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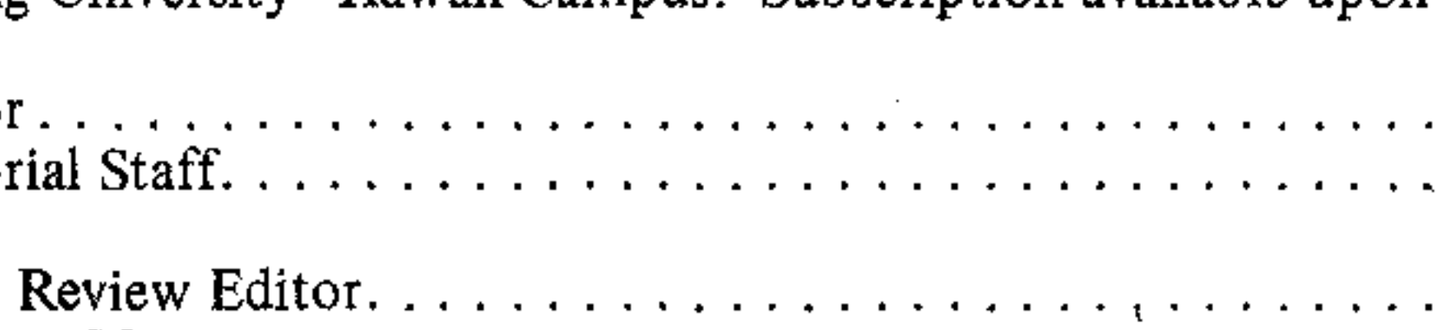

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International English for Japanese People: Suggesting "Multinationalization"

by Yukihiro Nakayama

This paper is addressed to a multinational audience. It may, therefore, be interpreted in different ways by peoples of different nations for different reasons. It is important to keep in mind, however, that it is mainly concerned with "International English for Japanese People."

English as an International Language

English has been functioning as an international language for some time. As international interactions have increased in number, the role of English has become more important not only in political/economic settings but also at international conferences, academic conventions, etc., on a global scale.

The geographical spread of English (Fishman et al. 1977) indicates its rising importance as an international language. Nations of the world, particularly those in Asia, are using English more and more frequently as an international language to communicate with the rest of the world—not just with the native English speaking world. This happening at the same time that English is being used *less* frequently (Harrison 1979; Onose 1981) as an *intranational* language in Asia because of the desire to reaffirm indigenous national/cultural identities. English is being used *less* frequently as an *intranational* language but it is being used *more* frequently as an *international* language (cf. Smith 1981a).

This increase in the use of English as an international language and the diversity of English forms, among other factors, have led to the development of a "functional concept of English as an international language" (Smith 1976ab, 1978, 1980ab, 1981ab; Smith and Rafiqzad 1979; Smith et al. 1981; Smith and Bisazza, forthcoming; Strevens 1977, 1978ab, 1980, 1981; Quirk 1978, 1981; Kachru and Quirk 1981; Lester 1976, 1978). Some of the studies along this line have been reviewed and accepted favorably in the context of English language education in Japan (Tanaka 1978; Nishimura 1978; Uono 1981; Komura 1978, 1980; Suenobu 1980; Nakayama 1980b; Kanzaki 1981; J. Nakamura 1978; Nohon Keizai Shimbun 1981; cf. Prator 1978; Thomas 1978).

An Operational Definition

In this paper, I will operationally define "English as an International Language," following Smith (1976ab, 1978), as "English which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another." (cf. Christophersen 1960; Marckwardt 1963; Quirk et al. 1973; Kachru 1977; Tohyama 1979).

This operational definition suggests two things. One is that an international language can be any language, natural, artificial or man-made, such as Japanese, BASIC English or Esperanto. But this discussion will be limited to English, which is being used very frequently for actual international communication. I am by no means promoting American English or British English to be a more frequently used international language for any "political" reasons (Tanabe 1978); let alone "the" international language. I will treat English as "an" international language (cf. Suzuki 1975; Higa 1976a; Koizumi et al. 1976; Lummis 1976; K. Nakamura 1981; Oda 1980).

