

# AGAINST VOCATIONALISM AND REAPRAISING ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE FOR JAPANESE STUDENTS IN A GLOBALIZED SOCIETY: DEVELOPING A RESILIENT LIFE

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*Abstract: In the current globalized world, students want to learn English to make themselves more marketable to employers, and institutions have repositioned their English programs to meet that demand, which is also true in Japan. According to the survey, where from a stance of pragmatism I asked people in work places of 10% of the occupations in Japan, they responded that English and special skills and knowledge are important, but more importantly, students need the abilities that correspond to what happens when reading literature. Additionally, comparatively reading cross-cultural literature assists students and others to build a resilient life in an increasingly westernized and globalized environment. In education, although reading strategies and oral communication are needed, so is cross-cultural, slow reading of literature.<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

In many countries, including Japan, many students want to learn English to make themselves more marketable to employers in our current global economy, and educational institutions have repositioned their English programs to meet this demand.<sup>2</sup> Particularly in Japan, individuals from economic organizations often become members of the government's Council for English Education, which is responsible for making all decisions regarding English education. The Council is currently insisting on "practical English" for Japanese students so that they may become business people who can win in the global economic competition. Unfortunately, the Council ignores the study of Anglophone literature (and, as you might know, even decided to close or downsize faculties of letters of national universities in 2015). As a result of such a vocationalism, oral communication has been emphasized along with reading skills such as scanning, skimming, paragraph

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<sup>1</sup>This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers 25370672, 23531265. Earlier versions of this paper appear as: Akiyoshi Suzuki, 2014, "Need for Anglophone Literature for Japanese Students in a Globalized Society: Developing a Resilient Life," *Lit Matters*, 1 (1), 86-106, and Akiyoshi Suzuki, 2015, "Reappraising Anglophone Literature for Japanese Students in a Globalized Society Developing a Resilient Life," Michael O'Sullivan et al. (Eds.), *The Future of English in Asia: Perspectives on language and literature (Routledge Studies in World Englishes)*, New York: Routledge, 207-223.

<sup>2</sup>English education in Japan is education of English as Foreign Language (EFL). English education in Japan in this essay means education of EFL.

and rapid reading of newspapers and business materials, and extensive reading of easy English texts. Of course, these skills are important for learning English; however, isn't the study of literature *also* important?

Worse, even if students do read literary texts, we must face the fact that they do not read them closely. Instead, because of the popularity of literary theories, students and teachers often end up censoring textual representation, instead of reading and enjoying texts, according to various theories or their own belief systems. They also too sharply distinguish between bad, oppressive texts and good, liberated texts. These days, some Japanese scholars are insisting that close reading of Anglophone literature is important because public education should not produce simple robots to collect and calculate data or labor away without a soul. Rather than robots, we need individuals with rich empathic humanity, with *genuine* critical thinking ability. Of course, rich humanity and genuine critical ability can be learned through means other than Anglophone literature. I agree with these scholars' insistence even though it sometimes sounds more like idealism since they argue literature's importance from a philosophical rather than a humanistic viewpoint.

Given this situation, I have adopted a pragmatic stance and asked individuals in a range of workplaces whether they see a need to read literature – not for theoretical defense, but as a voice of the people. In particular, I queried individuals in approximately two hundred different occupations in Japan, covering roughly 40% of the kinds of occupations in Japan. After analyzing their answers, I can state that the more strongly the economic organizations stress learning practical English, the more confident I am that the close reading of literature, particularly reading with cross-cultural and multidimensional viewpoints, is extremely important.<sup>3</sup> However, reading literature does not make a student simply conform to our increasingly cross-cultural, multidimensional globalized world. More significantly, it can lead students to a life of resistance to a globalized world that is based too much on American political and economic standards. In addition, I argue for literature's importance from the perspective of public education's social functions.

### I. Problems of English Education in Japan

For at least the last 20 years, university curricula upheld the traditional pedagogy of reading Anglophone literature in the freshman and sophomore years. As for English oral communication, students learned it independently or through club activities.

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<sup>3</sup>A 2013 survey, which asked one thousand Japanese business persons what they needed most in their education, shows the top one hundred responses (multiple answers up to five allowed) as follow: 1) Japanese history, 2) economics, 3) Japanese culture, 4) world history, 5) literature, 6) business administration, and 7) English. Of the respondents, 35.5% answered literature (Nikkei, 2013: 7). In reporting this survey's results, Yasuo Kashiwakura states that literature is important for understanding the Western worldview (Ibid: 34). My survey, which started in 2007, polls individuals in various occupations, and not just business persons. Therefore, in this essay, I propose other significant reasons for reading Anglophone literature to understand Western worldviews.

