimidating, threatening experience.

Let us now proceed to examine several elements of the socio-cultural aspects of this vertical Japanese society in further detail.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to Reischauer Edwin O., The Japanese (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 146-156 for a detailed discussion of individuality in the Japanese society.

<sup>5</sup> Condon John C., Intercultural Encounters with Japan (Tokyo: The Simul Press, 1974), p. 136.



### Freedom and Structure

It is essential for the teacher to recognize the influence structure plays in a Japanese student's life. It may be a very new experience for many students to be placed in an unstructured environment which may be created in an ESL class. In such an environment where creativity is stressed, the student is required to become an active participant rather than a passive receiver of knowledge. This change may cause confusion, conflict, resistance, and/or insecurity in the student.

The structured education process the Japanese student has been accustomed to and the process involved in successfully emerging from this system entails dependency on "the correct answer". This has lead many students to become extremely careful to produce only "the correct answer". This inclination and dependency on the source of correct answers through books and teachers, may cause the lack of a creative spirit which the non-Japanese teacher may seek or expect in the class. This cautiousness and dependency may also cause some discomfoting silence and lack of spontanaeity.

The structure of the Japanese language must also be considered to have an influence upon the

student's attitudes towards the way to learn a language. The Japanese writing system is composed of forty-six phonetic symbols "hiragana" used in the writing of Japanese words and another forty-six symbols "katakana" used in the same manner as italics is used in English and for the writing of foreign words. Additionally, the Chinese ideographs, "kanji" is also incorporated in the writing system. This is further complicated by various readings of each character. The Japanese Ministry of Education requires the students to know eight-hundred-eighty-one "kanjis" by the end of elementary school and 1,850 "kanjis" by the end of high school. A major portion of education is devoted to the memorization of writing system. This attitude towards "memorizing" the language, a very structured process, is then applied by many students and teachers to the learning of another language. For some, learning is equated to memorizing. Thus this aspect of structure also holds various implications and repercussions in the ESL classes.

Let us now proceed to examine the influence of structure upon the individual.

#### Group and Individual

Descarte once said "I think; therefore, I am." This, I believe is one of the basic principles of the Western civilization. In Japan, it is more appropriate to say "We think; therefore, we are."

The following anecdote from my personal experience may illustrate a conflict caused by the friction between freedom and structure, and group and individual:

I attended a multi-national, parochial kindergarten in Japan and was under the care of a Japanese teacher in the art class. We drew pictures of "the house." We all looked at a sample drawn by the teacher and drew the house. We received a gold star if our pictures resembled the sample; however, a spontaneous stroke of artistic creativity merited a black star.

After kindergarten, I was transferred to a school for Americans in Japan. My parents felt that my command of English was poor since I was speaking Japanese at home and at school. At the American school only English was used as a medium of instruction.

I can still vividly recall the dread of going to school. As I walked to the bus-stop, I used to envision an enormous vitamin pill which would give me instant fluency in English. What I hated more than just saying anything in English was when the teacher looked directly at me and asked the dreadful question "What do you think?" I specifically remember a horrible homework exercise where I had to draw "My Own Monster."

I was not only confronting a language problem but a set of new values. Similarly, students in our ESL class may not only be struggling with the language but may be groping within a new value system. The

aversion to English may not only be an aversion to the language but a reaction or disorientation to the new values.

Japanese society and the Japanese education system places more emphasis on group cooperation than individual competition.<sup>6</sup> Thus a student accustomed to such values may not readily be willing or able to function individually.

This group consciousness and structure can be incorporated and applied in various ways in the ESL class. Much group work may be encouraged with structured tasks for the group. The teacher may consciously form tasks with both the group and the individual in mind, and create tasks which allows for individual freedom within the group. In my experience with a class of thirty students, this has been a necessity and a mutually agreeable situation for both the students and the teacher.

For example, I assigned two oral class presentations during the first semester in lieu of a final examination. The first presentation was to be given in the beginning of the semester and the second one at the end of the semester. These presentations had been designed to

<sup>6</sup> Reischauer Edwin O., The Japanese (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 127.

familiarize the students with the class and to draw out the students as individuals.

The first presentation was a group presentation of their "hometown." The class was divided into several groups according to their place of origin. This not only familiarized the individual students with one another but drew upon the established bond of common origin which readily gave the group a sense of unity.

The objective of each group was to present the "hometown" to the class. Each individual within the group was required to speak for about three minutes. The content was to be decided by the group but prior to the presentation by the class, the teacher gave a model presentation and reviewed some vocabulary and structure items in the form of an oral review with a handout.

