

# Learning Learning

## 学習の学習

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『学習の学習』第4号です。この号には、ロズリン・ヤングのサイレント・ウェイに関する記事と、青木直子の「アジアにおけるオートノミー」についての見解を述べた記事が載っています。これらは、私たちが学習者ディベロップメントを考える時にインスピレーションを得るためのオルターナティブですが、これまで少なくともこのニュースレターの中では触れられなかったことです。サイレント・ウェイを使っても使わなくても「学習の補佐としての授業」という概念は意味のあるものですが、青木直子が示唆しているように、アジアの伝統の中からも、もう少し深く見てみさえすれば、同じように意味のある洞察が容易に得られるかもしれません。さらに、谷口すみ子の報告しているプレゼンテーションの中でマリオ・リンボルークリの示した、学習者に対する鋭く親密な認識はもう一つのオルターナティブといえるでしょう。そして、トムソン木下千尋、春原憲一郎、キース・アダムスの発表とJALT 94での学習者ディベロップメントのコロキアムの報告、これから始めるエキサイティングなプロジェクトのニュースとともに、来年からLearner to Learnerの発行が正式に学習者ディベロップメントN-SIGの活動の一部となることをお知らせします。これもまた、私たちが、自分自身の学習における（永続的な）学習者ディベロップメントについての洞察を得るためのオルターナティブとなるはずで

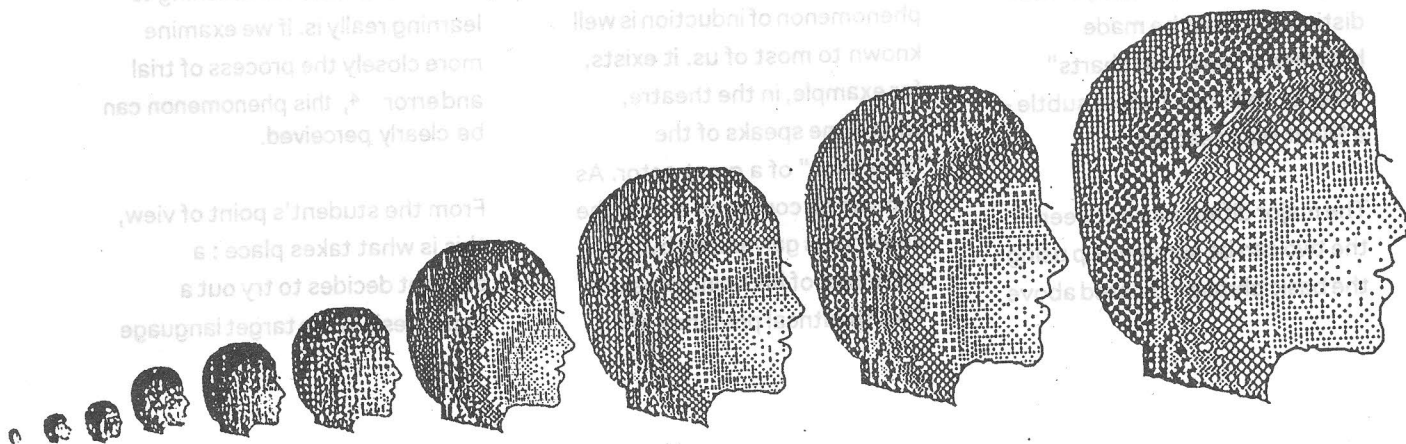
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翻訳：青木直子

Welcome to the fourth issue of *Learning Learning*! We come of age (well, the ripe young age of one) with an article by Roslyn Young on Silent Way and reflections by Naoko Aoki on "Autonomy in Asia," both of which indicate - in different ways - alternative sources of inspiration for learner development which have so far remained untapped, at least in these pages. What could be more relevant, though, than "subordinating teaching to learning" (in or out of Silent Way), and might there not be - as Naoko Aoki implies - similarly relevant insights right under our noses in Asia, if we only looked a little more deeply? In similar vein, Mario Rinvolucri shares (via Sumiko Taniguchi's report) his own subtle and intimate appreciations of learners, and - along with much more, including memories of conference presentations by Chihiro Kinoshita Thomson, Ken'ichiro Haruhara, Keith Adams and the JALT 94 Learner Development colloquium, *plus* news of exciting projects to come - we celebrate with this issue our forthcoming marriage with *Learner to Learner*. This should provide us with yet another "alternative" source of insight for learner development - in our own learning - and for many years to come!

