Thought and Action on “English as an International Language” per Yoshisaburo Okakura: Focusing on Acceptance of Basic English in the Early 1930s*

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Keeping in mind the theoretical issues of English language education reforms corresponding to globalization, this paper investigates the thought and action of Yoshisaburo Okakura’s later years, who lead the systematisation of English education. First, I examine and consider how Okakura accepted Basic English which was the simplification of the English language system that was devised by Charles Ogden at the beginning of 1930s. Second, a twisted relationship of “English as a foreign language” and “English as an international language” is examined historically and critically.

Keywords: Yoshisaburo Okakura; English language education; English as an International Language; English as a Foreign Language; Basic English; International Auxiliary Language

Introduction

Nowadays in Japan, English language education reforms corresponding to globalization is being promoted as a government policy. Based on a premise that English is an “international common language”, “foreign language proficiency” that emphasises communication is called for. After all, what is an “international common language”? What are the differences and relationships with a “foreign language”? There have not been any deep discussions about basic concepts that constitute an “international (common) language”. Principles and characteristics of education for English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as an international

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language (EIL) are different. However, it has been the fundamental problem of English language education in Japan that the distinction of the two are blurred and twisted. In short, the education of EFL aims for non-native speakers of English to acquire meta-language proficiency while placing emphasis on cultural values that are associated with the English language. The education of EIL, in contrast, goes beyond the distinction of native and non-native speakers of English, and aims for the acquisition of International Auxiliary Language (IAL) that puts emphasis on its practical values. A question that “whether it is acceptable to make a language of a particular people (in other words, English) into an international common language (or an international auxiliary language)” cannot be overlooked. However, when considering the localisation and diversification of the English language that advanced globally, what should be pursued is a condition of post-Anglo-Saxon, and a state of EIL that is clearly distinguished from EFL.

The state of EIL, and a relationship with EFL is an issue that requires examination from a historical perspective. In this respect, Yoshisaburo Okakura is in a crucial position. Okakura consistently pursued a state of language that would make modern Japan a nation-state, and he is especially known for arriving at the knowledge of EFL. He was born in 1868 when the Meiji Restoration began and the nation was set on a course towards full modernisation. He passed away in 1936, when that modernisation stalled and the whole country became geared towards total war. “Anglo-American Studies” called Eigaku relies heavily on European and American teachers. It further means a condition where acquiring the English language meant acquiring a knowledge of the West. While Japan was faced with a crisis of being colonised, to make “the Japanese language” as a unified language was under way to overcome and free itself from the outmoded linguistic division at that time. At the time of the modern nation-state development period around 1900, he endeavoured to construct “a foreign language” which meant “English” that did not contradict with and complemented to the institutionalisation of “the Japanese language” by parting from “the Anglo-American Studies” that had continued from the Meiji Restoration period. Okakura devoted his energies to activities that centred around education and research of English, and he remained active in his later years in the 1930s. This paper mainly pays heed to Okakura’s concentration on “Basic English” (BE) which was officially announced in 1930, and how he endeavoured for its education and diffusion in his later years. BE was devised by C. K. Ogden who was a linguistic philosopher and psychologist from England. BE is a simplified English system that is constituted from 850 basic vocabulary and minimum grammatical rules. The term “Basic English” is created from the first letters from “British, American, Scientific, International, and Commercial” that combined the meaning of basic and rudimentary. Its purpose was to make IAL a means for conveying opinions of the whole world, a first step for learning English for non-native speakers, and clarification of the thought of native English speakers. Since the time of its announcement, the idea created controversy internationally.

Okakura’s intense involvement in BE, an improved version of English, was received as a social incident, as he was known more as a translator and promoter of English literature. In order to understand this, it is necessary to pay attention to how he started to advocate EIL instead of EFL during this period, by ascertaining the fluctuation of the imperialistic world and transformation of the nation-state. By this time, he had retired from Tokyo Higher Normal School where he served as the head professor of English Department, and was giving English lessons on the radio at its beginning stage while working as the head of Department
of English Literature at Rikkyo University. For someone who was already in a prominent position within English education, and was enthusiastic about translation and introduction of English literature, how did he become engaged in the conceptualisation of EIL? Moreover, how did his acceptance relate to his own thinking sphere and historical context of the time? By illuminating Okakura’s endeavours activities in his later years, this paper aims to examine Okakura’s thoughts and actions related to EIL while examining the state when he accepted BE in the early 1930s. This will be a study that critically investigates the historical relationship between EIL and EFL while raising the issue of how “the Japanese language” was conceptualised at the time.

Okakura is an indispensable figure in the history of English language education and English linguistics and literature in Japan. So far, his beliefs and work have been discussed with reference to his major activities and publications. However, his involvement in BE has mostly been neglected. Okakura’s philosophy for English language education is widely known as a theory of purpose that values the cultivation of personal growth and focused on “training of reading skills.” The following especially captured the interest of contemporaries at the time: 1) English Language Education (1911) that included systematic theories is considered to be his major publication; 2) one hundred volumes of Kenkyusha English Classics (1921-32) that included institutional practice, supervised with Sanki Ichikawa and published from Kenkyusha; and 3) English language lessons on the radio (1925-36) that included those ideas into the program. Makoto Yamaguchi, Hajime Saito, and Sooan Yoon’s individual studies examined and considered them while questioning relationships between nationalism and imperialism of modern Japan. However, Okakura’s activities related to BE have been neglected. A theory of purpose that values the cultivation of personal growth was succeeded and repeated in the process of English becoming “a national education” after WWII. However, whether BE and EIL were consistent with that remains an issue to be pursued.

