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Traditions of “Debate” in Japan*

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1. Introduction

This study discusses how the English concept of debate and its equivalent in Japanese have been treated in Japan. The analysis here will pay special attention to categories of talk (e.g., Frake 1969) especially *debate*, *dibeeto*, and *tooron* in order to compare and contrast different traditions of debate.

A review of literature on rhetorical traditions in the West and in Japan will find that Japanese society lacks a tradition of training in logical argumentation comparable to Western societies probably because Japanese society did not need logical (at least in the Western sense) argumentation in disputes as much as its Western counterparts. Japanese society has experienced several opportunities of introducing Anglo-American debate but they did not succeed except for English debate in students' clubs mostly called ESSs (English Speaking Societies).⁽¹⁾ There has been a new rise in the popularity of debate in media and education since the mid-1980s together with the use of the loanword *dibeeto* 'debate,' but it is uncertain at present how much and how persistent the current popularity is.

In the following sections, first, I will review the Anglo-American tradition of debate. The focus is on the concept of debate in Speech Communication in America, since it has greatly influenced the introduction of debate in Japan, especially in education and students' clubs. Second, I will discuss a comparable Japanese concept, *tooron* 'debate' in Japanese culture. Third, I will discuss how that dimension of the concept of debate which is alien to traditional Japanese culture has been introduced in Japan.

2. The Meaning of *Debate* in the Anglo-American Tradition

2.1. Definitions of *Debate*

The English word debate encompasses a range of meaning from a broad meaning of everyday disputes to a restricted meaning of a particular educational training method. Let us look at some definitions from *Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English Language*:

- 2a. a contention by means of words or arguments: strife in argument ... *specif*: the formal discussion, argumentation, and resolution of a motion before a legislative assembly or other public deliberative body according to the rules of parliamentary procedure.
- b. consideration of or reflection upon a problem.
- 3b. (1) a regulated discussion of a proposition between two matched sides as a test of forensic ability.
(2) a course of study of the methods and techniques of such discussion often taught in schools and colleges.

The first half of the definition 2a above indicates a broad sense of *debate*, which includes such events as an argument between a husband and a wife about whether they should buy a new washing machine. The second half indicates a debate used in real-world decision-making based on strict rules such as in a courtroom or in a legislative assembly. Thus, *debate* refers to a process of argument in which the two (or more) opposing parties try to

* This article is a revised version of Chapter 4 of my dissertation (Inoue 1994). An earlier version of this work was orally presented in Japanese elsewhere (Inoue 1992).

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persuade each other or a third party about a controversial issue, whatever it is about, whether it is about shopping or a national policy.

Since there is a course called debate in schools and colleges in America, as definition in 3b.(2) suggests, many textbooks have been published. One of them defines debate as "the process of presenting persuasive information on behalf of or in opposition to a stated proposition or topic" (Sayer 1980: 11). Another textbook regards debate as a method of decision-making, defining it as "the process of inquiry and advocacy, the seeking of reasoned judgment on a proposition" (Freeley 1981: 2). This definition by Freeley reflects the inherited tradition of Western philosophy, especially rhetoric, from the time of Plato and Aristotle. Debate in this sense is a means to inquire into a probable truth of a question about which we cannot find the absolute truth by weighing pros and cons, and then to publicize and defend the discovered truth. A related term *argumentation* refers to a process and the study of making rational claims in such situations.

Debate is often contrasted with discussion in textbooks. The distinction in their use in referring to a decision-making process may be outlined as follows:

1. In debate, participants argue for and against the pre-fixed proposition. In discussion, participants look for a solution to a problem.
2. Consequently, debate considers two alternatives, while discussion considers multiple alternatives.
3. Debate is usually regulated by strict rules about the time and order of speeches. Discussion is conducted more freely with less formal rules.
4. In debate, the decision is made by a third party based on the arguments presented by the affirmative and the negative sides. In discussion, the purpose is to reach an agreement among participants.

(Thompson 1971: 8)

As a final comment on the previous definitions taken from *Webster's*, definition 2b includes decision making within a person's mind. For example, one can reach a decision through debating in one's mind whether one goes to a movie in the evening or studies at home.

2.2. Characteristics of Academic Debate

We have so far described a kind of debate

which concerns real-world decision-making. In American textbooks, this is called *substantive* debate. It should be distinguished from *academic* debate, which is conducted as educational training. The definition in 3b.(1) refers to academic debate and the one in 3b.(2) is the name of an academic course which teaches debate.

Academic debate is primarily for training in skills necessary in substantive debate. In academic debate, participants practice arguing both for and against a proposition regardless of their own beliefs. There are strict rules and the two sides speak for the same amount of time alternately. A third party (usually judges, sometimes the audience) gives the decision and/or critiques of the arguments.

Academic debate is offered as one of the speech courses in American colleges and high schools. It is also popular in extracurricular activities (see e.g., Klopff 1978). Debate is also used in British classrooms and is found in extracurricular activities (Gross (1965) has several articles describing school curriculum and activities in which debate is mentioned.).

Further survey is needed for determining how wide-spread academic debate is in different countries but this will be left for future research.

The general value of academic debate, as Thompson (1971: 1) says, is in the belief that debate is important "to the political and social processes of a democratic society." Debate textbooks also give more specific benefits of debate, which I would summarize as follows:

1. Intellectual training to cultivate abilities to analyze a problem, to make logical claims, to find fallacies, to understand opinions different from one's own, and to do research (e.g., in a library).
2. Communication training to learn effective ways of constructing arguments, of speaking in public, and in critically listening to other people's speech.
3. Training in cultivating desirable attitudes such as interests in social problems, fair play, and cooperation.