However, about 20 years ago, administrators in several universities began prohibiting teachers from using Anglophone literary texts for English education for two main reasons. First, the rising “need” for practical English: they believed that Anglophone literature did not contribute to learning practical English. Second, during their junior and senior seminar classes, many students began reading reference books translated into Japanese but needed to read these in the original English. Since then, learning practical English and *not* reading literature has prevailed all over Japan. In short, for universities, the significance of learning English became directly linked to post graduation careers. As a result, popular English skills now include learning how to read a newspaper and how to collect information and data from a graph, an advertisement, a business document, and a report. Specific pedagogies include scanning, skimming, and paragraph reading but not reading texts closely and thinking deeply about what they say. Thus abilities in reading stories or fiction have almost disappeared from university entrance examinations.

Such English education has been supported as a national policy. As mentioned, the government’s Council for English Education is often made up of individuals from economic organizations, and they make policy decisions on English education. In addition, the National Federation of Prefectural English Teachers’ Organizations (60,000 registered members, mainly high school teachers) insist that reading strategy should be taught and tested for pragmatic communication rather than for stories or fiction.<sup>4</sup>

As assessments of English ability and motivation to learn demonstrate, their insistence on pragmatics only is futile. First, the futility is proven by the actual decrease in Japanese students’ English ability, as is indicated by their test scores. For instance, Chisato Saida reports that English ability has severely declined since the policy shifted to pragmatic communication (Saida, 2010). Surveying English scores on the National Center Test for University Admissions after the task of reading a story disappeared from it, Sayaka Arai et al. (2009) observed an obvious decline in English and academic abilities.<sup>5</sup>

Second, Japanese students are not highly motivated to learn English. The Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) reports in a survey that almost 65% of Japanese university teachers regard students’ low motivation as the greatest problem in English education.<sup>6</sup> In fact, university entrance examinations traditionally enhanced students’ motivation to learn English; however, such is not the case now. Because Japanese universities face survival problems caused by low birth rates in

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<sup>4</sup>National Center for University Entrance Examinations: 2008, 2009, and 2010 official reports by “The Evaluation Committee of Examination Questions.”

<sup>5</sup>Arai et al. Handout of “Comparison between the Score of English Test of the National Center for University Entrance Examinations and the Image of English Ability Based on Test-Takers Subjective Appraisal.”

<sup>6</sup>Committee of the Survey, Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) (2003), “A Multidisciplinary Research on the Reality of the Situation about Education of Foreign Languages and English in Japan—Individual Edition of College Teacher of Foreign Languages and English.”

Japan, many cannot help but allow high school students of low academic ability to pass entrance examinations. In addition, many universities admit these students without any achievement test at all, requiring only a short essay in Japanese. Hence, high school students who are not good at English can avoid learning it; however, even those who are good at English tend to avoid learning it because they can get into university through entrance examination by recommendation but not by competitive test selection (Suzuki, 2010: 30–3). Therefore, many students enter universities with low motivation for learning English and low ability, too.

The students learning English without a sense of purpose or merely reading and listening to nonfictional materials to collect information has not increased their motivation but has instead reduced their English academic ability in an antiliterary educational environment. In this situation, I gave freshman students the assignment to closely read a retold version of “The Gift of the Magi” and the newspaper. Results showed that after reading “The Gift of the Magi,” both their motivation for learning English and their academic ability increased. They enjoyed the literary text. They were swayed, shaken, and inspired by the text itself, not by collecting information and data from it.<sup>7</sup> As I mention later, one feels and therefore thinks. From this perspective, literature is significant because it makes students feel. As my workplace survey shows, “practical English” does not mean merely reading the newspaper, collecting data, or speaking and hearing English. It means acquiring the capacity and abilities that reading literature with a cross-cultural perspective provides. This I explain in the next two sections.

