

# Does the Monitor Theory Provide An Adequate Model For The Second Language Classroom ?

(6)

Zen and the Monitor Theory

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## 1 . INTRODUCTION

This paper can properly be considered a sequel to the previous study entitled "The Monitor Theory In Japan." Since Zen has had far-reaching influence in shaping the culture of Japan, the language teacher should know something of its principles and practice. An objective approach will be taken to the study of Zen, tracing its development through history from the beginnings of Buddhism to the introduction of the Zen sect into Japan. Special consideration will be given to the Confucian and Taoist philosophies, which have heavily influenced the behavior and thinking of the Japanese people, largely through the medium of Zen which has saturated their culture.

One of the major developments in language teaching during recent years has been the Monitor Theory, proposed by Stephen Krashen. A rather subjective comparison will be made of the basic principles of the Monitor

Theory with those of Zen, focusing on the Acquisition-Learning distinction, which strongly resembles the interaction of the Taoist and Confucian ways of thinking in Japan. The concept of “intuitive communication” in Zen should attract the interest of language teachers, as it hints at the fundamental ideas of the Monitor Theory.

Because the Monitor Theory has no articulated method of its own, it relies on recent innovative techniques to achieve its purpose. Krashen lists the Natural Approach, Total Physical Response, and Suggestopedia as being particularly suitable to the “Monitor Theory classroom.” These methods will be compared with Zen practice, both subjectively, and objectively, and comments will be offered as to the practicality of using such methods in the various classroom situations in Japan.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ZEN

### A. Confucianism

K'ung Fu-tse (L. *Confucius*) was born about 551 B.C. in the region of Lu, which is the present-day Shantung in eastern China. He was the son of a local magistrate, a descendent of the kings of the Shang Dynasty. At age 22 K'ung Fu-tse began teaching privately, using the *Six Classics* of Chinese literature as texts. These included the *Canon of History*, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Record of Rites*, and the *Record of Music*. His own sayings were assembled by his disciples and passed down as the Confucian *Analects*.

The teaching of K'ung Fu-tse was a conservative moral philosophy which asserted that social harmony could be achieved by establishing and maintaining proper relationships among individuals. In this philosophy, the doctrine of *jen* (“human-heartedness”) stressed adherence to the Mid-

dle Way, and avoidance of extremes. Proper education, or cultivation of conventional knowledge, was said to be the way to human-heartedness. The superior individual was considered to be the person who pursued a career because of a moral imperative for him to do so, rather than to gain profit. The Confucian philosophy, chiefly concerned with the affairs of men in the world, focused on the relationship of man to society, and did not deal with the inner conflict between man and the universe.<sup>1)</sup>

## B. Taoism

Another philosophy which began at about the same time as Confucianism was Taoism, formulated by Lao-tse, a near contemporary of K'ung Fu-tse, who dictated a small book called *Tao Te Ching* to a border officer as he was leaving China. This philosophy, in contrast to Confucianism, dealt with the spiritual aspect of human existence, and attempted to provide a way of liberation from the immense pressure of conformity forced upon the individual by society. The basic ideas of Taoism can be traced to the *Book of Changes*, which does not provide an exact science as a way of liberation, but provides a useful tool for individuals possessing good "intuition." It should be noted, however, that intuition was not necessarily available without proper preparation, going through prescribed rituals, and bringing one's mind into a state of "readiness."

The first basic principle of Taoism is that the Tao is an undefineable, concrete process of the world. "Concrete" in this sense indicates that the Tao is not an abstraction drawn for the sake of communicating ideas, but rather a direct understanding of life. Communication in Taoism must therefore take place within an individual, because it does not allow the breakdown of experience into linear, abstract codes and symbols for the purpose of establishing a common denominator for understanding. At-

tempts to define Taoism in linear terms will undoubtedly distort it.

The second basic principle of Taoism is that the Tao is accessible only to the mind which can practise the art of un-self-consciousness (*wu-wei*). In this practice, the mind achieves a state of non-action, of absence of thought, in which it functions freely without forcing it. When the mind functions in the integrated, spontaneous manner that is natural to it, the individual is said to have attained *te* or the virtue of the Tao, a state of virile harmony. Taoism is, then, a liberation from conventional rules and communication and a liberation of the power of *te*.<sup>2)</sup>

### C. Buddhism

Sakyamuni Gautama was born ca. 560 B.C., the son of a wealthy ruler of the military caste in a region in the north of India, near the Himalayas. Although Gautama's father tried to insulate him from the pain and suffering of the world, as a young man Sakyamuni made secret forays outside his father's house, during which he reportedly saw a beggar, a corpse surrounded by mourners, and a hopelessly diseased cripple. Observing that poverty and sickness were the rule, rather than the exception, and that the oblivion of death was inevitable, Gautama began to question the meaning and virtue of life. No longer able to endure his privileged life, he stole away to find an answer, and practised self-mortification for seven years, finally concluding that this would not lead to wisdom. One day while sitting under a fig tree, Gautama attained to perfect enlightenment and became the Buddha. After his enlightenment he preached for 49 years from a center at Benares, and became the focus of an elaborate cult during his lifetime. The Buddha's immense popularity stemmed from the beauty and simplicity of his own life, combined with the philosophical depth and ethical nobility of his teaching.<sup>3)</sup>

