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Japanese Aesthetics and English Education in the Global Age

Kazuko Kurihara (Tokyo Board of Education)

Abstract

With the advent of the global information age, Japanese youth today are required to have authentic abilities to communicate with different peoples from different countries in the English language, rather than simply a good knowledge of practical and functional American English. Affective learners of English are created through aesthetic reading, especially English poetry, when moved or inspired by the authenticity of the content implying the profound but subtle meaning of human emotion in life. In this sense, the way of affective and aesthetic English learning follows the traditional Japanese appreciation of ephemeral beauty. As an authentic incentive to intellectual activities, this sensitivity leads to a deep, accurate, and rapid understanding of different peoples in the global world. American English education in Japan therefore should be aimed at a broader goal of English as a shared language for Internet-based communication, fostering a greater sense of traditional Japanese beauty for a more affective English-learner in the global community.

Résumé

Avec l'avènement de l'ère de la mondialisation, la jeunesse japonaise d'aujourd'hui est tenue d'avoir des capacités authentiques afin de communiquer avec différents peuples de différents pays dans la langue anglaise, plutôt que de simplement avoir une bonne connaissance, pratique et fonctionnelle, de l'anglais américain. Des apprenants affectifs de l'anglais sont stimulés par la lecture esthétique, particulièrement la poésie anglaise, lorsqu'ils sont émus ou inspirés par l'authenticité du contexte impliquant la signification profonde mais subtile de l'émotion humaine dans la vie. Dans ce sens, la manière affective et esthétique de l'apprentissage anglaise suit l'appréciation japonaise traditionnelle de la beauté éphémère. Comme incitation authentique aux activités intellectuelles, cette sensibilité mène à une compréhension profonde, précise et rapide de différents peuples dans le monde globalisé. L'éducation de l'anglais américain devrait alors viser à un objectif plus général de l'anglais non seulement comme langue partagée pour la communication par Internet, mais aussi favorisant un plus grand sens de beauté traditionnelle japonaise afin de produire des apprenants affectifs dans la communauté globale.

NEW CULTURES AND NEW LITERACIES OVER THE SEA

Japan consists of four main islands isolated from the Eurasian continent, each of which has its own beautiful nature and four distinctive seasons. These geographical and climatic characters have nurtured and fostered Japan's own language and natural disposition. The Japanese language is presumed to belong to the Altaic language

family, which also includes Turkish and Korean, due to the structural similarity to those languages. Other studies have also shown similarities to the Austro-Asian language of southern China, the Austronesian of Indonesia and Micronesia, and the Toaripi of New Guinea (Foreign Press Center, 1999).

The Japanese language, however, greatly differed from newly arrived ones brought together with other cultures from overseas, and the Japanese were compelled to learn and study those new languages with enormous efforts in order to understand the unknown cultures. That was true whenever Japan was confronted with new cultures or technologies coming from beyond the sea because the new literacies required for the acquisition of them were completely different from its own but were essential to understanding and utilizing the new cultures for Japan's sake.

Since then, every endeavor was made for that purpose. In fact, in the year 538, when Buddhism was first introduced from the kingdom of Paecche through China to Japan, the Japanese were eager to learn Chinese characters to understand Buddhist doctrines and the innovative skills and arts brought together with them, until the invention of Japan's own character system in the ninth century.

The second epoch in learning and studying new literacies came with the time of Westernization in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was in 1853 that Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S.A. so extremely frightened the Japanese with modern Western arms at the port of Uraga located at the mouth of *Edo* (the old name of Tokyo) Bay. The Japanese "remembered also the results of the Anglo-Chinese war ('Opium War') of 1839-1842. They consulted the Dutch at Nagasaki, who strongly advised them to agree to the repeated foreign requests" (Murphey, 2001, p.263). In 1872 the modern Japanese educational system started just four years after the Meiji government had rigidly re-established imperial rule out of the former Tokugawa feudal system.

Consequently, the Japanese national goal at that time was to catch up with advanced Western technologies through foreign studies in order to make Japan strong enough to stand against Western powers. Therefore, its educational expectation was necessarily to acquire language skills for reading advanced foreign books.