Types of Interaction

The other thing, which is the more important for our discussion, is that English is now used for three different types of interactions in international settings: (1) English native speakers of different nations communicating with one another, e.g., Britons with Canadians, (2) native speakers communicating with non-native speakers, e.g., Americans with Japanese, and (3) non-native speakers of different non-native English speaking nations communicating with

one another, e.g., Japanese with Koreans (Smith 1978; Nakayama 1980b; Baxter 1980).

English language education in Japan seems to have put almost all of its emphasis on the second category. In recent years, however, there has been a remarkable increase in the third category. Today English is used more frequently than before by non-native speakers when communicating with other non-native speakers in international settings. There is some empirical data which indicate that the trainees/students of some Japanese educational institutions in the business and academic sectors are in considerable need of interactions of this third category (Kakehi 1978).

New Communication Problems

This has led to new communication problems among peoples of non-native English speaking nations: (1) some non-native speakers of nation X can not understand "Englishes" spoken or written by non-native speakers of nations Y and Z, and (2) some non-native speakers of nation X can not speak or write "an English" that non-native speakers of nations Y and Z understand.

Realizing these problems, some directors of language training programs in the business sector in Japan have begun to cope with them. For example, Kosaka, director of the Overseas Training Institute of Matsushita Electric Industrial (National Panasonic), has employed, as English instructors, several non-native speakers, e.g., a German, a Swiss, an Indian and a Swede, in addition to native speakers. According to him, this has "enabled the trainees to get used to non-American or non-British varieties of English, and proven to be effective in some business transactions." Behind this is their policy that "in learning English as an international language, the cultural biases for particular nations should be *excluded*" (Nihon Keizai Shimbun 1980:9)

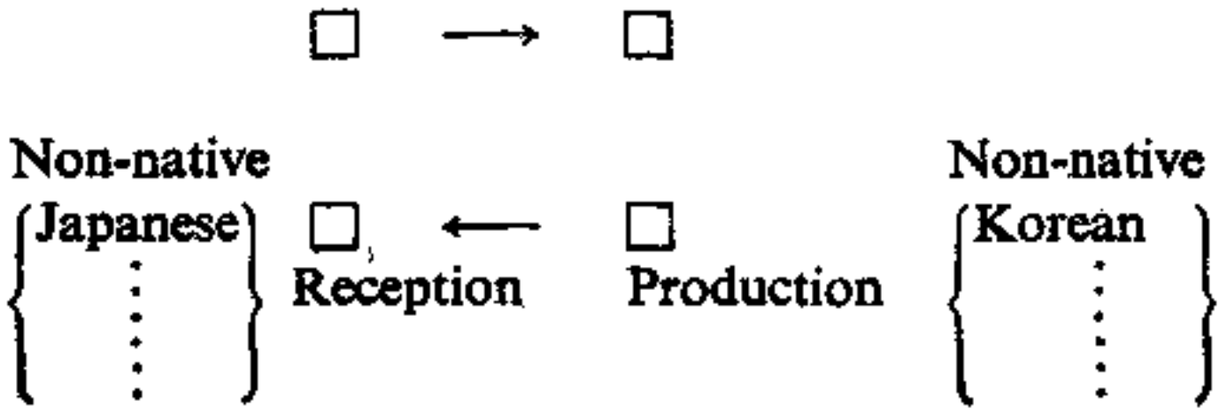
Yamanoue, manager of the International Planning Personnel Department of Kobe Steel, has a Chilean and an Egyptian teach some classes. He asserts that "the trainees can get used to the pronunciation of Chilean English and Egyptian English, and get to know the business practices and cultures of those nations" (Nakayama 1980b:20: Yamanoue 1981).

Unfortunately, these people are exceptional. Most people in English language education in Japan do not even realize the problems that non-native to non-native interactions pose. There has not been much academic discussion of these problems; there has scarcely been any empirical research at all.

The purposes of this paper are (1) to look into the problems of non-native to non-native interactions and the causes of these problems; (2) to suggest that English should be "multinationalized," in both its linguistic and socio-cultural components; and (3) to discuss some possible approaches to "International English for Japanese People."

Non-native to Non-native Interactions

First of all non-native to non-native interactions will be analyzed more concretely. As we know, there are two major aspects of verbal communication, i.e., production and reception. Production, of course, includes speaking and writing, while reception includes listening and reading. Figure 1 depicts these types of interactions.