The Buddha, like Confucius, preached a doctrine of finding the Middle Way between opposites. This involved the discipline of mind and body aimed at self-mastery and non-attachment. He regarded morality, meditation, and intuition as the proper approach to salvation, and recommended four steps for its attainment: 1) realization that sorrow is present in the world; 2) inquiry as to the cause of sorrow; 3) removal of sorrow by extinguishing desire; and 4) understanding that the removal of sorrow also brings happiness and peace. Also central to the Buddha's teaching was the doctrine of *karma*, borrowed from contemporary Brahmanism, which held that each mortal participates in a system of rewards and punishments for his actions, reaped during various incarnations of the birth-death-rebirth cycle known as *samsara*, but that *nirvana*, or enlightenment, can provide an escape from further transmigration of the soul.<sup>4)</sup>

The Buddha's teachings were memorized by his disciples and later compiled in the form of scriptures. The Southern School of Buddhism, known as Hinayana ("Lesser Vehicle") Buddhism, preserved its doctrines in the Pali Canon. The scriptures of the Northern School, or Mahayana ("Greater Vehicle") Buddhism were the Sanskrit-Tibetan-Chinese Canon. Whereas the Pali Canon provided a method of rigorous effort and self-control, the Sanskrit-Tibetan-Chinese Canon provided various methods, making concessions to intellectual curiosity and to popular desires for short-cuts to the goal, thereby "making *nirvana* accessible to every type mentality."<sup>5)</sup>

#### D. Zen Buddhism

The influence of Mahayana Buddhism upon the Taoists and Confucians led to the creation of the *Ch'an* School in China, which was later brought to Japan, where it became known as *Zen*. The founder of *Ch'an* was

Bodhidharma, who arrived in Canton from India around 520 A.D. He was the 28th in a line of patriarchs in India, who traced their accession directly to the Buddha. After he met with imperial disapproval in Nanking, Bodhidharma retired to a *Shao-lin* temple and meditated there for nine years. Afterwards he established the ascetic school of *Ch'an* and became its first Patriarch. The writings of Bodhidharma and his successors, known as the Six Patriarchs of Zen marked a transition of Buddhism from the Indian to the Chinese perspective.<sup>6)</sup>

Despite its distinctive Taoist and Confucian flavor, the *Ch'an* School, with its emphasis upon meditation and self-discipline, considered itself to be nearer the original teachings of Gautama than either the Hinayana or the Mahayana School of Buddhism. Its philosophy could be summarized in four phrases: special transmission outside the scriptures; no dependence upon words and letters; direct pointing to the soul of man; seeing into one's nature and attainment of Buddhahood.<sup>7)</sup>

The *Ch'an* School reached maturity during the *T'ang* Dynasty (618–907), under the Patriarchate of Hui-neng (637–713). An illiterate peasant from Canton, Hui-neng had experienced spontaneous enlightenment as a child, and having won a poetry contest which determined his understanding of Buddhism, was secretly conferred as the Sixth Patriarch. His doctrine of sudden enlightenment held that slow-witted monks, although they took a long time to achieve their goal, did not do so gradually. In order to facilitate teaching, he urged his disciples to answer each question in terms of its opposite, thus leading to an understanding of the Middle Way. Because Hui-neng did not appoint a successor, the *Ch'an* School was divided into five sects after his death, according to the practices of his five disciples.

In 845 the Taoist Emperor *Wu-tsung* began a vigorous persecution of

the *Ch'an* School, but after his death the school enjoyed increasing popularity. Large numbers of students began to come to the monasteries, which made it necessary for the monks to standardize their teaching methods. In contrast to the mature and gifted disciples who sought enlightenment prior to the persecution, the newcomers tended more and more to be "mere boys without natural vocation, sent for training by their pious families" to one or another of the numerous monasteries.<sup>8)</sup>

In order to solve the problem of teaching hundreds of students at one time, and the accompanying problem of testing their understanding, some sects developed a system of questions and answers known as the *wen-ta*. However, since these questions required an immediate answer, and the caliber of student had depreciated measureably, it became necessary to develop a system of problems which could be solved through meditation. These problems were known as *kung-an*, or "anecdotes." Each anecdote had a "classic" answer which the student was expected to discover intuitively. After correct understanding had been demonstrated, the student could "graduate" to another problem.<sup>9)</sup>

One sect of *Ch'an* which made use of the *kung-an* system was the *Lin-chi* Sect, descended from Hui-neng's disciples. Lin-chi (d.867) stressed that one should not think about a goal when meditating, because that would set a limit upon what could be attained. In 1191 the Japanese monk Eisai introduced the *Lin-chi* Sect into his own country, where it became known as the *Rinzai* Sect of Zen. Also known as the Sudden School, this sect holds that *satori* (enlightenment) cannot be approached by degrees. Adherents of the *Rinzai* Sect believe that intense meditation upon a *koan* (the Japanese word for *kung-an*) is necessary for enlightenment, but that enlightenment will probably not occur at the time of meditation.

