Book Review

Transcending Self and Other Through *Akogare* (Desire): The English Language and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Japan. By Chisato Nonaka (2018), 200pp. ISBN: 978178892170, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

In this rather slim book Chisato Nonaka discusses the relationship between English learning (as a second language) and internationalisation of education as a political choice by the Japanese government. She introduces the concept of "*akogare*", which is genuinely Japanese as an idea and a word, so that she may build an operational framework by which she would describe and analyse such emic and etic perspectives, as sociocultural and sociolinguistic relations between individual learners and the state policies on higher education. She then goes on to suggest the future possibilities of Japanese internationalisation as more than a mere description, and translates the term *akogare* to *desire.*

In the Introduction, she refers etymologically to the Japanese term *akogare* and explains why and how she refers to her own personal concern with the notion, that is, as an emotional matter with a person and a keen interest in English. She defines the key concept of *akogare* as "*a sentiment in which we desire to pursue our dreams whether they be a person or an object (tangible or intangible) that is tantalizingly out of reach from us* (p.10.) She assumes a heuristic possibility of the concept in developing her research. Her empirical methodological standpoint is explained as that of a constructivist, and choosing TESOL, or Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages as the main research field, she uses narrative analysis in examining the collected materials. In chapter 2, while introducing her study participants and comparing their experiences and understanding of *akogare* with that of her own, she finds much difference among the remarks given by them, and at the same time more confluence among them. She assumes the highly applicable possibility of the conception of *akogare* as a heuristic key term and a generative leading idea in advancing her research.

In chapter 3, the author refers to and examines the resources from which she deduced a hypothetical assumption of *akogare* as the theoretical framework of analysis of the remarks and responses from her study participants. Her research framework defined *akogare* in these four dimensions; (a) in working abroad, (b) in English conversation schools, (c) in study abroad and (d) in TESOL. She recognised her *akogare* assumption as *"A Space where an Individual pursues a Person or an Object that is tantalizingly out of research from His / Her View"*. (p.26.) Upon setting such, the author intends to apply the framework to the internationalisation of Japanese policy in higher education. In chapter 4 the author discusses and explains her theoretical details. Explaining the methodological perspectives, she refers to constructivist approaches and to story-analysis. Narrative analyses are used, and while taking the story-analysis as a thread, the author tries to weave all the themes to compile them into a collective story, that is, the findings of her study. In chapter 5 the link between *akogare* and gender is discussed: asking if *akogare* is a gender-bound concept. The discourses in this chapter consist of (a) introductory statements on some Japanese female learners' attitudes towards some type of Western men and (b) the standard of beauty. The core concern for the author is not the scholastic and metaphysical standards of beauty but more of a vernacular sexual preference. Some supplementary references, touching the sensitivity to the western-otherness, are less explanatory in her discourses.

In chapter 6, the author talks about "the Precarious Japan". The topic is about a mixed-race Miss Universe Japan 2015 title holder. The author asked her study participants, the Japanese young

men, what they felt when they looked at the photo of this Miss Universe. The responses revealed a somewhat unstable standards of Japanese men's acceptance of "non-Japanese-ness".

In chapter 7, the internationalisation of higher education is discussed from the view- points of one's capability of communication in English, and of structural reorganisation of higher education institutions. Particular attention is paid to Christian colleges and universities in way of asking if the colleges have been really open to internationalisation. The author invites the readers to pay special attention to the remark 'floating understanding of herself' made by a faculty member when responding the author's enquiry. (pp.122-124.). Nonaka stresses the importance to keep and innovate the space where the traditional binaries may be overcome. Lastly in chapter 8, she concludes her research on *akogare* and recommends re-imagining Japan and internationalisation.

Speaking generally, the book is worthwhile for English teachers. In one sense or another, this can be an introductory book for non-Japanese readers to discover Japanese education, and for Japanese readers to reflect upon themselves and their education. I felt somewhat alien to her English expressions but the book is well written. I have read the book with some academic concerns and would like to put down some points so that I may firstly deepen my understanding, and secondly, with the hope that the author enriches her discourses in the future.