2.3. History of Academic Debate

This section will overview the history of academic debate based on such sources as Freeley (1981) McCroskey (1982) and Potter (1944). The history of academic debate dates back to the Greek sophist Protagoras (481-411 B.C.). He thought that almost every proposition had two sides (the affirmative and the negative) which a speaker must be able

to advocate. Rhetoric in general, including debate skills, played an important role in education as a necessary qualification for citizens of Greece and Rome.

In the Middle Ages, when political freedom of speech was restricted, the importance of debate was lost for ordinary citizens. Disputation (syllogistic disputation in Latin), the ancestor of academic debate, continued to be essential training for scholars in emerging universities and for clergymen in Christian churches. It was important for scholars because the syllogism was considered a means to discovering truth following the Aristotelian tradition. Scholars also needed training in syllogistic disputation to defend their own theory against others. The church recognized the importance of disputation as a means to defend the orthodox theological stance.

In the 1400s, one of the first intercollegiate debates in England was held between Oxford and Cambridge Universities. It was, in keeping with collegiate practice of the time, a disputation in Latin (Klopf and Cambra 1979: 3). In the eighteenth century, we saw debating societies where people debated various topics in English in and out of schools. In 1823, the United Debating Society (later called the Oxford Union Society) was established at Oxford University. At first, students debated non-political issues and then political issues as well. The union sent many leaders out into different fields. For example, Prime Ministers Gladstone and Heath were both presidents of the union (Hollis 1965).

The British tradition of collegiate debating was brought into American colleges and universities; syllogistic disputation about theological and philosophical issues was a required subject in Harvard and other universities. In the middle of the eighteenth century, forensic disputation in English started, in which students learned debating of political and legal topics.

Also in the eighteenth century in the United States, debate was conducted in new-born literary or debating societies, which are both student organizations and community meetings. In November of 1872, one of the first intercollegiate debates was held between Northwestern University and the University of Chicago (Bauer 1978: 153). Around that time, high-school students also started interscholastic debating. In the 1920s, national tournaments were held for college and high-school students. Many of the American leaders have experienced debate training. Among political leaders, President Lincoln practiced debating in the New Salem Club, and such presidents as Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon learned debate at school.

3. Traditions of *Tooron* in Japan

It is often said that Japanese avoid verbal conflict and that *tooron* ‘debate’ is not compatible with their traditional communication patterns. For example, Adachi (1984: 27-28) states as follows:

... even today quite a few people feel disbelief or even hostility about argument and dispute. In fact, such people seem to be rapidly increasing. Several reasons can be thought of for that attitude. One of them which readily comes to anyone’s mind is that speech activities themselves, not to mention disputes, are traditionally not given an important status in people’s life in this country, where part of the national ethos is reflected in such ethical sayings and proverbs as “*koogen reishoku sukunashi jin* [‘A honey tongue, a heart of gall’ (originally from Confucius)],” “*chinmoku wa kin* [‘silence is golden’],” “*fugen jikkoo* [‘actions without words (Actions speak louder than words)’].”

(Translation by Inoue)

The word *tooron* has been used as a translation equivalent of *debate* since around 1880, according to one Japanese dictionary (*Koojien*; also see Section 3.1. below). The word itself, however, was used before that time, as another dictionary (*Nihon Kokugo Dai Jiten*) gives examples of its use starting from the early 12th century. One of the examples it gives from a literary anthology is: “*ooku moromoro no hito to tooron-seshi koto o zatsuroku-shitaru mono nari*” (‘[the book is] a miscellaneous collection of what many kinds of people debated’). The meaning of *tooron* in this citation overlaps that of English *debate* in its broad sense.

We can also find a speech event called *rongi*, similar in some ways to debate. It is “one of the events in the palace and temples, in which many people listen to one-to-one *tooron*” (Hashimoto 1972: 274; translation by Inoue). Hashimoto (1972) also mentions *uta rongi*, a debate about poems following the style of *rongi*, referring to a historical narrative (*Ookagami*) in the eleventh century. *Daigenkai* (a Japanese dictionary) defines *rongi* as “a ritual in which people such as high-ranking priests conducted questions and answers, and a debate about themes in sutras” (translation by Inoue). It is to be noted here that debate or some kind of dialectical disputation took place in religious and educational institutions in different parts of the world. It appears to have had educational functions for young priests in those groups. It is yet to be studied how similar or dissimilar ways of debating in different groups are.⁽²⁾

Sawada (1983: 285) discusses *taiketsu* or *taimon*,

a kind of debate between a plaintiff and a defendant conducted in *monchuujo* (a legal court in the Kamakura and Muromachi Eras) by referring to *Azumakagami* (another historical narrative).⁽³⁾ In contemporary Japanese, *taiketsu* is used to mean any confrontation both verbal and physical not necessarily in a legal court. *Taimon* is no longer used. A possibly related word *hantaijinmon* 'cross-examination' is used in both legal courts and in academic debate; it most likely originated as a translation for the English *cross-examination*.

In this way we see that Japan traditionally has words for debate and other related speech events. However, a number of authors emphasize the difference from the Western (Anglo-American) tradition in that the Japanese "debate" tradition is not based on logical (in the Western sense of the term) argumentation. Sawada (1983: 287) explains that "rhetoric based on logic has not been cultivated because Japan had too much rhetoric based on emotion and ethics" (translation by Inoue). We did not find any strong societal demand for training in argumentation, at least in the sense of the Western normative view.

