

*Foreign Language Education in the Wake of Globalization: The
'Learning-To-Communicate' Approach*

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, globalization must be considered in terms of both migration of people and movement of capital. Thus recognition of the socio-political entanglements through language learning process is in this context, I believe, of great importance. For that reason, herein I define the 'learning-to-communicate' approach, as a method whereby virtue of active cognition both student and teacher engage in critical communication. While in the 'learning-to-pass' approach passive cognition and 'banking education' (Freire 1970) prevails, the 'learning-to-communicate' approach, although not bereft of 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger 1957), embraces freedom of expression, joy of discovery and curiosity fuelled by common social ends, "for when treated simply as a way of getting individual information, or as a means of showing off what one has learned, it loses its social motive and end" (Dewey 1897). The notion that a student with basic foreign language skills is incapable of full engagement neither in a proposed discourse nor in critical communication, is possibly wrongly presumed; for when treated with equal consideration and stimulated through curiosity guided by vital questions, the learner is bestowed with a motivation for further language learning. Using this approach, this paper will attempt to outline ways in which English learning within small groups of Japanese undergraduate students could be improved. However, further investigation, evaluation and theorization of this approach are essential for more conclusive evidence.

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Describing or defining globalization process by simple terms is rather complex, so to earmark its beginning and its end. Nevertheless, we must not avoid critical discussion about its evolution and the role it plays on the manner we relate to and perceive reality. What does globalization entail and what form it should take?

Globalization

In *The Sources of Neoliberal Globalization* Jan A. Sholte notes that a line should be drawn between globalization - “development in a social geography”, and marketization - “policy approach to this trend”, in other words, the former indicating migration of people, ideas, integration of people through borderless exchange, while the latter *laissez-faire*¹ market economics *i.e.* neoliberalism through deregulation, liberalization and privatization in order to maximize profit - migration of capital. Aforementioned juxtaposition manifests itself by two distinct images *i.e.* one that is fully alive – rising from the human needs for integration, sharing and care, and one that is devoid of life in its very core – dominant perpetuation of capitalism and property’s *status quo* in its all forms. The justification that *laissez-faire* market economics combined with globalization, so called 「global-liberalized markets」, can bring about egalitarian society, the state of being free within it from oppressive restriction inflicted by the authority, and peace to the whole world has many flaws in it² and when unchallenged it has no legitimacy to exist.

Core Tenets of Culture of Capitalism

In *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*, Richard H. Robbins writes lucidly about globalization as an economic process *i.e.* mode of production-exchange-consumption and its impacts on social, cultural, educational and ecological conditions: 1) continued economic growth that latently or overtly calls for 2) transformation of non-monetary resources (political, environmental, social) into monetary capital by means of 3) neoliberalism and 4) with no commons, civic society is destined to cease; to avoid these progressive *état des affaires* 5) steps need to be taken to restore our political, environmental and social capital *inter alia* to terminate 「corporate personhood」; in order to maintain the control over local flux of resources, withdraw from policies promoting globalization-by-marketization (NAFTA³ TTIP⁴

¹ *French*: a term applied to the policy of leaving businessman alone to do “their of thing”- “let us do it“ in direct translation

² Marx and Engels 1848; Kropotkin 1913; Hertz 2001; Chomsky 2005; Keane 2009

³ North American Free Trade Agreement

⁴ Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

TPP⁵); resume economic power to local communities, respond to intellectuals and educational institutions who fail in “responsible and independent critics of the government’s policies”⁶ (Fulbright 1967).

Of course, Robbins is not alone in these observations, prominent thinkers of the past century such as Engels, Marx, Kropotkin, Proudhon, Dewey, Freire, Bookchin *et al.* had drawn alike analogies *i.e.* between private property expansion, society impoverishment and class division; between economy and education: “the ultimate aim of production is not production of goods, but the production of the free human beings associated with one another on terms of equality” (Dewey, 1938), that are being further developed by Chomsky and Giroux.

