

# 日本語と英語のコミュニケーション模様：タテ糸 vs. ヨコ糸

宮下 和子

## Japanese and English Communication Patterns: Vertical Vehicle vs. Horizontal Vehicle

Kazuko MIYASHITA

### 要 約

「話せない英語教育」という批判を聞くたびに、英語教師の一人として責任を感じる。ましてや、「6年以上もの英語教育を受けながら、基本的なコミュニケーションの力さえ身に付いていない」という指摘には胸の痛む思いがする。と同時に複雑な気持ちにもかられ、「では、話せる国語教育は充分なのですか」と意地悪く問い返したくなる。つまり、日本人は日本語ではじゅうぶんにコミュニケーションできるのかという疑問にとらわれるのである。

アメリカ社会を経験すると、日本の「タテ社会」が見えてくる。この垂直性を、一般的に日本人は、「躰」「らしく」「世間」などの文化的体験を通して無意識のうちに〈自分化〉しており、そのタテ軸の上下移動には、日本語のタテ糸機能が大いに活躍する。日本人の国語学習過程で見逃せない敬語や謙譲語の用法も表すように、日本語コミュニケーションでは一定のルールに従って話すことが暗黙の了解となる。しかし、このように形式的な言語表現、つまり各々の立場に合った「制服」選びに専念し、自分の言葉、つまり自由な「ふだん着」を楽しむ経験も無いまま、はたして日本人は自分や相手を理解し、さらには自己発見できるのであろうか。

一方、「移民の国」アメリカを、英語は「ヨコ糸」として水平につなぎ、「ヨコ社会」ならしめている。つまり、英語は多様な価値観の渦巻く「人種のるつば」を、誰にでも共通な記号としてつなぎ、肩書や年齢、性差などに関係なく自己主張できる〈言葉の国〉ならしめているといえよう。

このように日本語と英語は、言語上の違いに加えて、そのコミュニケーション模様も対照的である。漢字や敬語表現という日本語文化の特殊性と閉鎖性を身につけるだけでは、日本語を解放的なコミュニケーションの場での〈しなやかな〉言葉として駆使していくことはとうてい望めない。そこで、国語教育を日本語教育として客観的に捉え直し、タテ糸機能とともにヨコ糸機能をもつ日本語の威力を日本人自身に体験させることが重要であり、可能でもあろう。英語コミュニケーションへの移行には、日本語のヨコ糸機能をも経験する「スピーチ・コミュニケーション」や「ディベート」などの開かれた相互コミュニケーションの訓練を、国語教育の早期より取り入れることが必要であり、現実的な〈国際化行動〉の一つのしても不可欠といえよう。

**KEY WORDS:** 異文化コミュニケーション, タテ社会, ヨコ社会, 日本語, 英語

## 1. Introduction

English education in Japan has long met unfavorable criticism as years of struggle only result in acquiring communicative competence. As an English teacher myself, I should be responsible for these circumstances. At the same time, however, I cannot but feel the circumstances are rather complicated. In other words, I feel like challenging that criticism by raising a slightly different question: "How about the education in Japanese language, then? Has it been successful in nurturing communicative competence in Japanese among Japanese people?" My question is whether or not the Japanese are able to fully express themselves and exchange ideas with others in Japanese.

J. V. Neustupny in *Communication with Foreigners* claims: "Japanese people are poor in English because of their poorness in communication as a whole." He continues: "Japanese seem to have more difficulty than other peoples in communicating with foreigners because of their lack of English communicative competence, which is not necessarily related to their knowledge of English grammar."<sup>1)</sup> According to Roichi Okabe in *How to Read Foreign Cultures*: "To communicate with others can be defined as mutual understanding through active involvement by expressing one's current self."<sup>2)</sup>

To ordinary Japanese, one's current self means the self as a Japanese who has been built by Japanese culture. Let me look at myself. As a Japanese, have I ever appreciated the Japanese language as an effective means of self-expression and exchanging views with others? Or have I been trained through the education in my National Language to pronounce each word precisely? Are those who criticize English education in Japan and point out the learner's lack of communicative competence proud of being good speakers of Japanese? If they are not, have they ever made an effort to use Japanese effectively?

In fact, Japanese language education generally has overlooked the practice of "Japanese conversation." According to Takao Suzuki in *Language and Culture*, "the fact that Japanese are unskilled in their language ability is not due to their linguistic inability but due to their unwillingness to verbalize, which prevents them from expressing themselves with their own words and phrases."<sup>3)</sup> In order to improve the Japanese lack of skillfulness in verbal communication, therefore, practical improvement should be made in Japanese language education as well.

This paper will shed light on communication between America and Japan in terms of the communicative patterns of the two languages, English and Japanese, and suggest ways for Japanese to reach the goal or its possibility of coping with people from different cultures. In other words, it will illustrate the characteristics of both the Japanese and American language cultures, reveal how they mutually interact and influence each other, and provide the Japanese people with a prescription for how to achieve more internationally-minded performance beyond cultural borders. Also, this "challenge" to the Japanese is to help people from other cultures to sense, understand and appreciate part of the Japanese cultural climate.

## 2. Verbal Communication

### 1) Culture and Communication

In *The Silent Language*, Edward T. Hall says:

Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own.<sup>4)</sup>

A man grows up in surroundings of all kinds of communications deeply rooted in his or her culture, and these communication patterns are provided with the culture in which we live. Hall continues: "The fact that communication can be effected in so brief a time on the cultural level is often responsible for the confusion which so often occurs in cross-cultural exchanges."<sup>5)</sup> Even among Japanese people a communication gap could occur between those from different age groups or places. The gap would become more profound and complicated among people from a diversity of cultures.

However, we must remember the most important factor constituting the human communication. In 1841, a fisherman, Manjiro Nakahama (1827-1898), who could not speak a single English word, was rescued from drifting by Captain William Whitfield of the whaler *John Howland*. Their dramatic encounter, followed by their strong friendship, would be a good example of that factor. Their deep and lasting human bond seems to illustrate that, as Shunsuke Tsurumi briefly points out, "both of them perceived the other in the same manner as a human being."<sup>6)</sup> In other words, without a humane "vector," true communication cannot be achieved.