3.1. History of Introducing Western-Style Debate

Although there have been a number of attempts to introduce Western-style debate in Japan, the only one which succeeded was in English clubs in colleges (ESSs or English Speaking Societies).

First, when Christianity was brought into Japan in the 16th century, schools attached to churches gave training in Latin disputation, which did not spread outside of churches (Cieslik 1965: 18). Even among Japanese Christians, the popularity of disputation is doubtful.

In the Meiji Era, Anglo-American oratory and debate were introduced. For example, Yukichi Fukuzawa and his associates organized Mita Enzetsu Kai [Mita Speech Society] and made efforts to popularize public speaking. At the same time, they wrote *Kaigiben* ([*Conference Speech*] or [*Speaking in Meetings*]) a book that explained how to conduct meetings (Fukuzawa, Obata, & Koizumi c.1874). They took pains in translating terminology in conference proceedings; for example, they translated *speech* as *enzetsu* (literally 'performing talk') and *debate* as *tooron* (literally 'fighting arguments').⁽⁴⁾ *Kaigiben* listed *benronkai* ('speech meeting') as one of their activities. *Benronkai* consisted of practices in *jiyuu toogi* ('free discussion') and *tooron* ('debate'). *Tooron* which they conducted included two kinds of debate: one in which they argued based on their own belief and the other in which they practiced debate with choosing the side by drawing lots.

Noji (1980) wrote about speech activities in high

schools before World War I. He quotes a description by an alumnus about activities of "*bungaku shakai* (*riterarii sosaeti* 'literary society')" established in 1877 in Too-oogijuku High School in Hirosaki City in northern Japan, which was modeled after American college literary societies (Noji 1980: 1020-1030). Its activities included a debate with a jury selected from the audience, in which the affirmative and the negative teams alternately delivered their speeches and then the debate became open to the floor. Noji (1980) goes on to trace high-school debating in various parts of Japan in the following years before World War II.⁽⁵⁾

It appears that the concept of Anglo-American eloquence became well-known in Japan with the rise of democratic movements in the Meiji Era. The most popular mode of elocution in Japan, however, was one-way oratory. Although unchallenged oratory was popular, debate in which the opponent's arguments were examined and refuted did not become popular in Japan. This may be due to Japanese dispreference for overt confrontation in general and/or due to the tradition in which "rhetoric based on logic" (as opposed to emotional appeal) did not develop in Japan (see Section 3 above). The dominance of emotional appeal is also noted in a rhetorical style of high-school students' oratory in the early Showa Era. It is characterized as "a type [of rhetoric] in which one shouts, appeals, and asserts" and "a rhetoric of screaming" (Noji 1980: 1167; translation by Inoue).

In the Showa Era, under the military-influenced government, free exchange of opinions was increasingly discouraged.

3.2. After World War II (Asahi Debate Contest)

Japan's defeat in World War II and the subsequent occupation by the Allied Forces drastically changed the official norms of speech and press. Debate training in the Japanese language as a basis of democracy attracted attention under the influence of the American educational philosophy. Iwagami (1947: 93) discusses the social role of debate and concludes that "...what I think most important is the building-up of democratic personality through practicing debates, the development of humanity itself, and the cultivation of democratic personality with strong and uninhibited freedom" (translation by Inoue). In the same book titled *Tooron: Riron to Jissai* [*Debate: Theory and Practice*] (Asahi Shinbunsha 1947) we find other chapters which suggest high expectations concerning debate: "What is Debate?" by Goroo Hani, who explains debate based on traditions dating back to ancient Greece; "Debate as Inquiry into Truth" by Masamichi Ariyama; "Debate Tournament in America" by Shiho Sakanishi; "About Judging" by

Yasuzoo Suzuki.

Toshio Kanchi, who promoted debating in Asahi Shinbunsha (newspaper company) wrote a practical manual of debate based on American concepts of academic debate. We can see that the basis of this textbook was probably an American debate textbook written by Musgrave (1945/1946) because there is some overlap in the contents.

The Asahi Debate Contest, an intercollegiate debate contest sponsored by Asahi Shinbunsha, was held from 1946 through 1950. In 1948, there was a record participation of 208 schools (Kanchi 1951). There were other tournaments such as a prefectural youth tournament sponsored by Tochigi Prefectural Board of Education and an annual debate tournament for correctional officers in prisons sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (Kanchi 1951). Most of the records that suggest the popularity of debate are found only in the *Asahi Shinbun* articles, which may have been biased because of its sponsorship of those contests. But Haga (1976: 254) also mentions the debate in the 1948 entry of his chronology of public speaking events as “More and more students participated in debate competition with the method of ‘Asahi Debate Contest’.” (translation by Inoue) Some of my senior colleagues in their sixties remember that they participated in one of those debate contests when they were students.

In 1950, Asahi Shinbunsha discontinued its Asahi Debate Contest. The reasons for this were reportedly that various organizations had started to sponsor voluntarily Asahi-style debate contests and that the newspaper company would support them (Asahi Shinbunsha 1950). According to Kanchi (1951: 6-7) the reason why the Asahi Debate Contest was discontinued is that the newspaper company had fulfilled its initial role of promotion since debate had attracted enough popular support that people themselves were ready to hold debates. The company also said that the wide popularity of debate no longer justified a newspaper company sponsoring a tournament only for students. The reasons were not very convincing. Actually, the popularity of debate rapidly died down.⁽⁶⁾ A specialist of language education regrets:

... It is regrettable that in Japan the Intercollegiate Debate Contest sponsored by the Asahi Shinbun has been suspended, which started with all the efforts after the War. I wish the Asahi would revive the contest. If it is impossible, I wonder if some other newspaper company will sponsor an annual national debate tournament. (I said “newspaper company” simply because other organizations are unlikely to afford to sponsor a tournament at the moment;

other organizations would be fine.)