To the Japanese, it seemed natural that learning and studying foreign languages meant reading and perhaps writing them, never speaking with the people coming from outside Japan. I should mention that even in today's Tokyo, we Japanese do not see many foreign people, except in some parts of its downtown area.

The third era accompanied Japan's defeat in World War II, and a dramatic change to English education was brought through the overwhelming victory of the U.S.A. over Japan. The occupation forces, mainly American, set out to reform the prewar Japanese educational system as their top priority in the democratization of Japanese society. In 1947, the Fundamental Law of Education was enacted under U.S. guidance. As a result, the Japanese education system started to adopt the U.S. 6-3-3-4 system, and more importantly, American English education took the place of British English, which had been taught as an authorized subject in the prewar Japanese secondary schools.

PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Japanese Education Reform as the Top Priority of U.S. Occupation

In 1945, U.S. Occupation forces set out to democratize Japan politically, economically, and socially. Among other areas, “education reform was an issue of top priority in overhauling the national systems that had engendered the nation’s prewar militarism and ultra-nationalism” (the Foreign Press Center, 2001, p. 1). In the process of this reformation, American English education in Japan occupied for the first time an official and compulsory position in Japanese curriculum, for three years each in Junior and Senior High. The thorough education of the Japanese youth population was achieved at such a surprising rate that over 90% of junior high graduates enrolled into high school in 1974 (*Kawai Juku*, 2002, p.413). Consequently, Americanization has been also penetrating deeper and more completely into young Japanese minds.

In fact, American General Douglas MacArthur, in Japan from August 1945 to April 1952, had more absolute power over Japanese minds than did Emperor Showa, who had been said to be a “direct descendant of the Sun Goddess” (Lafeber, 1997, p. 218), through Japanese prewar education. Nevertheless, many Japanese sincerely welcomed his occupational administration and American aid for the devastated Japan, severely suffering from the lack of essential supplies such as food, fuel, transportation, and infrastructure.

In addition, the U.S.-led administration in Japan received firm nationwide support through its implementation in 1946 of land reforms, which had been untouchable since Tokugawa feudalism was legitimated at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Japanese social mobility after World War II through that land reform rapidly promoted social equality between the former landowners and their tenants. For the first time in Japanese history, “status resulted from achievement rather than birth” (Murphey, 1992, p. 362).

At the same time, that novel ethical code in the life of Japanese commoners created by postwar American policy began to give Japanese education a new prominence as a means of upward mobility. Equal opportunity given to everybody enabled any ambitious young Japanese to move upward in life by going on to a prestigious university through “a standardized single career path known as the 6-3-3-4 system” (Foreign Press Center, 2001, p. 1).

However, the annual results clearly show that an overwhelming majority of those accepted through the national recruitment examinations for central government bureaucrats have been the students in Tokyo or Kyoto Universities. Therefore, Japanese parents have been obsessed with the idea that their children should go on to one of these top universities for their future success. Thus, the severe competition among university entry examinees known as “examination hell” (Reischauer & Jansen, 2001, p. 194) appeared in Japanese society. The following describes the unusual situation of Japanese students, as “40 % of elementary school children, 50% of junior high school students, and 60% of high school students attend some kind after-school lessons and /or cram schools” (Itasaka, 1996, p. 199). The 1998 survey by the Ministry of Education also shows that 34% of junior and high school students had “almost never seen the sun rise, while 26% of them had never had a good look

at the starry night-sky” (Mizoe, 2002, p. 189). These educational circumstances also remind me of the unusual severity of so-called examination hell in Japan.

In that way, for better or worse, the postwar Americanization brought every Japanese youth an equal number of opportunities to rise in social status through a better education. Originally, the Japanese valued harmony with others and therefore respected the virtue of modesty as the supreme good, hating the unnecessary competition among people as something disturbing their peaceful relations with others. Subsequently, the novel principle of free competition with others brought by Americanization greatly changed Japanese minds and their dispositions in everyday life. As a result, Japanese students began to make the greatest effort to obtain good marks in school for their own future rather than for society.

