Student Classroom Reticence and the Communicative Language Teaching Approach

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1.0 Introduction

> *He who knows does not speak.*
> *He who speaks does not know.*
> *-- Lao-tzu*

In March 1995, Soongsil University threw caution to the wind and set up the Soongsil Language Center (SSLC), which, according to its website (http://sslc.ssu.ac.kr/), was the first of its kind in Korea. This program was noteworthy for its new, communicative approach to language learning and teaching [의사소통영어 교육] as well as for its small class size of 25 students per class.

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This new approach, also known as **Communicative Language Teaching** (CLT),[1] was adopted to help English language learners develop communicative competence i.e., the ability to use the English language effectively for communication (Hymes, 1972). Of what value is it to go through the time-consuming and expensive ordeal of trying to learn English if as a result of all your efforts you can still barely communicate in the language?

Over the past eight years since the SSLC was established, "22 native speakers of English from six English-speaking countries" have exposed about 24,000 first-year Soongsilians to the CLT approach. How does this "new" approach differ from the older and now widely discredited language-learning approaches such as grammar-translation and audiolingualism, both of which were standard fare in virtually all Korean L2 language-learning classrooms until relatively recently? In a nutshell, teachers employing in their classrooms the CLT approach try to talk less and listen more, encouraging their students to if not listen less, then certainly talk more and the more the better (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). "Talk

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1) Not to be confused with **Community Language Learning** (CLL), a "holistic," student-centered method developed by Charles A. Curran (1976), a psychologist whose research confirmed that anxiety is a major debilitating factor especially in foreign language learning situations. To help students overcome this anxiety, he created CLL, the first stage of which is as follows (though there are several variations): students sit in a circle, while their teacher walks around outside of the circle. If a student wants to say something she first whispers in Korean whatever it is she wants to say in English into the teacher's ear, who in turn whispers back a translation of the student's Korean words into English. The student then repeats this translation out loud to the entire group. While this "discussion" is going on the group's entire conversation is being tape-recorded. After the class is over, the teacher transcribes the taped conversation, prints it out, perhaps translating some of it into Korean, and distributes it to the class during the next session. However, CLL is difficult to implement in Korea because very few EFL native-speaker teachers possess sufficient Korean language skills.

to learn, rather than learn to talk" is the CLT mantra. The second language acquisition (SLA) theory underpinning this approach is that language learning comes about through using language communicatively, rather than through merely practicing language skills. J. Willis (1996: 1) notes:

> the practice of language forms does not necessarily make perfect; people cannot learn a language without plenty of opportunities for real language use; the language that they are exposed to and that they use must reflect the kind of language they want to learn; ...

But old ideas and methods die hard. The so-called PPP approach (Presentation-Practice-Production), although debunked a decade ago by SLA theorists (e.g., Long and Crookes, 1991; D. Willis, 1996), is probably still the "commonest teaching approach when judged on a world-wide basis" (Skehan, 1998: 94). Practitioners of this approach, J. Willis writes (1996: 44), harbor a "serious misunderstanding of the language learning process." Because it is "basically behaviorist," J. Willis continues, it shapes "the language produced by learners so that it conforms to that demanded by the teachers." J. Willis (1996: 137) notes that PPP is a teacher-centered, form-focused approach *par excellence*: "teachers are at center stage, orchestrating the class." PPP is based, J. Willis (1996: 128) concludes, on the conviction that out of accuracy comes fluency; while advocates of CLT and its cousin Task-Based Learning (TBL)[2] believe that out of fluency comes accuracy, and that learning is "prompted and refined by the need to communicate." The CLT approach is student-centered and meaning-focused. While PPP allegedly leads from accuracy to fluency, CLT leads from fluency to accuracy.

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2) J. Willis (1996: 1) notes that TBL "combines the best insights from communicative language teaching with an organized focus on language form."

2.0 CLT: Culturally Inappropriate?

Yet fluency is rarely achieved in PPP classrooms because students there hardly ever have a chance to get a word in edgewise. "In some language classrooms," Nunan writes, "it has been shown that teachers talk for up to 89% of the available time" (1989: 26). However, in Far East Asian[3] L2 learning environments, even those featuring the CLT approach, classroom discourse is still monopolized by the teacher due to the characteristic classroom reticence of East Asian students.[4] Song (1994: 192-193), an assistant professor of English Education at Seoul National University, found "strong empirical evidence" indicating that the cultural background of Far East Asian students is "strongly related to his or her level of participation in the ESL classroom." Song undertook her research because of a growing concern among EFL/ESL researchers such as Sato (1982), Pica, *et al.* (1987), Chaudron (1988), and Tsui (1993)

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3) I.e., Chinese / Taiwanese, Japanese, and Korean students. A note on ethnic labeling might be appropriate here. The use of terms such as Western, Eastern, and Far East Asian is problematic and controversial (see the informative discussion in Tweed and Lehman [2002: 89]). For example, *Western* as a label is inaccurate because it literally encompasses the entire Western hemisphere. *European American* is often used in its place, but this phrase excludes Canadians, Australians, and Western people of non-European ethnicity. A better label would perhaps be *culturally Western*. The same problems arise when using the cultural label *Eastern*. However, in this paper I will stick with the usual albeit problematic dichotomy, namely, Eastern (i.e., Far East Asian) and Western (i.e., North American and European).

4) A few years ago I was given permission by one of "best teachers" at the SSLC to videotape one of his two-hour English conversation classes. After transcribing the script, I found that this teacher talked for an astonishing 93% of the available time. In a post-class interview with the teacher, he admitted he did a "little too much talking" during the first 50-minute class. But other than this admission he insisted his class that day went "pretty much as usual."

about Far East Asian students' "reticence to interact in the EFL/ESL classroom." Song's study

> confirmed the claims by many ESL teachers and researchers that [Far East] Asian students were not active users of English in the ESL classroom⋯ In general, they were "quiet" and "reticent."143

Recently the University of Michigan in the U.S. published a handy guidebook entitled, *Understanding Your International Students: An Educational, Cultural, and Linguistic Guide* (2003: 63-4; 75; 102-3). Most of the classroom behavior indicated below is the manifestation of the enduring influence of Far East Asia's prevailing cultural ethos, namely, Confucianism:[5]

KOREA, SOUTH

- *Class discussion is rare in a Korean classroom*, and students generally do not ask questions. Instead, they are more likely to be required to answer questions or to perform tasks at the blackboard.

- Teachers in most classes welcome questions but *few students ask questions* because doing so makes them feel ashamed for not understanding in the first place.

JAPAN

- *Students rarely volunteer to make contributions to the lesson.* In fact, some teachers report cases of their high

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5) In the case of Korea, the influence of Confucianism is indisputable. The following quotation will suffice to illustrate this assertion: "The basic concepts and codes of Confucian ethics run deep in the thinking of the Korean people. The Confucian way governs most interpersonal interaction" (Park, 1979: 219). However, as will be discussed briefly below, this influence is diminishing at a rapid rate, in some areas of society more than in others (more so in the economic and political arenas, less so in the classrooms).

school students sleeping through lectures. Sometimes, asking questions is construed as challenging the teacher's authority or implying that the teacher is not competent. Another reason students are hesitant to ask questions in class is that they do not want to stand out or show off. Instead of asking the teacher questions to clarify a point in the lesson, students commonly ask each other, even while the class is in session. This behavior is not considered disrespectful so long as it does not disturb the whole class.

- Students are *hesitant to share their opinions openly* in large classrooms or in public but will share their opinions in small groups or outside the classroom.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

- In general, *most teachers do not expect a great deal of participation and discussion, if any, from their students*. In fact, teachers who demand the expression of opinions may be regarded as insensitive by their students.

- In China, most students are *loath to proffer an opinion or reaction to issues that are addressed in class*. This is partly due to the widely shared belief that young people are far too inexperienced to generate responses that would be sound, interesting, or worthy of attention.

TAIWAN

- A teacher's questions rarely probe or elicit a student's opinion. Instead, teachers may ask questions that allow learners to display their knowledge of facts.

- Often described as Field-Dependent and structure-oriented, children in Taiwan thrive in well-managed classrooms and quiet environments. As a result, Taiwanese students need a

little longer wait-time to give answers to oral questions than do their American peers.

- *Students rarely challenge a teacher* (emphasis mine).

Faced with this culturally-induced classroom reticence, some ESL/EFL researchers have begun to question the appropriateness of the CLT approach in Far East Asian educational milieus. Holland and Shortall (1997: 53), for example, comment that this approach may be culturally unsuitable:

> It has been suggested... that the kind of learner-centered approach suggested by advocates of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) *is best suited to the Western societies* where it originated. [Our] own contacts with Japanese and Chinese teachers, for example, suggest that, while they admire CLT methods, they often feel that such approaches are *inappropriate for their own teaching environments* because learners expect learning to be teacher-led; language learning is often exam-oriented; learning is seen to involve the imparting of knowledge by the teacher; other teachers will frown on CLT approaches as lacking seriousness to commitment (emphasis mine).

Much closer to home, Choe Yong-jae, a professor of applied linguistics at Dongguk University in Seoul, lamented during a conference on applied linguistics held at Soongsil University in October 1996 (1997: 86):

> ...how futile the blind adoption of foreign ideas and techniques is. *No imported theories or methods have been fully successful in Korean classrooms simply because their cultural backgrounds have not been compatible with Korean culture.* For example, the reticence of the students gets in the way of new ideas and techniques (emphasis mine).

3.0 Reticent, or Merely Repressed?

William Littlewood, currently professor for TESOL and Applied

Linguistics in the Language Centre, Hong Kong Baptist University, vigorously disputes what he considers to be a stereotype prevalent among Western researchers (and I guess he should include certain non-Western scholars such as the above-mentioned Prof. Choe) of Far East Asian students as being passive, obedient, and reticent. In a *System* article he co-authored with Ngar-Fun Liu, and entitled, "Why Do Many Students Appear Reluctant to Participate in Classroom Learning Discourse?" (1995), the authors ask, "What is the cause of this perceived reticence in the classroom?" In their research they claim to have found evidence that the idea of the passive Far East Asian learner is a figment of the observer's imagination, at least as far as Hong Kong students are concerned. Contrary to the stereotypical students portrayed by Flowerdew and Miller (1995), Hong Kong students show "a positive attitude towards participation in classroom discourse" (1995: 372). Granted they don't actually participate in class by speaking English, but this is "not because they do not want to" (p. 374). Then why don't they speak up in class, one might ask? Well, one reason, Scollon and Scollon (1994: 17) argue, is that the traditional Confucian teacher-student relationship does not encourage student questioning in class. Liu and Littlewood find this explanation "dubious." Far East Asian students are reticent in class not because they are passive, and not because they don't want to speak English, but because they have not had sufficient opportunities to practice their English. So if I understand Liu and Littlewood's argument correctly, the "cure" for the reticence of Far East Asian students would be to introduce student-centered approaches such as CLT into their classrooms, and the students will finally have a chance to talk their heads off, so to speak.