(Ookubo 1953: 208; translation by Inoue)

By 1953, national-level tournaments had already disappeared.

3.3. Debate Education in Schools

In Japanese-language courses (called *kokugo* ‘national language’) speech instruction including debating did not become very popular. Although the Ministry of Education’s Course of Study included speech education, Hamanaka (1955: 276) doubted whether it was seriously implemented in high schools as prescribed.

One of the early attempts to introduce debating in elementary and secondary school classrooms, after the decline of the Asahi debate, was promoted by a group of people who belonged to the Nihon Hanashi Kotoba Kyooiku Kenkyukai [Japan Speech Education Study Group]. Their practices are reported in *Shikoo Ryoku, Gengo Nooryoku o Takameru Tooron Shidoo* [Debate Instruction to Improve Thinking Ability and Language Ability] (published in 1967 from Meijitoshosha) and *Ronriteki Shikoo o Takameru Hyoogen Shidoo* [Expression Instruction to Improve Logical Thinking] (Kobayashi and Araki 1974). One of the members confesses that, in early 1960s when the teachers in his study group planned teaching debate in elementary and junior-high schools, “almost nobody in our study group had experienced debating ... ‘debate instruction’ was like developing a virgin land” (Hayashi 1974: 212-213; translation by Inoue).

The subsequent years have witnessed a number of books and articles being published about the use of debate in classrooms; the number especially increased in the second half of the 1980s (Oda 1978, Koyama 1983, Ishiguro 1988, 1989, 1991, a number of articles in *Gendai Kyooiku Kagaku* [Modern Education Science], which is a monthly journal for teachers about classroom methodologies). Unfortunately the study of debate education has not been systematically developed. Many of those writings are based on the authors’ own classroom practices. We can also find an ungrounded claim like “competitive debate is an essential training in Western schools but it is completely lacking in Japanese education in Japan” (Kinoshita 1990: 7; translation by Inoue).

Kai (1990) in contrast, tries to identify problems in speech education in Japanese schools after World War II. According to his analysis, speech education has long been part of the goals of school education. It was included in *Chuugakkoo Gakushuu Shidoo Yooryoo* [Junior High School Course of Study] published from the Ministry of Education in 1947 and there has been no extreme change of policy in the

Course of Study. Yet, educators have had three different kinds of problems: (1) the failure to identify *gijutsu* 'skills,' (2) the failure to examine *naiyoo* 'contents,' and (3) the failure to provide *ba* 'situations.' The first problem was observed in the Showa 20s (1945-1954) when the Course of Study only had a list of *genko katsudoo* 'speech activities' but failed to suggest specific skills to teach. The second problem was observed in the Showa 30s (1955-1964) thereafter, when the skills were identified but educators failed to examine contents (topics to discuss) about which those skills should be used. The third problem started to emerge in the Showa 40s (1965-1974) and influenced the 1977 edition of the Course of Study. Leading scholars in *kokugo kyooiku* 'national-language education' such as Kenji Morioka questioned speech education in *kokugo* as a school subject and argued that reading and writing should be the primary concern of *kokugo* as a school subject.⁽⁷⁾ Most of the problems of debate instruction by *Wakyookan* (*Nihon Hanashi Kotoba Kyooiku Kenkyuu Kai* above⁽⁸⁾) were of the second kind in that the teachers in the group were not so much interested in subject matters of debate as in the skills of argumentation such as methods of refutation.

There are other causes of the relative neglect of speech education in general, debate in particular, in secondary schools. Although the Course of Study for senior high school has had speech education together with composition under the title of *hyoogen* 'expression', only a small amount of classroom time has been devoted to essay writing on contemporary topics, much less to public speaking. The reality in schools is that "speech instruction, which has less direct relation with college entrance examinations, tends to be neglected" (Oda 1978: 382; translation by Inoue).⁽⁹⁾

4. The Use of the Word *Dibeeto*

Recently the use of the word *dibeeto* written in *katakana*, (a Japanese syllabic writing system used mainly for loanwords) has been increasingly observed. This corresponds to the recent seeming popularity of debate in Japanese in various domains such as schools, business workshops, and media. In the subsequent sections, I will discuss the spreading of debate focusing on the use of the word *dibeeto*, as opposed to *tooron*, to refer to 'debate.'

Since the mid-1980s, among various speech activities called *tooron*, a particular kind of debate, which is more or less comparable to American academic debate described above, is called *dibeeto* and written in *katakana*. How much *dibeeto* shares with academic debate as prescribed in American Speech Communication is yet to be investigated. But appar-

ently when *dibeeto* is used instead of *tooron*, the speaker or the writer intends to emphasize particular aspects of *dibeeto* which are not obvious in other speech activities traditionally called *tooron*. What are traditionally called *tooron* are often more appropriately called *round table discussion* or *forum* than *debate* in American English. *Dibeeto* is intended as a rule-governed confrontational activity. It was also called *tooron* until recently, and still is, in many cases.