The *Tsao-tung* School was developed by Tung-shan (807-869) and his

student Ts'ao-shan (840—901). According to their Doctrine of the Five Ranks, the student advances to enlightenment by stages. In 1227 the *Tsao-tung* philosophy was introduced to Japan by Dogen, and there it was called *Soto*, derived from the Japanese name for Ts'ao-shan (*Sozan*), and Tung-shan (*Tozan*). This sect does not use *koans*, but rather emphasizes the practice of *zazen*, or sitting meditation.<sup>10)</sup>

In summary, Zen is a form of Buddhism which came to Japan from India by way of China. Buddhism, which itself was greatly influenced by Indian Brahmanism, taught that a person could approach the truth by way of morality, meditation and intuition, and that if a man achieved “enlightenment”, he could escape the cycle of birth and death which held mankind in perpetual sorrow. This teaching was augmented by the prevalent Chinese philosophies of Confucianism, with its practical ethic of hard work and a quest for knowledge, and Taoism, which offered a way of liberation from the abstract and arbitrary rules imposed by society. The three basic Buddhist principles, practised by a small number of devout Chinese ascetics, blossomed into a popular movement which became known as Zen. This sect claimed that the truth was not to be found in any set of sacred books, indeed it could not be adequately described in words: the truth had to be experienced directly, as a result of intuitive transmission from an acknowledged Zen master. The characteristics which distinguished Zen from other forms of Buddhism were its methods of sitting meditation and the use of a system of “Zen problems” to be used as the theme for meditation.



## 2. ZEN AND THE MONITOR THEORY

### A. Taoism, Confucianism, Acquisition and Learning

One of the basic principles of Confucianism is the notion of self-improvement through education. "The task of education," writes Alan Watts, "is to make children fit to live in a society by persuading them to learn and accept its codes—the rules and conventions of communication whereby the society holds itself together." <sup>11)</sup> Communication requires the development of a set of symbols which will represent an object, an action, a feeling or an idea sufficiently to be understood by all members of the society. Language is one such set of symbols. Thus the object of language education is to develop in individual students the ability to convert their world of meanings into a mutually understood and accepted code for communication.

By contrast, Taoism is concerned with the meanings themselves, in other words objects, actions, feelings or ideas as they exist before they are converted to communicable symbols. This seeks to free an individual from the great strain placed on him by society, a result of the pressure to conform to common standards. The individual has been conditioned since childhood to view the world from a linear, rather than a global perspective, until he arrives at the point at which he "cannot learn a dance unless someone draws him a diagram of the steps... [he] cannot 'get it by the feel'." <sup>12)</sup> For the Taoist, communication must be an intuitive process, since abstract symbols cannot adequately transmit meaning.

Stephen Krashen, in describing his theory of adult second-language acquisition, states that "the fundamental claim of the Monitor Theory is that conscious learning is available to the performer only as a *Monitor*. In general utterances are initiated by the acquired system — our fluency in

production is based on what we have 'picked up' through active communication. Our 'formal' knowledge of the second language, our conscious learning, may be used to alter the output of the acquired system..."<sup>13)</sup>

In this description there is a striking similarity between the notions of "formal knowledge" and the "acquired system" of the Monitor Theory, and the "symbolic" and "meaningful" principles of Confucianism and Taoism. Krashen regards "active communication" as a direct experience in the use of the target language, without undue influence of the Monitor. The "utterance initiator," which is said to originate in the acquired system, depends on this direct experience to provide immediate access to meaning. If meaning is conveyed, communication takes place and the optimal Monitor user has employed his acquired system, modified by his formal knowledge of the language, to produce a statement.

The acquired system cannot be equated unequivocally with the Tao, since the former is concerned with language achievement, and language, being a linear abstraction, cannot provide the direct experience sought by the Taoists. Yet, in the sense that it fetches up an "intuitive" ability to convey meaning, the acquired system does contain elements of the Taoist philosophy. Furthermore the Taoist must be able to rid his mind of self-consciousness. The conventional view of "self" is based on a selection of past events and memories, and can be used to predict the future; the Taoist attempts to identify the "self" in the present, in the here and now, without reference to the past and future.<sup>14)</sup> By coming to terms with the true nature of the self, the Taoist becomes free to live in response to others. This attitude of compassion leads him to a more self-confident behavior.

Krashen believes that self-consciousness is one of the primary conditions of adolescence which leads to an increased "affective filter" and decreased

ability to acquire a second language. The “good language learner” is considered to be the individual who possesses a positive self-image, empathy, and an outgoing personality. A low affective filter, which may result from integrative motivation, can allow the “good language learner” to accept greater amounts of input. Furthermore, Krashen considers the best type of input to be that which adheres to the “here and now” principle, which he labels “caretaker speech.”<sup>15)</sup> Language acquisition and language learning, according to the evidence presented by Krashen, contain many parallels to the philosophies of Taoism and Confucianism. If these two philosophies have a place in language acquisition theory, then possibly further parallels can be found in the practical aspects of the second-language experience.

## **B. Methods Conducive to Second Language Acquisition**

Krashen gives an interesting analysis of seven language teaching methods, based on the ability to provide comprehensible input, to be interesting or relevant, and to lower the affective filter; whether or not there is a grammatical sequence; the quantity of input provided; what kind of tools are developed for conversation management; and the development of conscious learning (time, knowledge of rules, focus on form). Of the seven methods studied, he discounts Grammar-Translation, Audio-Lingualism, Cognitive Code, and the Direct Method as being inadequate for the acquisition-oriented second-language classroom. Three methods, the Natural Approach, Total Physical Response, and Suggestopedia, are deemed beneficial to the Monitor Theory classroom. Krashen states that “the Natural Approach makes a deliberate effort to fit all the requirements for both Learning and Acquisition...; Second Language Acquisition theory predicts that TPR should result in substantial language acquisition, and should not

encourage overuse of the conscious Monitor...; Suggestopedia comes very close to completely matching the requirements for optimal input.”<sup>16)</sup>