Four years later, Littlewood, in an article in *Applied Linguistics* entitled, "Defining and Developing Autonomy in East Asian Context" (1999: 71,

89), again took up this issue and labeled the stereotypical notions of passive, obedient, and reticent Far East Asian learners commonly held by many educators as "unfounded" and "dangerous" because they

> ...distort reality in important ways (notably by exaggerating differences between groups and making differences between individuals)... and cannot serve as a firm basis for organizing a learner-oriented pedagogy.

Littlewood is not the only scholar riled by the way Far East Asian students are being stereotyped. Ryuku Kubota, an associate professor in the School of Education / Curriculum in Asian Studies, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Far East Asian herself, goes one step further than Liu and Littlewood and accuses Western EFL/ESL researchers, who harbor negative ethnocentric "stereotypes"[6] of Far East Asian students as passive, obedient, and reticent, of being, well, unrepentant neocolonialist racists. Kubota, in a TESOL *Quarterly* article entitled, "Discursive Construction of the Images of U.S. Classrooms" (2001: 10), argues that the field of ESL/EFL teaching has tended to essentialize[7] the cultures of ESL/EFL students, especially those of Far

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6) For the record, white applied linguists are not the only ones guilty of ethnocentric stereotyping. Anti-black racism is rampant among Far East Asians, and one could have a field day reproducing infamous quotes made by high-ranking government officials, especially Japanese cabinet members, but these remarks generally reflect what is on the minds of average citizens. One personal "favorite": in 1986, then-Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro implied that the key to Japan's success was the "racial homogeneity" of its people. He suggested that this purity made Japanese society superior to that of the U.S., which was tainted with the blood of blacks, Hispanics, and others inferior races.

7) The following concise definition of essentialization is taken from Jan Armstrong's web article, "Power and Prejudice" (http://www.unm.edu/~jka/courses/archive/power.html): To essentialize "means attributing natural, essential characteristics to members of specific culturally defined (gender, age, ethnic, 'racial,' socioeconomic, linguistic…) groups. When we essentialize others, we assume that individual differences can be explained by inherent, biological, 'natural' characteristics shared

East Asia,

> as categorically different from the perceived culture of students
> in English-speaking countries such as the United States. More
> concisely, the cultures of the Other and Self... have been
> essentialized and polarized.

Criticism of this polarizing propensity among ESL/EFL teachers and researchers, particularly their "Othering[8] of English language learners" (p. 10), has been growing over the past decade, and a coterie of postmodernist scholars, including Pennycook (1994, 1996, 1998), Zamel (1995, 1997), Spack (1997a, 1997b), Susser (1998), Littlewood (1999), and, of course, Kubota (1999), has been in the vanguard of this effort. Susser, for example, argues that Orientalism and Orientalist discourse permeates ESL/EFL literature. Susser, quoting Said (1978 / 1994: 2-3), defines Orientalism "as a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ´ the Orient´ and (most of the time) ´ the Occident´ ." Orientalism, in short, "is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." This polarizing is dangerous because it leads inevitably to colonialism, ethnocentrism, and racism. Europe and the West / Occident and its culture is perceived as familiar (the Self or "us"), while the Far East / Orient and

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by members of a group. Essentializing results in thinking, speaking and acting in ways that promote stereotypical and inaccurate interpretations of individual differences. For example, feminists note that people essentialize women when they assume that girls and women are *naturally* emotional (versus rational), nurturing, docile, weak, vain, dependent (and so on). Essentialist thinking is often anchored in *dualistic* (two-category, either this or that) modes of thought. Classic and contemporary social theorists identify and challenge essentialist and dualistic ways of thinking about the social world (human/non-human; human/animal; human/machine; civilized/barbaric; masculine/feminine; intelligent/not intelligent; rich/poor; white/non-white; Anglo/non-Anglo; individual/group; psychological/ cultural; leader/follower)."

8) Othering: the act of creating artificial hierarchical dichotomies such as "in-groups" and "out-groups" or "us" and "them."

its culture as the unfamiliar, the strange, the exotic ("them" or the Other). Culture, then, Kubota (2001: 10) argues,

> is a site of discursive struggle in which various political and ideological positions compete with each other to promote a certain cultural representation as the truth.

She (2001: 10) adds, however, that "common understandings of a particular culture are not mirror reflections of objective truths."[9] Culture, in other words, is not a neutral or objective category; it is the product, as Foucault (1978) has enlightened us, of discourse that joins knowledge and power. And the cultural dichotomizing that manufactures a West and an East "reflects a colonial discourse that produces and fixes cultures differences." However, this othering, stereotyping, representing, maginalizing, and essentializing are "contested by the counter-knowledge produced by educational research."

How are the Western Self and the Eastern Other portrayed in the literature of applied linguistics? The images are dichotomous, the former generally positive and the later almost always negative.[10] Kubota says that a body of cross-cultural research within applied linguistics contrasts

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9) In postmodern thought, objective truth is, of course, an illusion. "The postmodernist critique of science, Spiro (1996) writes, "consists of two interrelated arguments, epistemological and ideological. Both are based on subjectivity. First, because of the subjectivity of the human object, anthropology, according to the epistemological argument, cannot be a science; and in any event the subjectivity of the human subject precludes the possibility of science discovering objective truth. Second, since *objectivity is an illusion*, science, according to the ideological argument, subverts those of oppressed groups -- females, ethnics, third-world peoples (emphasis mine).

10) Derrida argues that all binary dichotomizing is oppressive because "one of the two terms governs the other or has the upper hand" (*Positions*, 41). The first term in a pair is privileged at the expense of the second term. Interestingly, in most discourse *East* usually comes before *West*, just as *North* usually precedes *South*.

the images of classrooms in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries with the images of classrooms in the Far East. These images, however, are not necessarily derived from cross-cultural empirical studies, Kubota claims. Instead, they are the result of the "theoretical explanations" of ESL student classroom behavior.

Western and Far East Asian educational goals differ sharply. For example, because individualism is regarded as the supreme cultural value in the United States, students are encouraged by their teachers to develop logical, analytical, creative, and critical thinking skills (Ramanathan and Atkinson, 1999). In contrast, because collectivism is allegedly the supreme cultural value in Far East Asia, students there are encouraged by their teachers to develop skills that promote group harmony and respect for authority and tradition.

These dramatic cross-cultural differences frequently create difficulties for Far East Asian students studying in U.S. universities (Altkinson, 1997; Atkinson and Ramanathan, 1995; Ramanathan and Altkinson, 1999),[11] and this is to be expected because the Western and Eastern approaches to learning are poles apart, at least according to these images. For example, teachers in U.S. classrooms are expected to encourage self-expression and independent thought through inductive approaches, while teachers in Far East Asian classrooms are expected to transmit knowledge and respect for authority through deductive approaches. These differences in pedagogic approaches can be traced back to Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.), the exemplar of the West, and to Confucius (551-479

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11) For example, they will face challenges in writing classes. It is a common conception among many Western teachers (Kubota would say misconception) that Japanese written discourse is characteristically indirect, implicit, vague, inductive, and, worst of all, lacking in critical thinking and creativity, while English written discourse is described as direct, explicit, clear, precise, deductive, analytical, and, ideally, original.

B.C.E.), the exemplar of the East.[12]

Socrates frequently questioned others' beliefs and even his own because only through this process of incessant questioning could one's ignorance be uncovered. Socrates evaluated others' knowledge by, Tweed and Lehman (2002: 91) note,

> asking successively deeper and more probing questions, finding most people in these sessions to be foolish and ignorant, the most foolish being men of highest repute in society. He exposed the foolishness of these respected men by engaging in repeated questioning, which became known as **the Socratic method.** People sometimes followed Socrates to these displays and took pleasure in watching him humble these proud men.[13]

Self-generated knowledge was held in the highest esteem by Socrates. He was accused of corrupting the youth of Athens, but he responded that he could not possibly be responsible for their impious beliefs because he never really taught them anything, other than exhorting them to endeavor to know themselves.

Confucius, on the other hand, emphasized effortful learning, pragmatic learning, and respectful learning (*Analects*). According to Confucius, learning requires effort more than ability (18:1). But learning for the

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12) The next several paragraphs are summarized from Kubota's (2001) article and from Tweed and Lehman's (2002) article. Richart E. Nisbett (2003: 29), a social psychologist whose groundbreaking research in cross-cultural cognitive differences I will discuss shortly, once asked a Chinese philosopher why he thought the East and the West had developed such dramatically different habits of thought, and he replied: "Because you had Aristotle and we had Confucius."

13) Let's not forget that this chronic debunking got the philosopher / gadfly into hot water with some of the Athenian elite, who perhaps out of pure resentment for being exposed as pompous know-nothings sentenced him to drink a cup of hemlock. So free debate and discussion had their limits even in debate-obsessed ancient Greece, and Socrates paid the price for his principles. Socrates could have, if he had wanted, sought asylum in another polis and lived to see another day.

sake of learning was foreign to him (Lee, 1996). And the pragmatic tendencies of his teachings were apparent in the emphasis he placed on learning to secure a civil service career (2:18, 13:13, 15:32). Emphasis was also put on learning the essentials. Confucius once claimed that he was not in the business to create new ideas: "I transmit, but I don't innovate; I am truthful in what I say and devoted to antiquity" (7:1). He regarded his role as one of acquiring and transmitting knowledge, rather than one of creating new ideas, which would go against the grain of the Confucian idea of a model scholar: one who is characterized by modesty, slowness in speech, and willingness to learn from respected figures (1:14, 12:3, 14:44, 15:31). Confucius' acquisition-focused approach to learning is well illustrated in the following remarks:

> I once spent all day thinking without taking food and all night thinking without going to bed, but I found that I gained nothing from it. It would have been better for me to have spent the time in learning (15:31).