Thus given the balance between group and individual work, and freedom and structure, the overall class presentations were successful. Students appeared to be relaxed as a group during the presentation. Something about the individual students was also shared with the class.

Between the first and second oral presentations, I consciously designed a curriculum which incorporated a balance of freedom and structure and group and individual work. However, towards the end of the semester my emphasis gradually shifted towards the

individual to prepare the students for the second oral presentation which was to be done individually.

I have found more individuality expressed by the students in their written assignments than in oral class work. I have been pleasingly surprised to find another facet of a student revealed in writing in the privacy of the written assignments. Part of the cause of this expression may be the fact that more Japanese students are proficient in written skills than in verbal skills. However, I believe the major factor lies in the socio-cultural aspect of group awareness.

The student sees himself as a member of the group (class) thus his individuality may be suppressed during class. I have asked some students, in a non-classroom environment, why they do not express their opinions more openly in class and have often received the reply, "Me da chi taku nai" ( I don't want to stand out).

There have been incidents where the entire class "forgets" the homework. In actuality, a few students have completed the work but when the majority did not complete it, the individuals sacrifice their work to protect the harmony and unity of the class as a whole.

The importance of group awareness versus that of the individual constitutes the basic building block of the vertical Japanese societal structure.

Let us now continue to examine the element of form which plays a vital function in the maintenance of order within the system.

#### Form

The Japanese tea ceremony illustrates the ultimate in the expression of value placed upon form in the society. Each procedure requires the "correct" form in the process of drinking and serving tea. This formal ritual has been developed to a refined form of art which is not reserved exclusively for the elite minority but is valued, practiced, and/or recognized by the majority of society.

Nyozekan Hasegawa states in The Japanese Character:

"That the Japanese civilization is a civilization of daily life can be deduced from the particular type of sensibility which is manifest in Japanese cultural form in all their aspects. To put conclusions first, I believe that the principle underlying these cultural form is the control of feeling."<sup>7</sup>

All the traditional arts of Japan, martial arts, pottery, brush painting, etc., and various forms of discipline, ie., the way of Zen Buddhism contain strict

<sup>7</sup>Hasegawa Nyozekan, The Japanese Character (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1982), p.29.

rules of conduct (form) which requires the control of feelings. This control is necessary to guide the individual towards removal of ego which is the major obstacle to attainment of true understanding of the art or discipline.

This relationship of form and control of feeling is also evident in the daily life of the Japanese. Foreigners may encounter difficulties in determining the real emotional response of the Japanese due to the suppression of personal feelings by various constraints set by societal values.<sup>8</sup>

Let us now examine how this value placed on form permeates the Japanese society in other ways which affect our ESL classroom by focussing on the elements of form; specifically, the role, image, "haji", and "honne" and "tatemae".

#### Role

The role of the respective members of society are more clearly defined in Japanese society than in American society. There is space for freedom of individual expression within the framework of the role; however, disregard for the prescribed duties of the

<sup>8</sup> Refer to Barnlund Dean C., Public and Private Self in Japan and the United States (Tokyo: The Simul Press, 1975) for a detailed discussion of this relationship between form and control of feeling.



role may cause problems.

In view of the teacher-student role model of Japanese society, the teacher is an authoritative, active transmitter of knowledge whereas the student is the subordinate, passive receiver of the knowledge.

Conflicts and frustrations may be caused by the clash of the Japanese student's expectations of the teacher and the non-Japanese teacher's expectations of the students in view of the respective role models which have been formulated.

A student jokingly expressed his shocking experience of a Silent Way class session he had encountered in a previous semester.<sup>9</sup> "The teacher was making all kinds of wierd noises, playing with the little sticks!"

Another student was seriously concerned about the "teacher" who never really taught the students.

In both cases, the student's expectations of the teacher was not fulfilled. Subsequently the student's reaction was one of disorientation which took the form of ridicule and loss of confidence in the teacher.

<sup>9</sup> The Silent Way is a language teaching method developed by Caleb Gattegno in which the student is required to produce the verbal utterances and/or deduce the grammatical rules while the teacher remains silent as much as possible by non-verbally directing the students through the use of rods, sound-color charts, gestures, etc. See Stevick Earl W., Teaching Languages A Way and Ways (Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1980) pp.37-64.

The role of the teacher may also encompass some non-pedagogical aspects such as the teacher's appearance which is incorporated in the element of image.