American English as a Means of Upward Mobility in Japanese Society

At the same time as these changes, the U.S. government was actually providing Japanese school children with affluent American food, especially milk, which I remember well was the only protein the Japanese children at that time could consume through the daily meal service in school. Many Japanese parents in those days could not pay even the small amount of the fees for that kind of school lunch given to their children. In a such way, I knew what poverty meant as a mere school child. To Japanese eyes, the affluent richness of the U.S.A. shone too brightly.

With regard to the education of Japanese youth, the U.S. government strongly encouraged gifted young students to study in America, and it showered scholarships on them to support poor Japanese youth. As a result, Japanese leaders today in various fields are those who studied in America when they were young. Their American experiences strengthened the U.S. influence in Japan. The list of Fulbright scholarship-awarded students was once in the widely-read Asahi Newspaper, and the readers like me realized the fact that the current American-Japanese relations had been rigidly built on the past U.S. exchange programs for bright young Japanese.

After the overwhelming American victory over Japan, English meant everything to the lives of postwar Japanese generations because studying English gave them the greatest assurance of social upward mobility, rendering it possible to pass the most difficult entrance examinations for prestigious universities. Thus, greater ability in English became a powerful means of obtaining better future employment after graduating from prestigious universities. In the process, American-English learning started to exert a great influence on Japanese people up to the present time.

In effect, American English, for a successful entry into a Japanese university, became a crucial subject for the exams. The fact is that a student with advanced English skills can gain an advantage over others, because the score in English in an entry exam is often counted as double the value of the other subjects.

Consequently, students at every level study American English harder than any other subject under the current Japanese school environment. Even short-term English language programs abroad have become very popular among Japanese youth, and they often visit English-speaking countries during the long holidays. In short, the enactment of the educational reform by the SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) headquarters was in a sense able to completely change Japanese minds, with their prewar hatred morphing into a very close brotherhood with the U.S.A.

Issues of Time and Vocabulary in American English Education

Historically, Japan has heavily relied on the language education for reading and writing skills since the Meiji period (1868-1912), during which the utmost priority was placed on the acquisition of Western knowledge in order to catch up with the powerfully advancing West. While this past reliance is likely one reason, there seem to be other reasons for the more limited English language abilities today.

The time devoted to the study of foreign languages in Japanese junior-high school is extremely limited: three classes a week in a school year. "In contrast to 117 hours in Japan, the time allotted for language study in Holland is 303 hours, 173 hours in France and 151 hours in Germany" (Mizoe, 2002, p. 190). Given that these languages are quite like English and belong to the same Indo-European family, the significant linguistic difference of Japanese from English should be more seriously taken into account. These aspects of English education in Japan suggest that Japan's future in international society might be heavily hampered.

Another serious problem with the Ministry of Education's guidelines is that they initially limited the English vocabulary learned during the three years of junior high school to about 1,000 words and reduced it even more in 2003 to 900 (*The Seventh Revised Course of Study for Junior High School*, 1999); thus, students are less able to read, write, speak or listen to English. Furthermore, English textbooks first go through a selection process by the Japanese Ministry of Education, which always results in the use of standardized texts and therefore makes English learning more boring to students.

Focus on More Practical English in the 2003 Seventh Revised Course of Study

The Fourth Revised Course of Study invoked in 1973 reflected the special educational circumstances that Japanese universal high school education had reached almost to the final stage as the 1974 data revealed that high school enrolment was over 90 percent (Kawai Juku, 2002, p. 413). That Fourth Revised Course of Study announced for the first time English conversation as a requirement of the curriculum (p. 413).

At that time, English language education in Japan dramatically transferred emphasis from erudite to practical. In addition to the new communicative nature of the English classes, the more practical the English reading materials authorized by the Ministry of Education became, the less interesting their contents were for both teachers and students. In reality, the reading and writing competencies of Japanese youth were far better than their speaking and listening abilities among the four areas in English language learning. That was because the other academic subjects in Japanese secondary schools were far beyond such a mundane everyday life level.