This Okakura’s challenge is mentioned in historical studies of the BE promotion movement and biographical studies of Ogden who introduced the idea. Studies that are worthy of attention are the ones by Yutaka Umemoto and Yoshiko Aizawa. Umemoto’s pioneering study examined Okakura’s relationship with BE through facts and background information. He clarified that “it was a new attempt...to reform the English language education that was deadlocked”. However, the relationship between EFL and EIL was unexamined, as were the problems with BE. Aizawa’s detailed critical biography introduced exchanged letters that are recorded in Ogden’s documents in McMaster University Library. She clearly brought out Okakura’s thoughts as the representative of BE and how they differed from other concerned parties around him. From this book that “investigated the image of Ogden by focusing on Basic”, however, it is not possible to fully understand Okakura’s thoughts and actions related to BE in their entirety.

Based on these previous studies, this paper will 1) summarise tendencies after WWI which is the background for understanding why Okakura advocated EIL, 2) investigate Okakura’s actions during his stay overseas in 1931 which influenced him to accept BE, 3) examine his work related to BE as a materialisation of EIL, 4) examine his attempt to reform spelling that was accompanied by advocating BE, and 5) inquire into Okakura’s theory of EIL and its range, and arrive at a perspective that questions the current state and highlights implications. The main data source is compiled from Okakura’s published books and journal articles. His unpublished “documents related to Okakura Yoshisaburo” owned by Tenshin
Memorial Museum of Art in Ibaraki will also be drawn on.

1. Historical context after WWI – longing for an international language and the state of Japan

When viewed from a wider context, Okakura’s thoughts and actions related to EIL were prescribed by a worldwide structural change brought about by WWI and increased interest in an international (common) language and a linguistic reform. An outline of the formation and development of BE that punctured the stream, and a state of Japan focusing on Okakura’s movement will be identified.

After WWI, peace and disarmament orientation increased, and a demand for an international (common) language reached its peak as relationships amongst nations grew closer. In Europe, after all, there is a history of pursuing a dream of “a universal language” by dismantling “the Tower of Babel” of Genesis in the Old Testament. Its pursuit was popular especially when the power of Latin decreased in the 17th century, and various a priori artificial languages were being attempted philosophically and experimentally. From the end of 19th century when nation-states gained control up to this period, multiple a posteriori language plans with practicality were proposed. That was like creating a new artificial language (a planned language) like in the case of Esperanto, or modifying already existing natural languages (ethnic languages) such as making English into BE. Especially Esperanto that L. Zamenhof announced in 1887 attracted so much attention that the League of Nations discussed whether it should be considered as IAL. Linked to this, an attempt of reforming letters and limiting the number of vocabulary was also instigated. Focusing on the spelling reform movement, this was the period when the perspective of EIL gained prominence. This was a consequence of mixed feelings within England. There were feelings of superiority from the progress and diffusion of the English language worldwide yet also a sense of crisis towards change and division under imperialism. A recognition that a linguist E. Sapir described in the following was prevalent by the early 1930s: some such regular system as Esperanto is theoretically desirable but that it is of little use of work for it because English is already de facto the international language of modern times.

An original idea of BE that Ogden created was announced over forty years after the creation of Esperanto. This could be understood as his concrete practice of “Debabelisation” (a made up word by Ogden which meant to break away from a mixed and interrupted state of languages). Reflecting on WWI, it included a dream for ideal world peace. BE allowed the user to draw on general daily linguistic expressions from only 850 words as well as simple sentence construction. The basic vocabulary was not selected based on statistically frequent usage, but instead on semantics after being decomposed into word elements. It fully applied metaphor and context. Such were its features. It was a reasonable approach that was systematised by abstracting its principles, and not a deviation from normal English. During WWI, propaganda was frequently used to mobilise the masses by skilfully using the power of language. In order to not fall into such “Word Magic” (magic of words), he analysed thoroughly its function and structure with an assumption that language can be controlled.

The development of BE and its advertisement and diffusion were implemented through the Orthological Institute which was founded by Ogden in 1927. Moreover, BE developed
through a magazine called *Psyche* which Ogden was an editor of, and through publications from Kegan Paul publisher in London. BE was positioned in the most important section of “orthology” – the science of language norms. Its proposal was announced as “Panoptic English” (English that every word is comprehensible at a glance) in January 1929 in *Psyche*, and its complete version came out a year later in the same magazine. It aimed to instantly widespread internationally, and published books related to BE such as an instruction manual, a primer, and a phrase book. They are called mini-psyche that were published in a series of “Psyche Miniatures.” By utilising the new media of that time such as records, radio, and movies, the institute designed and promoted the translation of famous readings, developed materials, and teacher training. Funds and foundations in the US also supported and got involved, and especially the Rockefeller Foundation donated a large sum of funds for the promotion activities in the East Asian region. Its diffusion was conspicuous overseas. Representatives were placed in countries worldwide, and branches of the institution and BE centres were set up, and it rapidly expanded.