#### Image

It has been my choice to attempt to fit the image of a lecturer at college. Therefore, I have invested a portion of my salary in a "teaching wardrobe" which consists of conservatively styled and colored blouses and skirts. It has been my conscious choice to take these actions initially upon arrival at school. "Dai-ichi-insho" or first impression, leaves a lasting imprint upon many Japanese minds. Consequently, it is important to be aware that the image a teacher creates of him/herself is not only a reflection of him/her but also a reflection of the school he/she is affiliated with. The image he/she creates on the first day of school, in the first class, during the first semester, or the first year may have a lasting effect upon his/her future.

The image the students have of themselves also has an influence on the ESL class. A popular television commercial used to portray a rugged, handsome man, beer in hand, in solitude:

"Otoko wa damatte...Beeru." (A man in silence... Beer).

This commercial is a reflection of the popular image of the Japanese man as a taciturn stoic. Verbosity is not a highly valued attribute in the Japanese society, especially for men.

Masao Kunihiro states that the "art of silence in Japan can be traced back to Zen Buddhism which idealized the vulgarity of verbalization."<sup>10</sup>

The non-Japanese teacher may be exasperated by the silence and expressionless faces of some male students. The terse comments and apparent apathetic attitudes of these students may partly be due to this image identification.

Conflicts may arise upon the breach of, or disregard for, these aspects of forms, by causing someone "haji" or shame.

### "Haji"

One of the social control systems inherent in the Western society is the concept of "sin". However, in the Japanese society the equivalent of "sin" may be "shame" or "haji". This concept of "haji" has been a very effective means of social control in Japan due

<sup>10</sup> Kunihiro Masao, "Indigenous Barriers to Communication." Japan Interpreter, 8,1, 1973. p. 101. This concept is challenged by Andrew Miller in Japan's Modern Myth The Language and Beyond, chapter 5, "The Antimyth of Silence" (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1982), pp. 84-101.

to the "closeness" of the people caused by the inevitable limitation of natural geographical space.

I remember as a child being scolded by my Japanese mother to be quiet or not to cry by the severe tone in her voice and the phrase "Hazukashii desu yo." (It's shameful). "Mawari no hito ga doo omoi masuka?" (What would others think of you/us?).

The group consciousness reinforces the value placed upon the proper image and role one is to perform in the society; thus, the ultimate in reprimand or embarrassment is caused by shame or "losing one's face", in society's eyes.

Some role play situations may be such a breach of one's respective role or image and the hesitancy displayed by some students may be considered with this idea of "haji" in mind. Although the situation may be a seemingly amusing, light one to a non-Japanese observer, the Japanese students may be facing a more serious confrontation. Usually, role play of males portraying females or vice versa is not a major problem for most students. However choosing a very "macho" male student to portray a female role is an example where role playing would transgress this idea of "haji". Thus, the teacher should be sensitive and careful in selecting the individuals for role playing.

Another factor which may contribute to the inhibition of the student's action in class may stem from the interaction of "honne" and "tatemae".

"Honne" and "Tatemae"

Lebra defines "honne" as "one's natural, real or inner wishes and proclivities, whereas "tatemae" refers to the standard, principle, or rule by which one is bound at least outwardly."<sup>11</sup>

To maintain the respective role or image, one may be required to create a "tatemae" or "front" rather than reveal one's "honne" or true feelings in public. The inability to create a "tatemae" or disregard for it may be seen as a sign of immaturity or crudeness.

Consequently, a teacher may be flustered by the uniform, monotonous set of responses given by the students when trying to elicit opinions of individual students. Some students may not be familiar or comfortable in openly revealing the "honne" in public. It would be more appropriate to maintain

<sup>11</sup> Lebra Takie Sugiyama, Japanese Patterns of Behavior (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p.136. See also Thompson Gregory, "Honne and "Tatemae" Cross Currents, 8, 2, (Odawara, Japan: Language Institute of Japan, 1981), pp. 1-11.

the role and image and it may also be a precautionary measure not to cause "haji" (shame) to oneself and others since one's opinion may not only be seen as an individual expression but part of the whole, the group.

This intricate web of the interplay of the elements of form continues; however, I would now like to proceed to another aspect of the Japanese society, namely that of cooperation and competition. The group is the building block, and form controls the maintenance of order, and competition and cooperation provides the mechanics of the action of the society.

#### Competition and Cooperation

An intricate, complex interaction of cooperation and competition exists in the Japanese society. The vertical structure requires both cooperation and competition since it is a mechanism to maintain the definitive ranking system. This is evident in the entrance examination process into the universities, colleges, and companies and various other examination processes involved in obtaining degrees in various traditional arts and disciplines of Japan including the "Eiken" or the English proficiency examination.