As a result, able students could memorize the whole of their English text for the purpose of obtaining the best scores in the subject without being moved by the content. Given that both analytical and critical thinking are crucial to learning and studying, building such a shallow base without their apprehension or appreciation of language learning is extremely inappropriate for the improvement of their intellectual abilities, in comparison to the learning methods taken in other subjects such as math and science that promoted the mental development of these smart Japanese students to the highest levels in the world.

Furthermore, Japanese teachers continued to teach English conversation by explaining it in the Japanese language during classes, while Japan had a dearth of native instructors of American English. Thus, this kind of language education failed, in a true sense, in implementing its supreme role as a messenger of both American democracy and its merit system, despite many powerful efforts already made by the SCAP headquarters from 1945 to 1952.

It is high time that the pragmatism in American English language education should be reconsidered in the current educational context. What will be the true significance of the practical American English education to Japanese youths' future? Is the emphasis on daily-conversation learning truly most helpful for Japanese youth who are fated to enter the future in a globalized world? When I contemplate their future facing the irresistible power of globalization through the Internet, I cannot agree to such an easy, temporary transaction of the current English education with the shift in emphasis on communicative, functional English skills, which need few authentic, affective readings of English in the midst of the global world.

Needless to say, Japanese people today cannot deny the fact that communicative skills such as speaking and listening in functional English have become more critical to their living in the age of information and globalization. However, so long as they desire to place more emphasis on the international perspective than on pragmatism, as seen in the current American English education in Japan, the quality of its education should be seriously reconsidered for a profound understanding of the global community. This is because in the advent of globalization, more advanced skills for English understanding have been required for mutual understanding between different peoples from different countries without misinterpretation, regardless of the diversities in nationalities, political and economic systems, education, or beliefs.

Furthermore, instant global communication through the worldwide network at any place and any time demands that people possess not only the ability to use electronic technologies effectively but also the ability to read English information quickly, analytically, and critically (Leu, D.J., Kinzer, C.K., Coiro, J.L., Cammack, D.W., 2004). This ability to deal with English information properly needs a truer, deeper understanding of the language rather than simply a good knowledge of its functional skills. In any case, an authentic communication between two parties should be aimed at fostering and nurturing mutual understanding with great respect through a keen cultural awareness of the other party.

Japan's Loss in the Cultural Context

Japanese people today can enjoy almost all American movies immediately after the premieres in the U.S.A., many sorts of American magazines and books are published in Japan shortly after their American releases, and any kind of American foods and clothing are easily obtained even in remote Japanese towns. As a result, Japanese youth are absorbed by trendy U.S. pop cultures, instead of learning and touching Japanese traditions, unless they are taught them in school or become aware of Japanese traditional values for themselves. Sometimes they scorn traditional Japanese ethics such as modesty, politeness, or hard work as being too old fashioned. Such an example is often seen in high school excursions to Kyoto, the former Japanese capital with a 1,200-year history of refined cultural traditions, because Japanese young

students still try to find American fast food outlets in this old city.

Subsequently, traveling to the U.S.A has also become fashionable for today's Japanese youth, as they are eager to go there at least once while they are young, instead of visiting neighboring Asian countries. Therefore, studying abroad is often synonymous with studying in the U.S.A. I had to refer specifically to Canada when I left Japan to be a Canadian graduate student.

In accordance with these America-oriented attitudes seen daily in Japanese society, many Japanese, including adults, have begun to entertain the illusion that the ability to talk with Americans or to understand American TV programs guarantees a person international status.. This is mainly because CNN TV programs in Japan are the principal means of learning about international affairs, and therefore understanding things American is often regarded as equal to understanding the world. When compared with CBC or BBC TV programs, I found that CNN treated the same issue in its own peculiar way and different meanings could sometimes be suggested to its audience. This informational environment surrounding today's Japan implies a possibility that the Japanese might look at the world through American eyes, not through their own eyes.