## II. Opinions of Society

As mentioned, the significance of learning English in university has been directly linked to its post-graduation use for society. In fact, influenced by the mass media, Japanese students do recognize the importance of English. Television, magazines, and the Internet often state that English is required of Japanese people because of globalization. Nonetheless, low motivation has been a problem. In brief, many Japanese students recognize the general importance of English but fail to see its personal importance for them.<sup>8</sup>

This situation derives from the Japanese social condition. Most Japanese do not need English in their daily lives. However, the Japanese media reports that employees in many major Japanese companies need English language skills. On the other hand, as is demonstrated by their career goals, university students have diversified attitudes toward learning English, not all of them target jobs in global companies. In addition, they cannot accurately comprehend the real work environment because of a lack of information and experience. Moreover, no research has been conducted on occupations to determine whether or how much English is needed. Therefore, even

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<sup>7</sup>This was reported in JACET, August 11 at Hokusei Gakuen University in Japan.

<sup>8</sup>With regard to the material in the succeeding three paragraphs, see Suzuki and Kuwamura, 2011: 202–11.

when teachers tell students that they will need English after entering the job market, many tend to take that advice very lightly or not believe them at all.

Thus, in 2007, I began researching the degree of English knowledge required in Japan. Although many Japanese do not need English in their everyday lives, those working in some fields, such as flight attendants or employees in international companies, do need it. Although these examples are well known, the need for English in other professions is less obvious, for instance, for beauty salon staff, pharmacists, musicians, medical processors, and sports store staff. Therefore, I researched approximately two hundred different jobs in Japan to discover whether they required English; this covers almost 40% of the occupations in Japan. I asked individuals in different occupations if they needed English and if so, when, how often, at what level, and for what purpose. All the occupations I queried, except tax accountant and lawyer, now require the use of English, and in fact, most Japanese need to use some English in their work. Then I began visiting different workplaces and shooting videos of English being used and staff interviews. I have since edited these videos to approximately two minutes' duration and created a website that allows students to watch videos of their preferred jobs. I conceptualized the website titled E-Job 100<sup>9</sup> as a tool to help Japanese university students more deeply understand the significance of learning English for their potential careers. In addition, I show the videos in my English classes; the students' attitudes and motivation have changed dramatically – they have begun seriously learning English.

Incidentally, during the interview process for creating the website E-Job 100, the interviewees confirmed that “practical English” means “holistic use of English” and that to learn it, English education should revisit, in part, close readings of Anglophone literature. The first confirmation came from a nurse and a doctor. The nurse said, “English is important in our job. Of course, we must read technical books in English to learn more and always update knowledge, but this is not enough. Another important job of a nurse is to help a patient feel secure. Whoever comes down with an illness feels anxious. Now in Japan, many foreigners come to hospital or clinic. In order to treat them, a nurse should let them speak out anything in their own words, listen to them, and empathize with and understand them. It is the very starting point to cure and care for the patient. From this perspective, English is very important for us because foreigners in Japan usually speak out anxiety in English. English is needed for communication with a whole person.”<sup>10</sup> The doctor voiced a similar opinion: “For a doctor, the ability of English is very important. Many foreigners in Japan desperately look for a doctor who can speak English. When they can meet the doctor, they really feel secure.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, practical English skills are not merely general uses of English in society or very specific purposes in the workplace but the ability to use English fully and holistically.

More confirmations came from other workplaces. After the initial interviews with the nurse and the doctor, I began asking the question, “Is it enough just to learn

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<sup>9</sup>Suzuki, E-Job 100. (<http://e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx>).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., (<http://e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx/job/62/77/78.html>).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., (<http://e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx/job/62/74/75.html>).

English?” to all other interviewees. None of them answered “yes.” For instance, a person employed in web creation elaborated, “In times of globalization, a company always asks us to create the website in both Japanese and English. If you can just translate Japanese to English or English to Japanese, it is not enough. For a successful creation of the website, the design is also very important. A non-Japanese-speaking person has a different sense from a Japanese speaking person. We must learn the sensibility and sympathetic reactions in Anglophone culture and consider how effectively we can reflect them into sentences and design.”<sup>12</sup> The president of a cosmetic manufacturing company observed, “We must not remain simply following in the steps of America. Now it is the age of Asia. We Asian people need to relativize the American way of thinking. In order to do so, we must have eyes to look at our everyday life from outside.”<sup>13</sup> An engineer–salesperson in a printing company expressed the following view: “Beyond specialties, people in the world have literary grounding, which appears in conversation. Conversation gets preference over negotiation in business; conversation reflects the quality of a person in charge and his or her company and leads to assessment of reliability of the company.”<sup>14</sup> Although it is difficult to list all the replies, here are two more examples: A processor of plastic panels said, “English sentences in proposal and in contract are not easy: they are written in their favor. We need to closely read it and interpret it from the multi-dimensional eyes on their background like tradition, habit, culture, history, actuality, a way of thinking, and so on.”<sup>15</sup> A wrapping-paper designer voiced his notion of retaining Asian culture: “A new vision, a new idea, and a new theory go around the world in English. It is not enough to just accept and imitate them. The important thing is to localize them into Japan through comparison of actuality, culture, tradition, way of thinking, and so on between the area where they were born and Japan, or achieve a conceptual breakthrough and create another new vision, idea, and product.”<sup>16</sup>

