Teacher Personality and It's Relationship with Non-Western Views

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要旨

本論文は、まず教師の人格という観点から、日本ではどのような教師が良い教師とされているかについて考察する。日本人大学生を対象に「どのような教師が良い教師か」について調査したほぼ同一の２つの研究資料を示し、それを欧米で効果的な語学教育者とされるための条件と比較する。

次に、欧米での良い教師像を用いながら、前述の日本人学生調査結果を、図表によって紹介、分析する。

欧米で良い教師と考えられているからといって、その教師像を欧米以外の国でもそのまま用いようとするのが不適当であるのは明白である。次に、コミュニケーション学研究や、社会学研究、学術研究、出版の大部分を行っているのが、白人アメリカ人である為に、これらの分野の研究には非常に偏りがある（もしくは、白人アメリカ人にしか当てはまらない）という主張があるが、その主張の概要を表す証拠を提示する。教育やコミュニケーションに対する西洋哲学的理解は、西洋以外のものの見方や事情を考慮に入れずに行われていると断言する著名な研究者は多い。この問題の解決策は、「文化の相対性」への理解を深めることであると考える。日本で教えている欧米人教師は、日本の事情を学ぶとともに、日本人学生が教師に期待しているものについて、さらに深く学ぶよう強く求められている。意識のレベルでも無意識のレベルでも、欧米人教師には西洋の文化が染み付いており、それから逃れることはできないが、相手の文化を学び、その知識に裏付けされた無理のない妥協点を探していくことが、異文化間のギャップや誤解を解決し、文化間の橋渡しをする方法になり得ると考える。

Introduction: Roots of this research

This research was inspired and prompted, in part, by my former interpersonal communication professor, James C. McCroskey, whose many works are considered among the classics of communication research. It was in Dr. McCroskey's classes that I learned the fundamentals of interpersonal communication that I would later try to implement in my ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom in Japan. I had and still have great faith in and admiration of Dr. McCroskey's work. However, when I came to Japan and began to teach ESL, I quickly began to sense that something was amiss in the classroom. The amount of miscommunication and apparent lack of communication on behalf of my students was disturbing, to say the least. I began to get the first inkling that what I learned about communication perhaps didn't apply here, in Japan.

Naturally, as most teachers would do in the same situation, I began to examine my methods of communicating while teaching to see if I could find the problem. Being a so-called, "excellent communicator," I conferred and complained to other ESL teachers like myself, only to find that my problems were not unique. Virtually all of my fellow teachers were experiencing exactly the same problems and frustrations with Japanese students.

Clearly either the problem lay fully with them or with we teachers- or so I thought then.

The Good Teacher-From my point of view

I wanted to be a great teacher. In my own ESL classroom, I tried to emulate my favorite professors. I worked extra hours, labored meticulously over lesson plans, searched for new and interesting materials, kept up on the latest methodologies in ESL and tried to intellectually challenge my students. Still, I was, at least in my own limited understanding of the situation, experiencing failure in the classroom. On one level, I was sure I was being a good teacher, yet when faced with the reality of the classroom in Japan, it was clear I was not.

Stranger yet, was the apparent classroom success of less qualified (veteran) ESL teachers in my area.

Language Teachers Are Like Triangles

Trying to solve the mystery of what a good language teacher is no easy task.

Costas Gabrielatos (2000) has tackled this weighty question with his triangle illustration of the "shape" of a good language teacher.

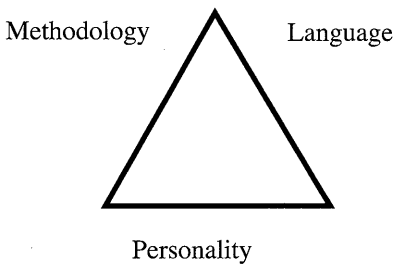
In his framework, Gabrielatos reconciles the two main views as to what makes an effective language teacher: (1) personality and (2) methodological / language skills and knowledge. The framework is simple to visualize and brilliant in its sensible approach. Basically the shape of the language teacher should be like an equilateral triangle. The three sides of the triangle are:

1. Personality (knowledge and skills)
2. Methodology (knowledge and skills)
3. Language (knowledge and skills)

The following is an illustration of the framework:

(Figure 1) The Shape of the Language Teacher
Costas Gabrielatos, 1998-2002

The major attributes of each element are as follows:



Personality

KNOWLEDGE:

* Self- awareness
* Interpersonal skills

SKILLS:

* Ability to observe, think critically, use experience
* Sensitivity to context
* Attitude towards change, development, diversity, quality, co-operation, authority.
* Perception of learning, teacher/learner roles, development