### 2) Native Culture and Foreign Culture

I have long felt a kind of gap between the term, "culture" and its Japanese translation, *bunka* (文化). As clarified by its verb, "cultivate," the former appears to be casual wear for everyday life as opposed to the latter which is associated with uniform or formal wear for special occasions, such as Culture Day in Japan. Among many cross-cultural exchanges, communication between America and Japan, in particular, seems to be a conflict between these two cultures: casual wear and uniforms. Cultural shock caused by the contact of these extremely contrastive cultures is the inner communication of an individual dressed in his or her own culture. The pattern of cultural shock differs according to the culture he or she confronts.

Akimoto Kume in *Cross-Cultural Communication* claims: "Within such individual communication, only those who seriously confront the situation through dialogue with themselves can reach an essential phase of another culture."<sup>7)</sup> Also Roichi Okabe adds: "Communication may be defined as a process in which two parties improve their images of each other, enhancing them from false to real images."<sup>8)</sup> In order to fulfill this purpose, Japanese people need to look into Japan and its culture more deeply, introduce them abroad, interpret them, and eventually share them with other peoples.

### 3) 'Unsociable' Japanese People

Americans are fond of parties and gatherings. Participation in such parties would surprise Japanese participants because of the absence of a master of ceremonies. Parties in Japan, on the other hand, are generally formal and often boring, but are fondly recalled by those who are tired of lively American parties, where each participant is required to act as a hero or heroine.

In *Japanese Language and Heart*, Hideo Yamashita, who has taught Japanese to foreign residents in Japan, points out the Japanese lack of sociability and attributes it to the structure of Japanese language :

Our mother tongue carries in its structure a variety of devices to pay respect to the person we talk to. As long as we apply proper daily usages in our conversation, we do not have to endeavor to practice any social manners: the words themselves play their roles, which will enable our human relationships to go smoothly. Consequently, we tend to fail to practice sociability when we are surrounded by people from different languages.<sup>9)</sup>

In *Englishness and Japaneseness*, Yoji Tanabe says that politeness produces quiet Japanese, imprisoned in a kind of fetters and restrained linguistically as well as culturally. He further mentions that Japanese can challenge that restraints only by realizing their fetters, understanding other's criteria, and then adjusting to the restriction.<sup>10)</sup>

## 3. Japanese Communication Patterns

### 1) Japanese Culture

"Politeness" may be most frequently referred to by Americans who try to characterize Japanese people. The Japanese phrase, *shitsuke-no yoi hito* (a polite person) is one of the highest compliments heard among Japanese. Compared with its English translation "discipline," however, the Chinese character (*kanji*) for *shitsuke* 躄 consists of two elements 身 (body) and 美 (beauty), and is apparently associated with the concept of beauty. Nevertheless, the beauty it embodies seems to depend on another's eye for the beauty rather than on a Japanese own eyes. In other words, Japanese discipline or politeness may well be interpreted as a formal performance by those who try to meet the behavior expected by others. This may be described as "formal behavioral patterns."

In Japan, nobody can avoid hearing the Japanese suffix *-rashiku* (-like), such as "man-like," "woman-like," "student-like," and so on. These phrases seem to influence all Japanese behavior, including clothes, verbal manners, hobbies, and belongings. In other words, Japanese seem to change their verbal clothes into a proper "uniform" according to their status or *-rashiku*. Thus, they gradually come to fit the Japanese "uniform culture," which seems unlikely to lead them to awaken themselves in society.

Such typical Japanese social life, (called *seken in Japanese*) the core of which is too

unsubstantial and ambiguous to grasp, generally expects its participants to assume obedient attitudes with no questioning<sup>11)</sup>. Consequently *seken* would be far from a place for educating and encouraging participants to develop a volunteer spirit, originality, or creativity in either verbal expressions or active behavior. On the other hand, however, once the Japanese people get accustomed to *sekin*, they usually find it not just rigid but also a comfortable place to live in. As long as they follow formal behavioral patterns approved by the *seken*, they do not need to be either independent or responsible for their thoughts or behavior; they are permitted to enjoy a kind of freedom and dependence within their sphere of action. These considered, the tradition of Japanese culture can be characterized by the stability of its participants, who stick to traditional conformity which has continued from generation to generation. The Japanese language has played the most important role in stabilizing membership in Japanese society.

## 2) The 'Vertical Society' and Its Human Relationships

A variety of experiences of American life would lead one to become aware of the vertical structure of Japanese society. The vertical principle is unconsciously practiced among Japanese through the cultural experiences such as "discipline," *-rashiku*, and *seken*. They move along the vertical axis in the vertical function of the Japanese language. In *Japanese Society*, Chie Nakane claims that "behavior and language are intimately interwoven in Japan," and continues:

Generally there is no development of dialectic style in a Japanese conversation, which is guided from beginning to end by the interpersonal relations which exist between the speakers.<sup>12)</sup>

Discussing Japanese society, Nakane says:

...that a group where membership is based on the situational position of individuals within a common frame tends to become a closed world. Inside it, a sense of unity is promoted by means of the members' total emotional participation, which further strengthens group solidarity.<sup>13)</sup>

She continues:

Whereas there is in Japan no notable horizontal group consciousness within such groups as executives, clerks, manual workers and so on, there is instead a strong departmentalism constructed along the functional vertical tie. It may group together a section head and his subordinates; in a university department, for example, the professor, assistant professor, lecturer, assistant and students are linked together in a vertical relationship. The professor is close to his lecturer and assistant (who are most probably his former students) and to his students than he is to any of his fellow professors.<sup>14)</sup>

Trying to join a Japanese hierarchical group would be quite difficult not only for foreigners but also for Japanese new-comers or strangers. Even though they could succeed, they would have to spend an extreme length of time as well as consume incredible energy.