What should be noted is that English language education in Japan was referred to as a “failure” by H. E. Palmer from the development stage, and BE was positioned as a means to bring about improvement. Palmer who was playing an active role in England, came to Japan in 1922 and is known for making efforts in reforming Japanese English language education. Palmer was “Linguistic Adviser” to the Japanese Department of Education. Based on his experience in Japan, he announced in *Psyche*, before the Plan, principles and plans of selecting vocabulary for students learning English as a foreign language. Ogden who read this mentioned the case of Japan at the time of announcing the Plan, by touching on the “failure” and the “danger of being abandoned” of the English language education of the past. He further explained that it was useful for Palmer’s Institute for Research in English Teaching to develop a programme. At the time of announcing the complete version, by mentioning Palmer’s efforts, Ogden stressed that BE can be also beneficial to educators overseas. Both viewed Japan from the point of promoting the worldwide diffusion of English, but later their points of view diverged clearly. Considering what teachers experience, Palmer placed importance on the selection of vocabulary in terms of frequency of use. In contrast, Ogden’s BE viewed IAL as the main purpose and did not accept revisions and changes and no compromise was made.

Looking back upon the situation of Japan that was considered as a “failure” and faced with the “danger of being abandoned” of English language education in the Japan of this time meant it lost momentum as a policy goal. Disputes about whether to retain or abolish English language education occurred in 1927, and it became the target of intense criticisms and attacks. With a vision for Japanese nation-state to become independent and Europe’s relative decrease in status, people started to hold negative views towards the English language itself. Regardless of enormous time, energy, and expense spent, there was no fruitful improvement in secondary school English and this was considered a problem. Okakura admitted that there was room for improvement in “foreign language teaching methodology.” However, from the point of supporting foreign language education for the cultivation of personal growth, he persistently claimed its necessity and legitimacy. “A foreign language in our country” was considered as “a big window to the Western culture” and “a pipe that brings in the current of Western civilisation.” It was emphasised as “aiding the cultivation of personal growth” that would prevent one from catching “a disease of nationalism based on a mistaken
extreme delusion”. This went against the widely held view of apparent “failure.”

Stressing the importance of EFL is a manifestation of Okakura’s ideology in his previous years that was observed such as in “English Language Education”. From here on, from the time after WWI, he took new actions while expanding his conceptual field. In 1923, he established a school called 尹_yojo-juku that “aimed to invite harmony of Eastern and Western civilisation through understanding its language and literature”. The school cooperated with giving English lessons on the radio that began in 1925, and published a magazine entitled Boyo for two years from 1927. This was a coterie circle that later became the base of his activities, and his students from Tokyo Higher Normal School such as Rintaro Fukuhara gathered. Okakura at that time described as follows: “It is currently an urgent task to show each other one’s strong points. This is done by bringing expressions that differ in meaning due to academic disciplines born in both the East and West”. He further stated that “it is necessary for humankind to invent (create) a new, lively, complete, and healthy civilisation that would function as a third party between the East and West. This is done by both the East and West to come in contact with and embrace each other”. While tracing a worldview of dichotomous Orientalism, his prospect was that Japan represented “the East” and a third civilisation would emerge between “the West”. Okakura at this time repeated the significance of EFL, and it could be stated that he began to hold a view that went beyond that.

2. Overseas trip of 1931-32 – devising EIL and visiting Ogden

It was from 1931 that Okakura made a concerted effort to publicise and promote EIL. In October after the Manchurian Incident, Okakura was dispatched as a “special envoy for Japanese art” representing the Japanese government to modern Japanese painting exhibitions held in America. For three months, he was in charge of “publicizing art in the country.” He headed home in January 1932 through England and returned to Japan at the end of March. Going to England was not a primary duty, but was what he planned from the beginning “to mainly observe English language teaching”. As he described it as “having found a ray of light,” this last overseas trip that lasted for nearly half a year became the impetus for his activities in later years. There are two things that should be noted. One is that besides activities for “a special envoy for Japanese art” in America, whenever possible he enthusiastically explained what form EIL should take. Another is that he repeatedly met Ogden in England and deepened his understanding about BE, and became the Japanese representative for that promotion movement.

As soon as arriving in Seattle, he asserted that “English will eventually become an international language”. This was not a mere predicative message, but lead to his specific actions towards its becoming a project. He sent a letter to N. M. Butler who was President of Columbia University in New York, and asked for his understanding and cooperation. Butler was a philosopher who actively promoted international peace movement while being involved in the Carnegie Foundation and American diplomacy, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize that year. Okakura decided to get a fund from the Carnegie Foundation for the project of making English as IAL, and made a proposal to Butler. There was a note enclosed with the letter. While respecting Butler’s humanitarian contribution to international peace, Okakura clarified his ideas about how EIL should be, i.e. the purpose and concept of making English
as IAL.

According to the note entitled “Thoughts in Items Concerning a Would-be World Language”, “Most of the international disturbances that trouble us only too often at present, are principally an outcome of international misunderstanding. Some better means of international transmission of thought is necessary for the possible realization of world peace. Hence the need for an international auxiliary language”. Many artificial languages such as Esperanto have been devised so far, but they are like “the Frankenstein monster”. A qualified language should hold a history of development as a language, and that is no other language than English which is used by “the two most powerful nations” of Britain and America. However, because English spelling is extremely unsystematic and in “the horribly chaotic condition”, it has been a barrier to acquire for children in these countries and for foreign people like the Japanese. In a situation where airplanes and radios spread, in order to construct “World English” as ideal IAL, “a Committee consisting principally of competent American as well as British scholars, artists, experts etc. should be formed to give the whole field of linguistic and orthographical emendations and re-adjustments”. Although Okakura did not touch on BE, he designed a grand project, and attempted to put this into action, though he was not able to realise it.

