

The Discourse of *Kyōyō* and English Education in Japan

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Introduction

Among the many controversies that have raged about English education in Japan (Kawasumi, 1978), one of the most fundamental has been about whether the teaching of English in schools should be for practical purposes or for fostering the students' intellect, character, and general knowledge. Advocates of practical applications, called *jitsuyō* in Japanese, emphasize English's usefulness in education, work, and personal life, and they point to the language's growing role as an international lingua franca. Supporters of the second approach, while not denying the practical uses of the language for some, say that, in Japanese educational contexts, most students would be better served if their instruction in English is positioned as part of a broad, liberal education, or *kyōyō*.

This controversy is not new. As described below and in Gally (2018), this conflict between *jitsuyō* and *kyōyō* can be seen in disputes about the need for English education that flared in the 1920s and 1970s. Although this debate has not been completely resolved, there has been a widespread perception, probably justified, that *kyōyō* has largely given way to *jitsuyō* as the primary motivation for teaching and learning English in Japan. This increased emphasis on practical applications of the language can be seen in several areas, including the reduced focus on literature in university language classes and the adoption of "communication" as a central concept in government-directed English-language curricula. In areas other than English language

education, however, *kyōyō* has maintained a strong presence, as can be seen by the incorporation of ethics education (*dōtoku kyōiku*) into standard school curricula and the many books and magazines published in recent years that promise to foster the *kyōyō* of adults. And despite the disbanding of liberal arts departments at many public universities in the early 1990s, several continue to have major divisions with *kyōyō* in their names, including Saitama University and the University of Tokyo. Interestingly, Akita International University and the School of International Liberal Studies at Waseda University, both established in 2004, include *kyōyō* in their Japanese names while teaching all of their classes in English.

Nevertheless, while the term *kyōyō* has been frequently used in different educational contexts, the continuity in the different meanings of *kyōyō* has rarely been discussed. The disputes about English education, even the one between *jitsuyō* and *kyōyō*, have tended to be discussed fragmentally, as if the meaning of *kyōyō* is unique to a specific time and context. In this paper, drawing on Foucault's concept of *discours*, which we here call "discourse," we attempt to explore how the meanings of *kyōyō* have been used to justify statements about who needs to learn English in Japan from a broader perspective. Our focus is on how the evolving meanings of *kyōyō* share a certain consistency and similarity. In the process, we reveal that the discourse of *kyōyō* functions in part as resistance to the profit- and efficiency-driven perspectives of policies at the national level.¹

The Evolving Meanings of *Kyōyō*

Despite its importance for understanding education and learning in Japan, the word *kyōyō* (教養) does not seem to have been used in the premodern era. The first citations in the largest historical dictionary of Japanese date to the 1870s, when the word was used to mean "education" or "teaching" ("*Kyōyō*," 2001). The word first appeared in the title of a book in 1901 with *Kokumin no Kyōyō* (The *Kyōyō* of the Nation) (Katō, 1901). In this book, which has sections on Confucianism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and Christianity, the word *kyōyō* means the knowledge necessary for the formation of one's personality and character. Several books published soon thereafter, including Akiyama et al. (1902), Shi-

moda (1902), and Ōhara (1907), treated *kyōyō* as cultural knowledge that mothers should know for harmonizing Japanese cultural traditions with Western science. In contrast with the influential polymath Yukichi Fukuzawa (1834–1901), who emphasized the shift from *kangaku* (漢学, classical Chinese learning) and *kokugaku* (国学, classical Japanese learning) to *yōgaku* (洋学, Western learning), that is, from ethical studies to scientific or rational thought, these authors stressed that *kyōyō* should be considered a part of character building and be based on both Japanese and European cultural knowledge.

According to Kiyotada Tsutsui's history of the development of *kyōyō* in modern Japan, this aspect of *kyōyō*, which dates to the late Meiji period (1900–1912), emerged with the flowering of *shūyō shugi* (修養主義), which meant the development of one's personality through knowledge and practice of both Western literature and traditional Japanese literature and religion. Especially after Japan emerged from its victories in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, having apparently achieved the prosperity and military strength that it had been seeking since the mid-19th century, young Japanese started to turn their interests from social problems to personal self-improvement, including *kyōyō* (Tsutsui, 2009, pp. 5–6).

