

Toward intellectual emancipation in the EFL classroom

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Toward Intellectual Emancipation in the EFL Classroom

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Introduction

Allow me to begin with an anecdote, concerning the all-too-familiar story of an unconventional teacher inspiring his students to great deeds. I am certain that we have all seen, read, or at least heard such stories, and likewise we all know how divorced from the realities of the classroom many of them can be. Be that as it may, I would like to refer to one familiar example, from the 1989 film *Dead Poets Society*, starring Robin Williams. In Japanese, the title is “今を生きる.” If you are at all familiar with the story, then you will surely know that it is about a group of young men at a preparatory school in the Northeastern United States, who are inspired by the teaching of Williams’ character, John Keating, an instructor of English literature. In many ways, it seems the quintessential “inspirational teacher” story; however, the film itself progresses like a tragedy and, indeed, has a suicide at its climax. And despite the brave, rebellious, and ostensibly *redemptive* gesture of the surviving students, in the film’s final scene—the well-known “O Captain! My Captain!” scene—viewers cannot shake the feeling that something profoundly *disastrous* has happened, so that it may not be going too far to say that we are left feeling rather depressed at the end.

Now, why is that? What did Mr. Keating teach his pupils, and why was it so dangerous that it ended in tragedy? What I want to suggest is that Keating made visible what was up to that point *invisible*; he spoke words that, up to that point in his students’ lives, were strictly speaking “*unsayable*,” he provoked them to think in a wholly different way—one which seemed *unthinkable* before he arrived on the scene. Most of all, he opened up new horizons of possibility, new ways of acting, or being, that indeed were

revolutionary, because something truly “revolutionary” never has any guarantees. It is *an experiment* in the strictest sense of the word: its outcome cannot truly be predicted, as in what we call *a demonstration*; one never knows where a true experiment will lead, how it will end—after all, it may end badly, as it did for more than one of Mr. Keating’s students. As William Haver reminds us, the “experiment” differs essentially from mere “demonstration” insofar as the outcome of an experiment can be an utter surprise. “The experiment as such is the jeopardy of the intelligibility according to which the experiment was conducted in the first place. Sense in its essential possibility is itself at risk in the experiment” (5, and passim). Keating opened up the possibility of revolution, of experimentation, and all that those words or concepts entail, both good and bad, through language, through art—more specifically, through poetry. But it could just as well have been anything else.

In this case, however, it was poetry. The crime, or the *transgression*, that Keating’s students committed was the desire to have poetry in their lives. Or, perhaps more accurately, the desire to live their lives like a poem, to write life itself as a kind of poem. This is, after all, not far removed from more famous literary exemplars—Don Quixote’s “madness,” for example, or Emma Bovary’s romantic and ultimately adulterous fantasies. For what “transgressions” are these dreamers, these poets of the profane world, in fact punished? Ultimately, they succumbed to the very same “temptation” as Keating’s students: the desire to have poetry, to have Art, in their lives. But why is this a considered a transgression, or some sort of moral failing? Why is something as seemingly harmless as a Walt Whitman poem (“O Captain! My Captain!”), in fact, so potentially threatening to the order of the workaday world?

The short answer is, in my reckoning, that what Keating did in that film, in a manner similar to the books read by Don Quixote and Madame Bovary, was to “disturb the peace,” so to speak, or perhaps better still, *to challenge the established order of things*. I will return to this notion, in my concluding remarks, when I take up the question of

disturbing the peace (and complacency) of the conventional EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom.

But, for now, we could hazard a guess and say that perhaps Whitman's poem was so dangerous because we live in a society where it is assumed that there are some who are destined for poetry and art, and others who must attend to more, shall we say, "serious" pursuits—as there are those who are destined for thought, for intellectual labor and the life of the mind, on the one hand, and on the other those poor souls who are condemned to a life of manual drudgery. Perhaps a few of them can be "enlightened," lifted out of their lowly condition, and guided if not shaped by progressive pedagogues who will, eventually, lead the poor brutes out of their darkness and into the light of Reason, "Culture" and "Civilization." It is not difficult to see how this logic lays the ground for all manner of racist, sexist, imperialist and otherwise anti-democratic social praxis.