Finally, Confucius advised learners to respect and obey authority figures (1:6, 3:19, 4:18, 14:43-44), and this advice contrasts the most sharply with Socrates' practice of publicly humiliating such figures. Confucius once said: "to honor those higher than ourselves is the highest expression of the sense of justice." He encouraged others to observe and learn from people who were models of virtue (5:3); therefore, students were exhorted to find such persons and try to imitate them (4:17). There was no need to embark on a laborious search for the truth because, according to Confucius, most of the important truths had already been made known. Thus, in Confucius' scheme of things, there is not much use for questioning, for the Socratic method, much less for heated debate and unfettered discussion.

Returning now to Kubota's 2001 *TESOL Quarterly* article, the literature of applied linguistics conveys certain images of students in the

U.S. and those in Far East Asia. As mentioned above, students in the U.S. are encouraged to be independent, autonomous, rational, and creative, and these traits can be developed through the acquisition of analytic, objective, and critical thinking skills. Regarding communication styles promoted in U.S. classrooms, Kubota (2001: 14) writes, they

> are presumably assertive and direct, and, as contrastive rhetoric studies often claim, their written discourse style is linear, logical, analytical, and deductive··· They actively engage in classroom discussion by expressing their opinions and questioning authority, whether it is a text, a teacher, or an established theory.

Contrast these positive images of U.S. students with the diametrically opposed negative images portrayed in the literature of applied linguistics concerning Far East Asian students. such Students are allegedly encouraged to be intellectually interdependent, to preserve knowledge rather than create it. Plagiarism is not particularly penalized because Far East Asian students "do not share the Western notion of text authorship that stresses originality, creativity, and individualism" (p. 14).[14] Rote

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14) Pennycook (1966), in a thought-provoking and controversial *TESOL Quarterly* article on plagiarism, argued that for various cultural reasons Far East Asian students appear to have an entirely different notion of "textual ownership" than Westerners do. EFL teachers in Far East Asia generally react with utter horror as soon as they discover the excessive amount of text copying (i.e., plagiarism) that goes on there. However, Pennycook argues, text borrowing has been remarkably common in the West, too, and it still is (e.g., JFK's 1960's "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," is remarkably similar to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.'s 1884 request to an audience to "recall what our country has done for each of us, and to ask ourselves what we can do for our country in return"). Pennycook quotes Goethe, who once said: "Everything clever has already been thought; one must only try to think it again." He then quotes Bakhtin, who once said: "Our speech, that is, all our utterances," is therefore "filled with others' words." Because language is constantly being cycled and recycled, Pennycook says, this should raise "profound questions about how we consider the notion of

memorization is strongly emphasized rather than logical and analytical thinking. Far East Asian students are especially discouraged from questioning authority. Regarding communication styles promoted in Far East Asian classrooms, Far East Asian students are often described (see also Jones [1999] and Connor 1996]) as

> reticent, passive, indirect, and not inclined to challenge the teacher's authority⋯ Their written communication style is often characterized as indirect, circular, and inductive⋯ In short, Asian students are presumably inclined to respect authority and maintain group harmony and interpersonal relationships rather than to seek truth through analytic and critical thinking (p. 14).

To summarize what has been discussed so far, the body of applied linguistics literature about the cross-cultural images of U.S. and Far East Asian classrooms, Kubota says, is dichotomous, the former being positively portrayed and the latter negatively. This explains the widespread concern among ESL teachers that Far East Asian students face considerable challenges when attending U.S. schools "because of

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textual borrowing or plagiarism" (p. 211). Therefore, we "need to take serious the, quoting Kearney (1988), "postmodern conviction that the very concept of a creative imagination is a passing illusion of Western humanist culture." The upshot of his article, if I understand it correctly, is that we should avoid the construction of a "crude East / West dichotomy or to assume some essentialist version of Chinese culture" (p. 211), and that we should realize "how the notion of plagiarism needs to be understood within the particular cultural and historical context of its development" (p. 218). Should EFL/ESL teachers be obliged to grant their students the "freedom of copying," just as Kim Hee-jung (see below) suggests giving reticent Far East Asian students attending U.S. colleges the "freedom of silence," the freedom not to participate in class? Pennycook concludes: "we need to be flexible, not dogmatic, about where we draw boundaries between acceptable or unacceptable textual borrowings" (p. 227). However, Far East Asian students attending U.S. universities should be warned that all Western universities regard plagiarism a very serious matter, and that they will never tolerate such behavior, intriguing cross-cultural interpretations notwithstanding.

cultural differences between the East and the West" (p. 14).

But do these dichotomous images of Eastern and Western classrooms as portrayed by applied linguists conform to the facts on the ground? Kubota fills several pages of her article with counter-knowledge which disputes these ubiquitous portrayals in applied linguistics literature. For example, as mentioned above, the prevailing image of U.S. classrooms is that they are arenas of robust discussion and free-for-all debate. But the reality, Kubota contends, is that the predominant activity in even mainstream classrooms is teacher-led discussion, although, quoting Harklau (1994: 248), "discussion may be a misnomer for this activity because teachers overwhelmingly dominate the talk." And what about memorization and rote learning, supposedly the most characteristic trait of Far East Asian education? Kubota cites Applebee's research (1996) which found that both elements prevail in U.S. high schools and even colleges. Overall, the image of a teacher in the U.S. is of an "authority and transmitter of knowledge" (p. 19). The studies cited by Kubota in her article portray an image of U.S students as "passive, docile, and compliant rather than active, creative, and autonomous" (p. 19). She cites Boyer's (1987) study that at the high school level, students rarely engaged in serious intellectual discussion, and that the teacher's lecture was a "sort of monologue, with no one listening" (quoted in Sizer, 1984: 158). Boyer (1987) asks, "How can we produce critical and creative thinking throughout a student's life when we so systematically discourage individuality in the classroom?" (p. 147). Again citing Boyer's (1987) research, Kubota notes that passivity also characterizes students in many college classrooms. Students are increasingly conscious of grades; consequently, Boyer (1987) writes, "[u]ndergraduates are afraid of controversy. They hesitate to participate in vigorous give and take on any topic. The main thing is to prepare for the exam" (p. 141). "In sum," Kubota (2001: 20) says,

contrary to the images produced by applied linguistics discourse, which focus on cultural differences, U.S. classrooms as portrayed by these studies are characterized by teacher dominance and student passivity.

Is it any wonder then, why U.S. students consistently rank so low in international academic competitions? Apparently all they do all day in class is sit there like bumps on logs.

4.0 "We're OK; isn't it the Others Who Aren't?"

Kubuta then discusses other researchers who launched a counterattack to discount and debunk these negative images about the U.S. educational milieu. These revisionists claim things aren't really as bad as right-wing educators with their "neoconservative educational agenda" say they are. Far East Asian classrooms, on the other contrary, are characterized by rigidity, authoritarianism, draconian discipline, and obsession with examinations and rote memorization. Bracey (1996a), one of the most outspoken of the revisionists, claims Japanese high schools in particular are devoid of critical, independent thinking, originality, and innovation. The national curriculum is exam- and rote memorization-oriented. Discipline is extremely severe. Conformity is rigidly enforced. "The goal of [Far East] Asian education systems," Bracey (1996a: 21) writes, "is obedience. In Japan it used to be obedience to the emperor; now it is simply obedience to the state and authority in general." While portrayals of Far East Asian educational institutions in applied linguists' literature were generally neutral in tone, Kubota comments, the revisionist descriptions of Far East Asian culture sound positively derogatory.

Kubota labels these images of U.S. classrooms generated by Western researchers, superficially objective, empirical and scientific, as ideal

rather than typical, and the images are "exploited to accentuate cultural differences" (p. 23). The other images of U.S. classrooms are "quite similar to applied linguists' images of [Far East] Asian classrooms, raising the question of whether educational practices in the United States are distinct from those in Asia" (p. 23). These conflicting images of U.S. classrooms and "different claims for truth" make it "impossible to determine their true characteristics" (p. 23).[15]

Kubota claims that these images of U.S. classrooms are "discursively constructed, reflecting and legitimating a certain political and ideological position from which the research speaks" (p. 23). Applied linguists and revisionists, therefore, dichotomize fixed differences between Far East Asian culture and U.S. culture, and polarize the Self and the Other. In the case of Japanese education, a "rich body of ethnographic studies" is ignored or given only superficial attention. She quotes LeTendre (1999: 40), who found that

> Japanese classrooms at the elementary level *on a nationwide* basis de-emphasize rote learning and instead emphasize hands-on activities, problem-solving, higher-order questioning, and the creative manipulation of materials during math, science and other lessons.[16]

This Othering, essentializing, and dichotomizing of the culture of the Self (the norm) and the Other (the strange, the exotic), especially regarding education West versus East, "echo colonial dichotomies that have differentiated the center and periphery" (p. 25).[17] In colonial

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15) Kubota adds this telling footnote: "This difficulty is similar to that in determining the characteristics of Japanese schooling...."

16) Although, Kubota admits, "these characteristics diminish and replace more drill-oriented learning as the grade proceeds" (p. 24). This admission is critical for in my judgment it undermines her entire argument.

17) Whenever Kubota uses the term colonialism in her article, she refers to "Western colonialism, particularly as related to the spread of English" (p.

discourse the privileged and superior core ("us") confronts those of the unchanging and inferior periphery ("them"). Regarding the comparison of the conflicting images of U.S. and Far East Asian classrooms, Kubota regards them as cultural constructs of colonialism or, quoting Pennycook (1998: 166), a "colonializing strategy of representation." And inequalities, prejudices, and discrimination are not the only colonial legacy. Kubota says that many writers (e.g., Pennycook 1998, among others) have pointed out that colonialism has produced a racial hierarchy (2001: 28):

> Just as various objects and natural phenomena around the world were categorized and catalogued under colonial projects, humans were divided into different species and ordered from superior to inferior.

Contemporary society is persistently racist, Kubota claims, but overt expressions of racial prejudice are suppressed, and are instead expressed "in more subtle ways" (p. 28). She cites van Dijk (1993: 28), who points out that contemporary racism is more cultural than racial. Academic discourse supports a new ideology that

> maintains the racial hierarchy by focusing on cultural differences in terms of language use, customs, norms, and values instead of explicitly discussing racial differences. Hidden in this discourse is the old hierarchy of racial superiority that determines which form of cultural product or practice is the norm or deviant.