Long Lived Neoliberalism – Education and Knowledge

In spite of the harms and drawbacks generated by neoliberalism in the context of globalization *i.e.* poverty (Cornia and Court 2001), unemployment and underemployment (Wood 1994), permission of authorities on so called “umowy śmieciowe”- junk contracts⁷ (Zilova *et al.* 2014), social injustice and collective spirit’s deterioration through competitive individualism (Harris and Seid 2000; Goodman 2011); the consent for preservation of such policies continues. As Scholte pinpoints in his report “the chief dynamics are located in four interrelated areas: governance, production, knowledge, and social networks”⁸. In case of knowledge and education, following *isms* may largely support its dynamics:

- secularism - vivid separation physical world from otherworldly forces;
- anthropocentrism - that puts human into circle of attention allowing on overindulgence in his/her desires, interests and experiences, thus precluding from understanding of structural arrangements and empathic response to devaluated human beings;
- scientism- “scientism is a matter of putting too high a value on natural science in comparison with other branches of learning or culture – much the most valuable part because it is much the much authoritative, or series, or beneficial“ (Sorell 1991);

⁵ Trans-Pacific Partnership

⁶ re-quoted from *Challenges* by Serge Lange (p.161)

⁷ “junk contract” refers to Civil Law Contracts in Poland - common employment practice, a transition from student-hood to employment-hood, however enabling cost-cutting of employment by not abiding minimum wage directive and preventing labors from buildup of social and pension benefits

⁸ Scholte (p.16) (2005)

- instrumentalism - allocation of the highest importance to knowledge through creation of non-inductive theories⁹, thus allowing for problem solving “by omitting (...) the universe of the realities behind the various appearances” (Popper 1962).

Others, such as professionalism and fetishism of knowledge could be also contributors to preservation of modus operandi of the policies.

In *The Menace of Liberal Scholarship*, Noam Chomsky by quoting Conor Cruise O'Brien, argues that power exerted on educational institutions is dangerous to scholarly integrity “power in our time has more intelligence in its service, and allows that intelligence more discretion as to its methods, than ever before in history” and that we have moved in the direction of the state where “a society is maimed through the systematic corruption of its intelligence”¹⁰ (Black 1967); he goes on by quoting Senator Fulbright that “the surrender of independence, the neglect of teaching, and the distortion of scholarship, the university is not only failing to meet its responsibilities to its students; it is betraying a public trust”; by further saying that “the “free-floating intellectual” may occupy himself with problems because of their inherent interest and importance, while the professional, however, tends to define his problems according to the technique that he has mastered, and has a natural desire to apply his skills” and this can be reflected in the comment of Dr. Harold Agnew (Director of the Los Alamos Laboratories Weapons Division): “The basis of advanced technology is innovation and nothing is more stifling to innovation than seeing one's product not used or ruled out of consideration on flimsy premises involving public world opinion”¹¹. Of course, it is not to say that all institutions comply with omnipresent conformity and passiveness that allows for silent acquiescence.

“Fetishism of commodities” was used by Marx in his book *Capital, Volume I*: “When we bring products of our labour into relation with each other as values, it is not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogenous human labour. Quite the contrary: whenever, by the exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless, we do it. Value therefore, does not stalk about with label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic.”(Marx 1978). In other words, it is a

⁹ as opposed to Dewey's concept of instrumentalism “that science starts from observation and proceeds, by induction, to generalizations, and ultimately to theories”

¹⁰ re-quoted from *Chomsky on Anarchism* by Noam Chomsky (p.11) (2005)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.12

special relationship we develop with commodities, replacing social relations between people, as an effect, obscuring relations of production in accordance with facts as a “social hieroglyphics”. In the same manner, the concept can be applied to knowledge - fetishism of knowledge - the product of institutionalized education, thus can be treated also as a commodity, consumable item, therefore allowing scholars to act as noncritical agents for government’s policies. The only way to reveal its productive relationships is to investigate how the knowledge as a commodity is an element of complex arrangements of production-exchange-consumption process. Though Dewey, refers in the following passage to a language, “for when treated simply as a way of getting individual information, or as a means of showing off what one has learned, it loses its social motive and end” (Dewey 1897); commodity-like-attitude can be noticed.

“Theory of ethnic stratification” developed by Donald Noel, explains that the ethnic stratification is a product of three following factors: 1) competition for resources; 2) unequal power; and 3) ethnocentrism. David Nibert has modified this theory to account for human oppression that is sustained through mutually reinforced socio-economic mechanisms; 1) economic exploitation; 2) unequal power greatly extended in the control of state; and 3) ideological control (Nibert 2013).