When arriving in London, he visited the Orthological Institute that Ogden supervised. According to a comment entitled “A New Light” which came out after his return to Japan, a “serious” “motivation” of traveling to the UK was “to further deepen the vague knowledge and clarify” about BE. Ogden was “a scholar of deep learning,” “a person of rich humanity”. For most part of his four-week stay, Okakura stated that “reviewing past publications and expressing opinions about future publications [of BE], I spent a pleasant time on equal terms”. Ogden also stated how Okakura was enthusiastic about the study of BE, discussed with him every day and night, and built an intimate relationship. Okakura accepted BE’s ideas and principles with surprise, and said “This is the great hope for Japan, and my last years will be given to putting the idea of Basic before my countrymen”. As a delegate of Japan, Ogden agreed to entrust the entire authority and its publicity and diffusion.

After returning to Japan, Okakura energetically spoke of the significance of BE as “like a new beacon in the English circle”. Like he declared to Ogden, he devoted himself to its education and diffusion. His first words after his return was “I am thinking of proposing the 850 words to the Japanese Department of Education and bring about a huge innovation in Japanese English language teaching”. A reason why he was attracted to BE was that it can be promoted as IAL, and it is “a very effective system that would be the base of English language teaching in our country”. Furthermore, “using complete small-scale English as a starting point, transition towards learning regular English becomes easy”. He had to admit the criticism such as “not making satisfactory improvement” that was raised during the disputes mentioned earlier about whether to retain or abolish English language. However, that did not resolve all the problems, and in his idea, “movement for improving spelling in an appropriate form had to accompany” in order to make English into IAL. These reforms are “issues that both British and American people should come together and think…and other foreigners should also consult”, and Okakura even planned to make it into an international cooperative project. Like his attempt to apply for a fund from the Carnegie Foundation, with the leadership of the two great powers of Britain and America, and with the cooperation of “a foreigner” like himself, it became an agenda that was most likely to be realised.
Okakura’s trip overseas told the people of Britain and America the mission of EIL. Furthermore, in his drive to promote “Eastern and Western civilisation harmony”, he was to discover the specific conditions and outlook of EIL.

3. Actions related to BE – as a Japanese representative

As soon as Okakura returned to Japan in March 1932, Yoyo-juku hosted “Basic English informal get-together.” Okakura spoke about “the future of English as an international language” and “envisioned plans.” A. P. Rossiter, who was an English instructor at the Naval Academy “introduced authentic Basic to the audience and further explained in detail about the content of Basic English” 32. Rossiter, who received training directly from Ogden, is the first person who introduced and practised BE in Japan. Although there is no sign of “making a proposal to Japanese Department of Education”, Okakura explained the necessity of EIL whenever possible, and made efforts for the education and spread of BE. In Iwanami Series’ Science of Education, he wrote a chapter on “English Language Education”. In the chapter, he continued his usual claim about “the value of a foreign language for the cultivation of personal growth”. In the end, he argued about “the future of English teaching in Japan”, and introduced a summary of BE that could be adopted as “beginner’s English” 33. With the return of Okakura, “Basic Movement” became “suddenly and actively apparent on the surface”, and it was said to be “one of new influential movements” at that time 34.

Okakura was viewed as an influential spokesman, and his efforts as a delegate was conducted with the support and negotiations with Ogden at the Orthological Institute. When the Rockefeller Foundation offered a fund to the Institute from 1933 for the diffusion of BE in Asia, Okakura began a promotion project making use of the fund with Tsutomu Takata from Toyama Higher School. Takata was Okakura’s former student. With Okakura’s recommendation, Takata studied under Ogden and frequented the Institute when he studied in England around the time when Okakura returned to Japan. Takata gained trust and published translations of BE in England 35. Okakura entrusted the management of the fund to Yoyo-juku. According to a report by Fukuhara who was the secretary, it stated that “Mr Takata accepted the research expense every time it was sent, and offered the full amount to Mr Yoshisaburo Okakura. Mr Okakura donated half of the expense to Mr Takata every time”. Okakura became “a delegate in Japan for basic research and publicity”, and Takata conducted the research “under Okakura’s supervision” 36.