Kubota says that her "concern was not which image is true and which is false, but rather how these images are produced and exploited" (p. 29). Instead, she claims to have tried in her article to reveal that the

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25). In a footnote she admits there exist other types of colonialism: "An example is the colonialism promoted by Japanese imperialism, which also has a past-present continuity in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political implications in Asia, including teaching Japanese as an L2" (p. 25).... One could speculate why she has relegated her mother country's infamous imperialist adventures to a mere footnote, but hidden motives are impossible to uncover.

images of U.S. classrooms "cannot be reduced to a single neutral, objective truth but are constructed by discourses that exploit various convenient notions to *serve their own interests* (p. 29; emphasis mine). One consequence of the perpetration of these images is that they have resulted in "detrimental communicative behaviors" and "intercultural miscommunication." For example, in "normal" Western style communication directness is touted as a virtue. Beebe and Takahashi (1989) found that Japanese, in face-threatening situations such as disagreements or criticisms, tended to be too direct when speaking English. In other words, the Japanese apparently overgeneralized the alleged directness of the U.S. communication style, and consequently appeared to be impolite or undiplomatic. This "intercultural miscommunication" could jeopardize the ESL speaker's social success. Intercultural misinterpretations can also arise. For example, U.S. and Japanese teachers watched videotaped scenes of each other's day-care centers and were asked to give their impressions of what they saw. The Japanese teachers found U.S. teachers strict and rigid about rules, and U.S. teachers found the Japanese centers noisy and chaotic. However, U.S. teachers contrasted the U.S. individualistic society with the Japanese more regimented one, where Japanese teachers don't have to interfere because their society is already highly structured.

5.0 Does it Make Any Big Difference?

Kubota claims that ESL teachers' "own beliefs and their perceptions of the Self and the Other can further reinforce cultural essentialization and Othering of ESL students" (p. 31). She cites the research of Harklau (1999b, 2000), which revealed a tendency among U.S. college

writing teachers to assign immigrant ESL students compositions on the topic of "your country," regardless of how long they had lived in the U.S. Other topics included comparing and contrasting how children are raised in the U.S. and in "your country." To Kubota these assignments, though "certainly well-intentioned," not only "impose a particular identity on the students, but also reinforce a polarization between cultures" (p. 31). Harklau (1999b) related an incident that illustrates the problem of a "fixed and monolithic view of culture": when two Vietnamese students provided conflicting answers about Vietnamese culture, their ESL teacher told them to talk it over and come up with a consistent answer.

Kubota next discusses in her article a "particular conception of cultural differences": the reticence of Chinese ESL students in mainstream classrooms. The standard argument (see Ramanathan and Atkinson, 1999, citing Harklau [1994]) is that their culture does not promote an individual expression of voice. However, Kubota (2001:31) writes,

> being reticent in mainstream classrooms may have more to do with an unwelcoming atmosphere, the mainstream members' lack of willingness to take their share of communicative responsibility to interact with L2 speakers..., particular gender dynamics in the classroom, or even mainstream peers' negative attitudes toward ESL students.[18]

Far East Asian-American students are considered to be a successful "model minority," and they are particularly successful academically.[19]

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18) Note there is no mention of the etiology of this reticence, that is, that the students are reticent because they are engrossed in deep thoughts, or that talking impairs their thinking, a radical hypothesis advanced recently by a Korean social psychologist whose research I will discuss shortly.

19) Pennycook notes that Biggs (1991) found a major contradiction in the common perceptions of Far East Asian students: on the one hand, they are "held up to be paragons of educational excellence, while on the other hand they are derided as rote learners" (p. 222). Just as there is good (i.e., non-intentional) and bad plagiarism, there appears to be good and

Still, they continue to experience racism from the dominant White society, in particular they are "underrepresented in college faculties and often face discriminatory employment practices for tenure and promotion" (p. 86). Osajima (1993) has investigated how Far East Asian-American students cope with this racism and discrimination from the White majority. Some Far East Asians try to assimilate into the mainstream in order to survive, while others simply avoid all forms of confrontation:

> These strategies for survival force us to rethink the stereotypical image of the Asian student as *quiet and hard-working. Their quietness cannot be understood as simply a product of shyness or Asian culture.* For the Asian students in this study, silence becomes a survival mechanism formed in the context of a racially discriminatory society (p. 89; emphasis mine).

Culture, Kubota claims (p. 31), is not the "sole cause of the problem, for such a view is akin to a *blaming-the-victim (or victim's culture)* move used in elite discourse that perpetuates racism."

Kubota concludes her article by saying that these cultural dichotomies idealizing images of U.S. classrooms and stereotyping and disparaging Far East Asians ones are blatantly negative and are a legacy of colonial discourse. What position then should ESL teachers and applied linguistics researchers take regarding this issue? For one thing they could look critically at their perceptions of cultural differences or the images of themselves and people from other cultures because these perceptions or images do not reflect objective truth. They need to understand that these discursively produced images of cultural differences are created and exploited to "justify certain ways of thinking and certain relations of power" (p. 32). They must "avoid an ethnocentric view that champions Western culture and the English language and ignores or debased non-Western languages and cultures" (p. 32).[20] They must also

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bad (mechanical) form of memorization.

recognize, Kubota (2001: 32) insists, that

> different cultures are made different discursively. It is imperative that teacher and researchers critically examine the underlying ideologies and social, cultural, and educational consequences of perpetuating the commonplace notion of cultural differences.

6.0 Critical Multiculturalism to the Rescue?

In a previous *TESOL Quarterly* article, Kubota (1999) discussed the pedagogic options available to ESL teachers who teach students who are culturally diverse. They could encourage these students to assimilate into the mainstream culture and language. Or they could promote rhetorical-cultural pluralism in the mainstream English community.However, the **acculturation model** treats the ESL students' cultures as deficits or weaknesses, and stresses explicit teaching of the dominant culture and language. The **pluralist model** recognizes and respects or tolerates the ESL students' cultures and voices, letting them coexist peacefully with the dominant culture and language, but fails to deal with the deeper issue of how discourses are at the root of inequalities of power. There is a third option: **critical multiculturalism**. ESL teachers should not only recognize and respect cultural diversity, but also critically investigate their own culture to realize how dichotomizing discourses produce inequalities of power. The goal of critical multiculturalism is social transformation, Kubota argues. Critical multiculturalists, therefore, have to decide whether or not the dominant language English and culture Eurocentric should be

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20) In a footnote Kubota (2001) recalls a public lecture she once attended by David Berliner, an avowed revisionist, during which "he enthusiastically engaged in Japan-bashing" (p. 32). This in an article devoted to bashing White applied linguists as blatant racists. People who live in glass houses....

taught to ESL students. Kubota notes that Freire (1993) insists the languages and cultures of subordinate groups must not be belittled as inferior or deficient. However, this does not mean the dominant culture and language should be neglected. Subordinate students "can use the dominant knowledge effectively in their struggle to change the material and historical conditions that have enslaved them" (Freire and Macedo, 1987: 128). English and the dominant culture are not taught merely to encourage acculturation through *banking pedagogy*,[21] but to give students "authentic voices" so they can, quoting Freire (1993: 135), "fight for the transformation of an unjust and cruel society." But above all, Kubota (1999: 29) says, to "create equality in society" teachers of the dominant culture and language must always keep uppermost in mind that

> no particular culture or language (or variety of a language) is superior to others, that learning the dominant cultural and linguistic codes does not have to mean sacrificing one's cultural and linguistic heritage, and that the learner can appropriate the dominant linguistic equality in the wider society.[22]

ESL teachers, Kubota (1999: 31) concludes, should continue to "explore these questions of cultural politics rather than continuing to essentialize the culture of the Other."

7.0 East is East, and West is West?

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21) *Banking pedagogy*: defined by Kubota as "certain information is uncritically transmitted to students and the existing unequal relations of power are legitimized" (p. 28).

22) If no culture can be labeled superior or inferior (a bedrock Po-Mo multiculturalist doctrine), does this not mean Kubota no longer has any "right" to condemn fascist or overtly racist cultures, something she has been doing ever since she began writing articles in *TESOL Quarterly?*

Are cross-cultural images of Far East Asian students as passive, obedient, and reticent merely discursively produced ones created by dichotomizing, predominantly white, Eurocentric, privileged, and male Western applied linguists guilty of Orientalizing, essentializing, exoticizing, marginalizing, and stereotyping the exotic Other, as Spack, Zamel, Susser, and especially Kubota insist? She cites Nieto's (1999) research that dichotomizing racial groups by focusing on traits such as collectivist and individualist, holistic and analytic, **field dependent** and **field independent**, "runs the risk of rigidifying the already existing stereotyped of racial groups of learners" (p. 87).[23] Such labeling, stigmatizing, or generalizing, Spack (1997: 765) remarks, is a "potentially hazardous enterprise" because students are "remarkably diverse, and thus no one label can accurately capture their heterogeneity."[24] One of most persistent myths perpetrated in cross-cultural essentializing research, Spack writes, is that cultural identities are fixed, homogeneous, stable, and static. Instead, "the students we teach have multiple identities and draw on multiple resources" (p. 768). Spack is

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23) More on these binary dichotomies later. For now suffice it to repeat Brown's (1994: 106) brief definition: a holistic or field independent individual is one who can perceive a particular item in a "field" of distracting items (tunnel vision); an analytic or field dependent individual is one who is so dependent on the field that he or she can not see the individual items (can't see the forest for the trees).

24) Spack (1997: 766) is so convinced labeling is hazardous she not only opposes the use of the word "foreign" (which suggests to her "alien," "strange," "not natural," "nonessential," and "irrelevant"), and is concerned about the "social and political implications" of the word "international" (U.S.-born students and immigrants are "verbally excluded"), she even finds the letter "O" in TESOL offensive because it situates people "in dominant and subordinate positions." Speakers of *other* languages? "Other than what?" she asks. Why should English be privileged over other languages? Why is English not the "other language"? Instead of using a language such as English to set people apart from one another, "we should be in the business of using language that brings us together." Spack has clearly gone off the deep end here.

particularly scornful of the way some applied linguists essentialize Far East Asian culture as collectivistic and group-oriented. For example, she cites Carson (1992: 43-44), who claims:

> The primacy of the group in China results from Chinese notions of "guan" control and regimentation. The group is linked to order, is vertically organized and teacher-directed; it exists to serve the collective good.