In *Conditions for Adaptability*, Chie Nakane characterizes the vertical structure in terms of the mentality of the participants and claims: "Japanese people are group-conscious and always obsessed with self-stabilization. In fact, it is always only the weak who are to be eliminated from the group."<sup>15)</sup> In such a vertical organization, where participants are linked through group-consciousness, language would not be effective among such highly homogeneous people. Nevertheless, Nakane warns that "this system contains the possibility of degrading the ability of the Japanese to fully understand and appreciate their fellow participants."<sup>16)</sup>

Takao Suzuki in *Language and Culture* deals with the Japanese concept of contract by illustrating a Japanese husband-wife relationship. He explains that the Japanese tend to feel tensions and uneasiness with their contract of being wife and husband. He continues: "They try to stabilize themselves permanently by reorganizing their husband-wife horizontal relationship into a vertical mother-father relationship which is provided by the birth of their child."<sup>17)</sup> In addition, Hidio Yamashita points out the weakness in the dignity of individual participants as follows:

In Japan, the individual tends to incline to the whole in order to harmonize with the society, as opposed to Western society, where each individual is self-assertive, eager to understand others through cooperation, and tries to maintain mutual relationships through a contract.<sup>18)</sup>

### 3) The Japanese Language

It seems that T-shirts with *kanji* printed on them are popular overseas; they may be enjoyed as pictographs more than as words. Japanese tend to visualize *kanji* in their mind while they are listening to others. Let me illustrate from my own experience. Right after returning from the United States, I found it quite difficult to listen to radio news in Japanese. Later I found myself still in the same listening habit that I had used to deal with the English language in the United States. In other words, I was trying to concentrate on catching the phonemes, not visualizing the *kanji*. In that sense, the Japanese language can be ideographic. It appeals to the sight of listeners, helping them to understand. In *Closed Language: the World of Japanese*, Takao Suzuki considers Japanese as ideographic and says: "The Japanese language possesses TV-like characteristics as a communication media."<sup>19)</sup>

For listeners to Japanese news programs who are accustomed to hearing English news, it is not only visualization that distracts them. There is a Japanese saying, *hanashi-wa saigo-made kikinasai* (Listen to me carefully to the very end). In Japanese, generally, both the most important point and the conclusion, regardless whether it is positive or negative, comes at the end of the sentence. For example, suppose you are expecting to hear whether or not a certain treaty has been concluded. You will get irritated as you are told in detail how the negotiation has proceeded and be disappointed to hear a negative conclusion at the end.

This rule of Japanese applies not only to one sentence or one paragraph, but even a novel or essay. This structure of the Japanese language is called “*furoshiki* (wrapping cloth)-style” by Noboru Ode in *The Logic of Japanese Language*.<sup>20)</sup> *An Official Theory of the Japanese* points out: “Extremely sophisticated Japanese sentences have no subjects.”<sup>21)</sup> Also Yoji Tanabe notes: “In the Japanese language the instigator is hidden.”<sup>22)</sup> In other words, within the structure of Japanese the predicate substitutes for the subject as well.

It is also worth while paying attention to the Japanese term, *Kokugo* (National Language), which is taken for granted among the Japanese. According to Norio Kaneyama in *How to Enjoy the Comparative Study of Culture*, its origin goes back to around 1889, when Tokyo University changed the name of the department of Japanese Literature from *Yamato-Bungakka* into *Kokubun-Gakka*. Kaneyama claims that “from the psychological viewpoint, the word, *Kokugo*, reflects a nationalism that considers the exceptional language not one among others in this world.”<sup>23)</sup>

On the other hand, Takao Suzuki claims that “we Japanese don’t have to be conscious of our language,” comparing Japanese to water, as opposed to English which he compares to mercury. In other words, being in a sharp contrast to fluid and formless water, the English language has a strong identity and condensation in itself just like mercury, producing self-assertiveness in accordance with environmental changes.<sup>24)</sup>

However, Japanese speech cannot be blamed for Japanese ambiguity. Hideo Yamashita claims: “There is no language that does not carry objectiveness or subjectiveness,”<sup>25)</sup> and Yuzo Ota supports him:

The phrase, “Japanese is an ambiguous language,” only implies the tendency of Japanese people who are inclined to use vague expressions in order to avoid confrontation in their human relationships. As a language, Japanese can play its role as both a vague and clear language.<sup>26)</sup>

In the process of learning Japanese, Japanese people cannot help learning complicated honorific usage and modest expressions, which exemplify forms practiced in their verbal performance. As a result, Japanese are unconsciously required to pick up the “proper” verbal expressions according to their age, social rank, sex, and so on.

Some of my American friends often amaze me with their fluent Japanese, particularly with their accurate telephone conversational manners. They beautifully practice proper usage according to whom they are talking to. Their precise avoidance of the second personal pronoun is both impressive and appealing to me. Looking back myself at the beginning of my American life, I remember how much I hesitated to use “you” to address my professors and advisor. It was obvious that I was obsessed with Japanese speech manners, where I should address my teacher as *sensei* (teacher) instead of *anata* (you).

When Japanese converse in Japanese, they address second persons as *sensei* or *nīsan* (elder brother), the superior title, but not by the inferior such as *student* or *younger brother*. Japanese feel awkward when it comes to talking with strangers, because they cannot address them properly unless they know their hierarchic position or at least who is senior. Consequently,

they use no title but do not substitute for the second personal pronoun.

Regarding Japanese personal pronouns, Takao Suzuki maintains: "Compared with the personal pronouns of European languages with their long history of thousands of years, Japanese personal pronouns are rather new inventions. The first person pronoun may well be considered 自称詞 (the self-pronoun), the second 対称詞 (the opposite-person pronoun), and the third 他称詞 (the other-person pronoun)."<sup>27)</sup> He continues: "The self-pronoun covers all the concepts when the speaker refers to himself or herself, and the opposite-person pronoun represents all the titles used for addressing his or her parties. The fixed usage is reinforced by the opposite-person relationship of superior to inferior."<sup>28)</sup> His analysis goes into the other-person pronoun by illustrating the usage practiced among family members: "In a family, where the youngest becomes the basis, all the members are addressed in accordance with their ranks based on their youngest member."<sup>29)</sup>

As concerns the first personal pronoun, Arimasa Mori states: "We Japanese have no unit of oneself or self-existence; our smallest unit is two. For Japanese, the term I is not the precise first personal pronoun, but equivalent to the idea, "me viewed from you" — the first personal pronoun depends on second personal pronoun."<sup>30)</sup> This is illustrated by a variety of titles used as the self-pronoun by one person, such as *watashi*, *boku*, *ore*, *sensei*, *papa* (father), *ojisan* (one's uncle or neighbor), and so on. Takao Suzuki discussed how to express the self-pronoun: "The Japanese tend to confirm their self-identification based on others. In order to unite themselves with others, they consider others' presence as the premise, onto which they project themselves, or they try to decide their coordinates — confirm their self-identification — in terms of their relationships with others."<sup>31)</sup> In other words, while talking, the Japanese are psychologically obsessed by how others regard them, instead of deciding what they are going to say. I suspect that such passive communication helps the Japanese to "awaken to themselves."