(Adapted from Nakayama 1980b: 23)

FIGURE 1

Each of these interactions involves production and reception on the part of each of the interactors. Thus, for the sake of discussion, it is possible to isolate four different aspects of each interaction: (1) reception by Japanese, (2) production by Japanese, (3) reception by other non-

native speakers, and (4) production by other non-native speakers.

Though in one sense the problems of reception by Japanese and the problems of production by other non-native speakers are actually two sides of the same communication problem, as are the problems of production by Japanese and reception by other non-native speakers, they are treated as separate aspects to better analyze the two-way nature of communication itself.

Specifically, the communication problems are, for example, (1) some Japanese cannot understand "educated Englishes" spoken or written by Koreans or Indians, (2) some Japanese cannot speak or write "an educated English" that Koreans or Indians understand, (3) some Koreans or Indians cannot understand "educated English" spoken or written by Japanese, and (4) some Koreans or Indians cannot speak or write "an educated English" that Japanese understand.

A complete discussion of these four would constitute another article. This one, therefore, will look into several findings made in recent empirical studies.

Recent Empirical Studies

Are varieties of English really a serious problem? To answer this question, Smith et al. (1981) carried out a pilot study with a questionnaire and an additional interview, involving thirty-two institutions in Asia, the Pacific and the United States which supposedly prepare people to use English in international settings. In this survey, they discovered the severity of some of the language problems that the trainees of these institutions face when using English in international settings. The two most severe problems reported were (1) poor listening comprehension, and (2) the inability to understand different varieties of English. These problems are no doubt related to each other.

The most natural cause of these problems, as was confirmed by the survey, is the lack of exposure to English. Smith et al. write that "whatever exposure such trainees have to the language is limited by the available resources. When these people find themselves in international settings, at home or abroad, they are interacting with people who are usually faced with similar problems and this is what compounds the situation and at times leads to misunderstandings." They conclude that "people in these institutions may assume that once non-native speakers can successfully interact with native speakers, they automatically can communicate with other non-native speakers. Experience has proven this *not* to be so."

Which is more likely to be intelligible to Japanese, native English or non-native English? There have been two opposing impressionistic observations made on this question in Japan. One says non-native English is more likely to be intelligible to Japanese (Arikawa 1980). The other says native English is more likely to be intelligible (Komura 1980: cf. Tanaka 1978).

With teaching experience in Japan and the USA, Yukihiro Nakayama was recently a Professional Associate at the Culture Learning Institute, East-West Center, Honolulu, and did research on a "functional concept of English as an international language" with Larry E. Smith. He is presently an Instructor at St. Andrew's University (Momoyama Gakuin Daigaku). He is also a freelance writer, and has authored/co-authored several tape-texts, one of which is *Birdree English Conversation Series: Introductory Course.*

In order to compare the degree of "intelligibility" between "educated" native and "educated" non-native varieties of English (cf. Ando 1978, 1979; Smith and Rafiqzad 1979; Nelson 1980; Smith 1980b; Gimson 1978: Shimaoka 1981), Suenobu, Smith and Nakayama (1980) made an empirical case study, involving an "educated" American speaker and an "educated" Korean speaker as test readers; 240 students from two universities in Kobe served as subjects. The grammar and lexicon were held constant while the phonological "features" were allowed to vary. The same listening comprehension test was "read" by the two

speakers with their different phonological features to test listening comprehension. In this study, it was found that (1) the educated American English is as intelligible to the freshmen as the educated Korean English is, and (2) the educated American English is slightly but significantly more intelligible to the juniors than the educated Korean English is (cf. Smith and Rafiqzad 1979).

One possible interpretation of the first finding is that the freshmen, who have not been exposed to much spoken English of any kind, find the educated American English and the educated Korean English equally difficult to understand, i.e., equally intelligible (cf. Bowers 1981). A possible interpretation of the second finding is that since they have been exposed to some American English and/or British English since they entered the universities, the students have improved their listening comprehension ability to understand the educated American English, but this did not carry over very much to the educated Korean English.