Richard Smith

(translated by Naoko Aoki)



# The Silent Way - Subordinating Teaching to Learning 1

Roslyn Young

## 1. Silent Way : a way of thinking and a set of tools

As well as a general theory of learning <sup>2</sup>, Caleb Gattegno put forward a basic pedagogical concept which he proposed should subtend all work in education. He called it "the subordination of teaching to learning." The materials usually associated with Silent Way - charts and rods - are in fact a set of tools which allow teachers to apply the subordination of teaching to learning in the field of foreign language education. The tools invented by Caleb Gattegno are not the only possible set of tools for teachers working in this field. Others can and indeed have been invented by teachers doing research in this area.

It is always tempting for people trying to describe Silent Way to limit themselves to what is immediately visible in the classrooms where this approach is used, without taking into account what is more difficult to see, more subtle. In fact, a clear distinction must be made between a "rods and charts" teacher and - much more subtle - a Silent Way teacher.

The major difference between the two can be summed up using the basic phrase indicated above

- the subordination of teaching to learning. A teacher can quite well use rods and word charts in class, but if the teaching is not subordinated to the learning, the class is a Silent Way class in name only. It is also quite possible to work in a language class without rods or charts and nevertheless to teach a class using Silent Way. If the teaching is subordinated to learning, if it demonstrates the principles proposed by Gattegno, it is a Silent Way lesson, even if an untrained observer is quite unable to detect that this is the case.

## 2. The subordination of teaching to learning : a way of thinking

The subordination of teaching to learning can be understood at several levels.

At the deepest level, this expression refers to a subtle transaction which takes place between the participants in the class. If the teacher lives his class intensely, is very "present", then, by a phenomenon of induction similar to what one finds in physics, he can induce all the participants of the class to be as present as is possible for each of them. This phenomenon of induction is well known to most of us. It exists, for example, in the theatre, where one speaks of the "presence" of a great actor. As soon as he comes on stage, the audience is galvanized by the mere fact of his being present. This theatrical presence of an

actor exists because he is totally present both to himself and to his audience. Although it is difficult to explain in a short article how a Silent Way teacher uses induction in the classroom, the result is immediately perceptible to all the participants, who are filled with a feeling of well-being, of elation, of joy.

At a much less subtle level, but one directly related to this first level, one finds the subordination of teaching to learning functioning in classrooms where the accent is put on the students' learning. Within the framework of the theory of education used here, learning takes place through a series of awarenesses <sup>3</sup>. This means that, in a class, minute by minute, or even second by second, the teacher can be in a position to see the awarenesses as and when they take place. He can, then, conduct his teaching in function of what he sees, varying from one minute to the next what he does in order to provoke awarenesses wherever he can see that it is possible. This is another meaning, at another level, of the phrase "the subordination of teaching to learning", and at this level it is possible to be extremely precise about what the subordination of teaching to learning really is. If we examine more closely the process of trial and error <sup>4</sup>, this phenomenon can be clearly perceived.

From the student's point of view, this is what takes place : a student decides to try out a hypothesis in the target language

and, to do so, produces an utterance. He depends on the environment - his teacher or another student - for feedback as to the correctness of his trial. Someone furnishes the necessary feedback and the student is able to integrate the result of this trial into his next one. This process represents one trial on the part of the student.

However, from the teacher's point of view, the situation is as follows: the teacher, hearing the student's attempt in the language, provides him with feedback. However, since the teacher can only guess at the student's hypothesis, this feedback is in fact at the same time a trial made by the teacher. The teacher's trial is the student's feedback and, conversely, the student's trial is the teacher's feedback from his previous trial. Thus, each time the student launches a new trial, the teacher is informed about the adequation of the feedback he provided to the student's previous trial.

We can also see that sometimes it is necessary to make the contents of these trials more precise. Imagine a student who says, "These rods red." The teacher must then ask the student to point on the word chart exactly what he is trying to say. If the student points "These rods red", the teacher knows that the problem concerns the presence or absence of the verb "are". If, on the other hand, the student points "This rod's red", the teacher knows that the student's

problem concerns the pronunciation of the word "this". The teacher's feedback can only be adapted to the student's problem if the nature of the problem is quite clear.