#### 4) The Japanese Language as a Vertical Vehicle

According to *An Official Theory of the Japanese*, "The Japanese do not realize that they are baseball maniacs with no skills to catch balls."<sup>32)</sup> Japanese panel discussions on TV sometimes disappoint and dissatisfy me. There are few interacting discussions among all the panelists, A, B, C, D, and the chairperson. Generally they seem to follow a kind of scenario: the chairperson starts questioning the first panelist A, followed by A's answer, then the second B, and so on. There seems little chance to see a developed idea emerge from heated discussions among all the participants. The situation may be compared to a bowling game, where each bowler, holding his or her own ball, is observed throwing it toward the pins, surrounded by spectators curious to see how it will go.

As has been implied, the Japanese communication pattern tends to be narrow and one-way, like a monologue. Therefore, it is characterized by rather subjective and impressionistic expressions resulting from the communication with the "inner hand," aiming to make others understand emotionally.<sup>33)</sup> It may not be surprising that "counseling," which would not become effective psychotherapy without mutual dialogue, has not rooted in Japan. Edwin Reischauer



has pointed out that many excellent Japanese literary works can be categorized as monologue literature rather than dialogue.<sup>34)</sup>

In *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-cultural Perspective*, Edward Stewart points out: “. . . who [Japanese] cannot communicate until they know the status of the other person since the language requires different forms to correspond to the status of the listener.”<sup>35)</sup> Calling this a “Recessive Type,” Roichi Okabe explains: “The Japanese are inclined to practice ritual communications which will follow traditionally accepted rules of forms.”<sup>36)</sup> In such Japanese communication, “. . . the human relationship generally ranges hierarchically along a vertical axis; those in the upper should be paid more respect than those in the lower.”<sup>37)</sup> Moving along the vertical axis, the vertical threads are the proper choices of personal pronouns, honorific or humble expressions, and so on.

According to *Differences between Japanese and American Honorific Behavior*, Japanese behavior is classified as “Sensitive Manners,” as opposed to “Acting Manners” of Americans. In other words, the Japanese are sensitive about using honorific expressions in a passive performance based on social rank and cultural custom, whereas Americans are nervous about how to act upon another.<sup>38)</sup> Related to this phenomena, according to Yoji Tanabe, is that both Japanese and Americans respect others: the former shows this by hierarchical relationships, whereas the latter does so by partnership. He concludes: “Americans convey their honorable feelings through closeness, as opposed to the remoteness of the Japanese.”<sup>39)</sup>

As has already been described, the Japanese language makes a great contribution to reinforcing Japanese society in terms of its vertical function, which may be called *verbal uniform*. In other words, the Japanese change their verbal uniforms according to their rank, follow certain conversational rules, and try to keep communication from eroding. Consequently, the Japanese seem to be unconsciously engaged in selecting the proper “uniform” to fit in their own “place,” rather than experiencing the freedom of self-expression in terms of their own verbal expressions — “casual wear.” I wonder whether such repetitions of passive performances can help Japanese people to understand and eventually to discover themselves.

“Education for Individuality” has never failed to be included by the Ministry of Education among the official goals of Japanese education. However, how can “a person of individuality” (*koseitekina hito*) and “a person of obedience” (*sunao hito*) both be valued in the Japanese educational climate? Individuality is the ‘core’ of one’s self-expression in terms of verbal performance, everyday behavior, clothing, and so on. Through trial and error (including others’ reactions), one awakens to himself or herself or his or her identity. In particular, verbal self-expression can not be developed without specific training, including the experience and observation of verbal catchballs. Instead of logically persuading others, the Japanese communication pattern tends to follow a kind of ceremonial order, depending on the fixed verbal forms, which are quite easy to foretell. Such being the case, it is doubtful that the Japanese communicative method can play its role as a vehicle for messages in an internationally communicating world where diversified values are cross-culturally challenged by each other.

#### 4. English Communication Pattern

##### 1) American Culture

The essence of American culture seems to lie in its diversity of values: the offspring of an intricate mixture of a variety of races and religions brought into the "nation of immigrants." What links people there as Americans is ideas and words, in sharp contrast with ritual behavior for Japanese people. As if still in its youth, the American culture seems to keep moving on, searching for its ideal and future goal. During my two-year stay in the United States, I was overwhelmed by the constant self-assertiveness of Americans, and convinced of their dependence on verbal communication. As a matter of fact, "Americans generally value highly both the skills and understanding of verbal illustration."<sup>40)</sup> If you are allowed to assert yourself freely, however, people around you are allowed to talk back to you mercilessly, too. This is termed "Competitive (*hariau*) Culture" by Roichi Okabe.

Also in the United States, I was quite surprised to hear one of my American friends say, "I know myself." Through growth process, Americans are constantly made conscious of their "selves," and are ready to judge and behave according to their own values. Thus, the sense of individualism or self-spirit and independence can be regarded as the "core" of American culture. Moreover, as is seen in such phrases as "It's your choice" or "It's up to you," this attitude is also paralleled by respect for the values of others. Americans not only refrain from the phrase "we Americans," but also dislike being addressed as "you Americans."