Perhaps Japan has become an American twin living by chance in Asia, and then Tokyo and New York should be expected to have many things in common, although each of them expects to be the world's primary global city with greater diversity in values. Most seriously, the Japanese may have lost their identity as Asian citizens, and even a sense of Japanese citizenship.

AESTHETIC PEDAGOGY IN AMERICAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Japanese Aesthetic Sensitivity as an Authentic Incentive to Intellectual Activities

Since 1947, much time has been devoted to English learning in Japanese schools through three-year compulsory education in junior high and three-year voluntary education in high school, whose attendance rate reached 97 % in 2000 (Foreign Press Center, 2001, p.80). Despite the greatest efforts to teach English, it is not likely that the Japanese ability to read and write English has improved since the enactment of the new education law after the end of World War II. Although English has become a more important subject for university entrance examinations all over Japan as well as established its position as a common language for globalization and the IT (information technology) revolution, the learning results are not as high as the Japanese expected.

Despite the fact that the benefits of Americanization are innumerable for postwar Japanese society, I argue that the thorough Americanization of Japanese life has nevertheless deprived Japanese youth of traditional Japanese cultural appreciation as fostered carefully over a long course of time. In this context, insensitivity to delicate, subtle, fragile, ephemeral, and transient meanings of both the outer and innermost worlds eventually leads to less mental curiosity in Japanese life. Yet, through such an affinity for Japanese traditional beauty, one can be enlightened in an instant to the truth penetrating the past, present, and even future. This keen sense shapes an authentic incentive to any intellectual activities of Japanese youth in their lives.

My concerns as an English teacher having studied in Canada gravitate toward how the loss of this Japanese aesthetic sense in students' outer and innermost worlds affects their attitudes in learning and studying English, and also toward how the educational remedy for this loss should be restored in the current Japanese educational environment. As an English teacher in Tokyo, I am seeking an authentic way of teaching American English under the current Japanese system that will be strengthened, rather than weakened, by this historical sensitivity to beauty.

The Japanese curator of East Asian Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and founder of Tokyo National Art School, Okakura, argues in his poetic English prose work, *The book of tea*, which I regard as an eminent English masterpiece written by a Japanese,

in our self-centered century, what inspiration do we offer them (struggling artists and weary souls)? The past may well look with pity at the poverty of our civilization; the future will laugh at the barrenness of our art. We are destroying art in destroying the beauty in life. (p. 92)

He then reinforced his thought:

How can our intelligence be augmented without a sense perceptive of 'Mind speaks to mind. We listen to the unspoken, we gaze upon the unseen.' (1993, pp. 80-81)

A Sense of Transcendence in Japanese Art Appreciation

In Japan, the Buddhist "doctrine that everything that is born must die and that nothing remains unchanged" (An Illustrated Encyclopedia, 1996, p. 31) nurtured and fostered an aesthetic value particular to Japan that "exquisite beauty was considered fragile and fleeting" (p. 15). Specifically, the delicacy, subtlety, fragility, and ephemerality of beauty have transcendent functions by virtue of their changeable qualities. "Changeability itself is frequently the object of admiration. For it means movement, progress, eternal youthfulness" (Suzuki, 1959, p. 380).

The Japanese mind that has been familiar with those aesthetic values of beauty is presumed to be quite sensitive to the transcendental beauty in current daily life through Zen influence by virtue of *cha-no-yu*, the art of tea (which is still one of the most popular Japanese beverages).

In Western terms, according to the Swiss psychiatrist Jung (1875-1961), a sense of transcendence is defined as "the transition from one attitude to the other organically possible, without loss of unconscious" (cited in Coward, 1985, p. 158).

Ephemeral Beauty and a Sense of Transcendence in American Poetry

American literature, especially the poetry, requires a sensuous process in appreciating its ephemeral beauty through a sense of transcendence, as equally seen in the appreciation of Japanese traditional art. For example, the poems written by Emily Dickinson (1830-86), an American poet of the nineteenth century, show her keen sensitivity of ephemeral beauty by virtue of her transcendental attitude toward Mother Nature. This is plainly stated in Bennett's remark on her poems that "the relationship between transcendent meaning and sense experience is their subject, not nature per se" (1990, p. 203). Her poem, for example, *The Day came slow-----* (Johnson, 1960,

p. 143) represents this transcendent sentiment of ephemeral beauty seized in nature.