Further research is planned to explore the second finding, with the hypothesis that as Japanese people improve their listening comprehension ability to understand native English, they will, in a comparative way, find non-native English *less* intelligible than native English; advanced Japanese students of English find it more difficult to understand "educated non-native Englishes" than "educated native Englishes" (cf. Smith and Bisazza, forthcoming).

Attitudes and Idealization

There are many causes for the inability to understand different spoken varieties of English. Any attempt to factor out all the causes is beyond the scope of this article. However, two will be briefly discussed. One is attitude towards the varieties of English. Krishnaswamy (1978) says that a listener will not understand anyone if he/she does not want to. Samonte (1981) points out that the listener must accept his/her part of the responsibility in solving the intelligibility problem. It should not remain entirely with the speaker. Japanese must become more tolerant to the many varieties of "educated non-native Englishes" (cf. Kashiwase 1980).

Another major cause seems to be that English has been taught to Japanese with the assumption that "the grammar, lexis and pronunciation of English are those of an idealized American or Briton from an idealized American or British culture" (Lumis 1976; Utsunomiya 1977; K. Nakamura 1980a). This type of English language education in Japan has not prepared Japanese adequately for interactions with other non-native speakers.

The Multinationalization of English

When English is used as an international language, particularly when used by non-native speakers in communicating with other non-native speakers, it is not owned by its native speakers, but it belongs to its non-native speakers. It can and should be "multinationalized" (Nakayama 1981), "de-nationalized" (Smith 1976a), or "de-Anglo-Americanized" (Kunihiro 1970).

There are two major components for multinationalization, i.e., the linguistic component and the socio-cultural component. Though these two overlap in some ways, one may operationally categorize multinationalization into two components.

The Linguistic Component

First, English should be multinationalized in the linguistic component. This does not mean, however, that teachers should be "lowering" (Prator 1978) the standard of English for their classes. It is not a situation where "anything goes" (Oda 1961, 1970ab; Tsurumi 1968, 1981; Suzuki 1971, 1975, 1979; Higa 1976b, 1978ab; Lummis 1976, 1980; Kuratani 1980; Wakabayashi 1980; cf. Nakayama 1979, 1980a). The target should be that which is grammatically acceptable, semantically "identifiable," and phonologically intelligible as "educated non-native Englishes." Some things are phonologically intelligible but not semantically identifiable; some things are both phonologically intelligible and semantically identifiable but not gramatically acceptable

as "educated non-native Englishes." All three factors are important (cf. Smith 1980a).

The Socio-Cultural Component

Second, English should be multinationalized in the socio-cultural component. When speakers, native or non-native, of more than one nation or culture interact, more than one set of socio-cultural assumptions will be in operation. Each culture has its own ways of speaking/expressing emotions, rules for turn-taking/choice of topic, patterns of discourse/argument, functions of speech, e.g., gratitude and disagreement, etc. A knowledge of these ways, rules, patterns and functions has to be developed for effective international communication (cf. Smith, et al. 1981).

Another major factor in the socio-cultural component is cultural background. English language education in Japan has stressed that language and culture are inseparably bound together, but by stressing the reciprocity between the two, it has been implied that English is, therefore, inseparably bound to American or British culture. This is ridiculous, because when Japanese use English in communicating, for example, with Koreans or Indians, Japanese culture, Korean culture and Indian culture will be in operation. Language and culture may be inseparably bound together, but English can not be bound only to the cultures of native English speaking nations. English should also be bound to those of non-native English speaking nations when used by peoples of non-native English speaking nations.

Approaches to International English for Japanese People

The final section of this article will discuss some possible approaches to "International English for Japanese People."

What would activities in English classes be like? The teaching material would be based on societies and cultures of both native and non-native English speaking nations. K. Nakamura's report (1980b) on his university classes gives an example of such activities. He has regarded English as an international lingua franca, and has taken up the varieties of English as an important theme of his classes, paying attention to the varieties of grammar, lexis and pronunciation of English. Nakamura's philosophy of teaching is basically: (1) do not regard any specific native English as a model, (2) do not limit the reading material to any specific nation, and (3) make the students aware of the "external functions of the language." (K. Nakamura 1981, personal communication) He uses material dealing with intercultural and political topics. Nakamura is thinking of using (1) material which deals with nations in the Third World and neighboring nations, and (2) material written by non-native speakers which stimulates the students' intellectual curiosity.