"Change" can be regarded as a tradition of American culture. While the Japanese tradition is characterized by its "fixedness," the United States, since its foundation, has been unchangeable in her succession of "changes" and her "flexibility." A "change," to Americans, is not something to be afraid of but an object worthy as a challenge for a better future. Edward Stewart agrees: "There is no existing society which has institutionalized change to the degree of American culture."<sup>41)</sup>

On the other hand, if you live in the United States filled with self-assertiveness, individualism, diversified cultures, and constant change, you will become aware of a kind of "simplicity" and "universality" which is also a feature of American culture. For instance, traveling in Japan we hardly ever have trouble finding some special products or souvenirs in each region, but there are none in the United States. Even if we could find some, they would be individual examples of culture or traditions brought into the New World from some mother country and still preserved.

As Masao Kunihiro points out: "In a society where a number of immigrant groups brought in their respective values, the standard tends to shrink to rather simple scale."<sup>42)</sup> This may explain why American popular culture, such as movies, music, drama and musicals, appeals to people worldwide, gaining great sympathy and popularity. In other words, what could be accepted by people, all with different values and culture, is some "universality" that would appeal to all emotions and souls. It is this universality that can be regarded as the "product" of the United States.

## 2) The “Horizontal Society” and Its Human Relationships

American society, where one’s own value comes first, can be called a “Horizontal Society.” It always makes its members awaken to themselves by their individual names, not by their title, age, or sex. The horizontal structure seems to lay the foundation for “democracy” — the long-cherished ideal of the United States. As a matter of fact, when living in the U. S., a person never fails to sense his or her identity as he or she frequently hears his or her name uttered in daily conversation.

The idea, “Equality of Opportunity,” has become like propaganda, observed in official use in business letters of a variety of American institutions. What “Equality of Opportunity” means to Americans of all races is a belief that they are legally guaranteed as many chances as they wish, without any restrictions due to race, sex, or age. To them, one’s word is not just an oral promise but also a reality they can challenge.

In American society, there are all kinds of occasions for selecting from a variety of choices, where one’s own decision is most highly valued. Takao Suzuki claims: “In America, where those roles of your own choice are more valued than those determined by others without your will, the husband-wife relationship is taken most stable when viewed on the basis of a husband-and-wife contract.”<sup>43)</sup>

## 3) The English Language

Composed of 26 letters, the English language seems to create a world of sounds. English sentences, constructed with rich sounds and rhythms as well as musical features, show an audio-linguistic pattern as opposed to the visual-linguistic pattern of the Japanese language. While Japanese can be compared to television, English may well be compared to the radio.<sup>44)</sup>

In an English sentence, the subject is emphasized in its role as instigator, the self serving as the basis for judging. Written as capital “I,” the self is first placed in the center as a speaker. Then the other is regarded as a hearer and clearly addressed “you”: for instance, “George, do you speak Japanese?” *In Language and Culture*, Takao Suzuki claims: “The first and second personal pronouns in both Latin and English only play their abstract roles as active and passive doers respectively in the verbal performance. This has nothing to do with specific characteristics such as rank, age, or sex. The same is true for the third personal pronouns, which are not substituted for by titles based on human relationships. Therefore, conversation observed among Americans features the exchange of ideas.”<sup>45)</sup>

As an English teacher, I tell students not to miss the beginning of each sentence when hearing English speech. Whether it is positive, negative, or interrogative, an English sentence begins with a subject, followed by the verb with a certain tense. Therefore, if you miss the opening of an interrogative sentence, for example, you will never comprehend what it means, much less how to reply. It seems to me, however, that Japanese learners of English generally pay more attention to the ends of sentences. This could occur partly because they unconsciously follow their habit of listening to Japanese speech. However, this perseverance to wait until the very end of each sentence does not fit the English case. It is necessary for Japanese learners of English to distinguish the English structures which appear centrifugal in sharp contrast

with Japanese.

#### 4) The English Language as a Horizontal Vehicle

The English language seems to function as horizontal thread to weave a horizontal structure of the United States, linking people horizontally in a "nation of immigrants." In other words, American English links Americans by acting as a *symbol* horizontal vehicle moving around the "melting pot" of diverse values and cultures. Thus, English plays an important role in enabling the United States to be a "nation of words," where people are encouraged to be self-assertive regardless of their age, social position or sex. In that sense, English (that is American English) should be included among the universal value systems of the United States. As a result, rhetoric in verbal performance places more emphasis on what to say rather than how to describe it.

Compared to one-way Japanese communication, English communication seems to maintain liberty and openness. The speaker has a duty to verbalize his or her "self," and at the same time the second person is expected to become actively involved in verbal cooperation not only by simply nodding but also through immediate verbal response to the speaker. English communication is often compared to a volleyball game. In other words, it lasts as long as the conversation ball keeps being tossed from one to another, then to another. The pattern features a mutuality of communication.

According to Takao Suzuki, "Among the main modern European languages, only in English are the two parties (the speaker and the second person) expressed as a symmetrically mutual relation."<sup>46)</sup> First comes self-identification, then the development of the communication with the other party. This dialogue-style communication shows a sharp contrast with the monologue-style of Japanese communication. "The dialogues generally proceed in a logical and argumentative manner, and particularly put weight on the persuasion of others through objective illustrations with specific facts or figures."<sup>47)</sup> This would be why "counseling" has been institutionally established in American education, where the pursuit of self-consistency on a dialogue basis is highly valued.

While studying in the U. S., every day I found myself observing the tireless and consistent self-assertiveness of Americans. I felt a kind of "academic freedom" in attending classes, where both the professors and students from all racial and age groups are seen involved in heated discussions, addressing each other as "I" or "you." As a consequence, a class "production" has turned out a "masterpiece" completed by all the participants, giving them a sense of fulfillment regardless of its quality. When it comes to everyday life, however, you would be tired from the persistence of this self-assertiveness and self-defense.