The Natural Approach was the result of a series of informal dinners hosted by Tracy Terrell, at the request of students and acquaintances, for the purpose of learning conversational Dutch. As it was developed for the formal classroom, the Natural Approach was influenced by the Monitor Theory, in particular the notion that the goal of the classroom is to provide intake for acquisition. Using the Natural Approach, the teacher speaks only in the target language, and corrects errors only when they cause a breakdown in communication. The student may speak either the target language or his native language (this assumes that the teacher understands the native language of all the students, i.e., a foreign-language classroom). There is a place for structure work and error correction, but these are kept to classroom-related homework assignments. The goals of the Natural Approach are of a functional-notional nature, that is, its aim is to help the student perform tasks and express his ideas.<sup>17)</sup>

Total Physical Response was developed by James Asher, according to three principles which he considered to be critical to child language acquisition. First, a child is said to understand when adults give him a command which results in an overt physical response. Second, listening comprehension provides the basis for future speaking. Third, as understanding develops, the child becomes ready to speak, at which point production is spontaneous. Krashen raises the question as to whether interest can be sustained by using the imperative almost exclusively, but Asher claims that “most linguistic features can be nested into the imperative form, and if the approach is used creatively... high student interest can be maintained for long-term training program.”<sup>18)</sup>

At this point an illustration is appropriate, owing to the fact that ver-

bal descriptions of the aims of TPR do not do justice to the method, which must be experienced to be appreciated. Chang Chen-chi, in offering ten suggestions for the practice of Zen in the *Soto* Sect, advocates the practice of circle-running exercises with friends. These are described as follows: "The master cried: 'Go!' Immediately all the disciples, responding to his call, followed him, running in a large circle. After they had run for a number of rounds, a supervising monk made the 'stopping signal' by suddenly whacking the board on a table, making a loud slapping noise. Instantly all the runners stopped and stood still. After a pause they all sat down on their seats in the cross-legged posture." <sup>19)</sup>

This author has vivid recollections of Tracy Terrell and other TPR enthusiasts leading large groups of seminar participants in a strikingly similar activity, shouting instructions in Dutch (or another language), and students running all around the room. The similarity with the Zen exercise may be only coincidental, but consider some other important factors. When a parent gives commands to a child, it is usually on a one-to-one basis, with a meaningful purpose in the daily life of the child. In the TPR class, the instructor gives commands which have no other purpose than to teach listening comprehension. The "total physical response" of sixty students going to the window, opening it, and returning to their seats with their left hands behind their heads can appear quite ludicrous. Another important point is that when a parent gives a command, it is to a child. The adult second-language class, although occasionally it may take on a game-like atmosphere, is still attended by adults, whose affective filters sometimes soar when asked to perform the ridiculous, resulting in a "total emotional response" against TPR. This may be a case of reaching the Middle Way by forcing an opposite response. However, in spite of the fact that the experience of TPR was memorable, it might be mentioned

that not a word of Dutch was retained.

Suggestopedia was developed in Bulgaria by Georgi Lozanov, based on three assumptions: that people can learn much faster than the rate which is commonly supposed possible; that learning is an event which involves the entire person; and that learning involves not only conscious effort, but is subject to a large number of nonconscious and nonrational influences to which the individual must respond. The barriers which we construct against these influences are necessary to preserve our personal identity, and must not be destroyed, yet they interfere with learning. "The antisuggestive barriers, then, are to be circumvented and not destroyed. When this has been achieved, the learner reaches a state of what Lozanov's translator calls 'infantilisation.' ... in this stage, the learner retains all of his previously acquired knowledge, but becomes more open, plastic, spontaneous and creative." <sup>20)</sup>

The strategy which Suggestopedia follows is to sidestep the rules and conventions that society has imposed upon the student, as well as the tensions that accompany him into the classroom, both of which prevent effective learning, and to avoid replacing them with other rules, conventions, and tensions. To do this, the teacher must utilize every psychological, artistic, and pedagogical technique which he can muster. The criteria by which success of the program may be judged consist of the principles of "joy and easiness," unity of the conscious and unconscious, and suggestive interaction. <sup>21)</sup>

The intensive Suggestopedia course is given four hours per day for one month, with about a dozen students in one class. Materials include ten dialogues, each with a theme and subthemes, on situations familiar to the students. At the beginning of the course, students are given a fictitious identity, which consists of a name and prestigious occupation in the target

language. Students are not assigned homework, but are asked to set aside a few minutes each day before going to bed and after waking up, to reflect upon the previous lesson.<sup>22)</sup>

As the students are arriving in the classroom, soothing music is played, and some device, such as a bell, is used consistently to signal the beginning of class. After a review, new material is presented by reading a long dialogue, with a parallel native language translation, and allowing students to ask questions about the dialogue in their own language. Then students engage in rhythmic breathing, while the teacher reads the dialogue and its translation. Breathing exercises, sometimes accompanied by music, or by the teacher's voice, may be used from time to time to restore mental alertness and to relax the students. Finally, in a "concert session," accompanied by specially selected Baroque music, the students sit in comfortable chairs while the teacher performs the dialogue. During the concert session, "the teacher looked for all the world like a soprano soloist in an oratorio: confident and in charge of her audience, but performing in a way that gave to them what they had come to the concert for."<sup>23)</sup> These readings take about 90 minutes, with the remainder of class time devoted to exploiting the materials. When the class is finished, soothing music is again played as the students filter out of the classroom.