However, this competitive spirit is controlled by the unifying force of the group which the individual belongs to. The group requires cooperation. This delicate interplay of competition and cooperation has important repercussions in the class.

The student's familiarity with competition may be channeled through the group. I have found that group cooperation, in turn, stimulates group competition. This has had a more positive effect upon the class as a whole than the encouragement of individual competition.

A popular class activity has been the "Cloze Song Exercise". The students listen to the song and fill in the blanks in the given cloze passage; for an example:

Yesterday, all my \_\_\_\_\_ seemed so far away  
Now it \_\_\_\_\_ they're here to stay  
Oh I \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday.

I have found that the encouragement of group competition has been a more effective impetus to motivate the students than the encouragement of individual competition. The class is divided into groups of five or six students and each group is asked to provide the answers after listening to the specific portion of the song several times. One member of the group is to be chosen by the group to represent the group by writing the answer on the board

and reading it.

It has been interesting to note the group dynamics of the class during this activity. There is a general cooperation within the same group but competition between the differing groups. Individuals who are not sure of the answers are not intimidated or put to shame since they are part of the group. Individuals who are capable of accomplishing the given tasks are recognized by the group. There is minimal competition within the group. However, the competitive spirit between the groups generates a pervasive game-like atmosphere to the class as a whole, in contrast to the tension caused by individual competition.

Another aspect of cooperation and competition which I would like to present lies in the area of group dynamics of "senpai" (upper-classmen, senior in age; superior in rank), "kohai" (under-classmen; junior in age; inferior in rank), and "doryo" (colleague; equals).<sup>12</sup>

The following samples of verbal interaction among the students between the "senpai", "kohai", and "doryo" illustrates this relationship further:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Nakane, Chie, Japanese Society for a detailed discussion of this relationship.

<sup>13</sup> The Japanese language is composed of different levels of speech used in accordance to the respective age, sex, or position of the speaker and the person spoken to.



" <u>Yare.</u> " (Do it.)	" <u>senpai</u> " to " <u>kohai</u> "	cooperation
" <u>Yatte kudasai.</u> " (Please do it.)	" <u>kohai</u> " to " <u>senpai</u> "	cooperation
" <u>Yaroo.</u> " (Let's do it.)	" <u>doryo</u> " " <u>senpai</u> " to " <u>kohai</u> "	cooperation of the group which may lead to competition with another group
" <u>Yaruzoo.</u> " (We'll/I'll do it.)	" <u>doryo</u> " " <u>senpai</u> " to " <u>kohai</u> "	competition cooperation of the group which may lead to competition with another group

Thus, when dividing the class into various groups, one should take note of the relationship of the students, particularly in a class with differing age groups present. The reluctance of the class, groups, or individuals to interact may partly be due to the unbalanced juxtapositioning of the "senpai" and "kohai".

Other factors which influence the group dynamics of the class are that of sex and societal position of the individuals composing the group.

I have found that most women sit with other women, men with other men, in the classrooms. It was particularly interesting to note a couple who I had often seen together outside of class always separate and sit at opposite ends of the class during class.

They usually entered the class together, separated, and left the class together. Most high schools in Japan are coeducational, however, the seating arrangement within the classroom still remains predominately segregated.

I believe that this phenomena arises due to the societal consciousness of form. The individuals take on roles required of them as students; thus, difference of sex, age, and societal position may be disregarded since they are in the role of students; however, the converse may also occur in which the societal role overrules the student role.

The interrelationship of these factors must be carefully managed by the discretion of the teacher. I have found that a careful observation is necessary initially, before action is to be taken, ie. in forming groups. The time spent for this initial observation period is vital and should not be omitted in view of the time limitation or other existant conditions.

I would now like to depart from the discussion and examination of the socio-cultural aspects of the Japanese society and pursue the broader examination of one of its other features, specifically that of education.

I have chosen to present the discussion of other socio-cultural aspects of Japanese society first in order to give the reader some background on factors other than

the educational system that influence the learning process of the Japanese.

### Education

"Nothing, in fact, is more central in Japanese society or more basic to Japan's success than its educational system..."Formal education and examinations have taken the place of class and birth in determining which organization and career pattern one qualifies for, in other words, one's function and status in Japan's modern meritocracy."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that education is of utmost priority in the Japanese society is a reality. However, a teacher with high expectations of student performance, with this fact in mind, may be frustrated or disoriented confronting an unmotivated, apathetic class with sporadic attendance. The teacher may immediately doubt his/her pedagogical competencies, but it may be helpful to also be aware of other aspects of the reality of this educational system.