In the U. S., when joining a circle of people, strangers will never fail to be introduced by their acquaintance to the others in order to meet them and join the discussion. It is interesting to see that this performance illustrates not only the frankness of Americans but also their honorific manners. Suppose you came across a similar situation in Japan, you would feel awkward and dislocated, for the communication will continue without asking you for your attendance or comments. Thus, one example of good manners in English-language communication

is not disregarding those people around you.<sup>48)</sup> In general, walking on the street, Americans smile at strangers, greeting, “Hi,” and students are not hesitant to question their professors one after another. These may all be considered examples of honorific manners. American people prefer “free communication, not tied to ceremonies or regulations,”<sup>49)</sup> and the English language weaves people together as horizontal thread cloth. In that sense, Americans put English into their communication pattern in a casual manner.

Thus, in addition to their linguistic characteristics, the Japanese and English languages sharply contrast in light of their communication patterns. When it comes to speaking and thinking in English, Japanese should switch from our-type Japanese communication pattern to their-type English communication pattern: from the *our* vertical speech manners to the *their* horizontal speech manners. In order to produce smooth transmissions, Japanese should start, at an early stage of their school education, to experience a wide variety of training in terms of more open-minded mutual communication, including “speech communication” and “debating” in Japanese, their mother tongue.

## 5. From *Kokugo* (the National Language) as a Vertical Vehicle to *Nihongo* (the Japanese Language) as a Vertical and Horizontal Vehicle

### 1) *Kokugo* Education

*Kokugo* education in Japan, as many textbooks illustrate, seems to parallel the image of the *makunouchi* lunch, a traditional Japanese packed lunch arranged with a wide range of foods — a bit of this, a bit of that. (This would be also true of the Japanese educational climate as a whole.) In other words, Japanese school students are educated to read a variety of novels, poetry, dramas, journals and essays in Japanese, to learn new phrases and *kanji*, and comprehend the content of the readings. Thus they passively absorb well-selected knowledge just like they eat safe, nutritious and well-balanced meals. Thanks to frequent examinations checking the degree of “absorption,” their knowledge steadily increases in quantity. On the other hand, however, they seldom have training to analyze content logically, to present their own ideas or thoughts, and to exchange views with each other. (This would be impossible unless they could read through one complete work.) As a result, there are hardly any phases where they become aware how significant it is for them to construct their own values, verbalize their views and logically persuade other parties. *Kokugo* education is charged with too much “Japanese culture” to play a role as linguistic education in terms of mutual communication internationally.

Surprisingly enough, despite such a wide variety of materials for studying, *Kokugo* education has paid less attention to “logical writing.” It sounds rather ironical, considering the extraordinary time and immeasurable energy Japanese must spend on writing practice, such as countless *kanji* for memorizing, essays (*sakubun*), or book reviews (*kansobun*). However, the instruction in writing seems to be centered on correcting *kanji*, specific usages of *kana* (the Japanese syllabary), and other usages including conjunctions. It does not cover writing based on logical analysis. In addition, book reviews will generally end up being impressionistic

descriptions meeting educational viewpoints. Under the circumstances, the only role of *Kokugo* can be to provide Japanese with a way of life as a representative of Japanese culture, but *Nihongo* (the Japanese language) will never be able to win citizenship as an active participant in an internationally-minded world.

## 2) English Language Education

As Yoji Tanabe points out, an English phrase can be used as spoken word to address anyone, "However short it becomes, the subject won't drop, and the sentence ends without any suffix. The only thing you have to do is to decide on your attitude and claim it directly, not trying to modify your views."<sup>50)</sup> As a matter of fact, the phrase, "What's this?" can be addressed to anyone, but its Japanese translation, *kore-wa nan desu-ka* is usually modified in various ways according to who is being addressed.

By making much use of such characteristics of the English language, English educators should introduce into the teaching of English more practical training in mutual exchanges in an atmosphere filled with freedom and openness. In other words, English teachers, too, are expected to use English in a sense of putting on casual wear, producing in the classroom the reality of cross-cultural exchanges. There is a limitation, though, because it would be quite difficult even for teachers to have their students experience sort of "cultural shock" produced only through their imaginations. It is true that an increasing number of AETs (assistant English teacher) and returnees from abroad have helped the Japanese with cross-cultural experiences. However, these cross-cultural circumstances will stay meaningless, as long as teachers remain tied to a sense of group-orientation or uniformity, and are not actively involved in such cross-cultural performances. In fact, "reverse cultural shock" of returnees has become a serious issue in various educational institutions across the nation.

## 3) From *Kokugo* as a Vertical Vehicle to *Nihongo* as a Vertical and Horizontal Vehicle

*Nihongo* has recently grown out of *Kokugo*, going through increased consideration as one of the world's languages, that is as a "foreign" (*soto-no*) tongue as well as "our" (*uchi-no*) tongue. In other words, in the same way TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) has been popular in the United States, now great attention is being focused on teaching Japanese as a second language both within and outside Japan.

Japanese language schools number about 600-700 throughout the nation. Also a number of universities and colleges have been enthusiastically establishing departments of *Nihongo*, gradually forcing the Japanese to switch their consciousness from *Kokugo* to *Nihongo*. In Japan many foreigners from various cultural backgrounds can be seen showing their Japanese competence for mutual communication. It is necessary for Japanese people, too, to regard the Japanese language as a means to communicate with people from other cultures.

In Japan, the Japanese language has been constantly considered as "our" (*uchi-no*) language, whereas the English language has been distinguished as a "foreign" (*soto-no*) language. How is the English language dealt with by Americans in "the nation of immigrants," then? Needless to say, one of the "musts" for immigrants in order to become Americans is to speak English.

Still today, for the variety of people flowing into the United States, the necessity for practical English competence has remained the same. In this way, English in the U. S. has been objectively considered as a second language as well as a national tongue. In other words, Americans might well be said to have shared their own language with other people all over the world.