4.1. *Dibeeto* in English Education

Probably the earliest extensive use of the word *dibeeto* would be found among people who practiced debate under the influence of American speech education. Many of these people, including myself, were exposed to debate in a collegiate extra-curricular club called ESS (English Speaking Society). Although each debate itself is conducted in English, Japanese is often used in conversation outside debate, and then the word *dibeeto* is often used. In such a situation, the pronunciation is modified to fit the phonotactics of Japanese as *dibeeto*, so it is not pronounced English *debate*. It is safe to conclude that the loanword *dibeeto* is being used, rather than the English word *debate*. *Dibeeto* is overwhelmingly the preferred choice over *tooron* when people refer to their activity (or particular speech event, i.e., debate match/round).

In writing, the usage of *tooron*, *dibeeto*, and *debate* is mixed. Intercollegiate English debate contests, which began in 1950 for universities in the Kanto area and spread nation-wide in the 1960s, used *tooron* in their official Japanese titles. Manuals written by students use *dibeeto* or *debate* when texts are written in Japanese.⁽¹⁰⁾ In publications, *tooron* used to be common. For example, Koike (1966) used *tooron* when he discussed English debating in high schools in Tokyo. Textbooks written by Mannebach and Uematsu (1973) and Klopff and Kawashima (1977) used *tooron* in the titles of their books (the text was written in English). However, one issue of a magazine featuring debate used *dibeeto* in most of the cases in which the concept or event of debate is referred to (the *English Journal*, February 1977). Textbooks written by Konno (1979) and S. Matsumoto (1987) used *dibeeto* in their titles.

Recently, the word *dibeeto* has increasingly attracted the attention of people concerned with English education in school settings because of the use of the word in the Ministry of Education's Course of Study for senior high schools, which was published in 1989 and came into effect in 1993. This Course of Study has a new subject (course) called "Oral Communication C" whose contents are de-

scribed as follows:

- (1) Care should be taken so that instructions are given in the use of expressions about proposing, advocating, and proving.
- (2) In instructing language activities, scenes should be set up such as recitation, speech, discussion, and debate, and efforts should be made to deal with various topics.
(*Kotoogakkoo Gakushuu Shidooyooryoo “Gaikokugo” [Senior High School Course of Study “Foreign Languages”]*, Chapter 2, Section 5.3; translation by Inoue)

In the original Japanese text, the underlined words in the above passage are written in *katakana* as *reshiteeshon*, *supiichi*, *disukasshon*, and *dibeeto*. The inclusion of such a passage in the Course of Study has caused considerable anxiety among teachers who are not familiar with these speech activities. They worry about what to do with debate in classrooms. Consequently there have been a number of articles introducing the basics of debate in books and periodicals for teachers of English. There are also workshops and lectures about debate sponsored by governmental and private organizations aiming at high-school English teachers.

4.2. The Use of *Dibeeto* in Mass Media

In the previous section about English education, I have already mentioned several published writings which used *dibeeto*. In this section, I will discuss the word’s use in media in general, especially in the written media of popular newspapers and magazines.

Except for use in the publications influenced by American scholars of speech communication and those related to ESSs, the use of *dibeeto* in the Japanese language is a recent phenomenon. The use of *tooron* has been much more common even if the referent is “debate” in the sense of competitive presentation of opposing arguments.

One of the earliest uses of *dibeeto* in the title of a book is found in M. Matsumoto’s *Chiteki Taiketsu no Ronri: Nihonjin ni Dibeeto ga Dekiru ka [Logic of Intellectual Confrontation: Can Japanese People Debate?]* published in 1975.⁽¹¹⁾ He has been a strong advocate of debate especially in training for business negotiation. He has conducted workshops and published a number of books and articles primarily for business people.

The inclusion of *dibeeto* into Japanese dictionaries is also recent. One of the prominent dictionaries for new words listed the word for the first time in 1980 (*Gendai Yoogo no Kiso Chishiki [Encyclopedic Dictionary of Current Terms]*). At first the entry in this dictionary only had translation equivalents:

“*Tooron. Toogi.*”⁽¹²⁾ Since 1984, a definition has been given as:

Tooron. Toogi. A contest in which competing two teams debate (*tooron-suru*) on the affirmative side and on the negative side according to stipulated rules. (Translation by Inoue)

Koojien (a leading unabridged Japanese dictionary) listed the word *dibeeto* for the first time in its newest edition (1991) with the following definition:

Tooron in which speakers are randomly divided into the affirmative side and the negative side, give constructive speeches (*ritsuron*) cross-examinations (*jinmon*) and rebuttals (*hanbaku*) about a certain theme, and judges decide the win and loss. (Translation by Inoue)

Another unabridged dictionary also gives a definition of *dibeeto* to the same effect:

Tooron. Especially a format in which debaters (*tooron-sha*) compete for skills in persuading the opponent and/or the audience under certain rules, with the affirmative and the negative sides of the theme being assigned regardless of their personal thought or belief.
(*Nihongo Dai Jiten* 1989 (Koodansha); translation by Inoue)

The dictionary definitions above emphasize a certain aspect of original English *debate*, i.e., academic debate (debate as educational practice and/or contest). This is precisely the area of meaning that distinguishes *dibeeto* from *tooron*. The newspaper articles that use *dibeeto* in the 1990s in fact refer to this kind of academic debate conducted in the Japanese language. Table 1 shows the frequency of articles that include *dibeeto* in their texts. Some of them refer to debate in Western countries or to debate as an idea, while most of them refer to debates that are taking place in Japan, such as contests, public demonstrations, and debates in schools and business workshops.