With that funding, Okakura supervised and published a book called “The Basic English Library”. To Okakura, who was the representative, mini-psyche and “other kinds of books and journals related to Basic” were sent and donated from the Institute to Okakura, who was the representative 37. It could be said that this Library is a Japanese version of the series. Kenkyusha that “maintained a neutral attitude” with Okakura published six books with his preface 38. They were published every six months on average. Its composition is as follows: 1) Ogden, C. K., translated by Takata, T. (1934). The ABC of Basic English, 2) Daniels, F. J., annotated by Okakura, Y. (1935). The Strange Horse: and Other Stories, 3) Gatemby, E. V. (1936). Japan and Some English Writers, 4) Takata, T. (1936). A New Guide to Basic English, 5) Defoe, D. translated and annotated by Takata, T. (1936). Robinson Crusoe, and 6) Ogden, C. K., translated by Hamabayashi, I. (1937). Basic by Examples.
Takata was involved most and in the publication of these three books. Other than Okakura and Takata, other Basicist joined, such as F. J. Daniels of Otaru Higher Commercial School who was a collaborator of Ogden. Of these six titles, 1) and 6) represents Ogden’s mini-psyche and are translated into Japanese. On the other hand, 2), 3), and 5) are reading books translated into BE, but there are no books that correspond to 2) and 3). A worldwide famous book 5) is included in the series, and it is a book with notes in Japanese added to the BE translation that Takata published while staying in England. There is also no original work that matches 4), but it seems that the book was written based on Ogden’s handbook called *Basic Step by Step* (1939) for Japanese learners. It should be pointed out that, according to Ogden, “The purpose of this book is to give a general idea of the stages by which Basic English, as outlined in the *ABC*, may be made part of the teaching system of any country”, this handbook was not translated and published without alteration. Mini-psyche was intended for international diffusion, but the Library was arranged in a way that would match Japanese learners. Other books such as *The Basic Words* (1932) and *The Basic Dictionary* (1934) were also planned to be published in Japanese, but this Library ended incomplete with the death of Okakura.

Although Okakura actively made efforts, his thinking did not coincide completely with Ogden’s, and he also felt issues related to BE. In order to fully overcome the obstacles mitigating against English language education in Japan, Okakura advanced a rationale for BE as “a runway to ordinary English”. However, that left institutional problems such as “entrance examinations” as well as other problems stemming from the discrepancy between BE and standard English. In other words, problems occur such as when “there are people of Basic on one hand, and people who speak ordinary English on the other, the people of Basic end up not understanding many words that were used by the other group”. Okakura’s disagreement with Ogden about the reorganisation and limitation of the 850 words was obvious. This was because Okakura viewed “modification was of course necessary”, whereas Ogden did not approve any modifications and changes. Okakura understood that “its presence was so strong…that it was impossible to laugh at it and pretend that it did not exist”, and felt necessary to re-examine it through practice. Once BE was viewed as a positive influence. By Okakura’s very late years, however, BE was “surrounded by almost all of the people against it”, and it was stated that “among various authorities in English circles, almost everything about BE was objected, and Okakura alone supported BE resolutely, and tried to implement it steadily”.

It is also interesting to find that Okakura became interested towards “the unification movement of the Japanese language” in the empire. Needless to say, Japan before the war was a colonial empire, and Japan was expanding its territory as it established “Manchukuo” in its territory. Kochi Doi, who was a scholar of English literature at Tohoku Imperial University, published a book called “Basic Japanese” in 1933 with its ideas obtained from BE. Okakura evaluated his attempt, and extended his explanation in the domain of “organisation and purification of the Japanese language”. The language of the world and the language of the empire needed to be in a relationship that was mutually constructive. Immediately after his return to Japan, Okakura thought “to establish Cultural Centres in various places for the diffusion of English as a simplified international language”. Once the aforementioned Library was completed, he had planned to “establish a special school where Basic was taught”. However, they were not realised in the end. According to the records of *Yoyo-juku* that were
sorted out after the death of Okakura, “the Rockefeller subsidies under the name Tsutomu Takata” were “2,500 dollars and 500 dollars for hiring assistants annually” that added up to “a total of 9,400 yen”, and “reached 28,200 yen over three years”45. Okakura never spoke publicly about this vast fund from overseas. Probably because of this financial support, he was able to conceptualise practice and systematisation of the grand plan in Japan. Okakura placed Yoyo-juku as a base that held a belief in “Eastern and Western civilisation harmony”. Although confronted with problems and was not able to realise his wish, Okakura took a participatory role in promoting BE worldwide while collaborating with Takata and other like-minded people.

4. Efforts concerning spelling reform – Anglic and an announcement of a new plan

Making English into IAL, for Okakura, BE was a prerequisite condition for EIL, but that was by no means enough. As mentioned earlier, it was necessary to adequately reform spelling as it was a learning barrier because of its disorder and difficulty. What he noticed was a proposal made in 1930 by R. E. Zachrisson of Uppsala University in Sweden about “Anglic” as “an international language”. Zachrisson who was “one of leading figures in the Scandinavian English linguistic circle” who contributed greatly to “the history of English phonology and British toponymy”. Anglic reconstructed pronunciation and spelling based on scientific and statistical research46. Okakura was fascinated by this from when he was abroad, and he introduced it as follows in the aforementioned “Science of Education” of Iwanami Lectures. This “new English spelling” “should be considered as a recent movement” in the “spelling reform movement” of Britain and America. He stated that “there were British and American authorities of the field as guides, and it was skilful simplification of the previous English spellings that have been practised up to the present”, “that used cunning means, and it causes discontent in our feelings”47. British and American thoughts were observed as expected, and as in the case of BE, Okakura did not consider Anglic as a comprehensive system.