Such statements, Spack says (1997: 766), "are never examined critically, but once they reach print, they are treated as cultural truths and then applied inappropriately to other cases." ESL/EFL teachers and researchers, Spack cautions (p. 772), "need to view students as individuals, not as members of a cultural group," and, quoting Friedman (1994: 71), let them "speak for themselves." In theory this is admirable, but what if our students don't try or want to speak up in class at all? Then what?[25]

Are cross-cultural distinctions such as collectivism and classroom reticence merely essentializing stereotypes based on faulty ethnographic research, or is there empirical evidence confirming these differences? **Kim Hee-jung**, a Korean social psychologist at the University of California / Santa Barbara and specializing in the relationship between culture and psychology, has done extensive research in this area in an effort to answer the question: why don't Far East Asian students speak up in class?[26] According to Lubman (1998), college educators in the United States with large numbers of Far East Asian students have expressed concern about their classroom reticence. Despite their relatively high overall grades, such students tend to avoid participating in

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25) As I mentioned above, Zamel (1997: 345) regards this classroom silence a "form of resistance" against the dominant and dominating White, Anglo-Saxon culture.

26) Her research, conducted under the guidance of Hazel Rose Markus, received the 2002 Society of Experimental Social Psychology Dissertation Award.

classroom debate and discussion. This is a particular concern to these educators because the prevailing pedagogic assumption is that such classroom activities help students become "better thinkers." In most U.S. college courses and seminars, especially in the humanities, **class participation** usually constitutes about 15-20% of a student's final grade. Underlying this practice is the common Western assumption that talking is a positive act because 1) it is an expression of the individual, and individualism is a core value in Western and especially North American culture, and 2) it is closely connected with thinking. Talking and thinking are often equated: "I talk, therefore I think; I think, therefore I talk."[27] And this assumption is regarded as universal, as true for everyone in the world; it is not culturally specific; it is "the nature of human nature" (Bruner, 1996: 16).

The Western assumption of the equivalence of talking and thinking can be traced back to the ancient Greeks (Barnes, 1965). For example, Homer regarded debating skills as one of the most important skills for a human to possess. Even average Athenian citizens could participate in free-for-all debates in the agora, and they could even directly challenge the king (Cromer, 1993). This Western assumption regarding the connectedness of thinking and talking persists in many psychological models of thinking. For example, the controversial **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** (Whorf, 1956) theorizes that thoughts and behavior are determined (or are at least partially influenced) by language; in other words, difference in language equals difference in thought.

This Western assumption about the connectedness of language and thought is not accepted in Far East Asian cultural traditions. While in Western countries students are taught to hone their debating and public

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27) With apologies to Descartes. John Condon (1984: 9) once wrote: "If Descartes had been Japanese, he would have said, 'We think, therefore we are.'"

speaking skills, in Far East Asian countries students are taught to hone their listening skills (Yum, 1996). For example, according to Caudill and Weinstein (1969), Japanese mothers speak much less frequently to their young children than do their U.S. counterparts. In general, Far East Asian children tend to be less verbal than North American children. Japanese children produce significantly fewer utterances per turn that North American children (Minami, 1994). Chinese infants at seven months of age generally vocalize less than European American infants (Kagan, et al., 1977). Dozens of such studies confirming this Far East Asian cultural tradition of relative uncommunicativeness could be cited. Thus, this cross-cultural difference in the relative importance of verbal communication manifests itself at a very early age.

Since ancient times there has been little emphasis put on debate and discussion in Far East Asian culture. Instead, much emphasis has been put on silence and introspection in order to attain higher levels of thinking. Buddhist and especially Taoist practices have contributed to this tradition. **Lao-Tse** (604-531 BCE), a contemporary of Confucius and thought to be the founder of Taoism, taught that "supreme truth" could be attained especially through the practice of silence: "He who knows does not speak. He who speaks does not know."

In Far East Asian cultural contexts indirect and nonverbal communication is more strongly emphasized than in North American or European cultural contexts. For example, in a Stroop task[28] Japanese participants' judgment was more influenced by nonverbal cues than was American participants' judgment (Kitayama and Ishii, 2002). And of course there is nunchi (눈치),[29] the Korean form of nonverbal

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28) An experiment where words are presented in a vocal tone with contradictory emotional meanings (e.g., the participant will hear the word *happy* delivered in an angry tone of voice).

communication. Lee Jun-yong, in a web article entitled, "Some Tips for Teaching English to Korean Students," provides the follow practical information about Korean culture:[30)]

> First of all, Korean students are generally *very indirect* in expressing their opinions, which is very different from that of Americans. According to the tradition and influence of Confucianism, most students have become accustomed to saving their words in all situations. They have been trained to observe a strict etiquette in speaking. Before they talk they have to consider the other's feeling and mood as well as their circumstances or conditions. Naturally, *expressive verbalization has not been encouraged* and their verbal behavior has been carefully regulated according to the other's responses or the surrounding mood. The famous proverb, "Silence is gold, but eloquence is silver" is a good an example which represents one of the characteristics of the indirectness so important in Korea. Automatically watching others' intentions (Korean *nunchi*) has become a very important factor when they want to speak or converse with others. As a result, most Korean students learning English as a foreign language save their words since they are conditioned (trained) to be introverted rather than extroverted (emphasis mine).

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29) A pure Korean word that is difficult to translate. The following definition of *nunchi* is provided by Kim Kyong-dong (at http://www.kdischool.ac.kr/library/data/w02-02.PDF). It means "perceptiveness whereby you can sense, get wind of, have an inkling of, or become aware of, a person's intention, motive, design, hidden agenda, or what have you." It also "primarily refers to one's attitude to the surroundings and others around oneself, in the sense that one tries to read others' minds, probe others' motives, or see how the wind blows, basically in an effort to make necessary adaptation to the condition."

30) Lee Jun-yong (at http://www.intesol.org/lee.html#bio in INTESOL Journal [ND]).

This cross-cultural research highlights the considerable importance placed on indirect and nonverbal communication in Far East Asian cultural contexts vis-à-vis North American cultural contexts. Why are there such dramatically different differences in communication styles East vis-à-vis West?

8.0 Far East Asians' Cognitive Style: Holistic or Analytic?

"It has been well documented," Kim Hee-jung (2002: 830) says, "that there are reliable differences in the modes of thinking between people from the [Far] East and people from the West." Much of the cross-cultural empirical research in this field has been done by Richard E. Nisbett and his associates at the University of Michigan in the U.S. In a recently published book entitled, "The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently.... And Why," Nisbett (2003: 191) asserts that

> differences between Easterners and Westerners have been found in virtually every study we have undertaken and they are usually large. Most of the time, in fact, Easterners and Westerners were found to behave in ways that were *qualitatively distinct* (emphasis mine).

What are some of these "usually large" and "qualitatively distinct" differences in the modes of thinking between Far East Asians and Westerners? Through various experiments (see, e.g., Choi, Nisbett, and Norenzayan, 1999; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan, 2001; Peng and Nisbett, 1999), Nisbett and his associates have demonstrated convincingly that Far East Asians are relatively **holistic** in cognitive style, whereas Westerners are relatively **analytic** in cognitive style,[31]) and that this phenomenon has important pedagogical implications. What does it mean to

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have a holistic or an analytic cognitive style? Far East Asians and Westerners literally see the world differently. Far East Asians tend to more easily see the whole (the field, and the interrelationships of the objects therein), while Westerners tend to more easily see the parts (the individual objects). These two distinctly different cognitive processes are, Nisbett, *et al.* (2001: 291) note, "embedded in different native metaphysical systems and tacit epistemologies." The origin of these cross-cultural differences is "traceable to markedly different social systems," the former exhibiting tendencies that are collectivist, and the latter individualistic.[32]

Many empirical experiments have been conducted by social psychologist to investigate these cross-cultural differences, but because of space limitations I will mention only one. In order to test the hypothesis that Far East Asians perceive the world holistically and Westerners analytically, Masuda and Nisbett (2001) showed animated underwater scenes to students at Kyoto University, Japan, and the University of Michigan, U.S., and then asked them to describe the scenes. All the scenes had one or more "focal" fish, which were larger, brighter, and faster-moving than anything else in the picture. In addition, each scene had less rapidly moving animals (smaller fish, frogs, etc.), as well as plants, rocks, shells, bubbles, and so on. The scenes were shown twice to the participants for twenty seconds each time. After the second showing the participants were asked to describe what they had just seen. As they researchers has anticipated, the Japanese participants tended to

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31) Also know as **field-dependent** and **field-independent**.

32) In a fascinating experience that demonstrates the collectivist-individual cross-cultural dichotomy, Han, *et al*. (1998) studied the daily events of Chinese, Korean, and U.S. citizens ages 4-6, events such as the things they did before bedtime or how they spent their last birthday. U.S. children made three times more self-references to the self that either the Chinese or Korean children. Also, U.S. children had twice as many references to their internal states than was the case with Far East Asian children.

make more references to background elements (the water, rocks, bubbles, inert plants, etc.). The very first sentence from the Japanese participants tended to refer to the environment: "It looked like a pond," while the very first sentence from the American participants tended to refer to the focal fish: "There was a big fish moving to the left." Next the participants were shown still pictures of 96 objects, half of which they had seen before and half of which they hadn't. All participants were then asked if they had seen these objects before. Some of the objects they had actually seen were shown in their original environments and some where shown in new environments. The Japanese participants could better remember the objects they had seen if they were shown in their original environments than when they were shown in new environments, suggesting that the objects had somehow become "bound" to (or embedded in) the original environments. The American participants, on the other hand, had no trouble remembering the objects they had seen regardless of the environments, suggesting that the perception of the objects was fully separated (decontextualized or dis-embedded) from their environments.

This experiment and dozens of others like it suggest that Far East Asians and Westerners view the world in dramatically different terms. Nisbett (2003: 109) conveniently summarizes these dramatic differences:

[M]odern Asians, like the ancient Chinese, view the world in holistic terms: They see a great deal of the field, especially background events; they are skilled in observing relationships between events; they regard the world as complex and highly changeable and its components as interrelated; they see events as moving in cycles between extremes; and they feel that control over events requires coordination with others. Modern Westerners, like the ancient Greeks, see the world in analytic, atomistic terms; they see objects as discrete and separate from their

environments; they see events as moving in linear fashion when they move at all; and they feel themselves to be personally in control of events even when they are not. Not only are worldviews different in a conceptual way, but also the world is literally *viewed* in different ways. Asians see the big picture and they see objects in relation to their environments so much so that it can be difficult for them to visually separate objects from their environments. Westerners focus on objects while slighting the field and they literally see fewer objects and relationships in the environment that do Asians.