In any case, we can easily trace the genealogy of this manner of thinking—of poetry or Art seen as something at least potentially transgressive and dangerous—back to Plato's famous banishment of poets from his Republic more than two millennia ago. And why were they judged, and condemned, as "dangerous?" Because they threatened the order of the city, the polis, the "proper" ordering of society: their words could be heard, or indeed spoken, *by anyone, to anyone*—and in that act of circulation and confusion the hierarchy of the city, the rigid roles of society, and the ordering of the polis could be disturbed.

In the following essay, I will discuss another lesson, drawn from another experiment: one from philosopher Jacques Rancière, who exhumed a peculiar, indeed singular and transgressive, if not revolutionary figure from the rubbish bin of history: an exiled schoolteacher named Joseph Jacotot, who scandalously proclaimed that equality must be an assumption, a point of departure, and *not* an ever-receding goal of either the School or the Society which it reflects; that a master or expert's knowledge was not necessary to teach, nor explication necessary to learn; that every human being is equally

intelligent as every other, though it is obvious that we do not all exercise that capacity equally well, and that the hierarchies of our society—that there are some “destined to think,” and others decidedly *not*, in many ways just as rigid as Plato’s Republic—are not only reflected in dominant pedagogical paradigms, but are, in fact, arbitrary and, therefore, should themselves be consigned to the trash heap if we are to finally get serious about realizing a truly democratic society.

Jacotot’s Lesson, via Rancière

In his 1987 book, *Le Maître ignorant*, translated into English as *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière recounts the story of Jacotot, forced into exile in the Netherlands, who found himself teaching students who knew no French, without himself understanding their native language (Flemish). As a result of these unique circumstances, he caused a scandal in the Holland and France of the 1830s, by demonstrating through his experience that a teacher could, indeed, provoke his students to learn—and, what is more, to learn subjects and skills of which he himself was wholly “ignorant.” What was his “method,” exactly? He called it “intellectual emancipation,” and he set it in contradistinction to *explication*, or what he derided as “intellectual brutalization” or “enforced stultification.” The term he used, *Abrutissement*, from the verb *Abrutir*, to “render stupid” or “treat as a beast or brute,” has no exact English equivalent, but this is how he described traditional pedagogical models, since the “master explicator,” even if he or she practices the so-called “Socratic” method, is always following a predictable script based upon the presumption of *inequality*.

Jacotot had his students read a bilingual, side-by-side translation of François Fénelon’s *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699; known in English as either *The Adventures of Telemachus* or *Telemachus, Son of Ulysses*), an early Enlightenment political tract that focuses upon Telemachus’ education at the hands of Mentor, the goddess Athena in disguise. He was stunned to find that they learned to read French without any explication of grammar, syntax or vocabulary from him, and that, when called upon to write an essay

in French on what they had read, they were capable of the same level of work that his native-speaking French students were. What he observed was the following:

[T]he intelligence that had allowed them to learn the French in *Télémaque* was the very same they had used to learn their mother tongue: by observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done. They moved along in a manner one shouldn't move along—the way children move, blindly, figuring out riddles (10).

The point, as I see it, is to force the student into a kind of apprenticeship, a prolonged struggle, with his or her stupidity, with the limits of his or her understanding—put another way, we could say that the apprentice is pushed up against a wall, forced into an encounter with the limits of the framework by which he or she heretofore had made sense of the world, what Haver calls an “experiment.” We could say that the “coordinates” of his or her mental map of the known world is, in this encounter with stupidity, shown to be inadequate—that there are gaps, or entire blank regions, territories left undiscovered or whole continents left unknown, and, therefore, voyages of discovery and exploration yet to be made.

What Jacotot provoked, in other words, was a crisis in meaning, a voyage in *dis-orientation*, an encounter with *stupidity*—the students' own stupidity, the teacher's stupidity, the stupidity of the foreign language itself, and maybe even one's own, or one's “mother tongue's” stupidity. By “stupidity” I do *not* mean simple ignorance or error, *Dummheit* or the state of being “baka.” To put in another way, I am not referring to currently fashionable anti-intellectualism or corporate junk culture. Rather, this notion of stupidity refers to thought's outside, what thought cannot, in fact, master or even “think,” and yet what it *cannot but* think—the very ground of thought, in other words. Does true thought *not* begin in wonder, in curiosity, or perplexity? Is a true journey *not* one that leads into regions of the “unknown?” Is stupidity, then, to be reduced to mere error, blindness, tautology or a refusal to think? In other words, is stupidity to be reduced to

simply one of the tragedies that may befall thought? That may be how it is conceived by many pedagogical theories or teaching methodologies, particularly the current, dominant regime of testing and the instrumentalization and quantification of knowledge, but I do not think that this is what the lesson of Jacotot, or of Rancière for that matter, teaches us.