Okakura also spoke frequently about Anglic. He published *Anglic and Basic – the Movement for the International Auxiliary Language of English* in “English and English Literature Lectures” that were published from 1933 by the *Shin-eibeibungakusha* publishing company. For Okakura, Anglic was merely “one of spelling reform plans after all”, and it did not deserve to be considered as “an international language”. Okakura thought that EIL would be achieved together with rational simplification of English similar to that observed in BE. Referring to Zachrisson’s *Anglic: an International Language with a Survey of English Spelling Reform* (Second enlarged edition, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1932), Okakura introduced its summary, and outlined more specifically his “dissatisfaction” with Anglic. That is to say, Anglic alphabet sets Consonant Symbols and Vowel Symbols that match “the spelling form”. However, “irregular spelling” of frequently used words such as “I, me, my” are treated as exceptions as “Wordsigns”. This is “unusual”. It is “obvious cheating”, although sixty percent of spelling may “not [be] different” but “defective elements” are “rampant”. He criticises that “it is a wrongdoing that is the same as sneaking pork soup into a vegetarian cuisine at an inspection”48.
What should be noted is that not only did Okakura explain about and criticise Anglic. He also attempted to rationally simplify English spelling himself, and enquired after the views of the wider public society in a sixty-page paper entitled “The Simplification of English Spelling”. This was published in October 1932 in a journal *Studies in English Literature* of The English Literary Society of Japan where he served as a councilor. Probably due to a request from Okakura himself, it was reprinted into “a book” from the printing company of the journal, *Kenkyusha*. The author assumed knowledgeable British and American people to be the main readers. This is clear by giving notice in the beginning as a “meddlesome” proposal from the far East, imitating Eastern “art of mercy”. Its ways of statement resembled that of Zachrisson’s small book, *Anglic*. The book first outlines the mission of EIL and the necessity of spelling reform integral to the mission. His argument is shown intensively. English is taught as an important subject in Japanese secondary schools, but learners “have fought for six complete years against the most fearful orthological odds in the whole world”. On the other hand, it was emphasised that “English, with all its orthological imperfections, has, during the last fifty years, been steadily making its triumphal march around the whole habitable world, thus by gradual steps promising to win for itself the glorious prestige of being an interlanguage in no very distant future”\(^ {50}\). By explaining again the note he used to appeal to Butler stated earlier, and while mentioning that BE would play an important role, he shifted the focus of his argument towards the spelling reform that Ogden did not work on\(^ {51}\).

Okakura reviewed the history of spelling reforms back to the late 16\(^ {th} \) century, and specifically indicated the corresponding relationship between speech-sounds and orthography of the so called “standard” English. He gives a list by dividing the sounds into consonants and vowels, and what is confirmed is that it is written in a way that is contrary to the phonetic principles, and states that “not only because there happened to be more than one and single letter for a sound, but because one and single letter was necessitated to stand for more than two, nay, often several sounds”\(^ {52}\). Next, he summarised the movement of the late 18\(^ {th} \) century, and the spelling reform movement that was active in both Britain and America from the late 19\(^ {th} \) century to the 20\(^ {th} \) century, by mentioning people and institutions that promoted them. He further writes in detail about the Anglic realised at this time\(^ {53}\). The introduction of Anglic continues for ten pages, and he presents his own ideas based on this at the end. It is what he named “The Y \cdot O \cdot K Alphabet”, and it was designed as he pursued phonetic principles. For instance, the letter “a” can be read as [æ] (cat), [ei] (gate), [aː] (father), or [æ] (all). They are written “a” (cat), “a-” (ga-t), “a:” (fa:th’r), and “o:” (o:l) respectively. Its feature is that by using assistant symbols such as hyphen (-) and colon (:), there are rules to read “a-” as [ei]. It is stated that “what I propose humbly to offer here to the thinking public is English in simplified orthography for use in the earlier stages of instruction, in the hope that it may prove a substantial help to correct pronunciation as well as an unfailing means of facilitating the attainment of ordinary reading and spelling”\(^ {54}\). It cannot be denied that the pursuit for phonetic principles made the spelling system more complex. However, this was a result of focusing on the pronunciation for beginners.

This paper was made into a booklet and was “distributed to scholars within academia and beyond it”. However, perhaps because it was “such an innovative proposal”, it was “completely ignored from the general public”. Even Fukuhara, who was Okakura’s pupil, made a comment on it when it was announced, saying “it is a fine work which Okakura did his best in recent years”. However, he continued to state that “I as a layman do not intend to
make remarks on it”, and avoided to get involved deeply. Still, Okakura continued and tried to “devise reform plans that suited better with the current spelling”. However, this, also ultimately remained incomplete and was not announced with his death. Okakura’s spelling plan that was introduced in Anglic and Basic hardly received attention, but it was an effort he made together with BE until the end. While punting on the stream of the spelling reform movement that covered EIL of this period, it was an attempt to make suggestions to Britain and America from the point of Japan as a representative of Asia. Following Zachrisson, it seems that Okakura tried to assist from the point of “a foreigner” as an outsider. It could be said that his ideology of “Eastern and Western civilisation harmony” manifested in it.

**Conclusion**

Keeping in mind the current situation mentioned at the beginning of this paper, I would like to consider what EIL was for Okakura, and how his thoughts and actions should be understood. This means to question the conceptualisation of “the Japanese language” as a national language correlative, and to clarify differences between EFL. It is also to view the phase of knowledge related to “English” after the 1930s which was a time of turbulence and reorganization of the nation-state.