One of the consequences of these cross-cultural differences in cognitive styles is that in Western culture debate and discussion are regarded as important educational techniques for learning and improving analytic thinking styles. Let us return for a moment to Kim Hee-jung's investigation into the connectedness of talking and thinking, and specifically the issue of Far East Asian students' characteristic reticence in the classroom, an investigation the practical implications of which, Nisbett has noted (2003: 211), are "extremely important." She carried out several experiments to test the effects of talking on thinking, one of which I will describe briefly. She hypothesized that European-Americans from a cultural tradition in which talking is thought to be closely relating to thinking would not be hindered in their performance, and that Far East Asian-Americans[33] from a cultural tradition in which talking is thought to be a hindrance to thinking would perform worse when talking than when silent. Using the **think-aloud method**, the participants were instructed to vocalize their internal thinking process as they occur.[34] The

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33) The participants were second-generation Americans, i.e., both of their parents were immigrants from Far East Asian countries. They were pre-selected because their "parental upbringing is more likely to reflect East Asian parenting styles, yet their English proficiency would be as good as their European-American counterparts" (2002: 830-831).

research results showed that the impact of talking on each group's performance differed greatly. Verbalization of the thought process significantly impaired the performance of Far East Asian-Americans, while the same verbalization did not affect the performance of European-Americans. This research, Kim contends, counters the common North American assumption that talking is good for thinking, and that encouraging students to speak up in class will help them become "better thinkers." This assumption, therefore, is culturally specific, she concludes.

Recall my mention of the concern of educators in U.S. universities regarding the classroom reticence of Far East Asian students. In North American culture, Kim (2002: 839) writes,

> talking is strongly emphasized and communicative assertiveness is generally regarded as a sign of a healthy personality, and anyone who keeps silent tends to be devalued as shy, passive, or lacking independent opinions··· The consequence of the collective silence of East Asians in America is that they are associated with some of these culturally negative traits of people who do not raise their voice.

Should Far East Asian college students, then, be encouraged to take debate classes in order to overcome this "cultural disadvantage" and learn how to express themselves? Economic success or failure after graduation could very well depend on it.[35] Or should colleges and universities be encouraged to reflect diversity in classroom styles and

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34) For example, when a person was working on a problem e.g., "what does 2 times 5 equal?" he or she would say out loud, "Two times five equals ten."

35) Kim (in Kim and Markus, 2002) relates an incident that illustrates a serious cultural misunderstanding regarding the meaning of talking. It happened to one of her acquaintances, an applicant for a fashion designer job, who was not hired after an interview because she appeared too shy and reticent. The applicant, a Korean-American, thought she was being appropriate and respectful during the interview, but the interviewer thought she was too shy and passive.

conditions and exempt Far East Asian students from classroom debate and discussion? Kim and Markus (2002: 449) suggest that "the act of talking is a cultural practice, and that freedom of speech should not be pressure to speak. Freedom of silence might be no less fundamental a cultural right." Kim (2002: 839-840) concludes that her research findings

> should lead to a greater appreciation of the value of tolerance for others with different ways of being, and the importance of developing multicultural places in which people from diverse cultural backgrounds can comfortably exist and adjust to different expectations without experiencing a sense of inadequacy⋯ To conclude, perhaps making students speak up in class might not be the only way to make them better thinkers for the colleges which are concerned about East Asian students' silence. Perhaps instead of trying to change their ways, colleges can learn to listen to their *sound of silence* (emphasis mine).

9.0 Conclusion.

It is time to summarize and try to reach some tentative conclusions regarding the conflicting viewpoints about the classroom reticence of Far East Asians that have been discussed so far. In recent years many applied linguists who have studied the classroom behavior of Far East Asian students in ESL/EFL classrooms, have commented on the relative reticence of such students vis-a-vis other ethnic groups, and have attributed this reticence to the lingering influence of Confucianism on Far East Asian cultures. This observation, however, conflicts with the perspectives maintained by critical multiculturalist scholars such as Kubota, Spack, and Zamel,[36] who assert that the esentializing of Far

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36) Perhaps a few insights about multiculturalism from Stanley Fish would be appropriate here. Fish, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois (Chicago campus), in a chapter of his book *The Trouble*

with Principle (1999), entitled, "Boutique Multiculturalism," asserts that multiculturalism does not and can not exist. Multiculturalism comes in two versions: **boutique multiculturalism** and **strong multiculturalism**. The former professes respect, sympathy or at least tolerance for other cultures. But there is always a point were boutique multiculturalists (hereafter BM) will stop short of approving other cultures. For example, BMs profess tolerance for worshippers of the Islamic faith. Yet when the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini called for the death of Salman Rushdie after his 1989 publication of *The Satanic Verses*, and issued a *fatwa* that garnered virtually unanimous support in the Muslim world, BM's were appalled at this outrageous display of religious intolerance. Countless other examples demonstrating boutique multiculturalists' potential intolerance for cultural diversity could be cited: should we be tolerant about female genital mutilation (FGM), the Islamic Sharia court sentencing of a Nigerian adulteress to death by stoning, Afrocentrist curriculum being promoting the U.S. inner city classrooms; animal sacrifices conducted by members of the Santeria religion; the use of peyote (a controlled substance) by Native-Americans in religious ceremonies; the Mormon practice of polygamy? BMs "resist the force of the appreciated culture at precisely the point at which it matters most to its strongly committed members" (p. 70). BMs do not and can not take seriously the core values of the cultures they allegedly tolerate. BMs believe in the universality of a common human rationality (as postmodernists they are grossly inconsistent here). Whereas BMs express a superficial respect for cultures other than their own, a strong multiculturalist (hereafter SM) accords a deep respect and absolute tolerance for all cultures at their core, for SMs believe every group has to right to form its own identity. But this is where a dilemma arises: a SM cannot possibly be faithful to this principle "because sooner or later the culture whose core values you are tolerating will reveal itself to be intolerant at that same core" (p. 73). Should you tolerate the mullahs capturing and executing Mr. Rushdie merely for publishing a book critical of Islam? In the West authors of books highly critical of Christianity do not live in fear of losing their lives. Thus, it is easy to see that neither BMs nor SMs are able to accept radical differences in core values. If a SM grits his teeth and permits the death sentence on Rushdie to be carried out, then he wasn't a multiculturalist to begin with, "since if he stuck with the distinctiveness of a culture even at the point where it expressed itself in a determination to stamp out the distinctiveness of some other culture, he would have become (what I think every one of us always is) a uniculturalist" (p. 75). Thus, Fish writes, "no one could possibly be a multiculturalist in any... coherent sense" (p. 75). In a footnote (p. 85), Fish says the same arguments could be applied to critical multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, in all its forms, Fish concludes (p. 78), "is an incoherent concept, which cannot be meaningfully either

East Asians as, say, passive, holistic, and collectivist, and North Americans as, say, active, analytic, and individualist, is a form of colonial oppression and a gross distortion of reality. Far East Asian students aren't intrinsically passive or reticent, but if they don't actually speak up in the classroom it is only because as members of an oppressed and threatened minority they have been denied their authentic voices, and silence is one of the few ways they can express their deep resentment. Kim Hee-jung, along with her social psychologist colleagues, would concur with the observations of applied linguists that Far East Asian students vis-à-vis other ethnic groups are indeed reticent in the classroom, but they would attribute this behavior to be a product of their deeply embedded holistic / field-dependent cognitive style, and not necessarily because these students are rebelling against their marginalization by the dominant White majority.[37] Kim goes so far as to suggest that Far East Asian students in U.S. college classrooms should perhaps be exempted from class participation requirements.[38] Or

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affirmed or rejected.... How respectful can one be of 'fundamental' differences? If the difference is fundamental, that is, touches basic beliefs and commitments, how can you respect it without disrespecting your own beliefs and commitments? And on the other side, do you really show respect for a view by tolerating it, as you might tolerate the buzzing of a fly? Or do you show respect when you take it seriously enough to oppose it, root and branch?" Multiculturalists Kubota and her Po-Mo / feminist sisters would never put their lives on the line to defend the right of a White Neo-nazi college professor to teach his students to discriminate against women, Jews, blacks, gays and lesbians, would they? How could they tolerate what they have already labeled as intolerable? Multiculturalism is easier said than done.

37) This is not to deny that the refusal of some students to speak up in class may be a political statement, although this form of ethnic resistance seems to me to be relatively rare.

38) Kim doesn't provide any specifics about how this preferential treatment (the "freedom of not talking") should be put into practice in the college classroom. Will Far East Asian students be sent out of the classroom whenever a discussion or debate arises? Won't the non-Asian students regard this ethnic privileging as a subtle form of affirmative action? Does

perhaps the colleges, in the spirit of multicultural diversity, should throw the practice out lock, stock, and barrel.

In my opinion, it would be shortsighted to heed Kim Hee-jung's advice and grant Far East Asian students the freedom to refuse to participate in debates and discussions in their U.S. classrooms. It is unlikely such a radical proposal will ever be put into practice in North American classrooms because, as Kim herself admits, "speech, verbal expression, and debate occupy vitally important places in much of Western and particularly European American education as valued practices in themselves and also as tools to enhance thinking" (Kim and Markus, 2002: 433). Far East Asian students are not, after all, genetically disposed to reticence; that is, it's not something hard-wired into their genetic structure. Most observers would agree with the applied linguists mentioned above that this pedagogic phenomenon is merely the result of a teacher-centered Confucian educational system that tends to discourage student classroom participation, nothing more, nothing less. Granted Kim Hee-jung may have a point in claiming that for members of certain ethnic groups talking could be a slight impediment to thinking, as her research would seem to suggest.[39] However, in my judgment encouraging Far East Asian students to participate in classroom

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she really expect U.S. educators will abandon their belief in the efficacy of class participation and perhaps reduce or eliminate the procedure from classrooms so as not to offend debate-challenged ethnic groups? And why should only certain ethnic groups be so privileged? What if non-conforming Muslim students refuse to be taught by female professors who don't wear scarves in their classroom? See the discussion above regarding multiculturalism and the inevitable limits of tolerance toward non-conformist behavior.