Methodology

KNOWLEDGE:

* Views on methodology
* Available materials
* Own views in learning / teaching

SKILLS:

* Seeing implications of theory
* Planning and teaching
* Balancing support and challenge
* Action research

Language

KNOWLEDGE:

* Views on language
*Awareness of own views on language

SKILLS:

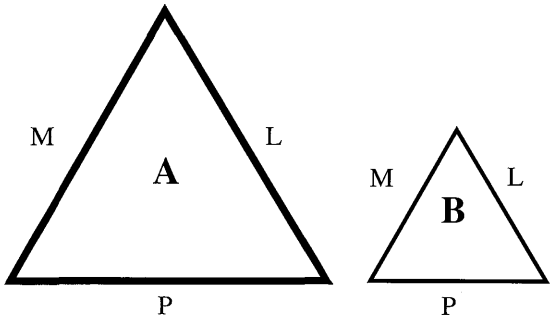
* Own language use
*Ability to see the implications of language analysis, draw conclusions from own contact with language
* Sensitivity to learners' L2 level

Gabrielatos (2000) states that there is some obvious overlap between elements. He also says that, "the larger the area of the triangle, the higher the effectiveness."

The first caveat here is that all elements should be developed equally in order to get the greatest effect.

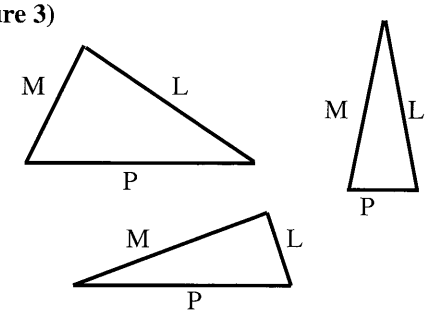
So, triangle (teacher) A is far preferable to triangle (teacher) B in Figure 2:

(Figure 2)



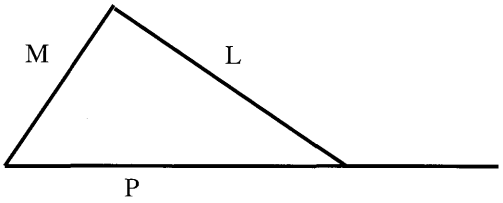
The second caveat is that if an element is less developed, then it limits the effect of the other elements. The more developed elements cannot be used to the fullest potential.

(Figure 3)



Yet another scenario is when one element is far more developed, resulting in the more developed element not being used to its fullest potential.

(Figure 4)



Gabrielatos' framework is deceptively simple and at the same time appeals to the training and common sense of trained ESL teachers. Non-trained teachers also see the beauty and truth in what Gabrielatos (2000) admittedly says, "is a crude representation of the complex interrelations that make up the profile of the language teacher."

Nevertheless I believe this to be an excellent way to visualize what a good language teacher should be....within the traditional sensibilities of Western educational philosophy.

The Good Teacher in Japan

Hadley and Hadley (1996) surveyed 165 Japanese

(Figure 5) What is a Good Teacher? (Hadley & Hadley, 1996)

Text Entry	Frequency	Text Entry	Frequency
Kind	40	Serious	6
Friendly	27	Doesn't give tests	6
Impartial	25	Easy passer	6
Understandable	18	Won't force own opinion	5
Cheerful	17	Good character	5
Punctual	13	Reliable	5
Fun	12	Interesting lectures	5
Enthusiastic	12	Tells stories from his life	5
Humorous	11	Active	5
Nonviolent	11	Considerate	4
Knowledgeable	10	Sympathetic	4
Writes in large letters on board	10	Doesn't take class roll	4
Speaks in a loud voice	10	Strict	4
Writes clearly	9	Experienced	4
Speaks clearly	9	Clear explanations	4
Not too much homework	9	Has a sense of humor	4
Gives easy tests	9	Liked by students	3
Humble	9	Fair	3
Interesting	9	Easy explanations	3
Good storyteller	9	Talks about experiences	3
Good teaching methods	8	Teaching has variety	3
Tells interesting stories	8	Interesting lessons	3
Intelligent	8	Ambitious	3
Honest	7	Earnest	3
Easy to talk with	6	Intellectual	3
Open mind	6	Physically attractive	3
Unique	6	Smart	3
Clean	6	Clever	3

university students (ninety-nine males and sixty-six females) as to "What is a good teacher?" . In each class in which the survey was given it was explained well and uniformly in Japanese, followed by an English explanation. Great care was made to ensure that all students understood the survey completely before completing it.