Okakura did not use the term “an international language” easily, but he took it as a new direction in how language should be of this time. Before the reform plans were introduced in Anglic and Basic mentioned earlier, Okakura first introduced them in “the Japanese language – its unification”, and explained them in terms of “an international language – its joint use”, “artificial international auxiliary language”, “English as an international language” in order. According to that, for Okakura, a relationship between “a standard language” and “a local dialect” for “a people that use a national language” was parallel to a relationship between “an international language” for “mankind” and “a national language” for each “ethnic group”. What is preferred today is “to strengthen the establishment of a standard language within one national language, and bring that standard language up to a level where it becomes an inter-course language for the users of local dialects of that national language. Similarly, different ethnic groups using different languages select one more language other than their own as a language to communicate with the outside world. This appropriate common language needs to be qualified as an international auxiliary language”. As relationship of countries became closer, and the unification of the world progressed, Okakura became keenly aware of “the need for a suitable international auxiliary language” other than a language of their native country. For that “qualification”, it needed to be a language that “was used widely around the world”, “had literature that one could be proud of”, and “had less difficulty to learn”. Thus, it had to be “the English language”.

As observed so far, EFL that Okakura had emphasised stepped back, and EIL or making English into IAL came in the foreground at this time. Either way, it was necessary to build a multi-layered and mutual relationship with “the Japanese language”. If a language was as “an international language” and not “a foreign language”, then it was necessary to consider how the English language should be. EIL was the reform of the English language itself for Okakura. In other words, it required reasonable simplification so that even non-native speakers of English could equally acquire it. Thus, his actions corresponded and linked with the
active acceptance of BE and his attempt of the spelling reform. Of course, they were a means to find a way to reinvigorate English language education in Japan. For him, however, such issues in themselves were ample justification to make English into IAL. When it comes to EIL, it was not necessary to consider English as “the national language” of both Britain and America. However, he made specific actions supported by his idea of “Eastern and Western civilisation harmony” because Okakura thought that “the two most powerful nations” would take the lead and carry out the language reform. It was to confirm the fact of global supremacy of Britain and America and the dominant status of the English language, and to punt on its further promotion.

Did Okakura of this time part from EFL, and dispose of its knowledge? That is not the case. Reasons why Okakura concentrated on BE was because it was not only simplified English but also a rational approach towards general English. If that circuit was not secured, the acceptance of BE would not have been approved. Since Okakura was particularly thinking of applying it to “elementary English”, he probably had a vision leading to education for English literature. That was why he treated Esperanto as a monster, although he once admitted its usefulness from its rational features. As Yoon pointed out, Okakura’s argument of English language education was something that tried to spread imperialistic values. Although imperialism and nationalism for him were something that complemented mutually, it could be said that EIL was a new open intellectual field as contradictions between the two deepened. In such intellectual narrative, it was possible to conceal criticism such as “a copy of the West” that occurred in the debate of retaining or abolishing English language education. In other words, it was possible to hide the criticism that “a foreign language” equalled to blatantly following British and American imperialism by studying the English language. Moreover, it was possible to separate for the time being the issue of mental colonisation that might bring about by studying it. At this time, there was a stronger sense of crisis towards Japan’s isolation in the international society, and it was necessary for “Japan” to be actively sending out messages. This was linked with the interest of “the organisation and purification of the Japanese language” in the empire. This also brought about a recognition that “it was inevitably necessary to connect firmly the new countrymen from various places who spoke different languages in the territory with the people of old Japan for the future development of the Empire of Japan”.

“Why do we learn English?” – Okakura explained from basic questions in a book called The Royal Road to English published in 1934 that was originally the content given in his radio English lessons. According to him, “as one type of international auxiliary language, we learn English to announce our intentions and emotions of the Japanese people using this, as well as to absorb knowledge and expressions of the world. We use it as a means to assist our mother tongue”. “What is necessary for us as modern people is to cultivate within ourselves not only a mind-set for our nation but also what might be called an international mind”. Its purpose was “to participate actively and greatly for Japan as an international person”. He was ahead of his time and it echoes narratives used in today’s policies. On one hand, he stated that “present-day English is no longer a possession of one British country”, and on the other, “it is a language that great literatures from old times are being written, and it still continues to create literatures that are most advanced in the world at present”. The former shows an inclination towards EIL, and the latter shows an inclination towards EFL. The two connect without contradictions or conflicts.
Considering the current situation, Okakura’s plan for linguistic reforms of English and active promotion of EIL are worth attention. When considering a huge handicap of non-native speakers of English that could lead to various disadvantages and inequalities, it is not possible to reject proposals such as the international cooperative project of making English into IAL as unrealistic. As Sapir described, “[an international language must be] protected by the powerful negative fact that it cannot be interpreted as the symbol of any localism or nationality.” However, because Okakura valued the maintenance and development of “the national language”, he sought for ‘an international mind’ that was based on Anglo Saxon values, and that was mutually constructive with “a national mind”. Therefore, his view lacks a vision of linguistic and regional change and differentiation that lead to today’s state of “World Englishes”. If Okakura was imagining EIL that goes back to EFL, and if he was leaving aside the issue of twisted relationship of the two uncritically, one must admit that the issue has been succeeded and repeated up to the present.