The image of ephemeral beauty in nature is likewise crystallized in the theme of the poem entitled *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, Lathem, 1969, pp. 222-3 by Robert Frost (1874-1963), an American poet in the twentieth century. Frost's sense of fragility in a flower as representative of ephemeral beauty by its one-hour life span is remarkably similar to Suzuki's attitude in the appreciation of a morning glory fading before noon in Japanese summer, as in the following:

The one peculiarity is that it blooms fresh every morning, and there are never any of yesterday's flowers. However splendid the flowers are this morning, they fade even before noon of the same day. This evanescent glory has appealed very much to the Japanese imagination. (Suzuki, 1959, p. 381)

In the same manner as these American poets did, the Japanese have been full of admiration for the fragile or ephemeral beauty of a morning glory as well as the momentarily falling of cherry blossoms at their best in the midst of Japanese spring.

Japanese Aesthetic Sensitivity for English Education

We Japanese could say that rapid Americanization after the defeat in World War II has deprived Japanese youth of delicate Japanese sentiments in their daily life as fostered and nurtured through our traditional Zen culture up to the present day, for example, by means of the *cha-no-yu* (tea ceremony). Instead of responding to delicate differences in the outer and inner worlds, young Japanese today are willing to accept anything American, forgetting to criticize or analyze its authenticity in life. Especially when it comes to trendy American cultures such as American fast food, ever-changing fashions, or popular music, movies and magazines, young Japanese become absorbed in following them in order not to get behind with the current comings and goings. Thus, their identities have been taken over by American corporations who sell 'cool'; only those who have inner strength and other cultural knowledge are enabled to define themselves and to resist the power of the youth market (Côté, 2006).

Unfortunately, trendy American cultures rarely nurture or augment an aesthetic sense needed for profound appreciation of arts or significance in life. This is mainly due to over-industrialized or dehumanized qualities related to the American pursuit of high efficiency in life, as easily found in the free enterprise system and equal competition principle. These values seem more dehumanized elements of life than those that the Japanese have cultivated through Japanese traditions and cultures with a close relation to Mother Nature since ancient times.

Watts, an American thinker, describes Japanese culture as "man as an integral part of his environment" (1957, p.175) or "no conflict between the natural element of chance and the human element of control" (p.174). In his view, the new lifestyle of Japanese youth today brought by rapid Americanization after World War II should be called abnormal in a Japanese traditional sense of intimacy with nature.

It can be said that a prime cause of both the current chaotic situation of American English education and the regrettable loss of Japanese traditional sensitivity should be attributed to the powerful Americanization of Japanese daily life since the defeat in World War II. In that process, we have also forgotten to develop an authentic,

aesthetic English understanding as cultivated through the reading of American literature like Poe's works as well as British literature like the works of Shakespeare (in modern translations), Blake, Wilde, and Wordsworth, all of which were once utilized for Japanese school texts, and are full of delicate nuanced meanings in life.

In particular, the dramatic Americanization of 1945 to 1952 had a great influence on Japanese minds and cultural life. Because the postwar Americanization was strongly supported by the vast majority of the Japanese through the historically novel land reform, it had a high potential to soon spread all over Japan, accompanied by American-style living and attractive social mobility through compulsory American-English education under the same education system as that of the U.S.A.

However, in order to improve the current problematic American English language education under the peculiar Japanese educational circumstances, I would like to make two proposals. My first proposal is a shift toward more reading-oriented English education as fostering more sensitivity to nuanced meanings in life than is currently practiced in Japanese schools. A further suggestion related to the first is that English oral classes should be synthesized within a balanced reading curriculum as part of the interdisciplinary studies of the English language arts. A special frame for an English conversation class is less likely to be needed in this case. It is after students have been deeply moved by virtue of authentic, aesthetic reading and then affective learning and studying that they will surely have a desire to express their own impressions and opinions in public, without being urged by teachers. This voluntary attitude toward English learning and studying creates authentic expressions within their minds, without their making English phrases for English's sake. At this level, a team teaching situation with a native-speaking assistant language teacher would be of more effective help for improving, developing, and nurturing a true oral competency in students through her natural English. I should add that it is regrettable that there are no JET teachers in Tokyo because they are hired to work in remote areas in Japan.