This to-and-fro between the student and the teacher, this "pas de deux" with occasional requests by the teacher for more precision on the part of the student, represents the unit of measurement in the process of subordination of teaching to learning.

It is common for teachers to confuse "the subordination of teaching to learning" with "learner-centred teaching." In fact, however, these cover two very different realities. Learner-centred teaching is and stays essentially a way of teaching. If one puts this expression into a context, it would be necessary to speak about teaching centred on the student rather than on the teacher or the book. No mention is made of learning. Implicit in

"learner-centred teaching" is the proposition that if the teacher teaches, then the student learns; a relation of cause and effect is considered to exist between teaching and learning. But it is easy to show that this link is imaginary. The fact that there are exams at the end of most periods of study, whatever the level of the students, shows this clearly. In the great majority of cases, irrespective of the discipline, the teacher does what he does for a certain time in front of a certain number of

people and, at the end of the period of time, he gives his students an exam. He most certainly does not expect his students all to get identical results. If he knew this would be the case in advance, he would not examine them. Indeed, if they did all get identical results, he would probably hold the exam again, considering his instrument of evaluation to be defective! Yet as a teacher, he stood in front of the class and did what he did, the same for everyone. It is therefore inescapable that what he does and what the students then do with what he does are not linked by a relation of cause and effect. In these conditions, it is better to admit that a causal link between teaching and learning has not yet been established, whether the teaching is centred on the students, the teacher or on the books they are using.

The subordination of teaching to learning, on the other hand, places the act of learning at the centre of the class. The accent is not on the student, but on those of his activities which will lead him to learn.

Another aspect of the subordination of teaching to learning can be resumed thus: "The teacher works on the student and the student works on the language." This aspect allows us to see that the accent really is placed elsewhere than in a usual class. The teacher is not "the one who knows" whose role is to transmit his knowledge to his students. I can say - I have to say -

that I am not an English teacher but a people teacher. My job is to work with the people in my class so that they become more efficient learners of what they are working on, in this case, English. What I know, as a "teacher of people learning English", is how to lead my students through the four stages of learning<sup>3</sup> so that each one ends up with "speaking English" at his disposition. To have "a language at one's disposition" does not mean the same thing as "a knowledge of the language. It is quite possible that at the end of their learning, the students have no idea what they did with their time. But they can state that they have the language at their disposition because they can use it, because they can speak it. They did a certain number of things associated with language learning and the fact of knowing how to speak the language is the result.

### 3. Silence

For many observers, the most surprising thing about a Silent Way classroom is the silence of the teacher. This silence puts into question almost all the ideas, theories and practices found in language teaching. Here are some examples.

Firstly, the teacher's silence is a constant reminder that the teacher's role is not to transmit knowledge. If very few ski instructors would consider that buying a book such as "Skiing in Ten Easy Lessons" could be a substitute for practice with real skis, many language teachers seem to believe that an understanding of grammar can

have a favourable influence on the speaking of the language. Some even act as if learning the grammar of the language were enough to create a know-how in their students. However, these teachers have not yet shown how, by what means, such a transfer could take place. In fact, whatever the area of study, nothing allows us to suppose the existence of a relationship of cause and effect between knowledge and a know-how, that the possession of knowledge can create a know-how. Speaking a foreign language is indeed a know-how and, as such, demands what learning any know-how demands : practice.

Secondly, the teacher's silence invites all teachers to reflect on the fact that the students can acquire excellent pronunciation of a foreign language without ever having heard it from the teacher. Gattegno's affirmation that new sounds are learnt not by listening to them but by making them should be examined with care. To the vision of a language as a sound system that the students explore by listening, he opposes another, that of a system of energy transactions that each student must manipulate with extreme precision in order to be able to speak the language fluently. This exploration is undertaken by us all when, in our cribs, at the age of a few weeks, we set about babbling and gurgling, installing at the same time the feedback systems which, much later, will allow us to enter the language

spoken in our environment. The type of exercise proposed by Gattegno leads to the creation of a double feedback system exactly like the one we all have for our mother tongue. This is why the teacher remains silent whilst proposing exercises which allow the students to undertake this exploration of the sensations produced in their phonatory apparatus.