Of prime importance was that the students were instructed to suggest attributes that would apply to any teacher, Japanese or non-Japanese. The students were also told to express their ideas in Japanese and were allowed to work in groups in order to negate any test-like atmosphere that may influence the responses.

Further the students were given no examples or hints as to what they should write in order to not contaminate the results. The results are reproduced in Figure 5.

Some Surprises

While there is some obvious overlap in the responses, even the most cursory glance at the previous data shows that affective factors constitute the top ten items on the list.

The top ten qualities (which are mostly affective or personality related qualities) such as being, "kind, friendly, impartial, understanding, cheerful, punctual, fun, enthusiastic, humorous and non-violent" scored a total of **186** in frequency, while qualities such as "knowledgeable, intelligent, intellectual, teaching has variety, smart, interesting lectures, interesting lessons and good teaching methods scored a total of **43** in frequency. The latter group had no responses placing in the top ten. Further, there are more overlapping responses for the affective factors outside of the top ten that are not included in the preceding figure.

Hadley & Hadley (1996) analyze the results as follows:

> "The subjects' general portrait of a good teacher is that of a kind-hearted, friendly individual who is open-minded, sympathetic but impartial in student relations and class decisions. A good teacher never resorts to physical violence or forces and opinion on an issue. A good teacher is punctual for class, is fun to be around, and should not only be very understandable, but understanding as well. A good teacher focuses on the needs of the students, not on tests or homework, and is knowledgeable and experienced, but humble.
>
> Whatever other teaching methods he or she uses, a good teacher is a storyteller who shares real-life anecdotes of interest to students. Enthusiasm for teaching, a sense of humor and cheerfulness will encourage students to participate in class. A good teacher can be admired, trusted, and depended on by students."

Now let's graphically represent (roughly) Hadley & Hadley's results in view of Gabrielatos' triangles:

(Figure 6)

According to Gabrielatos (2000), the "good" teacher these students describe would *not* be a good teacher.

(Figure 7) Survey Result

Text Entry	Frequency	Text Entry	Frequency
Interesting	26	Communicates well	3
Humorous	23	Caring	3
Kind	20	Gentle	3
Cheerful	19	Hard working	1
Friendly	18	Heplful	1
Fun	15	Empathetic	1
Attentive to individual	9	Honest	1
Patient	8	Polite	1
Unique	7	Dependable	1
Intelligent	6	Has love for the students	1
Able to motivate	5	Positive	1
Articulate	4	Is impressive	1
Knows Japanese culture	4		

With these results in hand, I decided to replicate the Hadley's research. Sixty freshmen at Kyushu University of varying majors and forty-five sophomores from Seinan Gakuin University majoring in French were surveyed (52 males and 53 females). The procedures that the Hadley's used were followed closely. The results of my surveys are in Figure 7.

Once again, the results show a heavy weighting toward the affective or personality-related characteristics of the teacher at the almost total exclusion of the methodological / language related items.

In Gabrielatos' triangular framework, we would see this kind of relationship among the elements of a "good teacher":

(Figure 8)

Once again we see Japanese university students giving an almost exclusively personality-based estimation of what a "good teacher" is.

With these two surveys to refer to, it appears that Gabrielatos' triangulation of the shape of the language teacher may be in need of revision. In fact, I believe that Gabrielatos' triangles are indeed a very accurate and astute way to visualize the "ideal" shape of the language teacher. However, I believe the equilateral triangle approach is neither appropriate nor ideal in a non-Western setting.

Clearly, from the preceding surveys we can see that the personality axis of the triangle is comparatively of much higher importance to Japanese students. It is natural to infer that, since Japanese students place such a high value on affective personality traits in a teacher, that the manner of communication (concerning affect) of any teacher will be the deciding factor in whether or not Japanese students will receive him/her well. In other words, with Japanese students, it isn't *what* you know or *how much* you know or *how well* you know it. Rather, it is *do you have a good personality* (by Japanese standards).

Conversely, in a Western setting, while personality is important in the classroom, the teacher's subject knowledge, methodology and skills are primary.

From this very limited example, it can be easily extrapolated that cultural relativity is of primary importance when communicating in the classroom. Our own (both teachers and students) views of communication and our behaviors are fundamentally shaped by our respective experiences in our cultures. Our cultures guide us on how to think about behavior and its causes. Our cultures even guide as to *whether to think about* the reasons for behavior (Caprara & Cervone, 2000).

Gergen (1979) believes that researchers can be heavily influenced by the values and assumptions of the culture in which they participate. This author believes that Gergen's statement applies not only to researchers, but also to all people.