39) Not all Far East Asians participating in Kim's experiments (2002: 831) experienced impairment in their performances. That is, when talking while thinking their behavior was no different from that of the European-American participants.

debates and discussions would be to their advantage for at least two reasons: first, it obviously facilitates progress in second language learning, a point I will discuss below, and second, it is a means whereby persons can articulate their opinions before wider audiences. As the French philosopher **Joseph Joubert** (1754-1824) once wrote: "It is better to debate a question without settling it, than to settle a question without debating it." Currently, the voice of Far East Asians can barely be heard in the North American political arena mainly because, relative to other ethnic groups, they are reluctant to participate in public debates and discussions, and this political silence should be of some concern to members of a "model minority" who are in danger of being relegated to the status of "high-tech" coolies. The majority of Far East Asian college students in North America choose to major in science, medicine, or economics, and one of the reasons for this choice is that class participation is not emphasized in such fields. Once again the influence of Confucianism can be detected in such behavior, a tradition based on harmony and the avoidance of confrontation or debate (Nisbett, 2003). But Far East Asians in the future will need more politicians than technicians or scientists who will be able to discuss and debate persuasively before the general public the issues which are of importance to Far East Asian communities. Opting out of the political process has cost Far East Asians their collective identities, as Amy Uyematsu (1971) and others have argued.[40]

Turning now to the situation in South Korea, I can see some signs

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40) Frank Chin, an Asian-American writer, in "Confessions of a Chinatown Cowboy," argues that Asian Americans have sold out to white America by denying their yellowness. Asian Americans "are the Uncle Toms of the non-white people... a race of yellow white supremacists, yellow white racists. We're hated by blacks because the whites love us for being everything the blacks are not. Blacks are a problem: badass. Chinese-Americans are not a problem: kissass" (1972: 66).

of change regarding this issue. For example, Far East Asian educators and curriculum reformers are deemphasizing traditional methods such as rote learning, and encouraging creativity as well as participation in debate and discussion in the classroom.[41] In addition, there is a growing trend in Korean universities whereby many professors, especially younger ones who have been trained in North American universities, are including class participation as a requirement in their courses. The pedagogical efficacy of classroom debate and discussion coupled with English language learning can be seen in the following article which appeared on the Ewha University website, and entitled, "Courses Taught in English Draw Record Enrollment."[42]

> More and more Ewha students are choosing to take specialized subject courses taught in English··· *Some people think of Korean students as too passive in the classroom because, in most of their classes, they are expected to sit silently and voice no opinions. Foreign students are widely known to be more aggressive discussion leaders. But these classes in English refute such stereotypes.* Even though the foreigners in such classes tend to be active, Ewha students are *just as active*. According to Prof. Kim Eun-mi (GSIS), who teaches "Political Economy of East Asia," "These students are self-selected and have greater passion for learning and *expressing themselves*. Their intellectual level is not inferior to that of the graduate students. They sometimes even stimulate me with their fresh and vigorous ideas" (emphasis mine).

Note the part of the passage that says Ewha students are "just as active" in expressing their opinions as their foreign classmates. But as Prof. Kim Eun-mi admits, "these students are self-selected and have

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41) Incidentally, Roh Moo-hyun, the current president of South Korea and a former human-rights lawyer, early in his administration called for transforming Korea into a "Debate Republic." He did so because he said he believes the existence of vibrant debates and frank discussions among the citizenry to be one of the signs of a healthy democracy.

42) See http://evoice.ewha.ac.kr/web/archives/4602/news1.htm.

greater passion for... expressing themselves," and they undoubtedly can boast of superior English communicative skills. Alas, classrooms such as this, where there is vigorous debate and discussion, are still the exception that proves the rule that most Koreans students are seen but seldom heard.

Recall Prof. Choe Yong-jae's criticism of the futility of the "blind adoption of foreign ideas and techniques" mentioned above:[43]

> *No imported theories or methods have been fully successful in Korean classrooms simply because their cultural backgrounds have not been compatible with Korean culture.* For example, the reticence of the students gets in the way of new ideas and techniques(emphasis mine).

I am not sure that he had CLT specifically in mind when he wrote this, but I believe his pessimism about the cultural inappropriateness of this particular "imported theory or method" is misguided. Far East Asian students are not reticent in their classrooms because they possess some sort of "silence gene." The influence of Confucianism on their classroom behavior is obvious, but the younger generation is currently undergoing de-Confucianization.[44] A century or so ago Far East Asian students were

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43) I wonder how Choe would evaluate the so-called "crazy English" technique created by the irrepressible Chinese business tycoon and celebrity Li Yang, who teaches that a person can learn how to speak English by shouting English phrases at the top of the lungs ("as fast as possible, as clearly as possible, as loud as possible"). Li also teaches people to yell out his motto: "I love humiliation! I embrace hardship! I welcome failure! I pursue success!" Li says: "I was extremely introverted.... I felt very bad about myself. Self confidence is a serious problem for most Chinese people." His most famous slogan is: "Enjoy losing [your] face." One of his goals: to teach English to one billion Chinese people so China can take over the world. He adds: "My way is the only way." Li may be on to something. That is, certain elements in the Confucian culture of Far East Asia render L2 learning difficult (how can you learn a language if you don't speak it?), and these "cultural impediments" must be removed if there is to be any process in acquiring the ability to communicate in a language.

loath to even tread on the shadows of their teachers; now students don't even think twice about wearing caps or chewing gum in their classrooms, and all in the presence of their teachers: so much for progress!

Such progress notwithstanding, the South Korean government, as I mentioned above, is actively promoting the implementation of CLT in Korean classrooms (McKay, 2003), and this approach not only facilitates language learning through authentic communication in the target language, one of the major features of the CLT approach (Nunan, 1991), it also encourages classroom debate and discussion.[45] Recall that at the beginning of this paper mention was made of the ancient Greeks, the inventors of democracy,[46] who thrived on debate and discussion. Homer emphasized repeatedly that next to being a capable warrior, the most important skill for a man to possess was that of the debater. The ordinary Athenian citizenry would gather in the agora to discuss and debate, and they could even challenge the king, and tell him, for example, that he wore no clothes. This tradition of the efficacy of debate and discussion flows through Western civilization down to the very present, and is a deeply-embedded feature of Western academic education, hence the emphasis on class participation.[47]

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44) Other Confucian influences on the behavior of Far East Asians are worth preserving, of course, but the traditionally authoritarian teacher/passive student dichotomous relationship is one influence that almost all Far East Asian educators now believe must be reformed.

45) For example, textbooks based on the CLT approach no longer are characterized by tedious drills exemplified in the PPP approach. *Passages*, a textbook I currently use in an "Advanced English Conversation" course, requires students to discuss current and controversial issues such as plastic surgery, asking students their frank opinions about this very expensive procedure.

46) Well, not exactly, for in Athenian democracy females among others were not allowed to vote.

47) Granted much discussion and debate in Western classrooms constitutes frivolous chatter, and true the ideal of constructive debate is not always meet, especially in high school classrooms, a point Kubota has emphasized.

Galthung (1981: 823), in a cross-cultural study of the intellectual styles of academics, wrote that the Anglo-American style "fosters and encourages debate and discourse." In sharp contrast, Far East Asians, due to the influence of Confucianism, tend to strive for in-group harmony. Within the social group, any form of confrontation such as debate and discussion was discouraged. Numerous studies could be mentioned to illustrate the lingering cultural tendency of Far East Asians to try to avoid conflict and controversy within the group (and a classroom constitutes an in-group). For example, Ohbuchi and Takahasi (1994) asked Japanese and American businesspeople how they dealt with conflict with their fellow managers. Twice as many Japanese as American respondents reported using avoidance as a means of dealing with a conflict of views, and three times as many Americans as Japanese reported attempting to use persuasion.

During the period of the "Contention of a Hundred Schools of Thought" (600-200 B.C.E.),[48] debate, at least among philosophers, did occur (Yang, 1988). But in China "[t]here never developed a ʹspirit of controversial languageʹ nor a ʹtradition of free public debateʹ " (Becker, 1986: 78). Debate could not flourish in such a cultural milieu because to contradict another was to make a mortal enemy (Cromer, 1993), and to

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[48] Recall Mao Tse-tung's "blooming-and-contending" campaign of encouraging intellectual debate: "let one hundred flowers bloom, and one hundred schools of thought contend." And contend they did. Eventually he was shocked to learn that the criticisms were directed even toward him personally. Cunningly he continued to encourage intellectuals to speak out, but party leaders knew that a counterattack against them was about to be launched because they learned that he had said: "We want to coax the snakes out of their holes.... Then we will strike. My strategy is to let the poisonous weeds grow first and then destroy them one by one. Let them become fertilizer." This tradition of the suppression of free debate and discussion has continued unabated in the so-called People's Republic of China.

be "involved in a lawsuit was ipso facto ignominious" (Lin, 1936).

Thus, Far East Asians vis-à-vis other ethnic groups have relatively little experience participating in classroom debates and discussions. Noam Chomsky, in an interview with David Barsamian (1996: 31), talked about what typically went on in his classroom at MIT. Barsamian asked Chomsky: "Do you find students are in awe of you or are hesitant to speak out?"

> Not most. Most of them are pretty independent-minded. And they soon pick up the atmosphere around. Walk around and you'll see. It's a very informal atmosphere of interchange and cooperation. These are ideals, of course. You may not live up to them properly, but it's certainly what everyone is committed to. *There are students who find it harder, especially ones who come from Asian backgrounds.* They've had a much more authoritarian tradition. Some of them break through quite quickly, some don't (emphasis mine).

Over the past 30 years that I have lived in South Korea, I have witnessed truly breathtaking economic and especially political development. Less than three decades ago South Korea was an impoverished country saddled with a brutal authoritarian dictatorship; today it boasts of an advanced economy and a vibrant democracy, with a presidential electoral system that in many respects is superior to that of the United States.[49] South Korea is the first Far East Asian country to democratize,[50] through a virtually bloodless democratic transition from military to civilian control, and Koreans rightly are proud of these and other achievements. If there is one thing Koreans excel at it's their ability to achieve dramatic and rapid change. But if I were to suggest

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49) It is unlikely the South Korean Supreme Court would ever dare to interfere in a presidential election as did the U.S. Supreme Court in 2000, whereby the conservative majority handed the election to Bush, although he was defeated by Gore in the popular vote.

50) Japan's democratic system was more or less imposed on them by their American occupiers.

an area still in need of some pedagogic improvement it would be this: a far greater emphasis should be placed on promoting student-centered classrooms featuring more student participation, something Korean educators have been advocating for some time now. A critic could counter that so far this lack of debate and discussion skills hasn't hurt Korea that much. Yet recall the Ewha university article mentioned above, and the following quote:

> Some people think of Korean students as too passive in the classroom because, in most of their classes, they are expected to sit silently and voice no opinions. Foreign students are widely known to be more aggressive discussion leaders. But these classes in English refute such stereotypes.