To provoke an encounter with stupidity, with the radical *other* of thought that is its very foundation or origin, in this way, is to embark upon a voyage of *dis-orientation*, it is to interrupt and destabilize the notion of the “subject supposed to know,” to use Jacques Lacan’s language (the famed *sujet supposé savoir*), both in the sense of the “teacher” or master explicator (even “expert”), as well as the Self, the learner him or herself. It also forces a crisis of the institution, the very “place” of learning, as this radical stupidity, this being struck dumb at one’s lack of comprehension, enacts a kind of *dis-placement*. In the face of this radical stupidity, we are literally “beside ourselves” and we lose the very ground beneath our feet. We can no longer occupy the place of the “subject supposed to know,” nor can our teachers. We come to the limits of our knowing, which can be a challenging situation, to say the least. But isn’t this always how we begin the process of learning? Meaning is no longer assured; sense is no longer guaranteed, or even presumed to be a possibility. “*Have I been understood?*” truly becomes a question, once again, regaining its radicality, its dignity, and its formidable power of provocation. In fact, the entire pedagogical enterprise, as it is usually conceived, is thrown into radical doubt. At the end of my essay, I will briefly discuss how we might go about provoking such an encounter in the field of EFL education, but first, allow me to back up a moment, and return to Rancière’s untimely book on the equally untimely “ignorant schoolmaster.”

Explication versus Emancipation

“Jacotot caused such a scandal in his day,” according to Rancière, “because he dared proclaim that uneducated people could learn by themselves, without a master explicator to explain things to them, and that teachers, for their part, could teach things that they themselves did not know” (this and subsequent quotations in this section are

adapted from “Sur ‘Le maître ignorant,’” a 2004 speech by Ranciere translated by Dasgupta; n. pag., translation slightly modified). At the heart of this project is a fundamental examination of the meaning of knowing, teaching and learning, and Rancière stresses how Jacotot’s untimely lesson is *not* merely an interesting footnote to the history of pedagogy, but is instead a profound philosophical reflection, as relevant as ever, on the manner in which education and the social order are related. Jacotot denounced the paradigm of “explication” by showing how its logic is “at bottom a social logic, a way in which the social is not only represented, but also reproduced.”

We must, at the outset, ask exactly what he meant by the term “ignorant schoolmaster,” and in addressing this question we should be able to better understand his pedagogical philosophy. In order to approach this concept, we should distinguish between its several different levels of meaning. The first is that an ignorant schoolmaster is one who teaches things she herself does not know. This is how Jacotot suddenly “found himself teaching students, with whom he did not share a common language, through the intermediary of a bilingual text” and placing himself “in his students’ hands,” telling them, through an interpreter, to “read half of the book with the aid of the translation, to repeat constantly what they had learned, to quickly read the other half, and then to write in French what they thought about it.” It is said that he was “astonished” to see how these students, to whom he had not “transmitted” any knowledge, had learned, “simply on his order, enough French to express themselves quite passably”—how he had therefore, in fact, “educated” them without having actually “taught” them anything. He then concluded that the act of a teacher who forces another intelligence *to exercise itself*—in a way, to provoke a radical species of “learner autonomy”—is independent of that master’s “possession” of knowledge and that, as a result, it was possible for an “ignorant person to be able to help another ignorant person learn that which he did not himself know.” This could even mean that an illiterate person might teach another illiterate to read, which was—and still is—an explosive idea.

We now arrive at the second meaning of “ignorant schoolmaster:” someone who teaches—that is, as Rancière sees it, “a person who is for another person a *cause of knowledge*”—without “transmitting” any knowledge. For, in fact, what is called “the transmission of knowledge” consists of “two intertwined relations, which we must learn to *disassociate*: a relation of *will to will* and of *intelligence to intelligence*.” Here we must be careful and not misunderstand the meaning of this “disassociation.” There is, of course, the common manner of understanding it—as an attempt to weaken the authority of the teacher, in order to stress the seemingly egalitarian relation of one mind “enlightening” another. This is the principle of so many “anti-authoritarian pedagogies whose model is the Socratic method,” featuring the figure of the teacher who “feigns ignorance in order to provoke” his pupils to follow the true path to knowledge.