With this in mind, Kim (2002) asks the appropriate question, "In what specific ways and to what extent does cultural baggage hinder the quest for objective understanding?"

East is east and West is best?

Gordon (1998/1999) said that well into the decade of the eighties, Caucasian males had an inordinate amount of control and influence in American communication scholarship, theorizing, authoring of journals, papers, etc...

As a result, views of communication have been skewed. Littlejohn (1996) also says that communication theory has a strong Western bias at the expense of not adequately integrating Eastern ideas into communication research.

When speaking of the growth of communication research, Yum (1988) said, "...much (growth) has been within North America and most research and theory is based upon Western philosophical foundations. As more scholars from Asia have entered the field of communication, there has been increasing dissatisfaction with the use of North American models of communication to explain communication processes in Asia, and even some aspects of communication processes in North America."

Min-Sun Kim (2001) showed that the

communication theory studied in the West has primarily been based on the assumptions of individualism and that very often, universal pronouncements about human communication phenomena are usually made from empirical research involving Caucasians from the United States. Kim (2002) maintains that the overwhelming majority of communication research centered in the West, along with research in social science, assumes that all people have independent self-construals or individual notions. She claims that this independent view of self is one of the major stumbling blocks to overcome in our quest for better understanding of communication events. Kim believes that this individualistic model of self-identity will take a different shape or may not be applicable in cultures where people view themselves as more interdependent; such as is the case in Japan.

Min-Sun Kim (2002) breaks down Berry's (1978) recommendations on social psychology into three steps she feels are necessary to take in the study of human communication:

(a) Cultural de-centering away from Euro-American theory,
(b) Re-centering the discipline within the culture of interest
(c) Integrating the different cultural perspectives to move toward a truly universal theory of human communication

While Kim's ideas on human communication theory are intriguing and broad ranging, the three steps above may not be entirely applicable in their current form to view the importance of teacher personality *in Japan.*

In order to better understand the data gathered I will modify Kim's ideas to suit the situation.

I reckon that I should try to (a) culturally de-center myself from my typically American-based viewpoints and (b) try to re-center myself within the culture of interest (Japan). I will not attempt the most ambitious (c), to move toward a universal theory of human communication as it is far beyond the scope of this research.

Coming full circle

My survey results and others (e.g., Shimizu, 1995) show great similarity to Hadley & Hadley's (1996). Their analysis of their survey results well illustrates the Japanese idea of *sempai / kohai* relationships which could be best be explained as a kind of benevolent big brother (sempai) to little brother (kohai) relationship that is deemed primary to success and cooperation in all groups or organizations in Japanese society. Hadley & Hadley (1996) say that, " It is only natural to expect therefore, that Japanese students would seek out these ideals in their teachers."

Hadley & Hadley quote Rohlen's (1974) explanation of the sempai / kohai relationship:

> Ideally, the sempai will represent, advise, console, teach and discipline their kohai. Kohai, in return, will confide in, listen to, depend upon, follow, and respect their sempai...there is an implication that leadership should be as sympathetic, protective and unselfish as good sempai. (p. 23)

This explanation seems to fit perfectly with the survey results.

From my former, typically Western viewpoint, it would seem that Japanese students are looking for a counselor or big brother, not a teacher. And thus, the trap is set for miscommunication, isn't it? Looking back on my early years in Japan teaching ESL, I can easily see that both I and the students had widely varying ideas about what a teacher is and should be.

Conclusion

This report is merely a scratch at the surface of an area of research that is now blossoming. Concerning the survey results, there are myriad issues not even touched upon, such as student stereotypes of foreign teachers, religious philosophical issues, student dissatisfaction, language education methodology and policy and current trends in Japan that no doubt have great bearing on the subject and are deserving of deeper consideration. I have not delved into these topics, as the scope of this report will not allow it. I

hope to report my findings on these issues at a later date.

It is indeed encouraging to see that ESL instructors in Japan and other countries, as well as intercultural communication researchers, are in increasing numbers, coming to terms with the enormity of the importance of affect and cultural relativity. Research in these areas is ongoing and dynamic.

To fully understand the situation in Japan, Western teachers need to know more about the context of the Japanese education system and as Hadley & Hadley (1996) put it, "the culture of learning" in Japan. Western teachers (and Japanese students) need to know *what* is expected of them, *why* it is expected of them, and also *be willing* to work with the students to come to some sort of *compromise* (Pennington, 2003) as to what is acceptable for the students and the teacher; an overlapping of classroom cultures if you will.

Both language teachers (Western) and students (Japanese) fail to recognize these basic differences in behavior, communication, context, and expectations and are, quite naturally, very quick to misattribute the causes for behavior.

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