My second proposal is that this education should be also aimed at fostering a sensitivity to life, or Japanese historical sensitivity to ephemeral beauty, in English learning and studying. How can our intelligence be augmented without a sense perceptive of ephemeral beauty in the outer and innermost worlds? An affective learner going through aesthetic, authentic reading studded with subtle beauty will accomplish a true appreciation of the profound meanings of life enclosed in the reading materials like the Canadian classic *Anne of Green Gables* that has been appreciated and loved most in the world by the Japanese for a long time.

As I indicated before, American poetry also crystallizes the appreciation of nature by borrowing from nature to express a sentiment in life, a keen sensitivity to the beauty of Mother Nature. The images of ephemeral beauty caught in the theme of Frost are described as "Whatever man sees in nature is a reflection of his mind and heart." (Doyle, 1962, p. 219). What is more, his sensitivity to the fragile beauty is remarkably similar to Suzuki's view on Japanese Zen culture, whose influence still remains in our Japanese daily life.

There is no doubt that English competencies will be dramatically improved by the application of this sense to daily learning and studying through authentic, aesthetic reading, including poetry. Suzuki recognizes this sense of transience more concretely, as seen in the Zen way of looking at the world:

What constitutes the frame of mind or “psychosphere” thus generated here is the realization of the spirit of poverty devoid of all forms of dichotomy: subject and object, good and evil, right and wrong, honor and disgrace, body and soul, gain and loss, and so on. (1959, p. 295)

This Japanese mind is also perceived in “Man as an integral part of his environment” (Watts, 1957, p. 175), which might be the same idea as Heidegger’s philosophy of “being-as-a-whole” (as cited in Pattison, 2000, p. 103) and the issue of how Being exists in the world. Thus, Watts criticizes the Western way of behaving for the idea of an “artist conquering his medium as our explorers and scientists also speak of conquering mountains or conquering space” (Watts, 1957, p. 175).

The idea of conquering, however, seems to me to be the same as the American principle of free competition in life, as introduced into Japanese society soon after World War II. This idea was not likely to be suitable to Japanese society where their ethical value *wa* (harmony) barred “all the arrogant, individualistic, self-assertive spirit, so characteristic of modern Japanese young men” (Watts, 1957, p. 305). I should add that the Japanese spirit of *wa* is rapidly disappearing from our current Americanized society in a similar way that a sense of appreciation of profound beauty is.

In the advent of the global information age, Japanese youth today are required to have authentic abilities to communicate with not only American people but also different peoples by using English as a “*lingua franca*,” that is, as a shared language of communication (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000, p. 146). For a deeper, more accurate, and more rapid understanding of different peoples with different nationalities, creeds, and political or economic systems, American English education in Japan should be aimed at the broader goals of future generations living in the global world.

The first effort should move beyond the standardized practical, functional American English learning and studying as aimed at the promotion of smooth communicative activities. Instead, as sensitivity to authentic beauty is an essential incentive to any intellectual activity in life, high ambition by virtue of authentic, aesthetic English reading studded with ephemeral beauty would result in the creation of a good mind, flexible intelligence, and exquisite sensitivity in the outer and innermost worlds of Japanese students. After their recognition of authentic, aesthetic beauty, students could easily capture profound and subtle meanings of life even in the midst of globalization, which otherwise gives them too much worthless information to be dealt with.

If there is anything Japan can be proud of in the global world, I believe it should be a keen sense of transient beauty, such as the delicacy, subtlety, fragility, momentarity, and ephemerality of beauty. We Japanese have prized these changeable qualities most in our life because “changeability itself is frequently the object of admiration. For it means movement, progress, eternal youthfulness” (Suzuki, 1959, p. 380).

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