Another motivation for the use of the word *dibeeto* is to emphasize confrontation. Magazine articles titled “*shijoo dibeeto* (literally, ‘on-paper debate’)” give the pros and cons of an issue (as in articles often carried by *AERA*, *DIME*, and *Nikkei Woman*).

Another factor influencing the increased use of *dibeeto* is that people (at least those reported in media and those working in media) are dissatisfied with the current lack of meaningful discussion, debate if you will, in the political arena. They often

express the need for debate in politics in their writings and in printed interviews.

4.3. New *Dibeeto* Events

As I noted in the previous section, when many of the newspaper articles use *dibeeto*, they refer to debates that are taking place in Japan. Let me discuss a few of them below.

For several years in the 1980s, we saw an inter-collegiate debate tournament conducted in Japanese being held annually. It started in 1982 as a symposium sponsored by a sports equipment company Mizuno and in the next year it had become Toozai Gakusei *Dibeeto* Kontesuto [East-West Inter-collegiate Debate Contest] sponsored by Sankei Shinbunsha (a newspaper company) which was held for several years. The purpose of the tournament was to introduce western style debate into Japan.⁽¹⁴⁾ But its format (a five-minute constructive speech followed by an eight-minute cross-examination) was likely to produce an exchange of unwarranted opinions against unestablished arguments. This is because the speakers could not give enough proof in their relatively short constructive speeches but may have been able to give assertions in answering questions in a cross-examination period.

Such a format was adopted probably because the organizer of the contest thought that the audience would enjoy a debate with lively exchange of words like crossing swords (as opposed to well-supported and well-organized arguments). One of the critical evaluations of the Asahi tournament immediately after World War II was that many teams repeated unimportant points back and forth against each other because the format allowed each team to speak up to seven times, dividing their fifteen-minute rebuttal period. This was intended to give a taste of cross-examination (Kanchi 1951: 35-38). It would have been interesting to see if this Sankei tournament would have developed a style of debate based mainly on logical argumentation or if it would have ended up with verbal warfare following the Japanese image of *tooron*.⁽¹⁵⁾ Unfortunately the contest was short-lived as was the Asahi contest which faded out in 1950s.

There are some other debate tournaments with limited publicity in which debates are conducted in Japanese. For example, a group called *Mirai-juku* (literally 'future private school') in Tokyo and Osaka has been sponsoring a debate tournament for several years. The Japan Debate Association, which had previously promoted debate mainly in English, sponsored a tournament in Japanese in March, 1995 and will continue to do so.⁽¹⁶⁾ These tournaments are open to public (both students and non-students). At the present, it is uncertain whether they will be more popularized and other similar events will follow.

There were at least two TV programs that regularly broadcast debates around 1992. One was *Seishun Tooku Tooku* [Youth Talk Talk] aired by the NHK Education Channel.⁽¹⁷⁾ Although the program did not use the word *dibeeto* or *tooron* in its title, it was a debate in which two high-school teams presented arguments concerning a contemporary controversy. Toward the end of the program, the audience cast a vote. The other program was *Dibeeto* aired by Fuji TV. People participated in a tournament as in the manner of quiz programs.

One TV program which cannot be called debate in the narrow sense but still is worthy of mention is the program titled *Asamade Nama Terebi* [Live TV Until Morning] which is called *tooron*. It is a discussion by a dozen speakers moderated by a commentator (Sooichiroo Tawara). It features endless cross-firing arguments, often leading to *ad hominum* attacks between several regular speakers. It is a prime example of *tooron* as verbal warfare,⁽¹⁸⁾ "suitable" for TV showing, but often criticized by advocates of academic debate in the ideal sense, for producing a skewed image of debate. But it at least attracts a considerable amount of public and media attention. Even a parody of the program appeared on TV.

There are also a number of reports in newspapers about public debates at school festivals. Newspapers also report the use of debate in business training in private companies and in government agencies. Outside such institutions, there are several (at least those reported in newspapers) groups prac-

Table 1. Frequency of Newspaper Articles that Contain *Dibeeto* in Text

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Asahi	0	0	0	2	3	11	10	15	27	25
Mainichi	NA	NA	0	0	0	6	8	15	11	11
Yomiuri	NA	0	0	1	1	2	2	5	9	9
Total	0	0	0	3	4	19	20	35	47	45

(Source: G-Search in NIFTY-Serve)⁽¹³⁾

ting debate for self-improvement in places like community centers.

4.4. *Dibeeto* in Classrooms

Some of the educators who promoted the use of *tooron* in classrooms (Japanese, Social Studies, Science, etc.) have started recognizing *dibeeto* as a specific form of *tooron*. For examples, Ishiguro (1991) recalls how he came across *dibeeto* as competitive game for the first time while he was using *tooron* in his elementary school classrooms. Katakami (1991) has a different characterization of *dibeeto*. Among several types of *tooron no jugyoo* ‘class using debate,’ so-called *dibeeto gakushuu* ‘learning by debate’ is a type of class in which the aim is to draw a conclusion, in which children find a value in debating itself, and in which debate is scheduled toward the end of a unit of the course (Katakami 1991: 7).

As more and more school teachers and education scholars get interested in debate, the use of the *katakana* word *dibeeto* without its Japanese gloss in the parentheses seems to have been established in professional writing. In the field of *kokugo kyooiku*, *debate* is considered one of the key words for the years 1990 and 1991 (Okamoto 1991; Ookuma 1992). In 1991, two professional journals had an issue featuring *dibeeto*. The subtitles of those issues may be translated into English as “How to Incorporate *Dibeeto* in Class”(Gendai Kokugo Kyooiku [Modern

Japanese Education] June, 1991) and “*Dibeeto* is Fun” (Gekkan Kokugo Kyooiku [Monthly Japanese Education] December, 1991).