In summary, according to various individuals from diverse workplaces in Japan, students need four main abilities in English: (1) the ability to read passages closely and correctly and interpret them from multidimensional viewpoints to create something new and renovate dogma; (2) a critical viewpoint from which they can see everyday life from beyond its parameters in order to defy stereotypes and achieve conceptual breakthroughs; (3) the ability to broaden the interpretative horizon with an eye for differences in sociohistorical realities, sensibilities, ways of thinking, habits, traditions, politics, cultures, and differences between Japan and other cultures; and (4) rich humanity and empathy for others. In other words, the results of my workplace survey suggest that holistic use of English requires the following: the capability of reading texts; listening and reacting to others with care and empathy; being open to others’ ways of thinking and feeling and not relying only on one’s own belief system; establishing individuality so that one is able to interpret oneself, others, and texts;

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., (<http://e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx/job/62/111/88.html>).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., (<http://e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx/job/62/72/253.html>).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., (<http://www.e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx/job/62/109/289.html>).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., (<http://e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx/job/144/158/130.html>).

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., (<http://e-job-100.sakura.ne.jp/modx/job/144/158/207.html>).

accessing multidimensional viewpoints peculiar to regions; defying stereotypes and dogma; and achieving conceptual breakthroughs to create something new. Without these abilities, students cannot survive well in global society because their English usage becomes meaningless.

### III. Reading Literature for a Life in a Globalized World: For Survival

To truly learn practical English, education in Anglophone literature is a requisite. The four abilities listed earlier correspond to what persons of letters state about the significance and effectiveness of reading literature. The first ability – to read closely, interpret, create something new, and renovate dogma – corresponds to literature in its broadest sense and to “slow reading,” a term Aldous Huxley uses to argue for the quality, rather than the quantity, of reading. He differentiates between information and culture:

In a rapidly changing age . . . there is a real danger that being well informed may prove incompatible with being cultivated. To be well informed, one must read quickly a great number of merely instructive books. To be cultivated, one must read slowly and with a lingering appreciation the comparatively few books that have been written by men who lived, thought and felt with style (Huxley, 1933: 3).

The second ability, i.e. to critique and evaluate, corresponds to the significance of literature that Ralph Waldo Emerson argues for in his essay ‘Circles’:

Literature is a point outside of our hodiernal circle, through which a new one may be described. The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it . . . All the argument and all wisdom is not in the encyclopedia, or the treatise on the metaphysics, or the Body of Divinity, but in the sonnet or the play (Emerson, 1990: 178).

The third ability, broadening one’s horizon, corresponds to the significance of literature that D. H. Lawrence argues for in *The Spirit of Places*: The importance of reading the literariness of each place, considering some things peculiar to it, and of cross-cultural readings.

Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality. The Nile Valley produced not only the corn, but the terrific religions of Egypt. China produces the Chinese, and will go on doing so. (Lawrence, 1923/1964: 5–6)

Lawrence’s insistence on cultural difference includes understanding “deep culture” as Joseph Shaules states (Shaules, 2007: 1ff). Therefore, reading literature in English is

important because, as linguist Guy Deutscher (2011) argues, “The world looks different in a language” – this phrase serving as the title of his book.