Also impressive are the tape-texts by Takagi and Cates (1980). They have recorded conversations between several Japanese and four different native speakers, i. e., an American, a Briton, a Canadian and an Australian. They have also included sixteen different non-native speakers from Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East, i.e., a Korean, a Chinese, a Czechoslovak, a Chilean, an Italian, a Frenchman, a Dutchman, a Ghanian, a Brazilian, an Iranian, an Indonesian, an Indian, a German, a Swede, a Singaporean, and an Egyptian. These people talk about the politics, economies, societies and cultures of their own nations (cf. Richards 1976; Krishnaswamy and Aziz 1978). More teaching material of this sort must be produced.

Sukwiwat and Fieg (forthcoming) are attempting to pinpoint the various problems that Thai speakers have in communicating in English with non-Thais. They are now working on a handbook that will suggest ways to improve such communication. The novel feature of this handbook is that it is an attempt to categorize systematically problems of syntax, semantics, non-verbal behavior, and cultural differences—and relate these four areas to specific functions such as expressing gratitude, compliments, disagreement, etc. They have reordered and synthesized the functional categories proposed by Wilkins (1976) and have selected twenty categories which seem to embrace the most frequent and important areas of human interaction (cf. Bickley 1981).

This handbook will certainly prepare Japanese to better interact with Thais when communicating in English.

Guidelines for Speaking and Listening

Although Smith (1981a) agrees that "there is no single method which people can acquire and no set of rules which they can simply put into practice" (Gumperz and Roberts 1978) to ensure that they communicate effectively across cultures, he offers some guidelines which can help. He divides them into two categories: one for the speaker and the other for the listener (cf. Mauser 1977; Van Zandt 1970). Below are six guidelines out of the thirteen offered by Smith:

When speaking, remember:

1. Speak clearly and distinctly but don't slow your speech down excessively unless you speak uncommonly fast.
2. Avoid slang, jargon, and figures of speech. Be as concrete as possible. Be specific and illustrate your points with examples when feasible.
3. Avoid long monologues and limit the number of ideas in each of your sentences.
4. Beware of trying to be humorous unless you know your listener and his culture well. You can be easily misunderstood and thought to be insulting.
5. Tactfully ask questions occasionally to determine whether or not your listener has comprehended your key points. Nodding the head does not necessarily mean that the listener has understood or agrees with you. A Japanese listener may nod his head to mean, "I am listening to you and trying to understand, please continue."

When listening, remember:

1. Don't be surprised, even in the best of circumstances, when misunderstandings occur. Be ready to admit you have misunderstood (or have been misunderstood) and seek immediately to clarify the situation.

English language educators need to work with students to sensitize them to expect misunderstanding and assist them in accommodating to it (Candlin 1981).

Conclusion

English has been functioning as an international language for some time, and the incidence of non-native to non-native interactions required by the diversity of international interactions has been increasing. In spite of this, English language education in Japan has only been teaching the national languages and cultures of the USA and the UK, which has not been sufficient. It will now also be necessary for our students to listen to and read "educated Englishes" spoken and written by peoples of non-native English speaking nations, and learn about their societies and cultures. In addition, English teachers in Japan will have to teach and prepare students to express socio-cultural things about Japan in their "educated non-native English" (Nakayama 1981; cf. Ando 1979:3; Ogawa 1981: 113).

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Author's note:

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Author and Subject Index *TESL Reporter* Volumes 13-15 (1979-82)

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AUTHOR INDEX

SUBJECT HEADINGS

AUDIO/VISUAL AIDS

BILINGUALISM

CONVENTIONS, SEMINARS, AND WORKSHOPS

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

LANGUAGE LABORATORY

LISTENING

PROFESSION

PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

REVIEWS

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

SOCIOLINGUISTICS

SPEAKING

Correcting without frustrating. Mauricio Pilleux. 15,3:52-56.

Lathophobic aphasia. Donald E. Bott. 13,3:50-52.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Alphabetomania: from "A" to "Z"—or is it "zed"? Jason B. Alter. 13,2:33.