Krashen holds Suggestopedia in high esteem as a possible medium for realizing the goals of the Monitor Theory. If the goals of Suggestopedia, as outlined in the assumptions, strategies, techniques and criteria for success listed above, were stated in spiritual rather than linguistic terms, they would very strongly resemble the goals of Zen. Herein lies the core of the matter, that is, that the Monitor Theory, as articulated by Krashen and exemplified by Asher, Terrell, and most significantly, by Lozanov, is a kind of linguistic Zen, and though there may be minor points of disagree-

ment, the similarities are so strong as to be convincing. The following discussion is based on Stevick's analysis, with some reference to Krashen.

The success of Suggestopedia depends on a pleasant classroom, the authoritative behavior of the teacher, and the relaxed attitude of the student. The traditional classroom, with its wooden desks and chairs, blackboards, flag, and trashcan, typifies a "hard" area, in other words, a place to study, not a place to relax. In Suggestopedic terms, equating study with a "hard" area is one of the norms imposed upon us by society. During the '70s, many American elementary school teachers, as well as teachers in the junior high and even high schools, began to set aside "soft" areas in their classrooms, decorated with a sofa or bean-bag chair, carpet etc., so the students could study in a more relaxed atmosphere. (If, as it happened, results were disappointing, prompting the "back-to-basics" movement in many states, the cause may just as well have been the lack of authoritative behavior of the teacher, influenced, no doubt, by the *laissez-faire* attitude prevalent during the '60s.) Going one step further, Suggestopedia proposes converting the entire classroom to a "soft" area.

On this first point the Monitor Theory would seem to be at odds with the world of Zen. Dr. Suzuki describes life in the monasteries as one of poverty, austerity and hard work.<sup>24)</sup> No attempt will be made to justify this discrepancy. Perhaps the Zen student has accepted the rigors of his vocation as part of the cost of discipleship. The language student, on the other hand, is unlikely to forego a meal or give up a good morning's sleep in order to acquire the proper use of "s" on the end of a third-person singular verb, no matter how highly motivated he might be. It may not even be necessary. Here the Zen student might benefit from learning a second language through Suggestopedia, and in doing so discover that Sakyamuni Gautama could still have achieved enlightenment at home, while fulfilling



his responsibility to his wife and children.

The teacher as an authority figure is another basic element of Suggestopedia. This strong authoritative behavior is perhaps necessary because the method attempts to remove the norms which have been established by the student's society, a major authority figure in itself. If the classroom is converted to a "soft" area, the presence of a non-authoritative teacher could induce non-constructive behavior on the part of the student. An authoritative teacher, on the other hand, might inspire the student to benefit from the relaxed environment, broadening his goals beyond the limits which he previously thought possible. Authoritative action may give credibility to a method which otherwise might provoke the student to resist it.<sup>25)</sup>

On the subject of authority Krashen remains silent. Whether this is a tacit approval of authoritative teacher behavior, accepted because Suggestopedia fulfills other goals of the Monitor Theory, is not clear. It may be unstated disapproval, indicated by the subtle changes in terminology, such as "dynamic" and "confident," two personality traits which commonly describe the successful teacher. More likely, Krashen considers this detail as secondary to the central issue of providing comprehensible input for acquisition. If Suggestopedia is so compatible with the Monitor Theory, however, and if this condition is so basic to the success of Suggestopedia, more attention should be paid to the manner in which the teacher presents the materials.

Recent trends in American education have produced the notion of the teacher as an equal, in other words, the non-authority figure. University professors often teach class in casual attire, encourage students to address them on a first-name basis, and even hold class outdoors on the lawn. By contrast in Japan, teachers still command the respect of their students by

adhering to a standard of formality commensurate with their position. It does not follow that formality produces authority, but if the two are part of the same overall system, that system should be examined to determine its impact on Suggestopedia first, and by extension, its impact on the Monitor Theory.

Of course the educational system in Japan, as part of the general culture, is influenced by Zen. In discussing Zen, it becomes necessary to differentiate between *authority* and *authoritative behavior*. Zen renounces the idea that truth can be contained in a set of sacred scriptures, in other words, authority. "The basic idea of Zen is to come in touch with the inner workings of our being, and to do this in the most direct way possible, without resorting to anything external or superadded. Therefore, anything that has the semblance of an external authority is rejected by Zen. Absolute faith is placed in a man's own inner being. For whatever authority there is in Zen, all comes from within." <sup>26)</sup>

There is in Zen an authoritative behavior, whether real or perceived. "The relationship of pupil to master," writes Herrigel, "is one of absolute confidence and unquestioned devotion... this can be seen from the way the pupils speak of the master among themselves-with a kind of sacred awe. For them he is the model and prototype, and even their exceedingly sharp and discerning eyes can detect no fault in him, although they are constantly in his presence." <sup>27)</sup> The Zen master may or may not act in an authoritative manner. The trust placed in him by his students comes from a belief that he has received the "Buddha-mind," which can only be transmitted from another master, having been transmitted originally by the Buddha. Hence, the master embodies the absolute "authority" in which the student believes. In this respect Zen does in fact rely upon authority. However, the student has no way of confirming his master's authenticity, since

“enlightenment” is a personal experience, and there is no factual test to prove one’s credentials as a Zen master.<sup>28)</sup>

There is a basic difference, then between the Zen master who commands respect because of his implied authority, and the language teacher who assumes an authoritative posture in order to give credence to his unorthodox methods. The language teacher may possess factual qualifications which establish him as an authority in his subject. In Japan these qualifying examinations are very much a public experience: although there is no universal, absolute authority conferred upon the language teacher, he has the explicit social authority to practise his profession. The task of the Suggestopedia teacher is to make use of this established authority structure to convert his class from the conventional, where the “hard” classroom fosters the “learned system,” to the non-conventional, the “soft” classroom, and the realm of the “acquired system.”