The fourth ability, rich humanity and empathy, corresponds to a traditional literary function, which J. Hillis Miller calls “innocent reading” (Miller, 2002: 159). Miller argues we should continue to read literature because it is part of our basic human need to create imaginary worlds and to have stories. Some scholars of English education insist on literacy as the most important perspective for reading literature (Slater, 2004: 40). However, reading literature cannot be ascribed only to literacy. Individuals in workplaces expressed the importance of reacting to others with empathy. From this perspective, reading literature, which arouses emotion in the reader’s mind, is important. In addition, as Pierre Legendre mentions, this world is a fiction in the sense that the relation between the self and the world happens through a screen of language (Legendre, 2004: 82). If individuals cannot interpret voice in fiction, imagine its meaning, or empathize with characters, they are far removed from the practical world. Stephen Bremner, a scholar of English education, uses the “intertextuality” concept in literary theory for writing and reading business documents; however, this is inadequate because it ignores mood and empathy (Bremner, 2008: 306–21). Because people feel, they can think, and they can feel because they think in language. Another scholar of English education, Peter Elbow, believes that *how* one’s writing comes across is as important as *what* comes across, and thus he insists on the importance of “reader-based feedback,” and hence of learning literature (Elbow, 1998: 249).

All four abilities are significant for students’ lives in a globalized world. Moreover, thinking of abilities two, three, and four, comparatively reading literary texts, particularly cross-cultural close reading of literary texts, is absolutely essential.

This study of “comparative literature” does not imply approaching a literary text from a literary theory but rather from current world literature. It stems from a counterargument to using literary theory without reading from a mere human perspective: for experiencing the story itself, empathizing with the characters, and immersing one’s self in the setting. One reason for not reading Anglophone literature in English education is that literary research has diverged into popular literary theory, often leaving its human content and context behind, as many scholars, such as Robert Alter and Richard Rorty, and particularly those of world literature, such as Haun Saussy and Zhang Longxi, have argued.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, literary theory gives the reader a fresh eye; however, we should be careful when we criticize a literary text from a certain theoretical framework without considering the work’s concrete context. As Heidee Kruger, Edward Said, and Joseph Massad point out, theoretical frameworks sometimes contribute to ignorance or suppression of culture and people in sociohistorical situations peculiar to regions, particularly when critics omit concrete facts and histories peculiar to those regions (Kruger, 2012: 93; Said, 1983: 242; Massad, 2009: 255–6). This is theoretical alienation. Certainly, as Mikhail Bakhtin

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<sup>17</sup>See Alter, *The Pleasure of Reading in an Ideological Age*; Rorty, “Looking Back at ‘Literary Theory,’” 63–8; Saussy, “Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares,” 12; and Zhang, “Reading Literature as a Critical Problem.”



points out (Bakhtin, 1981: 262), a novel is by nature polyphonic, containing diverse social speech types and diverse individual voices, artificially organized. Therefore, literary texts should be read, first of all, with consideration to contextual histories, actualities, facts, cultures, habits, traditions, religions, sensibilities, ways of thinking, politics, and so on. In other words, they should be read through both localized and multidimensional viewpoints, rather than merely checked according to theories developed in certain eras or areas. In addition, as Patrick Hogan argues, cross-cultural reading leads us to understand human emotions and cognitive faculties in and beyond each area (Hogan, 2011: 91). Such reading meets the requirements of the four aforementioned abilities, which reemphasizes the authentic views of workplace interviewees.

#### IV. Reading Literature for a Life in a Globalized World: For Resistance

Reading literature with both localized and multidimensional viewpoints is significant not only for students' future jobs but also for their personal lives. Human life presents problems, and many of them arise from globalization; however, globalized life just presents another facet of the human condition, which literature exists to address: suffering, struggle, knowledge, ignorance, tragedy, pity, love, and other essential aspects of life.

In order to promote peace in the world, we should look at ourselves, first of all, when literature is very helpful because, as Emerson said, "The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it." From this perspective, Thane Rosenbaum insists on the importance of reading literature in law school in the U.S. According to Rosenbaum, law school and lawyer in the U.S. focus on fact and how to win in the court but do not care about justice or morality, or heart and soul of a person, which has made them unhappy. In order student of law school to learn what justice and morality are and what they will be if they do not care about heart and soul of a person, according to Rosenbaum, literary works of authors such as Shakespeare, Dickens, and Melville, where "the law is often depicted as a venue for crushed spirits" (Rosenbaum, 2005: 6), is very important. This function of literature fits ability one and four mentioned earlier.