With the beginning of the Taishō period (1912–1926) appeared another current: *kyōyō shugi*. This “*kyōyōism*” also insisted on personal development. But while the earlier *shūyō shugi* had been available to the mass of people, *kyōyō shugi*, according to Tsutsui, was restricted to a small, mostly urban educated elite. Tsutsui found the origin of Taishō-era *kyōyō shugi* in the Daiichi Kōtōgakkō, or First High School, in Tokyo, whose principal from 1906 to 1913 was Inazō Nitobe (1862–1933). There, Nitobe organized extracurricular classes and special lectures in order to promote the students' personal development. The school came to be seen as a training ground for *shūyō*, and its graduates included authors who later emphasized the importance of *kyōyō*, including Tetsurō Watsuji, Jirō Abe, and Yoshi-shige Abe (Tsutsui, 2009, pp. 21–41). Thus *shūyō shugi* and *kyōyō shugi* were both used to mean “intellectual and personal self-cultivation,” a notion similar to the concept of *Bildung* in German. This didactic role for *kyōyō* has been pointed out much more

recently by Tadashi Karube, who wrote that “statements that insist on the importance of *kyōyō* are often regarded as being like dull sermons” (Karube, 2007, p. 10),² because the term is often associated with the question of how one should live one’s life.

As the influence of Marxism spread in Japanese society toward the end of the Taishō period, the influence of *kyōyō shugi* declined for a while (Tsutsui, 2009, pp. 108–109). In the first two decades of the Shōwa period (1926–1989), however, with the rise of militarism, the suppression of Marxism, and the outbreak of the Pacific War, *kyōyō shugi* emerged again, but this time with yet another focus. *Kyōyō* now took on a more systematic character, as shown by the many books published that sought to explicate how one should read (Tsutsui, 2009, p. 115). Thus *kyōyō shugi*, which originally emphasized the personal development of the individual, evolved into an organized system of knowledge. This tendency continued after the Second World War and into the 1960s, when higher education became more widely available (Tsutsui, 2009, pp. 122–123).

Kyōyō in the New Universities: The Case of the University of Tokyo

After the Second World War, the term *kyōyō* took on new, institutionalized meanings when the Japanese educational system was reorganized. In 1947, following the creation of three-year high schools for both boys and girls, a new system of higher education was also introduced (Monbushō Daijin Kanbō, 1981). The old high schools (*kōtō gakkō*) and colleges (*senmon gakkō*) and some teacher-training schools for men (*kōtō shihan gakkō* and *shihan gakkō*) were combined to form new four-year universities. In those universities, professional or specialized education (*senmon kyōiku*) was contrasted with general education (*ippan kyōiku*). That concept was partially modelled on the general education that was a feature of higher education in the United States. This led to the establishment of *kyōyō katei* (*kyōyō* programs), which had been implemented in the high schools under the old system. These *kyōyō katei* included courses in foreign languages, especially English, French, and German, which were largely taught using the grammar-translation method. The main motivation for including foreign-language education in these programs seems

to have been that by reading texts in those languages students would acquire Western *kyōyō*.

In 1949, the University of Tokyo established its Kyōyō Gakubu, now called the College of Arts and Sciences (University of Tokyo, n.d.). Around the same time, Kyōyōbu (*kyōyō* departments) were introduced at the national universities in Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, and Kyushu as well. Other universities followed later, reaching a total of 33 officially established *kyōyō* departments or colleges by 1968. Many universities began providing *ippan kyōyō kyōiku*, or “general *kyōyō* education,” through departments that often included *kyōyō* in their titles.