Lozanov believes that learning is restricted by the absence of psychic relaxation. The success of the Suggestopedia class depends not only on the pleasant classroom decor and the authoritative behavior of the teacher, but on the relaxed mental condition of the students. Krashen mentions the technique of deep, rhythmic breathing which is practised during the teacher’s reading in L1 and L2, as one way to obtain psychic relaxation.<sup>29)</sup>

In American courses, the teacher will use yogic breathing exercises as a method for calming the students and reducing tension, reciting a monologue which goes something like this: “Close your eyes. Relax. Relax every part of your body...your head...your shoulders...your left arm...your right arm...your left leg...your right leg. Now breathe. Breathe evenly...in...out...in...out. Imagine yourself walking on a sandy beach. The waves roll in and out in time with your breath...in...out...in...out. There are palm trees near the beach, and the sky is clear and a beautiful blue,” etc.

This is all well and good for those of us who enjoy blue skies, sandy beaches, and palm trees, but what about the students (and there are a good many) for whom these images evoke negative sensations, such as loneliness, thirst and sunburn? Lozanov hopes that the student will deal with these associations by unifying his conscious and unconscious mind. He claims the yoga exercises help to bring the student to the necessary state of relaxation to accomplish this.

At first glance, the breathing exercises seem to be the same as those practised in Zen. Both of the Japanese sects practise sitting meditation (J. *zazen*), which for the *Rinzai* Sect has the purpose of solving a *koan*, while the *Soto* Sect practises sitting just to be sitting. However, the practice of Zen meditation is different from yogic meditation in that the latter is done to achieve quiet of mind. Zen meditation is done with the aim of creating mental upheaval, of bringing the mind to a point of no return and pushing it beyond, into a new point of view which is called enlightenment.<sup>30)</sup>

This is not to say that Zen practice leads to a near nervous breakdown. In fact, Zen sitting and breathing exercises have been used for successful treatment of neurotic patients in psychotherapy. "This is a practice leading to single-mindedness, first, by assembling our psychic energy into a unity, and second, by strengthening it through constant practice in our daily living, leading to a stage where we are fully charged with strong vitality and power..."<sup>31)</sup>

However, the act of sitting may not be the ultimate form of meditation, as evidenced by the fact that early Zenists practised walking meditation, and others have practised an art or a sport as a form of meditation.<sup>32)</sup> The word *zazen*, moreover, comes from *za* (no-thought) and *zen* (looking inward).<sup>33)</sup> There is no physical posture implied.

The *Soto* Sect of Zen is also called the School of "Serene Reflection," which pursues "a clear awareness in the tranquility of no-thought."<sup>34)</sup> After a person has gone through a torturous ordeal, he achieves this state of "clear awareness," in which, Suzuki writes, "all your mental activities will now be working to a different key, which will be more satisfying, more peaceful, and fuller of joy than anything you ever experienced before."<sup>35)</sup> The state of peace and joy described by Suzuki recalls the first criterion established by Lozanov for determining the success of Suggestopedia. Stevick urges caution in defining relaxation in the second language classroom, emphasizing that relaxation does not mean inattention, but rather produces a state of mental alertness. He distinguishes two kinds of concentration: the care-full (apprehensive), and the care-less (self-confident).<sup>36)</sup>

When apprehensive concentration is replaced by self-confident concentration, the language student is said to be in a state of readiness for learning. Alan Watts describes a similar condition in discussing the Tao, that is, that the mind begins to function freely and spontaneously, in a state of wholeness, of un-self-consciousness, or non-ego.<sup>37)</sup> Suzuki also speaks of the wholeness of the mind, or more succinctly, that it cannot be divided into conscious and unconscious elements.<sup>38)</sup> Lozanov (recalling the beach and the sunburn) suggests that the student, while consciously focusing on the lesson, experiences a barrage of thought associations which have been stimulated either by the lesson or which have risen from the subconscious. He says that the conscious and unconscious elements of learning should be woven together to the student's advantage during a Suggestopedia course.<sup>39)</sup>

Further reduction of tension takes place in Suggestopedia by assigning a fictitious identity to the student. "Unlike the reality of the student's

life outside the classroom, this 'fictitious reality' brings with it no embarrassments, no conflicts, no anxieties. On the contrary, it brings a series of enjoyable experiences." <sup>40)</sup>

Here the teacher takes advantage of natural side-effect of the second-language classroom. A second language can serve as a mask behind which the student can hide, resulting in a certain freedom of personal expression which his "real" self, developed and expressed in the native language, would not permit. This phenomenon occurs most often in a one-to-one teacher-student situation, but it also occurs in small groups and even larger classes. The western teacher is often amazed by the disarmingly candid remarks which surface in classes consisting entirely of Japanese students. A private session, moreover, may become for the student a type of confession, or worse, a session with his analyst, which requires that the teacher constantly and consciously insist that it remain a language lesson. Assigning a fictitious identity, however, provides the teacher with an escape valve from the therapeutic aspects of language learning, while allowing the student to maximize learning by wearing a psychological mask in the second-language classroom. This permits the student to overcome his objections to new ideas suggested by the teacher, for example, that he can learn a thousand words a day, or that he can play games in the classroom to help him learn faster.

#### 4. THE SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

The three methods listed by Krashen as being conducive to second-language acquisition, when taken together, have many things in common with Zen. Since Zen is a major influence in Japan, and language acquisition is a fundamental element of the Monitor Theory, Krashen's ideas should be

well received in Japan.