Simultaneously, abilities one, two, and three imply figuring out the limits of cognition under the prevailing ideology in today's globalized world. Practically, the basis of globalization is capitalism, which began in the United Kingdom, and the country most dominant in globalization is the United States, with its specific economic and political standards. Potentially, our world tends toward deadlock driven by economics, overpopulation, and American standards in consumption of natural resources, with the inevitably resulting crises of environmental sustainability. To avoid deadlock, people living outside the United Kingdom and the United States need to learn about cultural differences and to understand the many reasons for global clashes; all people need to learn about the reception and transformation of cultures, imaginations, sensibilities, logic, habits, traditions, realities, and ways of thinking or, in other words, "the spirits of places," as D. H. Lawrence said. Encountering objects of different characters from *ours*, as Naoki Sakai mentions, "reveals the limits of our

cognition and perception, and makes clear a way to see the world differently. Analysis and confirmation of cultural and historical characters of different objects reveal potential blind spots in our and their cognition and perception” (Sakai, 2002: 166).

In addition, Shigehiko Hasumi points out that a literary text is “a function to bring out a whole system of problems which had been lurking around the text, through reading it” (Hasumi, 2006: 193). In other words, when non-Anglophone people read Anglophone literature, interpreting it from multidimensional viewpoints, they can find potential blind spots in our own and others’ cognition, perceptions, and systems.

However, in addition to that, localized reading provides resistance to the powers of capitalism and cultural dominance by Anglophone culture. As G. E. R. Lloyd states, “If we need more globalization in the sense of stronger international political and legal institutions, we clearly should resist globalization when that means the loss of some of the world’s diverse heritage in art, music, literature, and the rest” (Lloyd, 2011: 226). In addition, Legendre and Jean-Luc Nancy point out that all too often *globalization* really means *westernization* of the world; they are concerned that the West’s occupation is expropriating the means for resistance or counterargument (Legendre, 2004: 16–22; Jean-Luc Nancy, 2007: 34). In this situation, Nancy thinks much of art (which includes literature), because a world represented in art is another world (Nancy, 2007: 42).

The pairing of globalism and localism originally appeared in the global strategies of business administration. Coincidentally, business people see the need for literary education, in fact, for resistance to globalization and for survival in it, for we cannot very well live outside the globalized world. Red Chan (2011) insists, “A useful start to understanding ‘world literature’ in East Asia is to think in terms of cross-cultural interactions within the region” (Chan, 2011: 464). Yes, reading world literature with localized eyes can contribute particularly to Asian readers. Current world literature has a valuable place and underscores the importance of *reading* literature; however, localized reading goes beyond Eurocentrism.<sup>18</sup> In other words, helping Asian students resist globalization and its accompanying cultural losses means reading closely, particularly with Anglophone literature, *not* reading through the lens of literary theories from Europe, *not* blindly accepting Western and Westernized culture, but resisting by reading from localized and multidimensional viewpoints.

Some may doubt this idea as being just “each to his taste,” and deny literature’s significance in public education. In *Why Literature?* – from the perspective of Winnicott’s theory of the transitional object – Cristina Vischer Bruns argues that literature helps to bring forth a new self and new society. Regarding fiction as a kind of transitional object, she observes,

literary reading is valuable for individuals and for society because it functions as an especially effective occasion for re-working our conceptions of ourselves and

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<sup>18</sup>Spivak also insists on adopting the area studies model in her book *Death of a Discipline*. Siskind’s argument is also suggestive (See Siskind, 2003: 343).

others. Through it our way of being in the world can be altered or modified as it accesses psychological states where self-other boundaries are fluid and open to change. Literary reading's location in transitional space between inner experience and the external world makes possible this formative role, essential not only for children and youth who are still maturing but equally for adults who need the inner flexibility to adjust to a continually changing environment (Bruns, 2011: 37).

Her view can rectify the disadvantaged position of literary reading in public education after the appearance of reader-response theory. Presently, student-centered education is popular and combined with reader-response theory, reading literature has become so relative that it has lost its significance in public education. Truly, some scholars of English education, such as Alan Hirvela, point out the effectiveness of reader-response theory for English language teaching (ELT) from the viewpoint of learners' autonomy (Hirvela, 1996: 127–34); however, such a viewpoint lets students withdraw into their own subjectivity (Tanaka and Sugai, 2001: 77). Bruns insists that reading literature is, rather, to meet others with a different character from the reader. In other words, as Sakai points out, reading literature points the way for us to see the world differently.