At the University of Tokyo, the descriptions of *kyōyō* given by three different deans of the Kyōyō Gakubu through the 1970s reveal several common elements. According to Tadao Yanaihara, the first Kyōyō Gakubu dean, *kyōyō* means “the basis of specialized knowledge” and is “not divided into parts” (Yanaihara, 1951), that is, it is a unified, integrated field of knowledge. This approach to *kyōyō* as something general and basic, a kind of pre-specialized studies, was shared by other academics in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, Isoji Asō, who also served as dean of the Kyōyō Gakubu at the University of Tokyo and, later, as president of Gakushuin University, defined it as “the attainment of multifaceted knowledge” (Asō, 1952). The mathematician Teiji Takagi called it “the broad basis for all specialized knowledge, a deep foundation for the formation of the human being” (Takagi, 1953). The Sanskrit scholar Naoshirō Tsuji wrote that *kyōyō* provides “balanced shared knowledge, enabling an attitude of understanding and acceptance between different fields” (Tsuji, 1955). And the physicist Shigekichirō Nogami called it “a clear conceptualization of how a particular specialized field fits within scholarship as a whole” (Nogami, 1968).

On the other hand, some scholars also attached importance to the practical side of *kyōyō*. Isoji Asō wrote that it “fosters the ability to make comprehensive judgments and understanding from many viewpoints” (Asō, 1952). Atsushi Kawaguchi, a scholar of French literature, called it “the ability not only to remember what one has learned but to put it to use” (Kawaguchi, 1959). Natsuo Shumuta told undergraduates at the University of Tokyo that “lectures in the College of Arts and Sciences are intended not only to provide you with knowledge but also to

give you the ability to think and make judgments” (Shumata, 1960). Addressing a similar audience a decade and a half later, the philosopher Shōzō Ōmori told students that the education they would receive during their two years in the *Kyōyō Gakubu* would “provide more than a collection of knowledge; it will also provide a way of viewing things, whether nature, literature, or human beings” (Ōmori, 1976).

In addition to its generality and practicality, the “character development” aspect of *kyōyō* continued to be emphasized as well. Teiji Takagi’s assertion that *kyōyō* is “a deep foundation for the formation of the human being” was noted above. Similar claims were made by Shigeru Aihara (1963) and Sachio Takagi (1972), and Shōzō Ōmori (1976) wrote that *kyōyō* allows one to “understand what you are and what you are trying to do.”

Discourses about the word *kyōyō* thus evolved to include several interlocking strands. To the prewar emphasis on character development has been added, especially in university contexts, a view that a broad education is valuable both for specialized studies and for practical uses later in life. These multiple meanings of *kyōyō* were carried over, more or less intact, when the term *riberaru ātsu* (“liberal arts”) came to be used as well in university contexts.

But as the meanings of *kyōyō* were evolving, its implementation at many Japanese universities encountered difficulties. Students came to see the courses offered under the *kyōyō* label only as credits that they needed in order to graduate. In the 1980s, pejorative slang was coined for *kyōyō* classes: *panyō*, an abbreviation of *ippan kyōyō kamoku* (general *kyōyō* courses). Another problem was the distinction between *kyōyō* classes and *senmon* (specialized or professional) classes and a tendency to belittle the teachers of the former. Economic pressures continued to drive calls for increased emphasis on practical knowledge, making *kyōyō* a relic from the past for many people (Nakabachi, 2003, pp. 97–98). Finally, in 1991, a large-scale deregulation and reform of Japanese higher education was implemented with the aim of making the system more flexible and enabling each university to act according to its own educational philosophy. In the next few years, most national universities eliminated their *kyōyō* colleges or departments (Yoshida, 2003, p. 75). Instead of focusing on *kyōyō* courses first, students now entered their majors immedi-

ately upon matriculation and took general education courses, including foreign languages, throughout their four years of study. The only national universities that managed to keep the *kyōyō* concept alive as a distinct program for all students were Tokyo Medical and Dental University and the University of Tokyo. This shifting institutional role for *kyōyō* education created a particular challenge for English education.