<sup>14</sup> Reischauer Edwin O., The Japanese (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 167.

Andrew Miller states that "The goal of the whole complicated immensely expensive enterprise of foreign-language learning and instruction in Japan has become to pass examinations, rather than to make actual or effective use of the language taught."<sup>15</sup>

The reality of this statement will be apparent upon examination of the English portion of any college or university entrance examination. The inability or hesitancy of some students, after six years of English classes in intermediate and high schools, to verbally produce a coherent English sentence may be due to this obstacle.

#### "Shiken Jigoku"

"Shiken jigoku" literally translates as "examination hell". It is the highly competitive, selective examination process which all Japanese seeking entrance into differing strata of the education system undergo, particularly entrance into the university or college. The cycle of "shiken jigoku" may commence as early as kindergarten where anxious parents direct their children to the "right course" into the "good" kindergarten which may

<sup>15</sup> Miller Roy Andrew, Japan's Modern Myth The Language and Beyond (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1982), p. 239.

safeguard the entrance into the "good" elementary and secondary schools, and ultimately "the" university.<sup>16</sup>

The top five "ichiryu" or "first-class" institutions consists of Tokyo National University, Kyoto National University, Osaka National University, Keio, and Waseda University. Public institutions are considered of higher standards than the private institutions in general.

The self-esteem and image of the students and the educators are also affected by the university or college they belong to:

"He's at Todai (Tokyo National University)."

"He's at Kodai (Kanazawa Institute of Technology)."

These two statements contain very different nuances and implications. The societal value placed on the name or form is very high.

Upon admittance into a university or college, the student is finally freed from the bonds of "shiken jigoku", momentarily. It is a short-lived joy ride of four years for most who will once again be restricted by the company, home, and/or society upon graduation. This may be the only time in their life that they are "free to spread their wings" for both men and women. This fact is recognized by the educators, society, and the students themselves.

<sup>16</sup> An insightful essay about "shiken jigoku" is found in A Hundred Things Japanese, pp. 176-177.

Thus, it is not uncommon for the students to be absent for 70% of the course and pass. Grades are of relatively minor importance since the prospective job interviewers will be more concerned with the name of the institution the candidate attended than the grades.

### "Ronin"

Due to the importance of the name of the university or college one attends, some students may defer entrance into an educational institution until they are accepted by the institution of their choice. "Ronin" was a term originally used to designate the masterless samurais who were displaced members of the Feudal Period. Today, however, this term is used to indicate these students awaiting and attempting to enter the university or college of their choice after their initial rejection.

Transfer of schools is not an easily facilitated, common practice as in the USA; thus, some students choose to become a "ronin" for a year and sometimes more and lead a life of semi-retirement from the society and are accepted as such. They do not necessarily work and may be completely supported by their parents. The "ronins" have given rise to numerous "yobikos" or prepschools which train students exclusively to pass the entrance examinations.

"Suberidome"

Some students who choose not to become "ronins" will submit applications to several schools as precautionary measures or "suberidome" literally "to stop slipping". This insures entrance into an institution. Consequently, lesser known universities and colleges have become "suberidomes" for some students.

"Botchan" and "Hanayome Shugyo"

"He's a "botchan". His father owns that company and he's next in line."

"She's just going to school as part of her "hanayome shugyo"."

"Botchan" refers to the protected son of an affluent family. "Hanayome" is a bride and "shugyo", training, thus, "hanayome shugyo" refers to the training a young woman should accomplish prior to becoming a bride.

In most cases, these students are secure in terms of their future and the demands placed upon their education is considerably smaller than for others. However, for the sake of form and appearance in the society's eyes, it is desirable for these students to attend an institution of higher learning.

### Summary

I have presented my observations of the socio-cultural aspects of the Japanese and Japanese society which I believe may directly or indirectly affect the ESL class. These are my observations and not value judgements or criticisms. This is an ongoing study since it is an examination of the living society.

Nyozekan Hasegawa states:

"The characteristic of a nation, just as that of the individual determines the general trends of its mental states and actions of a deep-rooted level. However, again, like the individual character, it is not something determined before birth as are animal instincts; it is built up over a long period of history, and its formation and growth take place hand in hand with the formation and development of social and cultural forms. That is something which could be constantly cultivated, rather than clung to as an unchanging absolute."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Nyozekan Hasegawa, The Japanese Character (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1982), p. 3.



I shall now close this paper with a sincere hope that this study may lead you towards your own understanding of the Japanese society and your students.

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