Robin Gill in *English Is So Much like Japanese* claims: “True sensitivity cannot be shown through fixed expressions but through an open and flexible spirit, which is changeable according to the expectations of the second person.”<sup>51)</sup> What he means here is that a flexible communication cannot be created only by using stereotyped Japanese phrases such as “*yoroshiku onegai shimasu.*” (literally, “I ask you to take care of me.”) Edwin Reischauer suggests: “Among Japanese, there are many cases where the parties hold an illusion that they understand each other, though actually they do not. For Japanese people to be internationally-minded, they need to learn such basic rules and manners as clear verbalization of their views and to make great effort to persuade their parties.”<sup>52)</sup>

As has been already pointed out, the horizontal function of the Japanese thread has now been explored by many foreign people. Many Americans, who have experienced educational training in speech communication or debate in school as well as the constant practice of self-expression in their everyday life, begin practicing Japanese in their daily conversation as soon as they begin their Japanese lessons and soon come to master its basic expressions. In the future a number of foreigners will threaten their Japanese counterparts with their Japanese competence in a variety of work places.

Hideo Yamshita cites: “Those who can interpret foreign languages in a true sense must be those who are highly-disciplined and philosophically-trained in their own tongue.”<sup>53)</sup> He further suggests for Japan’s direction in the future:

The Japanese understand each other perfectly. It is like a Japanese-Japanese dictionary, which only needs some semantic comparisons and several simple examples, without any significant matters required by foreigners. We Japanese have grown in a closed verbal world like our dictionary, where we can understand each other, even dropping subjects and objects. We are a group of people whose viewpoints vary according to those of the second persons. We are a verbal population of over 1,000,000,000 which differs from any other nation in the way of expressing objects and self-assertion. For us to be self-assertive in the world, we need to probe deeply into “how we are different” from others.<sup>54)</sup>

Having only the knowledge of the peculiarities and closeness of Japanese culture, such as *kanji* or honorifics, never help Japanese people practice Japanese as a flexible language in open and free communication. Taking an objective view of Japanese as one of many languages will lead them to view themselves more deeply and see how they are different from others. Therefore, it is important and possible for them to reconsider *Kokugo* education as *Nihongo* education and to experience both the vertical and horizontal functions of the Japanese thread. With the increase of opportunities within communities to express one’s own views and ideas,

the Japanese language will develop to carry a kind of universality to some degree. For the sake of that, the Japanese should practice conversation with their own words, demonstrating the wonderful capacity of the language.

I believe such training in self-expression in Japanese is sure to help Japanese people learn not only the English language but also other foreign languages. In addition, it will help them to communicate with people from other cultures, to exchange ideas, to share cultures with each other, to contribute internationally to the whole world, which has been shrinking cross-culturally, and eventually to pave the way for the twenty-first century.

#### 4) International Behavior and Cross-Cultural Education

Chie Nakane points out: "For most Japanese intellectuals, discussing their relations with foreigners is only kind of conceptual game within their group; for they are only interested in foreign lands ideally. This is the most extreme example of the separation of ideal and reality."<sup>55)</sup>

So far, communication between America and Japan has been generally discussed by the mass media, focusing on the cultural shock of Japanese people dressed in their *uniform culture* in contact with the US *casual-wear culture*. What today's "internationalization" realistically demands, however, is for the Japanese to accept the *casual-wear culture*, introduce it into Japanese *uniform culture*, and maintain the characteristics of both cultures hopefully. In other words, the Japanese now stand at a crossroads where they must choose their own casual wear, no longer depending on their formal uniforms. More specifically, an individual Japanese should voluntarily welcome foreign cultures quite different from his or her own and face cultural shock resulting from individual communication. This will generate energy for enabling him or her to become a cross-cultural person.

Such expansion and reinforcement of the cross-cultural communication link will be necessary for both Japan and individual Japanese as one of the steps for performing internationally. "Internationalization" has now moved further onto the stage of inward internationalization. Putting an emphasis on the inward internationalization of Japan, Soshichi Miyachi claims in *The Returness*: "What is essential to the critical issue of the returnees is deeply rooted in the general view of Japanese society, that is, how the children who have returned with their cross-cultural experiences are to be accepted by their Japanese peers who have never experienced foreign cultures."<sup>56)</sup>

Taking all these into consideration, cross-cultural education seems to include native-culture education. Looking back an ancient Japan, for example, when *kanji* were introduced from China into Japan, the people did not possess any written language. Those characters then must have appeared to them as belonging to a foreign culture. Today they have merged into Japanese culture and represent the Japanese culture. As this example shows, to erase the border between one's own culture and foreign cultures is to help to produce inward internationalization. The term "internationalization" will become invisible in the Japanese vocabulary when Japan becomes internationalized in the true sense.



## 6. Conclusion — The “Global Village”<sup>57)</sup>

The world has been undergoing rapid changes on a daily basis on such a scale that we could hardly imagine how the earth will change by the year 2000. The expression, “The Global Village” coined by the Canadian sociologist, Marshall McLuhan (1911-1981) does not sound an exaggeration even in Japan. The computerized information-oriented society has been demonstrating the importance of “language” every day and night on a global scale.

The world’s images of Japan, in terms of her status, her situation and international role have been going through a series of remarkable changes. Even though individual Japanese do not feel the reality, “Wealthy Nation — Japan” has been strutting around the world, attracting the eyes of envy and expectation of all the people in the world. In addition, in accordance with the busy traffic of “money” and “people” in and out of Japan, the number of Japanese people who observe Japan more objectively has increased drastically, skaking the inner structure of the nation.

An immediate increased number of all kinds of diplomatic negotiations and private diplomacy has been observed. This can no longer be covered by “quiet Japanese.” It is quite common for the Japanese to see many foreigners expressing themselves clearly and precisely in Japanese. Japanese are no longer in an age when they could excuse themselves by saying, “well, we are Japanese,” or “after all, foreigners cannot understand Japan.”

Japanese people now should take immediate action and join world citizens who can communicate with each other with flexibility wherever they may be located. At the same time, they must remember that it is an important assignment that each of them should be responsible for educating the following generation toward the twenty-first century.