First, a tentative definition of Self and Other should have been given. The author refers to transcendence of the binary of self and other. It may be necessary for the author to show the readers how transcendence might be possible. Mere juxtaposition does not provide this. What kind of theological tensions can there be between the Self and the Other, for example? It has often been observed that the two notions were brought into a type of dialectical relation by a medium of the Third that is superior or transcendental to the Self (e.g. Christian God). It has also often seen that the first person (I) was related to the second (you) and the third (he /she/ them) persons in linguistic space, where the Self should stand to or with the Other, that is a plural construct of the second and the third persons. How can there be a linguistic triangle consisting of three kinds of persons? In highly- secularised European world views, reason (light of nature) can work as the medium by which the Self might exist against or, with the Other. A nexus, at least triadic dynamics, may prove a transcendence. In this case the Self and the Other are nominally men of a quality, whose world-views are nominally of common value. Such an absolute abstraction of human beings guarantees a composition of abstract dynamic space where the notions of individuality and collectivity may survive and work.

The reviewer assumes that the author might have discussed more about the required space where Self and Other in her definition could survive and function. Nonaka refers very briefly to Kant and Hegel but tells nothing about how and why the Kantian and Hegelian ontology and epistemology could provide a logical scheme for her *akogare*-construct. There can be another dichotomy in comparative studies in education; that is, insider-outsider binary scheme. Although I think Nonaka's *akogare* cannot easily be a paradigm (paradigm in Kuhn's definition is not *a pattern* of problem solution), it is worthwhile for the author to meditate upon a feasibility to expand her frame of reference (*akogare* frame) in order for hers to embrace another heuristic dichotomy.

We know that existentialism attacked and destroyed modern (Kantian and Hegelian) ontological and epistemological structures which was based either on Christian theology or, on reason. Nowadays we see diverse religious faiths and theological doctrines crossing borders on one side, and hyper-globalised marketisation of information (which is another rationalism based on Western Reason) on another. The problems of dichotomy of the Self and the Other have become more complex than ever. In addition, they lie in the deep shadows of post-colonialism. Are the Selves, Asian, African and even Western-- liberated from political and economic tyranny? In these situations, what kind of new space does linguistic of Self and Other realise in the ontological sphere worldwide? Is there any possibility to set the dichotomy of the Self and the Other(s) on any stable philosophical foundation? If not, what should we provide or prepare?

Second, on etymological reasoning of the word *akogare*, I share the author's interpretation. At the same time, I think that it could have been more useful for the author to pay attention to

another lexical explanation given the term in the dictionary. It reads there that the word *akogare* (noun) was derived from the verb *akogareru*. The word *akogareru* came from *akugaru* (verb). The basic meaning of the verb *akugaru /akogareru* was that (a) a man wanders or roams leaving his place, wanders nowhere, and that (b) his mind being haunted by a dim idea of another place or directions toward unknown, he roams out from home (*Kokugo dai-jiten,* grand Japanese dictionary, volume 1, p. 245.). Giving priority to this explanation, we may postulate another scheme for enhancing narrative analyses. The 20th century was the time of grand migration and even today we observe a large scale, and in higher frequency the thrives and drives of immigrants who go across the borders. Towards the end of the 20th century, some coined the phrase 'Japanese diaspora' which symbolised the emergence and growth of new Japanese personalities. In the USA, many books on modern diaspora were published. In the age of grand migration, another interpretation of the old Japanese verb might suggest us to employ the notion and strike an innovative framework for interpreting, educationally for example, in the international setting. The author's questioning: *which country's interviewees would choose to be born or to be*, could be more productive in gaining insights into their zests for acquiring higher capability of English language usage.

I close this review by raising a remark about TESOL. TESOL asks teachers to apply its six principles--accepting them as the practical methods of teaching English to those whose mother tongues are not English, I would like to know what kinds or types of English can or should be taught. In my memory which goes back to the era from 1946 to 1972, my English teachers' methods were rudimental. Watching and reading the passages on the blackboard, then, oral questions; stringent English grammar lessons in English and English composition, among others. I had non-native English teachers in Japan. My grammar teacher was highly acquainted with the lexical knowledge and usages of vocabulary. At an international language school in London, I found the basic methods were the same as my secondary school English lessons, though one was new to me: I heard English in recorded audio instead of written messages on the blackboard or in print. In terms of grammar, the type of teaching at the London school was weak. In my secondary school in Japan, my teachers recommended English literature from the UK and the USA. In London, my tutor supervised my essay-writing. Judging from my personal experiences of learning English, it is a key for any learners to be acquainted with good English or encountering highly educated teachers at once in English, and in other disciplines for that matter.

Shinichi Suzuki
Waseda University