



"We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious" (W. Disney)

# ANY QUESTIONS? 2

**March 16, 2015**

José Cruz: Uh because it it uh, it goes back to that topic that I was reading in in Voice Of America. It's about how kids think about what's in front of them. And they- **at least at least** one part of that article was arguing they don't really yet have the capacity to make the most broadly rational decisions yet.

Danny Minn: Yeah I agree with that. He he.

José: And especially Japanese kids the way they've been raised in their educational culture, their educational environment, and that comes out of the test-taking um mentality. Once I realized that, then I realized what was missing. When you tell your students, as I did for the longest time, you know, "Has anyone got any questions about English. Anytime you can talk to me before or after class." I was doing exactly what you were doing. Never or very very rarely got any kind of real reception to it. I realized it's not because they don't want to, they do, but they just don't see anything in it for them. And they've been raised with that idea, that if there's nothing that's going to help me get a better score by asking this question, they don't see the intrinsic value of actually asking a question. So I made it, you know- all of it point-based. (Hm) You ask me a question, and I'm going to give you points for it. (Right) And then even the keeners who really did want to ask a question saw that, "OK I can do this without any kind of you know standing out or without any like looking like a keener." And they started asking a lot more questions in my classes.

Danny: Sure I I- I've tried things like that. Yeah. Heh heh.

José: Oh. And what? It didn't- Overall it didn't work you found, or?

Danny: No uh, well you have the same people, uh raising their hands all the time.

José: Mm and then what I tell the class is, "See that? He just got an 'A', (He then) and you're not because for whatever reason you don't want to raise your hand.

Danny: No, well that or they don't care about getting an "A". They are-

José: That is- this is true actually.

Danny: They're satisfied with getting a "C" grade.

José: That's right. That's right. That's the other huge difference um is the uh the natural tendency for us as Westerners- as North Americans to see an "A" as being of much greater value than a "C" and unfortunately in Japan that's not really the case, is it.

Danny: No. Because it doesn't matter. Your **GPA** does not matter.

José: Your GPA- the the concept of GPA is not really, it's not really used in this university or in most universities in Japan, is it?

Danny: Ah well we have the GPA system. But no- no one...

José: That's news to me!

Danny: Right! No one looks at it.

José: Right not not hiring universities. Nothing.

Danny: Right so if you're getting a job in the US, uh and you have no job experience, right? So the the companies will look at your GPA as something to uh base their cri- you know, judgement of you. So, "Oh! You got a 4.0! Wow, (Nice) You must be very studious, smart, (Mm) a hard worker," and (Time management skills) Yes. (Blah blah) I don't think the companies look at the GPA here.

José: I think if you were to go to most HR departments in Japan, they **don't know** what a GPA is.

Danny: Heh heh. Well, I don't know.

José: You know. You graduated from this prestigious public university. Good enough for us. The fact that you've mostly kept your head down on the desk and even when your eyes were open you were playing cards with your friends in the back doesn't matter. (Heh heh) Uh apparently, um one of my friends, he said uh way back in the early '80s that was perfectly normal. (Hm) Kids were playing cards in the back. (Yeah) And the reason why a lot of teachers are still used to like holding a microphone to give their lectures to

like thirty kids, is because some classes can get so unruly you need that microphone so that then at least the kids who were trying to listen could hear over the other voice conversations in the back.

Danny: Yeah I've heard those stories and thankfully I've never had uh a class like that. Heh.

José: Yeah. And and you know, yes it's not impossible in America, but that's the stuff that like you know bad comedy movies about university life are made of, like you know, "Animal House". (Ha ha) You don't expect it to actually be the norm, and in Japan it was the norm apparently.

Danny: Yeah.

[word count: 791]

Pointers:

**at least at least:** an example of repeating as opposed to using filler words (0:13)

**GPA:** Grade Point Average (2:21)

**don't know:** note how José drops the sound of the "T" in **don't** (3:13)

Discussion:

Do you think you got a good education?

Should people be judged on their university results?

How much more important is an "A" than a "C" to you?

VOA ARTICLE: "UNDERSTANDING THE MISUNDERSTOOD TEENAGE BRAIN"  
<http://bit.ly/2yyOUbS>

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