Kyōyō and English Education

Discourse of *Kyōyō* as Resistance

As shown by the evolving meaning of *kyōyō*—including personal development as well as general knowledge as preparation for specialized studies or for practical applications—the concept has been fluid, being shaped over time by changing social relations and circumstances. The various meanings of *kyōyō*, however, do share certain elements, including the integration of a spirit of modernity and knowledge gained through education and an emphasis on individual self-actualization, which might not have existed in Japan's previous feudal society. Furthermore, the meanings of *kyōyō* often encompass the social systems and techniques for realizing that integration. In other words, the concept of *kyōyō* is an example of an aggregation of spirit, knowledge, and social systems that regulates people's thinking and behavior, which Foucault (1969/1972) calls *discours* and which we refer to in this paper as "discourse."

The discourse of *kyōyō* has been used to justify and explain the purposes English education in Japan. One of the most famous early proponents of *kyōyō* as the purpose of English education was Yoshisaburō Okakura (1868–1936). In his book *Eigo Kyōiku* ("English Education," 1911), Okakura argued that English, as it was taught at the time in the middle schools in which many boys from middle-class families studied, conveyed certain important values, including broadening perspectives, overcoming stereotypes, eliminating prejudice against foreign countries, and removing exaggerated misconceptions about the home country. He also claimed that the study of the linguistic structure of English provided valuable exercise in analysis, generalization, classification, and application as well as in understanding and

presenting ideas in a language other than one's native tongue (p. 39). Although Okakura referred to these educational values as *shūiyō* and the introduction of knowledge and insights from overseas as *jitsuyō*, in his usage these two concepts fit squarely with the later discourse of *kyōyō* for English education.

Tetsuo Kawasumi (1978) argued that the underlying factor behind Okakura's claims for the educational values of English was the fading appeal in Japan of the academic field of *Eigaku*, which encompassed both the study of the English language and the acquisition of knowledge and values from the West through the language (p. 44). While influential in the 19th century, the importance of *Eigaku* gradually declined as Japanese society developed and as the influence of the father of *Eigaku*, Yukichi Fukuzawa, declined after his death in 1901. Kawasumi also noted that, from around that time, English came to be regarded merely as an examination subject that students must study in order to move on to higher education (p. 45). The evolving social situation at the time of Okakura's book suggests that his emphasis on the *kyōyō* value of English education was a defensive move to try to protect the tradition of *Eigaku*, which was then facing difficulties.

The discourse of *kyōyō* was used in defense not only of *Eigaku* but of English education itself when it faced severe criticisms regarding the necessity of teaching English in public schools. One strong attack on English education in public schools was made by Tsukuru Fujimura (1875–1953), a scholar of Japanese literature. He pointed out the low cost-effectiveness of English education in Japan: huge amounts of time and effort were devoted to teaching and learning it, even though there was little need for English in business in Japan (Fujimura, 1927, p. 252). He advocated that English as a subject be eliminated from the middle-school curriculum (p. 262).

Yoshisaburō Okakura, Riichirō Hoashi, and other English educators responded to Fujimura's attack by describing the educational value of English education in terms of *kyōyō*. Hoashi (1927) stated that Fujimura's point about the lack of need for English in business did not prove that learning English was unnecessary; instead, he emphasized that English education contributed to developing a poetic imagination, moral beliefs, religious faith, and an understanding of the universality of human

nature (p. 278). Okakura and Hoashi used the discourse of *kyōyō*, which was based on the concept of *shūyō*, as a strategy to shift the focus of the arguments away from monetary values, refuting Fujimura's statements as myopic (Kawasumi, 1978, p. 239)

With the creation of the new education system after WWII, in which male-dominant middle schools, which had been preparatory schools for higher education, became open to females as well, English education entered a new phase. English became a de-facto compulsory subject in what were now called junior high schools. For the widespread implementation of English education, the government's Courses of Study, which set the objectives and methods for education in public schools, *kyōyō* was included both as personal development and as linguistic skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Terasawa (2014) refers to this new interpretation of the purposes of English education in public junior high schools as "the downward extension of *kyōyō*" (pp. 215–218). In other words, the application of *kyōyō* as personal development, which had been intended only for wealthy classes, was expanded to the entire citizenry. Terasawa argues that some scholars identified the purposes of English education in public junior high schools as being not only the teaching of language skills in preparation for reading texts written in sophisticated English but also the teaching of the history, cultures, and customs of Western countries like England using plain English with simple expressions. Thus, as the disputes about English education continued, the social groups being taught English through the national education system changed and *kyōyō* was systematically incorporated into the government's postwar educational policy.