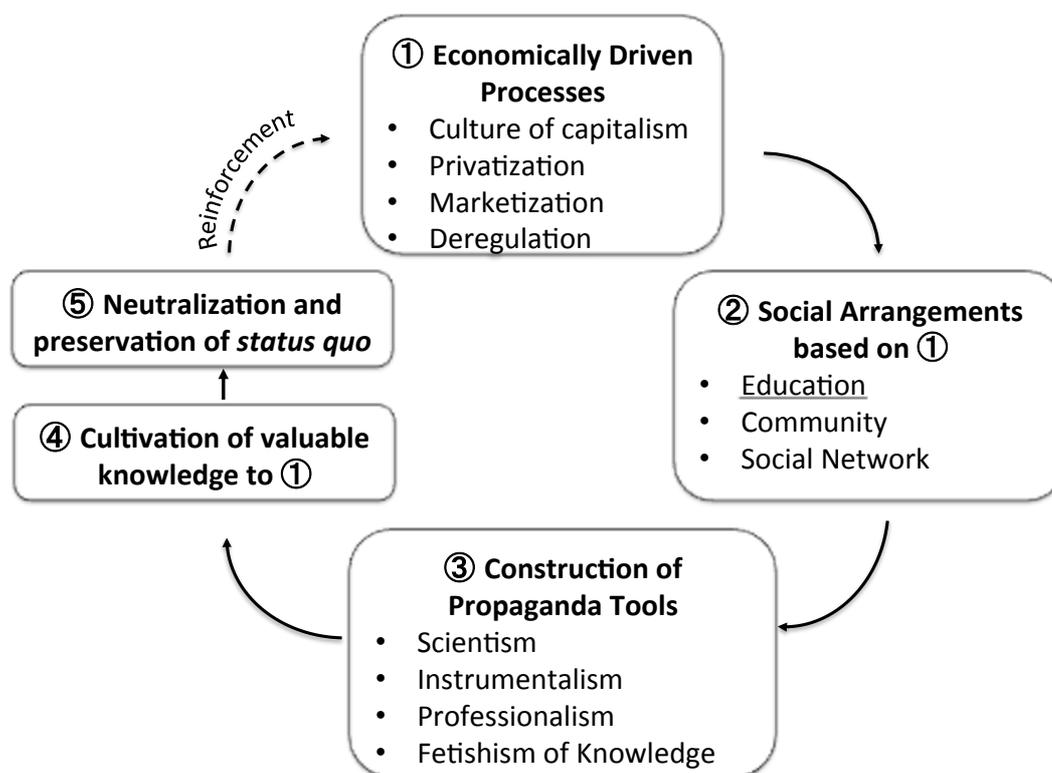
Patterns in devaluation of certain groups within society due to discrimination based on the grounds of one’s age (ageism), race (racism), gender (sexism), sexual orientation (homophobia), physical or intellectual disabilities *et al.* have been questioned and broadly studied by many sociologists; why do particularly these groups are vulnerable to abuse and/or violence, are burdened in a disproportionate manner with privation and backset? Many among of them come to understand that the prejudices are a consequence of social arrangements that are biased and unjust, that formulate one’s conciseness and this, in turn, is mirrored in one’s actions toward others. For instance, Anderson and Collins argue that the various forms of oppression *i.e.* racism *etc.* should be examine with the context of belief system and social institutions. Suzanne Pharr states “It is virtually impossible to view one oppression (...) in isolation because they are all connected (...). They are linked by a common origin-economic power and control-and by common methods of limiting, controlling and destroying lives. There is no hierarchy of oppressions. Each is terrible and destructive.

To eliminate one oppression successfully, a movement has to include work to eliminate them all or else success will always be limited and incomplete.” (Pharr 1988) Thought some of the form of the oppressions can be more easily recognizable

than others, Chomsky points out “Actually, another problem which I think must be faced is that at any particular point in human history people have not understood what oppression is. It’s something you learn (...) one of the first tasks is to get people to understand that they are living under conditions of oppression and domination.” (Chomsky 2005). In other words, taking notice of something that, at the first glance, is imperceptible and blend into our everyday activities can be difficult.

Based on theory of ethnic stratification and oppression by Noel and Nibert respectively, Fig. 1 depicts dynamics of neoliberal practices i.e. production-exchange-consumption process that transform educational institutions and social interactions.

Fig. 1 Dynamics of neoliberal practices.



Learning-to-Communicate Approach

To assure that knowledge acquired through language and education are not a sole means to an ends for neoliberal policies and capitalism that is some ways create, propagate and sustain a thrust for constant exuberant display and exaggerated spending; blur our critical thinking abilities, and eternize conformism and passiveness; foreign language education must also undergo transformation.