## NOTES

- 1) J. B. Neustupony, *Gaikokujin-tono Communication* (Communication with Foreigners) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1982), p.41. trans. by Author
- 2) Roichi Okabe, *Ibunka-wo Yomu* (How to Read Foreign Cultures) (Tokyo: Nan’undo, 1988), p. 56. trans. by Author
- 3) Takao Suzuki, *Kotoba to Bunka* (Language and Culture) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1973), p.203. trans. by Author
- 4) Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Anchor Press, 1973), p. 30.
- 5) *The Silent Language*, p. 99.
- 6) *Quoted in Yuzo Ota, Eigo to Nihonjin* (The English Language and the Japanese) (Tokyo: TBS Britanica, 1981), p.29. trans. by Author
- 7) Gyo Furuta ed., *Ibunka Communication* (Cross-Cultural Communication) (Tokyo: Yuuikaku Sensho, 1987), p. 227. trans. by Author
- 8) *Ibunka-wo Yomu*, p.109. trans. by Author
- 9) Hideo Yamashita, *Nihon-no Kotoba to Kokoro* (Japanese Language and Heart) (Tokyo: Shincho-sha Gakujuyutu Bunko, 1986), p.213. trans. by Author
- 10) Yoji Tanabe, *Eigo-rashisa to Nihongo-rashisa* (Englishness and Japaneseness) (Tokyo: Gurobyu-sha, 1981),

- p.184. trans, by Author
- 11) Telecompower Inc., trans. *Koshiki Nihonjin-ron* (the Committee Coping U.S./Japanese Trade War Strategies ed., *An Official Theory of the Japanese*) (Tokyo: Kobun-do, 1987), p.70. trans. by Author
  - 12) Chie Nakane, *The Japanese Society* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co. Publishers, 1970), p.31.
  - 13) *The Japanese Society* , p.24.
  - 14) *The Japanese Society* , p.40.
  - 15) Chie Nakane, *Tekiou-no Jyoken* (The Conditions of Adaptability) (Tokyo: Kodan-sha, 1972), p.128. trans. by Author
  - 16) *Tekiou-no Jyoken*, p.139. trans. by Author
  - 17) *Kotaba-to Bunka*, p.203. trans. by Author
  - 18) *Nihon-no Kotaba to Kokoro*, p.40. trans. by Author
  - 19) Takao Suzuki, *Tozasareta Gengo: Nihongo-no Sekai* (The Closed Language: the World of Japanese) (Tokyo: Shincho Sensho, 1975), p.75. trans. by Author
  - 20) Noboro Ode, *Nihongo-no Lonri* (The Logic of Japanese) (Tokyo: Kodan-sha Gendai Shinsho, 1965), p.90. trans. by Author
  - 21) *Koshiki Nihonjin-ron*, p.12. trans. by Author
  - 22) *Eigo-rashisa to Nihongo-rashisa*, p.207. trans. by Author
  - 23) Norio Kaneyama, *Hikakubunka-no Omoshirosa* (How to Enjoy the Comparative Studies of Culture) (Tokyo: Taishukan, 1989). p.156. trans. by Author
  - 24) *Tozasareta Gengo: Nihongo-no Sekai*, p.196. trans. by Author
  - 25) *Nihon-no Kotoba to Kokoro*, p.178. trans. by Author
  - 26) *Eigo to Nihonjin*, pp.289—290. trans. by Author
  - 27) *Kotoba to Bunka*, p.129. trans. by Author
  - 28) *Kotoba to Bunka*, p.146. trans. by Author
  - 29) *Kotoba to Bunka*, p.171. trans. by Author
  - 30) Jyuzou Itami, *Nihon-no Kotoba to Kokoro, "Atogaki"* (Epilogue) trans. by Author
  - 31) *Tozasareta Gengo: Nihongo-no Sekai*, p.183. trans. by Author
  - 32) *Koushiki Nihonjin-ron*, p.2. trans. by Author
  - 33) *Ibunka-wo Yomu*, p.79. trans. by Author
  - 34) E. O. Reischauer, Yuji Naya, and Hiromi Kobayashi, *Nihon-no Kokusaika* (The Internationalization of Japan) (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 1989), p.335. trans. by Author
  - 35) Edward C. Stewart, *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburth, 1971), p.50.
  - 36) *Ibunka-wo Yomu*, p.79. trans. by Author
  - 37) Takao Suzuki, *Kotoba to Shakai* (Language and Society) (Tokyo: Chuo Koron-sha, 1975), p.37. trans. by Author
  - 38) Sachi-ko Ide, Tsunao Ogino, Akiko Kawasaki, and Shoko Ikuta, *Amerikajin to Nihonjin-no Keigo Koudou* (Differences between Japanese and American Honorific Behavior) (Tokyo: Nan'undo, 1986), p.24. trans. by Author
  - 39) *Eigo-rashias to Nihongo-rashisa*, p.201. trans. by Author
  - 40) *Koushiki Nihonjin-ron*, p.2. by Author
  - 41) *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, p.74.
  - 42) Masao Kunihiro, "Yakusha Atogaki" (Translator's Epilogue) of Masao Kunihiro et all translated *Chinmoku no Kotoba* (*The Silent Language*) (Tokyo: Nan'undo, 1966), p.249. trans. by Author
  - 43) *Kotoba to Bunka*, p.188. trans. by Author

- 44) *Tozasareta Gengo: Nihongo-no Sekai*, p.76. trans. by Author
- 45) *Kotoba to Bunka*, p.182. trans. by Author
- 46) *Kotoba to Shakai*, p.43. trans. by Author
- 47) *Ibunka-wo Yomu*, p.170. trans. by Author
- 48) *Eigo-rashisa to Nihongo-rashisa*, p.200. trans. by Author
- 49) *Ibunka-wo Yomu*, p.79. trans. by Author
- 50) *Eigo-rashisa to Nihongo-rashisa*, p.170. trans. by Author
- 51) Robin Gill, *Eigo-ha Konnani Nippongo* (English Is So Much like Japanese) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo Bunko, 1989), p.128. trans. by Author
- 52) *Nihon-no Kokusaika*, p.332. trans. by Author
- 53) *Nihon-no Kotoba to Kokoro*, p.253. trans. by Author
- 54) *Nihon-no Kotoba to Kokoro*, p.289. trans. by Author
- 55) *Tekiou-no Jyouken*, p.66. trans. by Author
- 56) Soshichi Miyachi, *Kikiku Shijyo* (The Returness) (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 1990), p.98. trans. by Author
- 57) "United by electronics, man will live happily in his 'global village.'"