Although the concept of *kyōyō* was brought into the educational system, the discourse of *kyōyō* as resistance to criticism did not completely disappear. The views of *kyōyō* as personal development through reading English remained alive, reappearing when English education in Japan was required to change. One reflection of this discourse of *kyōyō* could be seen in the stance of Shōichi Watanabe in his dispute with Wataru Hiraizumi in the 1970s. A member of the upper house of the National Diet, Hiraizumi submitted a proposal for the reform of foreign language education to the Policy Affairs Research Council of the Liberal Democratic Party (Hiraizumi, 1974). In his proposal, Hiraizumi

questioned why children must learn English as part of their compulsory education in spite of the limited benefits and outcomes for most of them. His proposal focused not only on the ineffectiveness of English education in terms of time and workload and the low demand for English in business, but also on the students' low motivation, the harmful effects of including English on university entrance exams, and the monopoly of English in foreign language education.

Shōichi Watanabe, a scholar of English linguistics, refuted Hiraizumi's proposal by stressing the benefits and outcomes of English education. He raised the example of the long tradition of reading-based learning in Japan, emphasizing the importance of reading to develop students' potential for language learning and to increase their intellectual ability (Watanabe, 1975). This refutation by Watanabe resembles the defensive statements of Okakura (1911) that also emphasized reading skills. The Hiraizumi vs. Watanabe dispute illustrated one aspect of resistance to government power, since Hiraizumi was a member of the ruling party at the time. The point is that critics of English education in Japan denied not the value of learning English but rather the focus on its economical value and the effectiveness of teaching English to everyone in public schools. In this case, it was the advocates of universal English education in public schools who used the discourse of *kyōyō* as a strategy to claim that English education had value beyond monetary considerations.

This aspect of the discourse of *kyōyō* as resistance to economic values becomes clearer after the dispute between Hiraizumi and Watanabe in the 1980s and later. Business interests began to advocate that the Japanese government promote English education that focused on developing speaking and listening skills, the so-called communication skills. Since then, the near-sacred status of English education in public school curricula has no longer been seriously threatened, and the Japanese government has placed even greater emphasis on English education. Since 2013, in fact, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has implemented a "communication-based" approach in which English classes in public high schools are supposed to be taught using only English, rather than the more typical method, in which the teachers use Japanese to explain grammar and vocabulary and to manage their

classrooms. In 2011, the start of compulsory English classes in public schools was moved from the first year of junior high school to the upper grades of elementary school. At around the same time, educational institutions began to put more emphasis on English proficiency tests, such as TOEIC or TOEFL, created by outside organizations, with universities increasingly using applicants' scores on such tests as a supplement to or in place of exams created and administered by the universities themselves. Such changes at the university level have a great impact on secondary and even elementary education.

Where power exists, however, resistance emerges. Some scholars and teachers in the field of English education have opposed the recent trend toward "communication-based" English education driven by MEXT on the grounds that it does not actually focus on the use of English in real life (Torikai, 2011) or that the educational system and support for teachers are inadequate for that purpose (Erikawa, 2013). Abe (2017) points out that the recent communication-based policy is not new but just a paraphrase of conventional four-skills-based policies and that it downplays reading and writing on the one hand and overemphasizes speaking skills on the other without convincing support (p. 49). Abe further claims that cozy relationships between the government and private English proficiency-test organizations may be a major reason behind MEXT's drive to impose the four-skills-based English proficiency tests as a replacement for the current common university entrance exam (p. 49).