But the “ignorant schoolmaster” makes a very different kind of “disassociation”—she understands, in fact, what Rancière calls the “double bluff” of the Socratic method. “Under the appearance of nurturing the pupil’s capability, it actually ends up demonstrating the pupil’s *incapability*. Socrates not only shows the incapability of his rivals, the false teachers (the Sophists), but also the incapability of whoever is not led by him along the correct path.” The so-called “progressivism” of the Socratic method is really only a “sophisticated variation of ordinary pedagogical practice,” according to Rancière, which “confers on the teacher’s intelligence the responsibility for overcoming the distance that separates the ignorant person from true knowledge.”

“Jacotot *inverts* this disassociation,” as Rancière sees it: the ignorant schoolmaster “exercises no relation of intelligence to intelligence, but is instead simply an authority, a will that instructs the ignorant person to set out on a path, which is to say to activate the inherent capability that the student *already possesses*.” This is nothing less than the capacity that every human being has already demonstrated, in what is perhaps our first and most difficult of all “intellectual apprenticeships”—learning, as children, the foreign language that we call our “mother tongue.”

This is the fundamental lesson that we learn from the strange turn of events that turned the “learned professor” Jacotot into what Rancière calls an “ignorant schoolmaster.” The lesson has to do with the very logic of pedagogy, which is to teach the ignorant person that which he does not know, to “lessen the distance” between the ignorant person and something called “knowledge.” The usual mechanism is explication, or explanation. “To explain” is, of course, to “lay out the elements of the knowledge that must be transmitted in a manner appropriate to the supposedly limited capacity of the minds under instruction.” But this seemingly simple idea is, in fact, subject to *an infinite regression*. “Explanation is generally accompanied by an explanation of the explanation,” he insists, and “there must be books to explain to those who do not know the knowledge that they must acquire.” However, and most importantly for Rancière, this explanation is apparently *insufficient*: there must also be masters, teachers or experts “to explain to the ignorant ones the very books that are supposedly explaining the knowledge.” In other words, there must be explanations so that the ignorant person “understands the explanation that permits him to understand.” Rancière concludes that the regression is actually infinite, while the authority of the master is still accepted as the sole arbiter of the point “where explanations have no need of further explanations.”

Jacotot, however, believed that he had clearly seen and understood the logic of this paradox: “if explication is infinite, it is because its essential function is in fact to make infinite that very distance that it attempts to reduce.” The strategy of explication is therefore *not* a practical one, striving toward a specific end; rather, it is an end in itself, what Rancière calls “the infinite verification of a basic axiom: the axiom of inequality.” In his words: “to explain something to an ignorant person is first of all to explain to him that he would never understand if things were not explained to him; it is first of all to explain to him his own incapability.” Explanation offers itself as a method of reducing inequality, however, this reduction is, quite to the contrary, a *confirmation*—of ignorance, incapability, and inequality.

It is this “knowledge,” of inequality, that the ignorant schoolmaster refuses to acknowledge or confirm, and this brings us to the third sense of his “ignorance”—ignorance of this “knowledge of inequality,” which is somehow supposed to set the terms for the reduction of this inequality. The “master explicator” makes inequality an axiom: “there is,” as Rancière’s describes it, “inequality between minds, but we can make use of this very inequality, to make of it the cause of a future equality. The master explicator is therefore the superior being who works towards the abolition of his own privilege. The art of the master who methodically lifts the veil from the things that ignorant people could never understand on their own promises that one day they will be their master’s equal.”

In contrast, “the ignorant schoolmaster poses equality as an axiom to be verified.” In Rancière’s words, “it relates the inequality of the master-pupil relationship not to an equality to come—and that will never come—but to an already assumed, fundamental equality: after all, in order for a student to perform the exercises given to him by his teacher, he must already be able to understand what the master says.” This is what he describes as a fundamental equality between “speaking beings” that “precedes the relationship of inequality and sets the terms for how it may be exercised.” It is this that Jacotot calls “the equality of intelligence.” What does this expression mean? Not that the exercise of all intelligence is the same, but instead that there is only one form of intelligence at work in what Rancière calls “intellectual apprenticeships.”