Carl Rogers originally created student-centered education.<sup>19</sup> His theory is based on the opinion that, rather than persons who can effectively accumulate knowledge, education should foster persons who can live autonomously, renovating knowledge by themselves in a rapidly changing age (Rogers, 1969: 104). Certainly, our era fits Rogers's description. In addition, Bruns points out that reading literature contributes to the continuously "changing self," described in Rogers's education as "a fully-functioning person" (Rogers, 1989: 412–6; Rogers, 1967: 183–4). Presently, student-centered education, as I remark later, is developed without considering the significance of its technical terms, such as *facilitator*, *contract*, *empowerment*, and *fully functioning person*, all of which were created by Rogers. A true student-centered education should adopt reading literature closely in order to better contribute to the students' self-development.

#### V. The Golden Mean of Education

I have argued for the importance of reading literature in English according to the opinions of a wide variety of people in workplaces in Japan; however, I do not deny the value of oral English education and pragmatic reading strategies. From a pedagogical perspective, we cannot choose just this or only that. Most pedagogies have advantages and disadvantages, and thus what is important is balance. Japanese students' declining English test scores indicate that something is definitely out of balance. In addition, as Guy Cook (2010) argues, although the denial of close reading

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<sup>19</sup>Charles A. Curran is often misunderstood as the creator of student-centered education in the field of English education. Furthermore, John Dewey established a similar educational theory with student-centered education; however, Dewey's education is "child-centered education" and differs from Rogers's "student-centered education" despite the fact that Dewey had considerably influenced Rogers (See Kuwamura, 2010: 127–47).

and translating literature in English in language teaching began in the early twentieth century, that denial is a prejudice; and close reading of literature, in fact, effectively helps students learn English.<sup>20</sup> Certainly, oral English and English for business purposes are needed; however, closely reading fiction develops not only English but also empathy, humanity, the human condition, and notions of how one can live from a different perspective. Again, we should remember what Patrick Hogan points out: cross-cultural reading of literature leads us to understanding human emotions and cognitive faculties (Hogan, 2011: 91).

From the viewpoint of brain science, it is true that empathy is important in academic knowledge. Intelligence and emotion are in unity. Intelligence and feeling link to the faculty of reason, and for developing reason, emotion plays a critical role. As the brain scientist Antonio R. Damasio states, “Emotion, feeling and biological regulation all play a role in human reasoning” (Damasio, 2005: 8). In addition, as Hitoshi Ōshima explains in his lecture on brain science and literature, the biological regulation of the brain is brought about unconsciously by automatic nerves and then a body experiences an emotion, which facilitates creation of images in the brain and consciousness. The brain is aware of its own consciousness. At the same time, emotion becomes feeling. Feeling arouses thinking and simultaneously the feeling is memorized; this process finally produces a sense of self through verbalization (Ōshima, 2012). Humans can feel something and thus think of it and can think of something and thus feel it, and they express it in language: I feel, therefore I am.

As for reading literature, a can-do self-evaluation list (what we call “Can Do List”) does not neglect feeling entirely. In addition, reading literature in the list is mainly reserved for advanced students. However, because of their low motivation, few students become advanced. If Japanese English education follows the “Can Do List,” many Japanese students will never read a story in English or any Anglophone literature at all during their school days. In that case, they can never rise to the challenges voiced by the workplace interviewees and summarized in the words of Huxley, Emerson, Lawrence, and others. If an original story of Anglophone literature is difficult and too long for Japanese students, they should read poetry. Or, as a generous compromise, they can read a retold version of a literary work, comparing some important and/or easy passages with the original. However, even if the students encounter many difficult words, phrases, and sentences, an attitude of trying to understand what is difficult to understand is also important in itself. Such an attitude is fundamental for human learning, careers, and relationships.

Not only pedagogy but also education itself should be balanced. Public education in a democratic society has three social functions: (1) integration of society, (2) selection and division, and (3) autonomy of individuals (Hara, 2005: 158). The first function is to teach common knowledge and skills to students in order to attain democratic equality. To achieve this, a common curriculum is adopted (Ibid: 158–9). The second function, which appeared in the early twentieth century, is to select and divide students effectively and progressively. The concept aims to place students in the right jobs through various curricula according to individual interest and ability and

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<sup>20</sup>Cook’s book also includes information on history of English education.

to measure students' academic abilities numerically, for instance, with achievement tests, in order to promote social progress and strengthen national power (Ibid: 159). The third function, autonomy, involves liberal education that enables students to live, work, and contribute positively to society (Ibid: 160).