If this is to be the case, several considerations need to be made. First, we need to consider the students. In Japan, people of all ages study English, from small children to senior citizens. Second, we need to know what kind of class the students are attending: whether it is a junior high, high school, or university class; a private language school; a *juku*; a company class; an English club; or private lessons. Third, we need to know the subject. In Japan there is a distinction between *English* and *English Conversation*. Fourth, we need to consider the teacher. Is he a good teacher but not a fluent speaker? Or is he a native speaker but not a good teacher? Is he both a fluent speaker and a good teacher? Or neither? Fifth, we need to consider the materials used in the class. Are they appropriate for the student, for the goals of the class, and for the teacher? What may be a good method for one type of student, class, subject, and teacher, may not be good for another situation.

It should be mentioned that the hypotheses set forth in the Monitor Theory apply only to "adults," or students who have passed the age of intelligence, or formal operations, and whose Language Acquisition Devices have closed. Otherwise, "second-language" acquisition is nothing more than a child learning a second language by natural means. Ironically, Total Physical Response seems to be a method which is ideally suited to childrens' classes, as it makes use of the enormous energy level which often stands in the way of their classroom progress.

If we limit the applications of the Monitor Theory to Japanese students of junior high school age and older, we need to examine the socio-cultural traits which distinguish these students. From the 6th century until the 9th century, Japan actively embraced the culture of China. The results were profound and far-reaching, and can still be seen in Japan today.

After 646 A.D., more than eight hundred schools were established throughout the country. “Memorization of the Confucian *Analects* in the written form of Chinese and in Japanese pronunciation constituted the main classroom activities. One of the important purposes of learning the Chinese classics was the application of Confucian precepts to everyday life as well as to mental training. This study of the Chinese classics lasted until the western pattern of education was introduced to the country in the nineteenth century.”<sup>41)</sup> The “surface structure” of education may have been changed by the introduction of western systems, but the “deep structure” remains basically the same. “Few if any Japanese today would describe themselves as Confucian, but Confucian values still permeate the thinking of virtually the entire Japanese population.”<sup>42)</sup>

Zen, which was brought from China in the 12th and 13th centuries, espouses both Confucianism and Taoism. With Zen came its standardized methods of dealing with large classes and less-endowed students. When reading of the Zen pupils being “without natural vocation, sent for training by their families,” one cannot avoid thinking of today’s universities. This is not to underrate all university students, but many simply abandon mental activity after gaining entrance to their universities, doing nothing in class except sleep or gossip about personal matters. (The ultra Monitor under-user, making professors envious of their Zen counterparts, who make frequent use of a “stick” as an important pedagogic device!) Perhaps one cause of this problem, as in post-persecution Zen, is the increase in student population. Whereas 2% of the college-age population in the 1930s (the most intelligent, motivated and promising students) attended university, the percentage is now approaching 40%.<sup>43)</sup>

Such a rapid increase in university enrollment will result in two further developments: overcrowding of classrooms; and the method of dealing



with overcrowding when geographic and economic conditions limit expansion of facilities—competitive entrance examinations. Entrance examinations to Japanese universities consist of a standardized scholastic aptitude test, achievement tests in specific subjects, including English, and ratings of personal and social characteristics.<sup>44)</sup>

The criterion of personal and social ratings seems to be consistent with the aims of the Japanese secondary school English curriculum: to help adolescents develop individual, social, and vocational competence. English study in high school “is part of an elaborate, intense rite of passage in which the more ambitious of the young people in this country demonstrate their capacity for drudgery and self-denial... and, in so doing, hope that they will be granted admission to the institutions of higher learning, which will lead to the best jobs the society has to offer.”<sup>45)</sup>

Institutionalized drudgery, so heartily embraced by high school students, having been absorbed into the education system through the influence of Zen, is nonetheless anathema to Krashen. In this respect the methods proposed to implement language acquisition collide head-on with centuries of language learning by the Grammar-Translation Method, still the predominant teaching method in Japanese universities.<sup>46)</sup>

A more receptive institution for innovative methods would be found in the widely varied system of private language schools located throughout Japan. These, being operated as businesses for profit, generally have a goal of keeping students enrolled as long as possible. Since enrollment is voluntary, classes must be kept interesting, placing educational concerns second.<sup>47)</sup>

The student of a private language school has a goal of supplementing his formal education in order to a) improve his chances for employment or advancement, or b) entertain himself. Students motivated by money are

often university students or businessmen. Those motivated by leisure are often housewives. As a supplement to the Grammar-Translation courses offered in the secondary school and university systems, the private language school usually offers “conversation” classes.

By the time a student has finished high school, he has memorized a large number of vocabulary items, grammatical rules, types of sentence construction, etc. In other words, he knows a great deal about the language: how to read, how to translate into Japanese. The student theoretically knows how to write, but reliance on a dictionary hinders performance in this area. Listening and speaking skills have not been thoroughly developed. The conversation class hopes to activate this knowledge, or reactivate it in the case of older students.

Recently conversation classes have been added to the curriculum in some universities as a supplement to the regular language or literature course. The prevailing question in this context should be, “What *is* a conversation class?” Should it take the same form in a university as it does in a language school? Most likely there will be more students in the university class. Does it need to subordinate education to student interest? The philosophy of the university is a deciding factor. What are the expectations of the students? Does “conversation” have a meaning not found in the O.E.D.? Who will teach the class, and what materials will be used? The answers to these questions should depict a university conversation class as distinct from the private conversation class. A final question should try to determine the extent to which the Natural Approach, TPR, and Suggestopedia can successfully be applied to either type of conversation class. To date, these methods are not widely used in Japan.