The ignorant schoolmaster—that is to say, the teacher ignorant of inequality—therefore addresses herself to the “ignorant person” from the point of view “not of his ignorance but of his knowledge, for,” as Rancière reminds us, “he already in fact knows many things. He has learned them by listening and repeating, by observing and comparing, by guessing and verifying. It is in this way that he has learned his mother tongue.” It is also in this way that he has learned how to write: for example, how students in Japan learn Kanji. He must be “obliged to relate what he does not know to what he knows, to observe and compare, to tell what he has seen and to verify what he has said.”

If he does not accept such a challenge, it is simply because “he thinks it is not possible or necessary for him to know more.” The obstacle that the ignorant person faces to the full exercise of his capacities is *not* his ignorance, but what Rancière dubs his “consent to ignorance.” He is accepting as a given *the opinion of inequality*, which is held by traditional pedagogical philosophies and reflected in society at large.

But this opinion is quite different from an individual’s supposed “stupidity.” It is an “axiom of the system, the axiom under which the social system ordinarily functions”—what Rancière terms “the axiom of inequality.” This axiom rationalizes or attempts to justify the inequalities that operate in the rest of society in general. It is not the schoolmaster’s knowledge that can suspend the functioning of this system of inequality, but her *will*. The command of the emancipating schoolmaster forbids the so-called “ignorant” or “stupid” person from being satisfied with what he knows by declaring himself incapable of knowing more. In other words, the false refuge of the dreaded “*Wakanai*” that we all-too-often hear in the EFL classroom in Japan when students are called upon to offer an opinion on something fairly abstract. The command of the teacher, instead, *forces* the student *to prove* his capacity, to continue his intellectual adventure according to the same methods by which he began. This logic, which operates under the presupposition of equality and which, Rancière insists, “demands its proof,” is what he terms “intellectual emancipation,” and it stands in direct opposition to the “intellectual brutalization” or “enforced stultification” that normally goes by the name of “education.”

What, then, can we do with Jacotot’s “lesson,” in terms of our own classrooms? What might an EFL classroom look like if it *began from the premise that* students actually *had something to say* about the world around them, and that they *had the capacity to say this in English*? This brings me to my tentative conclusion.

Conclusion

During my first year at Mie University, I used conventional EFL textbooks designed for Japanese university classes in my seminars in “Present-Day English,” but

after repeated frustration and disappointment, I decided in my second year to create my own lessons, entirely from scratch. It wasn't too much extra work, being that I spent a comparable amount of time and effort creating supplementary materials for each textbook lesson the previous year—in fact, I practically re-wrote each unit in the process and was forced to “reinvent the wheel,” as the saying goes, week in and week out. But after reflecting upon my own encounter with “stupidity”—the limits of my teaching ability, or my stupidity as a teacher, as well as the stupidity of EFL textbooks in general—I decided to take Ranciére and Jacotot at their word, and begin from the premise that my students, after six-plus years of English instruction, could actually read English articles about various topics, hold conversations with one another about these topics, and in the process, teach one another, and me, about them.

In other words, rather than infantilizing them, or using inauthentic scripted dialogues, in order to gradually lift the veil of ignorance as they work their way toward the ever-receding horizon of “conversational ability,” I would assume that they were already quite capable of conversation and that they would profit much more from a struggle with their own “stupidity,” charting the blank spaces on their own mental maps, engaging in an apprenticeship and a struggle not only with the English language, but also with open-ended problems that held out no easy answers. We discussed topics like *ijime* (school bullying), *konotori no yurikago* (drop-off places for unwanted infants), the changing Japanese diet, children's mental and physical health, and other topics relevant to their future careers as educators. However, I would imagine that the themes could, potentially, be just about anything.

The point is for the students to be presented with a text that they must try to understand, and an issue that assures no simple answer. I split the students up into teams, and attempted to create some group cohesion and sense of identity by asking them to make team names, create slogans and even mascots. Each week, the students must read the two-page article I give them—a different article for each team, usually representing a

different point of view on a common topic, and mostly taken from *The Japan Times*—and then come to class with their Reading Journals, which contain lists of new vocabulary words, idiomatic expressions, unfamiliar grammar points, a sentence or two summarizing the main point, and questions concerning content or overall meaning for class discussion. I encourage them to use monolingual dictionaries wherever possible, and to write down example sentences and definitions, synonyms and so forth, in English. As you might imagine, this is quite a lot of work, but the students responded very well overall.