Assisted reading for second language learners. Emilio Cortez. 14,3:53-54.

Beyond communicative competence: teaching culture in ESL. Harry Krasnick. 15, 3:45-49.

Correcting without frustrating. Mauricio Pilleux. 15,3:52-56.

Generating your own cross-cultural materials. Trish Delamere. 15,2:33-35.

Grammatical explanations in the EFL class. Mauricio Pilleux. 14,3:47-49.

Lathophobic aphasia. Donald E. Bott. 13,3:50-52.

Lets—learn English through stamps. Jason B. Alter. 13,4:74-75.

Micro-ESL: vocabulary, grammar and communication. Joan E. Friedenberg and Curtis H. Bradley. 15,1:12-17.

Reading and "Fa'a Samoa": teaching in a bilingual culture. Jeannette Veatch. 13,1:17-23.

Reading stories aloud. Emilio Cortez. 15,2:28-29.

Teaching editing skills through student monitoring. Jeffrey Butler. 13,3:58-60.

Teaching ESL through films. Charlotte Lofgreen and Cheryl Brown. 14,4:71-76.

Teaching social rules of behavior. Patricia Sullivan. 14,4:69-70,82.

Uses of picture stories in ESL instruction. Ronald F. Holt. 15,1:3-9.

Using the overhead projector to bridge the communication gap. John Pentick. 15,3:43-44.

Using visual aids in the grammar class. Dennis Cone. 15,2:23-27.

What do I do on Monday? An ESL institute provides the answer. Carolyn Kessler and Curtis W. Hayes. 13,3:56-57.

Young second-language learners: let's keep their attention. Emilio G. Cortez. 13,4:69-70.

TESTING

EFL exams in Britain looked at comparatively. Lois Arthur. 13,3:47-49,53-55.

VOCABULARY

Word whirl. Vicki Lee. 13,2:34,42.

WRITING

Can naive judges recognize improvement in ESL compositions? Janet L. Kayfetz and Laurie J. Blass. 14,4:77-82.

A controlling frame for paragraph development. Walter P. Allen. 14,3:55-56.

The purpose of the passive. Virginia French Allen. 14,4:47-68,76.

Teaching editing skills through student monitoring. Jeffrey Butler. 13,3:58-60.

Announcements

The Japan Association of Language Teachers will sponsor its ninth annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Administration, September 23-25, 1983. Proposals for papers, demonstrations, and workshops are encouraged. Contact: Richard Harris, Nijigaoka Mansion 1207, 1-1-1 Nijigaoka, Meito-ku, Nagoya 465, Japan.

The Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea announces a new special publication entitled *Language Policy in Oceania.* This book presents accounts of language policy in most of the countries and territories of Oceania from the start of European colonial influence up to the present. Edited by Andrew Taylor and John Lynch, it is expected to appear early in 1983. Contact: Andrew Taylor, Unitech, P.O. Box 793, Lae, Papua New Guinea.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Language Centre (RELC) will hold its eighteenth regional seminar April 18-22, 1983 in Singapore. The theme of the seminar is "New Trends in Language Syllabus Design." Contact: Chairman Seminar Planning Committee, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, RELC Building, 30 Orange Grove Road, Singapore 1025, Republic of Singapore.

The Culture Learning Institute of the East-West Center announces a seminar for educators on the varieties and functions of English when it is used by people of different nations as a means of communication. The seminar is called "English as an International Language: Issues and Implications" and is scheduled to be held at the East-West Center June 1 - July 15, 1983. The topics will include: varieties of English as an international language and the differences between EIL and other functions of English; teacher training and material development for EIL; the use of native and non-native literature for EIL; cultural factors influencing communication patterns; and needed research. The staff of the seminar will consist of an international team of instructors with particular interest and experience in cross-cultural interaction. The seminar is designed for participants who are native or non-native speakers of English who train classroom teachers, write materials, or develop language policy. The cost is U.S. $1,000 which covers registration, housing, health insurance, and seminar materials. Each participant is responsible for roundtrip airfare to Honolulu. The application deadline is January 15, 1983. For more information and an application form, write to: The Director, Culture Learning Institute, East-West Center, 1777 East-West Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96848.

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