In the process of trying to find answer to “How to acquire communication abilities in foreign language?” in that way, following factors came to manifest themselves:

- active cognition;
- motivation;
- “dialogical communication” - “the essence of education as the practice of freedom awakening of critical consciousness through the investigation of “generative themes“ (Freire 1970).

Learning-to-communicate approach is a method where by virtue of active cognition both student and teacher engage in critical communication. While in the ‘learning-to-pass’ approach passive cognition and banking education -“instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.

This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” - prevails, the ‘learning-to-communicate’ approach, although not bereft of “cognitive dissonance” – “the existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance”, and when it is “present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance” (Festinger 1957), embraces freedom of expression, joy of discovery and curiosity fuelled by common social ends. The notion that a student with basic foreign language skills is incapable of full engagement neither in a proposed discourse nor in critical communication, is possibly wrongly presumed; for when treated with equal consideration and stimulated through curiosity guided by vital questions, the learner is bestowed with a motivation for further language learning.

Fig.2 shows an outline of the learning-to-communicate approach. The approach comprises five following segments, each of which can be associated with listening, writing, reading, speaking and thinking abilities. Though, it is being put into practice for few months, further investigation on evaluation of overall approach, account for effectiveness of each factor, and possible effect of de-motivators must be conducted. At present, the approach's evaluation is under examination

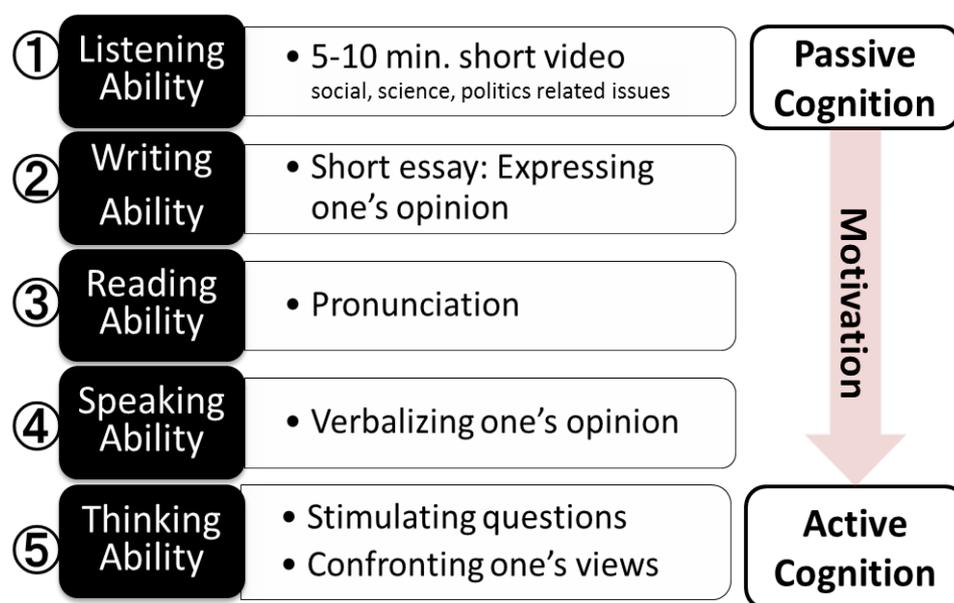


Fig. 2 Outline of learning-to-communicate approach.

Conclusions

While acknowledging multi-facets of globalization process, it is difficult to state unanimously that it brought about merely negative implications. However, in case *laissez-faire* market economics combined with globalization, as many have been noticing, there are grounds for concerns, and the critique has been addressed partially herein.

Teaching-to-test approach that prepares students to a standardized test whether in in general subjects or foreign languages, though, can provide student with information and score that often is a measure of an academic success through memorization; reflects the “banking concept” of education. It may be, that creating more interactive and/or exciting spaces for learning through use of technology, or not, is insufficient in invoking a curiosity and critical though in a student. Therefore, the shift in paradigm in the way the foreign language education is conducted and the manner it is perceived by policy making institution is needed.

On the other hand, “learning-to-communicate” approach, though still in its infancy and built purely on theorization, when executed with full commitment, hopefully will bring about conditions where “freedom no longer be placed in a opposition to nature, individuality to society, choice to necessity, or the personality to needs of social coherence” (Bookchin 2005).

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