The teacher for any class must use some method for instruction. When asked what method they use, many teachers respond with the catch-all

“eclectic” method, which in some cases means that they have no method. The Grammar-Translation Method, used in language and literature courses throughout Japan, provides a comfortable setting for both teachers and students. This important fact is completely ignored by foreign teachers who berate the Japanese system, and should be sufficient reason for Krashen to reconsider his statement that the Grammar-Translation Method produces a high affective filter.<sup>48)</sup> On other points, however, Krashen is justified in asserting that this method is generally ill-suited to the conversation class.

The Audio-Lingual Method, on the other hand, is suitable for a conversation class, but would not have any place in a literature class. This method seeks to make structures automatic by providing drills in repetition, substitution, transformation, and translation. Although Krashen admits that the Audio-Lingual Method may be useful in some cases, he criticizes its use of mimicry and memorization. In Japan, however, this method is preferable to other methods because it meets students' expectations of what a “conversation” class is supposed to be like, it is suitable to remedy errors frequently made by Japanese students, and it reduces the probability of cultural misunderstandings.<sup>49)</sup>

Krashen's analysis shows that the Direct Method provides input by focusing on inductive teaching of grammar, done entirely in the target language. This method was introduced to Japan by Harold Palmer in 1921. Its weaknesses include the assumption that a second language can be learned in the same way that a child learns its first language (identical to the weakness of the Monitor Theory); insistence on early production and fluency at the expense of comprehension; confusion resulting from explanations in the target language; and the lack of motivation which approaches the intensity experienced in L1 acquisition. Since grammar is

the subject matter, the students' purpose is to learn language. A child, however, learns language in order to function socially. The classroom which simulates the social function of L1 acquisition will be a more successful L2 conversation class.<sup>50)</sup>

As a theory needs a method, so the method needs a text. Most importantly, it needs teachers who are willing to put the theory into practice. Krashen hopes to synthesize acquisition theory, applied linguistics research, and teachers' ideas and intuitions in a single Monitor Theory. Teachers, however, often have no choice as to the materials they must use, the choice having been made for them at an administrative level. Administrative decisions, moreover, are based on political and economic factors influenced by government decisions and budget allocations. Purchase of suitable textbooks depends on availability, which in turn is influenced by the supply and demand of the publishing industry. Consequently, teachers who would like to implement the Monitor Theory in their classrooms are hindered by textbooks which have a different objective altogether.

In Japan, textbooks at the secondary level are approved, but not prescribed, by the Ministry of Education, from a list of about thirty titles. These include *New Everyday English*, *New Horizon English Course*, *New Prince English Course*, *New Crown English Series*, and *Vista English Series*. At the university level, texts need not be approved by the government. University texts usually include literature, short stories, biographies, etc.

Unfortunately for Monitor Theory enthusiasts, materials which specifically support the Natural Approach, TPR, and Suggestopedia, are not included in the list of texts approved by the Ministry of Education. Teachers in private language schools and university conversation classes may have more flexibility, however. The following is a brief account of some major British and American publishers which have received wide

attention in Japan. Since the Monitor Theory is a recent development, not many texts have been developed even by these companies for the specific purpose of employing the Monitor Theory in the classroom.

The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) publishes video dramas in corporate settings. These have received good reviews but are intended for a limited audience, and may not be appropriate for a university class. Cambridge University Press publishes a wide range of materials, notably the English Certificate preparations, which are appropriate for advanced levels. The Longman Group, Ltd. publishes materials which can be useful in a wide variety of situations at all levels. Oxford University Press, although it publishes excellent dictionaries and reference works, is disappointing as a textbook publisher. Oxford texts may be suitable for a private language school class, however, because they place heavy emphasis upon student interest level, while paying pitifully little attention to classroom activities and continuity of educational content. Regents publishes numerous textbooks which use the Audio-Lingual Method. Particularly good are those written by Robert Dixon. Prentice-Hall seems to fill the gaps which are often left by other publishers, by providing textbooks with unique approaches, yet never sacrificing solid educational foundations.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The culture of Japan has been influenced heavily by Confucianism, which emphasized loyalty, personal relationships, etiquette, hard work, and education; and Zen, which offered a method of discipline for the mind and body, with the aim of attaining harmony with the universe. Language teaching, which necessarily draws on aspects of culture, must therefore come to terms with Confucianism and Zen if it is to function smoothly in

Japan.

The Monitor Theory of second-language acquisition stresses motivation, self-confidence, and the reduction of anxiety as keys for successful language learning. Suggestopedia, which itself is very much like the practice of Zen, is considered an excellent method for fulfilling the requirements of the Monitor Theory. Insofar as it resembles Zen, the Monitor Theory may provide a vehicle for the language teaching profession to approach the culture of Japan.

The educational system in Japan, however, is traditionally Confucian in its philosophy, resulting in the over-use of what Krashen terms “the learned system.” If the Monitor Theory is to take hold and succeed in Japan, there will have to be a massive change in the attitude of society toward the “conventional wisdom” of Confucianism, and acceptance of a system which favors the Taoist aspect of Zen. In effect this change is already under way, and can be seen in the enthusiasm many Japanese show for studying “English conversation.” Whether it is possible, or even desirable, to effect a complete transformation of society, to the extent that the Monitor Theory provides the accepted model for the second-language classroom, remains to be seen.

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