4.5. How Popular is *Dibeeto* in Fact?

From the above review of the use of *dibeeto* in various domains, we can see that the word and concept *dibeeto* seems to have achieved some public recognition. In most cases it is used with a positive meaning, probably because of the use of the word by advocates of debate. A negative use is also observed. A magazine for working women lists eight types of *ojisan* ‘middle-aged men’ who bother them in work places, the first of which is *dibeeto ojisan*, who likes arguing for the sake of argument (*Nikkei Women* June, 1992: 58). *Dibeeto ojisan* is criticized as unproductive. Here, argument is something unwelcome, probably reflecting a traditional Japanese value.⁽¹⁹⁾

In the midst of this seeming popularity of *dibeeto* in media and in media-related events, how much is *dibeeto* actually recognized by ordinary people? My tentative conclusion on the basis of two pieces of rather limited evidence is “very little” as of 1992. I will summarize that evidence: First, my own questionnaire in one of the undergraduate classes I taught in Fukuoka University of Education in spring, 1992 showed that the word *dibeeto* was an unfamiliar word for the students and few of them had participated in *dibeeto*, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Popularity of *Dibeeto* among College Students*

Question 1. Have you heard (read) the word “ <i>dibeeto</i> ”?	
1. Often	2
2. Sometimes	6
3. Seldom	5
4. Never	38
Question 2. Have you participated in <i>dibeeto</i> ?	
1. Yes	1**
2. No	38
No answer	12
Question 3. Please explain what is <i>dibeeto</i> .	
5 answers:	
<i>tooron, ronsoo</i> ‘debate, controversy’ (1)	
<i>tooron-suru koto</i> ‘to debate’ (2)	
<i>tooron-kai?</i> (<i>eigo deno</i>) ‘debate-meeting (in English)’ (1)	
<i>tooron-kai mitaina katsudoo no yoona happyoo no ba desuka?</i> (1)	
‘Is it a situation presenting opinions like a debate-meeting?’	

* 52 students answered the questions; among them 40 are math education majors and 12 are other majors. Since one of them answered “*dibeeto* ‘rebate’” in Question 3, that student was excluded from the tabulation.

**This answer was given by an English-major student who said he had participated in debate in class.

Although the students who responded to this questionnaire do not constitute a representative sample of the Japanese population in general,⁽²⁰⁾ those students' unfamiliarity with *dibeeto* seems overwhelming.

The second piece of evidence is anecdotal. When I asked a librarian (young female) in the same school for a computer search of the book titles that included *dibeeto* early 1992, she typed *ribeeto* 'rebate' and I had to tell her that the word was *dibeeto*, not *ribeeto*.⁽²¹⁾ I remember some people around me mistook *dibeeto* for *ribeeto* when I started debating in college. We joked about it because of an obvious association of politics with those two words (*ribeeto* in Japanese is sometimes used to mean 'bribery').

Although we need more research to determine the popularity of the word *dibeeto* among ordinary Japanese people, the above two pieces of evidence suggest that the word is not necessarily widespread among them. College students and librarians are assumed to have more-than-average familiarity with contemporary words used in the media. If they don't know *dibeeto* very well, the rest of the population would not be any more familiar with the word and concept.⁽²²⁾

5. Conclusion

This article discussed the contrast and contact of two different traditions of "debate": one in the West (mostly in America) and the other in Japan. It highlights part of the ways of speaking in the overall repertoire of the whole speech community of Japan (cf. Hymes 1974; Saville-Troike 1989). The analysis of lexical items that refer to categories of talk such as *debate*, *dibeeto*, and *tooron* has shown how the Anglo-American concept and practice of debate have been introduced into Japan with varying degrees of success. Those who advocate debate have been suggesting that debate is different from traditional Japanese *tooron*. Such people used to advocate a new way of *tooron* (e.g., Fukuzawa in the Meiji era and Kanchi immediately after World War II). More recently a new term *dibeeto* has been used to emphasize the difference. Similarly, debate in students' English clubs (English Speaking Societies) has been advocated as something unique in Japanese society.

The accommodation of debate in Japanese society is undergoing a rapid change now. Popularity of debate in education and media is increasing people's familiarity with the word *dibeeto*. However, it is probably too early to conclude that the Western concept of debate has been firmly incorporated into Japanese culture this time after several unsuccessful introductions of debate in the past. It is a question

yet to be answered whether the current rise in popularity of debate is only another wave to be passed.