Historically, educational systems emphasize one of these three functions and often implement educational reform. For instance, in the United States, because of Herbert's unsuitability to the times, his educational method was replaced at the turn of the twentieth century by progressive education, including Dewey's child-centered education. However, progressive education has the disadvantages of systematic learning and of teaching material without enough intellectual value. Thus text-centered and curriculum-centered education, such as Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy, replaced progressive education, particularly after the shock experienced in the United States by Russia's launch of Sputnik. When the relationship between teacher and student was broken during the Student Movement in the 1960s, Carl Rogers's student-centered education superseded other pedagogies by emphasizing and focusing on empathy and understanding for the individual student from his or her internal framework of reference. After that, many scholars began doubting students' academic abilities and, in the 1980s, most educational systems again focused on academic development. These changes came partly from misunderstanding each educational theory, but demonstrate that each pedagogy has advantages and disadvantages. Globalization, national military and economic strength, fierce international economic competition, and numerical estimation have led education to attach too much importance to practical utility.<sup>21</sup> For example, as Harry Lewis (2007), the former dean of Harvard College, criticizes "excellence without a soul," current educational practice emphasizes practical utility when competition for excellence has never been fiercer.

Japan seems to have adopted an attitude toward education similar to that which Harry Lewis is criticizing. Truly, in Japan, student-centered education, with the function of individual autonomy, has been the most common. However, the Japanese approach to student-centered education tends to mainly contribute to the function of selecting and dividing students to win in the larger international competition. One reason is that the educational theory is implemented without true understanding of Rogers's terms, such as *student-centered education*, *facilitator*, *contract*, and *significant learning*. In Japan, these terms contribute to academic development, but not to the improvement of character, though Rogers's emphasizes educating the whole person by balancing knowledge and sensibility. Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory, "cooperative learning theory," is also currently popular in Japan, but it does not work well as adapted to the Japanese context, either. Educators use Vygotsky's theory without implementing his methods of class preparation, which detail great efforts to contrive strategies for increasing low-achieving students' motivation. In Japanese

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<sup>21</sup>These days, "Smile-Scan," which measures the score of a smile and helps students learn how to smile for hospitality, is popular in Japan. What Arlie R. Hochschild cautioned against in 1983 has now come to pass. Cf. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling*.

English education, this contributes to the selection-and-division function, with the tendency toward stripping educational theories of their original meanings and practices. Furthermore, there is often blind acceptance of theories of English education from foreign countries without consideration of their fuller meanings and implications for the Japanese context.

Not only education and pedagogy but also educational materials should be multidimensional and balanced. English is a communication tool, but what exactly comes across? Certainly English offers not only information but knowledge of the whole person as well. Communication is the act of a whole person, and by reading Anglophone literature, English education can help create empathetic, conscious, whole persons.

### Conclusion

From a pragmatic stance and proven principles of education, I have argued for the importance of literature in Japan. Authentic voices in Japanese workplaces, which, it is assumed, require only “practical English,” pronounce English literature, an understanding of Western culture, and empathy for diverse others as requisites in their workplaces. However, more importantly, I have argued that students need four essential abilities: (1) the ability to read passages closely and correctly and interpret them from multidimensional viewpoints to create something new and to renovate dogma; (2) a critical viewpoint from which to see everyday life from beyond its parameters and be able to defy stereotypes and achieve conceptual breakthroughs; (3) the ability to broaden the interpretative horizon with an eye to differences in sociohistorical realities, sensibilities, ways of thinking, habits, traditions, politics, cultures, and differences between Japan and other cultures; and (4) rich humanity and empathy for others. These abilities correspond to what happens when reading literature, in the broad sense of the term. In addition, comparatively reading cross-cultural literature assists students and others to build a resilient life in an increasingly westernized and globalized environment. From the perspectives of education and brain science, English education should be balanced through the inclusion of literature. In Japanese education, the selection-and-division function dominates, and although reading strategies and oral communication are needed, so is cross-cultural, slow reading of literature. An ideal educational model, as sociologist S. Schiering Marjorie states, “is evidenced by linking common social and societal realities through the reciprocity of thinking and feeling” (Marjorie, 2012: 35). As many working professionals attested, such linking and reciprocity can be developed and nurtured by reading Anglophone literature.

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