In theory, what I tried to accomplish was the following: as a facilitator, one ignorant of the topic discussed (or, more precisely, one who does not pretend to possess a “correct answer”), I compel the students to not only test the limits of their reading ability, but also to enhance their inferencing skills, ambiguity tolerance, field independence (or “selective attention,” ignoring irrelevant distractors and getting to the main point as quickly as possible), and, in the process, attempt some self-diagnosis. When they came together in class, as a team, they had to decide upon the different pairs (since I placed them in teams of six, with three teams in a class of eighteen) that would present to the class the different areas I compelled them to stress in their Reading Journals: vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and an article summary. I tried, in this way, to push them up against the limits of their English abilities, as well as to force them to think about difficult problems or issues in contemporary society, all while negotiating the contours of both cooperative- and problem- (or task)-based learning. Along the way, I hope that they moved toward a greater sense of intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy, and began to see English as something other than a series of exams to be passed.

To bring this back to *Dead Poets Society*—and though no teacher would ever want his or her classroom legacy to be as disastrous as Keatings’ was in that film—I would say that one of the goals of the university, and certainly of the EFL classroom, should be an encounter with Difference, or what Rancière calls “heterology.” For him, this term refers to the way in which the “meaningful fabric of the sensible is *disturbed*: a spectacle does

not fit within the sensible framework defined by a network of meanings, an expression does *not* find its place in the system of visible coordinates where it appears.” He goes on further to describe it as an “undecidable[...] radical uncanniness that threatens to destroy all[...] meaning”, even as it “*undoes* the sensible fabric,” which he defines as “a given order of relations between meanings and the visible,” while, simultaneously, “establish[ing] *other* networks of the sensible, which can possibly corroborate the action taken by political subjects to reconfigure what are taken to be facts,” and thus “contribute to liberating political possibilities by *undoing* the formatting of reality produced by state-controlled media, by *undoing* the relations between the visible, the sayable, and the thinkable” (*Politics of Aesthetics*, 63-65; emphasis added). This is, in fact, precisely what Keating had accomplished.

It is a work, a labor, not of Negation or negativity, but rather of confusion, ambiguity, complication and questioning; of un-doing and un-tying knots, of loosening connections heretofore taken for granted and making the familiar decidedly unfamiliar; of throwing cliché, “common sense,” what “everyone knows,” and other species of conventional thinking into radical doubt. It is, in this way, a labor of un-working, of un-doing; in other words, it is a practice of freedom, of emancipation, of insurrection, revolution and experimentation—of “raising a ruckus,” so to speak. Of course, this may indeed be radically at odds with our institutional setting, particularly in Japan, given both its cultural and political ethos of conformism. But the point, I think, is not to help contribute to the manufacture of good bureaucrats: after all, many other aspects of Japanese education, society, and institutional life seem to be doing a thorough enough job of accomplishing that, without our assistance. If Curtis Kelly is correct, in his insightful essay, “The Hidden Role of the University,” then what goes by the name of “English” in Japan, in fact, occupies an important space—that of freedom and equality. In Kelly’s estimation,

Japanese culture can be characterized as deep and narrow, with prescribed responses for almost every situation, while by comparison, the cultural base of English is broad and shallow, allowing far greater flexibility in dealing with the unexpected. Although the ability to communicate with non-Japanese might be the greatest benefit of [learning] English [in Japan], it offers something else as well: an alternative mind set for dealing with modern problems. English—by way of its associated values of freedom, individuality, and self-initiative—allows a far greater variety of responses to many of the situations Japanese may face (185).

Now, this may or may not be true of what Kelly is calling “English”—that it is actually somehow connected to, or rooted in, individualism and a strong sense of “Self,” and so forth—but, regardless, what he says about its “associated values” strikes me as correct, at least in the Japanese setting, as “English” has come to function (again, in Kelly’s words) as a species of “counterculture” in Japan. It is less a case of grammar and syntax and more an issue of a distinctive worldview, or, for lack of a better term, a “culture” and a way of thinking, a way of approaching or making sense of the world. What goes by the name of “English” in Japan, therefore, offers an alternative framework for perceiving and negotiating the world. In this way, one thing that we can hope to achieve in the EFL classroom is to compel our students to think—perhaps even to *think differently*.

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