Thirdly, this silence can incite teachers to reflect on the fact that we all know how to learn and that what we learn spontaneously is usually well learnt. Most of us are happy enough with the way we walk! Each child speaks his language at a level which suits him. How is it that learning succeeds in these areas, in which the learning was not directed by a teacher? On the other hand, if we look at what is left of our History or Geography, Maths or French classes at school, the yield is usually small. The silence of the teacher leaves time for the students to do what they have done successfully all their lives - learn. It is necessary for teachers to be very prudent in the language classroom. Silence incites one to be prudent.

But I have called silence an instrument, which implies that it can be actually used by the teacher. The teacher's silence forces him to reflect constantly on his own clarity, and this changes the preparation of his class completely. The teacher always has to try to find strictly non-ambiguous means of presenting each situation. While

the class is taking place, he must have his students' understanding constantly in his mind, not only concerning the situations he presents, but also concerning the language he associates with them. Silence is a very efficient safety factor because, as soon as the teacher's job is not well done, the whole class is plunged into silence. No student can go on. The teacher can thus never be tempted to go on ahead, leaving his students behind, because this is prevented immediately by the impossibility of the class to continue. The teacher never loses the class.

As well as this, the teacher's silence allows him to keep the students in contact with their unknown, on the cutting edge of what they are learning. Since, after the first few hours, they are the ones who usually introduce new language and new situations, through the mistakes they make, what they say will always correspond to what they can see is possible for them in the here and now, suggested by what has just happened in the class or what might have happened. If they can communicate what they are trying to say, the teacher can remodel what they produce into the target language, helping them to maintain the highest quality in their language at all times. This is necessary if they are to acquire criteria about the language when speaking about situations they have set up themselves. For the class to take place at all, the teacher has to stay with the students wherever

they happen to be, following them in their exploration and working on their errors and mistakes as they are produced. Thus, his silence allows the teacher to keep his students in direct contact with their unknown, surely the only way learning can take place. Like some jazz music, the Silent Way lesson is an improvisation played by the students and the teacher jointly as they advance. It becomes a measure of the teacher's own competence at subordinating his teaching to their learning. Only when he is completely at ease in silence can he consider himself to be a Silent Way teacher. Then and only then can he begin to talk in class, but what he says will be quite different from what he used to say.

#### 4. How does one become a Silent Way teacher?

It can take many years to become a competent Silent Way teacher, not because it is difficult to use rods and charts - this takes only a very short time - but because any teacher wishing to use Silent Way must learn to be sensitive to the learner at work in himself in order to be able to recognize the learner at work in others. To become aware of one's awareness functioning at every moment of the day, to know oneself as present (or not) in all one's acts, these are among the first jobs of the would-be Silent Way teacher.

But probably the most important job is to learn to know oneself

fundamentally and deeply as a human, as a person who uses his will to create "at will" countless new ways of being; to learn to recognize the students as humans having the same inner freedom, the same human qualities. Only then will the teacher have enough confidence in himself and in his students to be able to subordinate his teaching to their learning.

#### Notes

1 This is a shortened English adaptation of an article which originally appeared in Japanese in *The Language Teacher* 18/8 (August, 1994), pp. 35, 36, 38.

2 The Japanese version of this article was preceded by an extensive discussion of Gattegno's general theory of learning (in *The Language Teacher* 18/7 (July, 1994), pp. 27 - 30). Cf. also the following books by Caleb Gattegno: *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools; The Common Sense of Teaching Foreign Languages; What We Owe Children - the Subordination of Teaching to Learning*. All of these (except the last, which is out of print but may be reprinted if enough people request it) are available from The Center, 204 Shirono Bldg., 3-41 Manzai-cho, Kita-ku, Osaka 530 (tel./fax: 06-315-0848).

3 In brief, Gattegno identifies four stages in the process of learning, each involving different awarenesses. First (stage one), I must become aware that there is an unknown to be explored. In stage two I explore the unknown through trial and error, using a double feedback process of i) awareness of what is, in order to estimate what trial is useful here and now, and ii) awarenesses resulting from feedback from the environment which tells me the result