In criticisms against the current English education policies, the discourse of *kyōyō* appears once again. Yoshifumi Saito (2017), a scholar of English literature and English education, also severely criticizes communication-based English education, claiming that it can contribute only to the mass-production of low-grade learners as well as the development of Japanese society as a cultural colony (p. 183). Instead, he advocates *sodoku* (reading aloud), *kutō* (reading in phrases), and *yakudoku* (reading through direct translation) as traditional pedagogical methods that are compatible with Japan's linguistic culture (p. 183). Saito's argument is unusual in promoting English education as *kyōyō* while sharing similarities with the opposition to the proliferation of English in terms of the ideology of the Japanese language (*Nihongo ron*), which Kubota (1998) describes as resistance

to the hegemony of the West and English.

Haruo Erikawa (2013), a scholar of the history of English education in Japan, argues that the significance of learning foreign languages in public schools is not only for acquiring skills but also for personal development and for mutual understanding and coordination with people outside Japan in order to create a peaceful and democratic world and to understand the diversity of languages and cultures, leading to expanded ways of thinking and sensibility (p. 11). Erikawa's argument suggests that the discourse of *kyōyō* can also function as resistance to the current "communication-based" English education, which is considered to reflect a worldwide trend toward globalization and competition-based human relations, or neoliberalism (Erikawa, 2013).

Several common threads thus run through the discourse of *kyōyō* regarding English education: a focus on the intellectual and spiritual benefits to individuals rather than monetary profit or economic development; an emphasis on international understanding rather than the protection of the nation-state; and opposition to approaches and goals for English education that are advocated by business and government interests. The unifying feature of these threads is that, in each case, the arguments in favor of a *kyōyō*-grounded focus for English education are used to resist perceived threats and prevailing trends.

Discussion

This paper has attempted, by drawing on Foucault's concept of *discours*, or "discourse," to find continuity in the meanings of the Japanese word *kyōyō* as it has been used in debates over English education in Japan. As discussed above, different scholars in the context of English education in Japan have used the discourse of *kyōyō*, which originated in a concept of personal development, or *shūyō*, in order to resist various attacks, from advocacy for the elimination of English as a required subject in public schools in the 1920s and 1970s to the current business- and government-led focus on "communication-based" English education.

While still incomplete, this overview suggests that the discourse of *kyōyō*, which has sometimes been considered to be a

conservative, even reactionary position, functions as resistance to national-level perspectives that focus on income and efficiency. The most common criticisms focus on two issues, the first being why English needs to be taught to all students in all public schools, and the second being who needs to learn English, as the percentage of working adults actually using English is only around 10% even now (Terasawa, 2015, p. 162). The first issue focuses on the national resources devoted to English education, while the second issue involves the time and effort devoted to learning English.

While the scholars promoting the concept of *kyōyō* in the context of English education in public junior high schools were unable to completely resist the attacks, they succeeded somewhat in shifting the focus of the argument from economic values and cost-effectiveness at the national level to the development of the individual. The focus of the disputes can therefore be interpreted as being whether public education is for the benefit of society as a whole or for that of individuals. Ideally, perhaps, public education should benefit both, but the history of the disputes on English education in public schools proves the difficulty of realizing that ideal. In particular, the recent “communication-based” educational policies strongly reflect demands from business interests for a more “globalized” workforce. In that context, discussions of English education for *kyōyō* purposes, that is, for personal development and self-realization, may become more important. Rather than just focusing on building learners’ linguistic skills in English so that, as adults, they can meet the demands of business, industry, and government, educators, policymakers, and others need to discuss how English and other languages can be taught as *kyōyō* to foster individuals who can maintain a sense of independence and dignity against the seemingly relentless drive toward economic growth and efficiency.

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Note on Coauthorship

The idea to write this paper was first proposed by Gakutani, who, together with the other authors, gathered information on and developed insights into the evolution of the *kyōyō* concept and its role in English education in Japan. The final text includes passages originally written by all five authors. The central thesis was developed by Yamamura, who is therefore listed as the first author. The writing and completion of the paper were coordinated, and greatly delayed, by Gally.

Notes

1. Some might call the opposed concept *jitsuyō*, but we refrain from using the term in our discussion, as the meanings of *jitsuyō* have also been evolving over time.
2. Here and below, all translations from Japanese sources are by this paper's authors.

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