There are many points in Okakura’s thoughts and actions of this period that should be considered in connection to the current state. It is necessary to carefully clarify the history of English language education from the point of EFL and EIL being intertwined and competing. Furthermore, Okakura’s activity related to “an international language” and symmetrical “a national language” has not been fully discussed in this paper. From 1934, Okakura served as a member of Special Romaji Investigation Committee (which was founded by the government in 1930 in order to unify Roman notation) and the Japanese Language Council (which was established in 1934 as an advisory body for the Minister of Education for the improvement of the Japanese language), and was actively involved in its reforms. It is also necessary to examine and consider specifically Okakura’s involvement in such areas.

Notes


Thought and Action on “English as an International Language” per Yoshisaburo Okakura

Kyoto: Jimbun Shoin, Chapter 3. Yoon, S.(2011), “Teikoku nihon to eigo-eibungaku [The Imperial Japan and English Linguistics, English Literature]”, Kyoto University: Doctoral Dissertation, Chapter 1 & 3. Of these, Yamaguchi discusses on English as “the international common language” of the 1930s (Chapters 5-7), however it does not on BE but on “an English conversation” and the mind-set in a problem.


20 Okakura, Y.(1924),“Brown Study (chu)”, Eigo seinen [The Rising Generation], Vol. 50, No. 8, January, p. 248.


23 “Bijutsu shisetsu kaeru [Special Envoy for Japanese Art Came Back],” Eigo seinen [The Rising Generation], Vol. 67, No. 2, April, 1932, p. 73.

24 “Okakura kyoju no eigoron [Professor Okakura’s Thought on English],” Eigo seinen [The Rising Generation], Vol. 66, No. 12, March, 1932, p. 428.


26 Y. Okakura’s Letter to Dr. N. M. Butler, President, Columbia University, N.Y., Jan. 19th, 1932 (draft), Okakura Yoshisaburo kankei shiryo [Collection of Yoshisaburo Okakura’s Documents], No. 191, in the Tenshin Memorial Museum of Art, Ibaraki. “Thoughts in Items Concerning a Would-be World-language” (draft), Ibid., No. 190. The attached memorandum is published in Eigo seinen [The Rising Generation], Vol. 67, No. 2, April, 1932.


30 Okakura (1932b), op. cit., pp. 79-80.

31 Okakura (1932a), op. cit., p. 4.


36 Fukuhara, R., “Rockefeller kenkyuhi no ken [Matter of Rockefeller Research Funds],” November 20th, 1933, in the envelope entitled “Rockefeller shikin no yoto ni kansuru Fukuhara-shi no an bun [Mr. Fukuhara’s Draft about Way of Use of Rockefeller Funds],” Okakura Yoshisaburo kankei shiryo [Collection of Yoshisaburo Okakura’s Documents], No. 726.

37 The Notebook for Recording on Yoyo-juku, 1936, p. 6, Okakura Yoshisaburo kankei shiryo [Collection of Yoshisaburo Okakura’s Documents], No. 753. A series of “Mini Psyche” and so on, are stored in Okakura Library at Central Library, University of Tsukuba Library, and I confirmed these books.

writing that is significant with Basic Step by Step of Mr. Ogden himself” (p. ii).


41 Okakura’s “Josetsu [Introduction]” in 1), p. xviii.

42 Miyata, K. (1936), “Omoidegusa: Ko-Okakura sensei no katarareta kotodomo [Reminiscence: Something told by Mr. Late Okakura],” Gengo Mondai [Language Problem], Vol. 2, No. 12, December, p. 539. Miyata was employed as an assistant of the BE promotion project with the Rockefeller funds.

43 Okakura, Y. (1933a), “Kokugo no seiri to joka: Doi kyoju no “kiso nihongo” o mae ni shite [Organisation and Purification of the National Language: In the Face of the Basic Japanese of Professor Doi],” Eigo seinen [The Rising Generation], Vol. 69, No. 6, June, pp. 186-188.

The former is cited from “Yoyo-juku rinji kouenka [Extraordinary Lecture Meeting of Yoyo-ju-ku]”, op. cit., the latter from Miyata (1936), op. cit.

45 The Notebook for Recording on Yoyo-juku, op. cit., p. 15.


47 Okakura (1932c), op. cit., pp. 31-32.

48 Okakura, Y. (1933b), Anglic to Basic: Eigo no kokusai hojokka undo [Anglic and Basic: Movement for English Reform as an International Auxiliary Language], Tokyo: Shin-eibeibungakusha, pp. 13-15. There is a booklet of Anglic in the above-mentioned Okakura Library, I also referred to it.

49 “Kenkyusha kanko shuppanbutsu nenpu [Chronological List of Publication in Kenkyusha]”, op. cit., p. 127.


51 Ibid., pp. 501-508.

52 Ibid., pp. 509-516.

53 Ibid., pp. 518-543.

54 Ibid., pp. 544-550.


56 Okakura (1933b), op. cit., pp. 1-10.


58 Yoon (2011), op. cit., p. 47.

59 Okakura (1933a), op. cit., p. 186.

60 Okakura, Y. (1934), Okakura sensei shoto eigo kowa [The Royal Road to English], Book One, Tokyo: Kenkyusha, pp. 1-5.

61 Ihara (2005), op. cit., Chapter 4.

62 Mandelbaum ed. (1949), op. cit., p. 113.