NOTES

- (1) The term *English Speaking Society* is a proper noun which refers to a name of a students' extracurricular club. It should not be confused as a generic term an *English-speaking society*, which could refer to any group of people whose members speak English.
- (2) Jensen (1992) refers to several works that deal with debate in different time and place in Asia such as in China and India. It is definitely a topic for further research to find correlation between different ways of academic debate and other cultural variables such as decision-making modes in the society (see Roberts and Forman's (1972) study about riddles in different cultures).
- (3) Legal systems in the middle ages are discussed by, for example, Kasamatsu (1992).
- (4) See Fukuzawa, Obata, and Koizumi (c. 1874) and Noji (1980). The word *enzetsu*, as well as the word *tooron*, had been used before Fukuzawa. Fukuzawa must be acknowledged not merely for inventing those translation equivalents but for his recognition of the importance of public speaking and for his efforts in enlightenment campaigns. (Haga 1976: 12-13)
- (5) Noji's voluminous work *Hanashi Kotoba Kyouiku Shi Kenkyuu* [*A Study of the History of Speech Education*] about 1,200 pages (Noji 1980) is an important collection of published accounts of speech education mainly in elementary and secondary schools in Japan from the beginning of the Meiji Era (1860s) through 1930s.
- (6) The decline of debate may be attributed to the end of the Allied Occupation of Japan if the popularity was somewhat artificially created by the American pressure of democracy education.
- (7) The newer 1989 edition of the Course of Study again increased the relative importance of speech education in *kokugo* education.
- (8) Wakyouken is an acronym of the name of the organization. *Wa* is another reading of the Chinese character used for *hanashi*.
- (9) In the same book, which discusses teaching methodologies of *kokugo* 'national language' courses, Hayami (1978: 433-449) describes how to conduct academic debate (formats and a ballot sheet) as is practiced in America but probably few teachers actually used this kind of debate in Japanese high schools when the book was published.
- (10) Many of those manuals use Roman letters for most of the terms used in debate although the base sentences are Japanese. For example:
Aff. Neg.-no *sorezore-no* Case-o *kangaeru maeni*,
ittai nan-no tame-ni Proposition-o adopt *shiyoo-to shitari*,
reject *shiyoo-to shitari suru-no-ka-o kangae naku-te-wa nara nai*.

‘Before thinking about cases for the Aff [affirmative] and the Neg [negative], we must think about for what objectives each side tries to adopt or reject the proposition.’

(A debate manual distributed by Kanto Universities E.S.S. League 1977:6)

- (11) M. Matsumoto calls himself the pioneer of debate in Japan. Although his efforts to publicize debate certainly should be acknowledged, media (news reporters and editors in publishing houses) fail to acknowledge the efforts to introduce debate earlier such as those by Yukichi Fukuzawa and those under the influence of the Allied Occupation. Just to give a few examples outside M. Matsumoto’s own books, the *Sankei Shinbun* (March 24, 1984) reporting their *Dibeeto Kontesuto* says, “... Michihiro Matsumoto, who is like Japan’s pioneer of debate ...”(translation by Inoue). *Gekkan Kokugo Kyooiku* (December, 1991) has more or less the same phrase. Evidently even a reporter of the *Asahi Shinbun*, which promoted their debate contest earlier, does not know their own tradition. In a feature article about debate, an interview with Michihiro Matsumoto is titled “the pioneer of debate” (*The Asahi Shinbun*, May 22, 1990).
- (12) *Toogi* is less frequently used than *tooron*. Some authors of books on communication skills contrast *toogi* ‘discussion’ with *tooron* ‘debate’ but the contrast is not commonly observed in ordinary usage of Japanese.
- (13) The search was conducted by the author using the text database of the three newspapers available in G-Search in NIFTY-Serve, which is a commercial on-line database. NA indicates that the articles in those years are not included in the database.
- (14) In the Japanese title of the contest, the word *dibeeto* was used rather than the Japanese counterpart *tooron*.
- (15) I do not have enough evidence to infer how the organizer decided the style of the contest. I only note here characteristics of three of the key figures who contributed to the organization of the contest. When the contest began, the commercial-base planning was done by Dentsu, Japan’s largest advertising agency. Michihiro Matsumoto was giving technical advice on debate. Later, he was replaced with Shigeru Matsumoto (no relative of Michihiro) who inherits American academic debate more directly. Michihiro Matsumoto, in contrast, is advocating his adopted view of debate. He calls it *dibeeto doo* (literally ‘debate way’). *Doo* in this sense may be translated as ‘principle’ or ‘doctrine.’
- (16) The author is currently serving as the chairman of the Japan Debate Association.
- (17) In 1993 I saw occasional programs called *Nyuu Eiji Dibeeto* [*New Age Debate*] on the NHK General Channel. The format was about the same as that used in *Seishun Tooku Tooku*.
- (18) In writing *tooron*, the program often uses an

alternative Chinese character for *too*. This alternative character (*dou* in Chinese) gives a stronger sense of physical fight than the original character (*tao* in Chinese). This *tooron* program is characterized by the dominance of “having arguments” rather than “making arguments” (cf. O’Keefe (1977) about the distinction between the two types of argument).

- (19) However, I should also note that the same issue of the magazine has a column called “Hot Talk: FAX Tsukatte Shijoo Dibeeto [Debate on Paper Using FAX],” in which readers’ opinions are contrasted about the theme of the month: “Do you want to quit the company and change job? Or do you want to stay in the same company?”
- (20) For example, one debate program mentioned earlier (*Dibeeto* from Fuji TV) is not broadcast in Fukuoka.
- (21) Although I did not ask her if she had known the word *dibeeto*, my impression was that she had known it because she did not ask back when I mentioned *dibeeto*. It must be the case that the first word she had in mind when she heard *-beeto* was *ribeeto* not *dibeeto*. But it is also possible that she had not known the word *dibeeto*. It is very difficult to infer the knowledge of a speaker from an incidental event.
- (22) Early in 1995, debate attracted an unexpected attention of popular media and the general public because the chief spokesman of a murderous cult religious group in Japan demonstrated his skills in argumentation in press conferences and other public occasions. He was a successful debater in an ESS when he was a student. The effect of this popular attention to debate in terms of the popularization of the word and concept of debate is yet to be studied.

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