Thus, some progress in this direction is being made in Korea, and the CLT approach in English language learning classrooms is contributing somewhat to this, Prof. Choe's criticism of "the import of foreign theories or methods" notwithstanding.

It would be an understatement to say that these days South Korea is taking English language learning very seriously. For example, on Oct. 23, 2003, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun expressed support for making English South Korea's second official language. "We will implement the idea regionally and expand it (throughout the nation)," he said. "[I]t is necessary to expand the use of English and English education" (*The Korea Herald*, Oct. 24, 2003). Also, Lee Myung-bak, the mayor of Seoul, announced in late October, 2003, that he is recommending that English be used together with Korean, and that the city will begin using Korean and English together in official documents and during some "high-level meetings." He pledged he would "lead the charge" to expand the use of English, saying that it will help South Korea improve its chances to become a financial hub in Asia. "English is becoming a second mother tongue. I will encourage Seoul officials to use English in official

documents and the policy-making process. More importance should be given to English education. I want to make a society where at least people can explain simple directions in English when they encounter foreigners on the street" (*The Korean Times*, Oct. 26, 2003).

English is now the world's *de facto* lingua franca, and it will probably retain this status for some time to come. "English," Crystal (1997: 106) writes, "is now the dominant or official language in over 60 countries and is represented in every continent." According to Graddol (1999), in the next 50 years the number of people using English as their second language will jump from 235 million to around 462 million.[51] Why are so many people worldwide spending time and fortune to learn English? Phillipson (1992), for one, ascribes the spread of English to **linguistic imperialism,** or *linguicism*, in that it is an ethnocentric and post-colonial effort of what Kachru (1985) terms **Inner Circle** countries to maintain dominance over periphery countries. This effort has had "malicious effects on Asia" and is "offensive" insofar as it is a "variant of Orientalism" that becomes internalized and ultimately results in inequalities and injustices. This negative viewpoint of the export of English to other countries has been challenged by many Far East Asian scholars and educators who cite very pragmatic reasons for struggling to learn English. For example, Dr. David C.S. Li, an associate professor of English at the City University in Hong Kong, notes that to residents of Hong Kong, English is little more than a "value-adding commodity." The English language and the Ginseng herb, Li says, both share similar qualities: "They are expensive, come in various forms, bitter on the tongue,[52] but

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51) Proof positive of the inexorable spread of English is that the language is now the lingua franca of the Cannes Film Festival in France, a fact that undoubtedly has set the teeth of francophones on edge.

52) Speaking of tongues, it would be an understatement to say that some Korean mothers have gone overboard when they coerced their children

[are] nevertheless enabling!"[53] Thus, McKay (2003: 4) writes, "Many individuals learn English not because English is promoted by English-speaking countries, but rather because these individuals want access to scientific and technological information, international organizations,[54] global economic trade, and higher education."

Take access to higher education as a motive for learning English. The number of Korean students attending North American universities in the past decade has skyrocketed, undoubtedly reflecting their conviction they will receive a better education abroad than at home.[55] And it's not only

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into receiving a frenotomy, that is, the slicing of about half an inch off the frenulum (a strap of tissue linking the tongue to the floor of the mouth) to make their children's tongues more flexible, the false expectation being that such a mutilation would help their children pronounce English words more precisely.

53) Quoted in the *Hwa Kang Journal of TEFL* (May 2001), "TEFL as Imperialism or Empowerment," by Timothy R. Fox. (http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Classroom/1930/Journal/May2001/Fox-5Ease.html). Another colorful description of the empowerment resulting from learning English was given by Kachru, in a book entitled *The Alchemy of English* (1986: 1), who explains that "knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin's lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science, and travel. In short, English provides linguistic power."

54) The characteristic reticence of Far East Asians' is an issue even on the LPGA circuit. Jan Stephenson, an Australian golfer who lives in Florida, complained: "This probably is going to get me in trouble, but the Asians are killing our tour.... Their lack of emotion, their refusal to speak English when they can speak English. They rarely speak." (November issue of *Golf Magazine*). And it got her in big trouble indeed! She later issued a written apology to the Asian community: "By no means did I intend to hurt anyone nor were the statements racially motivated. I clearly understand how these comments could be taken as racial comments and for that I am truly sorry." None the less, they rarely do speak.

55) The number of South Korean students studying abroad in 2002 was 155,327, roughly triple the figure of a decade ago, according to the South Korean Ministry of Education. The U.S. was still the most favored country for Korean students, followed by China, Japan (15,317), Canada

their English skills that will be improved after attending college abroad. Because it can be assumed that Kim Hee-jung's suggestion will never be put into practice, these students, or at least those majoring in the humanities, will be required to participate in classroom debates and discussions. And let's not forget that thousands of Korean students are attending North American language institutes, where the language learning approach of choice is of course CLT. Thus, the efficacy of the CLT approach extends beyond merely the empowerment of its learners with knowledge of a global lingua franca; it has a political efficacy as well.

10.0 Epilogue

As I have explained above, Far East Asians tend to display a holistic (field-dependent) cognitive style, and Westerners tend to display an analytic (field-independent) cognitive style (Witkin and Berry, 1975; Kitayama, 2000; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan, 2001). Are these cognitive styles flexible or fixed? Cognitive style researchers concur that cognitive styles differ from cognitive abilities in that the former tend to be flexible, the latter tend to be fixed. This cognitive style flexibility is illustrated in the following experiment. Kitayama and his associates (2003) discovered that a person's cognitive processes could be modified even after living a relatively short period of time in another culture. They designed a clever experiment that tested the hypothesis that North Americans were

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(15,222), Australia (10,492) and France (6,614). These six countries accounted for 85 percent of the total number of Koreans studying abroad. It would be an understatement to say that there is widespread and growing dissatisfaction among Koreans regarding their educational system.

relatively more attuned to a focal object and less sensitive to context (due to their analytic or field-independent cognitive style), and that Far East Asians were relatively more attuned to contextual information namely, information that surrounds the focal object (due to their holistic or field-dependent cognitive style).[56] They presented Japanese and American participants with several examples of a line drawn in a square. Then the participants were taken to another part of the room and shown a square of a different size than the one they had just seen. They were then asked to draw a line inside the square that 1) was either of the same length they had just seen, or 2) was proportionally the same. Americans were more accurate in drawing a line that was the same absolute length, demonstrating that they tended to ignore the context. Japanese, on the other hand, were more accurate in drawing a line that was the same relative length, demonstrating that they tended to relate object to context. Next Kitayama and his associates studied the behavior of Americans who had been living in Japan for a period of time (usually a few months) and Japanese who had been living in American for a period of time (usually a few years). Kitayama tested both groups using the Frame-line test (FLT) and discovered an interesting cross-cultural phenomenon: the Americans who had been living in Japan shifted their behavior in a "Japanese direction," and the Japanese who had been living in America likewise shifted their behavior in an "American direction."

Will Far East Asian's cognitive styles continue developing in a Western direction, or will Westerner's cognitive styles someday shift in an easterly direction? Or will there be some sort of convergence? There is an ongoing academic debate about the views of the future presented

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56) The following several paragraphs are summarized from Nisbett (2003: 227-8).

by Francis Fukuyama (1992) and Samuel Huntington (1996). Fukuyama argues that capitalism and democracy have won the day, and that the world's economic and political systems are converging. Huntington disagrees and argues that the world is on the brink of a "clash of civilizations," and that there are irreconcilable differences in values and worldviews East versus West. Is the Westernization of the world an unstoppable juggernaut, crushing all cultures in its path? Nisbett (2003: 221) notes that there "is some evidence that socialization of children in the East is moving toward the Western pattern." Other social scientists predict the world will move in the direction of convergence, a blending of social systems and values. Many Westerners are increasingly finding certain aspects of the East intriguing and efficacious. Take holistic medicine, whereby the whole person is attended to and not the parts, as is the case in Western medicine. Dr. Andrew Weil, a Harvard Medical School trained physician, is one of the world's leading providers of online information about holistic medicine. Perhaps the world is already traveling down the path of **biculturalism:** Westerners are becoming more Eastern (hence the popularity of yoga, tai chi, martial arts such as taekwondo, and so on), and Easterners are becoming more Western (hence the increasing emphasis on the importance of creativity, classroom debate, and so on), and so, contrary to Rudyard Kipling's prediction, eventually the twain shall meet.[57]

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57) One other relevant experiment should be mentioned. Kuhnen and his colleagues (2001) tried to prime an interdependent, collectivist orientation by having the participants read a paragraph and circle all first-person pronouns (we, us, our) and tried to prime an independent, individual orientation by having them read a paragraph and circle all first-person singular pronouns (I, me, mine). Then both groups took the **Group Embedded Figures Test** (GEFT). The results: interdependent-primed participants were more field-dependent than were independent-primed participants. Participants were able to remember the contexts in which they had seen a particular object (the object and field were bound) better after interdependence priming than after independence priming.

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58) The references have been abbreviated to conserve space.

【국문초록】

교실에서의 학생의 과묵함과 의사 소통 언어 교수법의 접근

<div align="right">토마스 F. 존스타드</div>

최근 한국의 교육부는 의사소통 언어 교수법(CLT)을 제2언어 교육에 적용하는 것을 지지한다고 밝혔다. 이 교수법은 극동지역에서 제2언어교육을 담당하고있는 북미 출신의 영어 교사들이 현재 선호하는 교수법이다.

CLT는 학습자들이 의사소통에 목적을 두고 목표언어를 실제로 실용적, 기능적 측면에서 언어를 사용하며 습득하게 하는 교수법이다. 일부 학자들은 이 교수법이 어떤 문화권에는 적절하지 않을 수도 있다는 주장을 하고있다. 북미의 대학 교수들은 극동지역 출신의 학생들이 다른 지역의 학생들에 비하여 과묵하다고 평하고 있는 것은 이미 잘 알려진 사실이다. 이 논문은 이 과묵한 성품이 형성된 이유에 관한 여러 견해를 예시하며, 교실수업에서의 토론과 논쟁의 중요성을 강조하며 CLT 교수법이 극동 아시아 지역의 교육 환경에도 적절하다는 결론을 도출하고 있다.

Key words : Communicative Language Teaching (CLT),
Classroom reticence, Holistic / analytic cognitive styles,
Cross-cultural research, Essentializing