THE INTERNET AS A POLITICAL AND ETHICAL PROCESS

Implications of ICT and E-learning in the Multicultural Contexts

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Introduction

This paper is intended to make some suggestions for the improvement of the present day reality regarding the Internet and E-learning towards the equitable and cooperative co-existence of different human groups in the multilingual/multicultural settings by discussing some central problems and related issues concerning today’s globalization arguments coupled with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), particularly the Internet. I am very much concerned about arguing the political and ethical implications of the ICT and the Internet in this paper. My particular concern here is for encouraging discussion regarding the establishment of the Philosophy of the Internet for higher learning.

My discussion will be focused on the arguments concerning the reality of the Internet as a political and ethical process rather than a mere technological process and its implications, and the arguments on the reality of multiculturalism in the context of globalization and to analyze implications of linguistic and cultural diversity for the survival of all humankind. Based on the above discussion, I will make some suggestions for the improvement of the present day reality regarding the Internet and E-learning.

1. The Internet as a Political and Ethical Process

Two Opposing Views of the ICT and the Internet

The ongoing “Internet Revolution” is dramatically changing, not only the internal socio-economic and political structures of most nations, but also the way in which they relate to each other. The process of “globalization” has also been fostered and accelerated by the rapid expansion of the Internet and the extensive use of ICT in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. The 21st century is said to be an era of e-business and e-learning.

In my observation of the current state of the ICT and the Internet, however, two opposing views are recognized: idealistic and realistic. I believe that we must take account of the implications of these two opposing views in an argument of how we should deal with E-learning directed toward the equitable and cooperative co-existence of different groups of people beyond their cultural and linguistic barriers.
The idealists are apt to perceive that the Internet is a technological concept and a means to help development of a global community. As opposed to the idealistic view, the realists criticize that such an optimistic perception of the reality regarding ICT is not appropriate. In my opinion, we must first recognize the Internet as a political and ethical process rather than a mere technological process, as far as the present day reality of the use of ICT is concerned. The Internet has both good and bad effects, so to speak “a double-edged sword” that can be used for enrichment as well as destruction of diverse human cultures. Let me start my discussion by elaborating this point a little bit further.

**The Idealists View vs. the Realists View**

The idealists of the Internet, mostly from the US and the UK, are apt to emphasize the promising future potentiality of the global technology, assuming that English language, which is functioning as a *de facto lingua franca*, is being shared among users from different language and culture groups all over the world, and believing that the present dominance of English on the Internet will continue and the unification of diverse world’s languages into an established global standard language (English!) will proceed in the long run. The realists who are mostly from non-Anglo-Saxon countries, on the other hand, are suspicious of how long the present dominance of English on the Internet should continue. Paul Treanor, a Dutch critic, calls the ideology of the Internet or Cyber space the “Net-ism”. Treanor foresees, or hopes, that the present dominance of English is probably temporary, for national language use will extend in the future, as the population of computer users grow in some areas in the northern hemisphere, other than the US, the UK and their few kin countries. The bulk of the population in many other developing countries may still fall far behind, though.

Needless to say, the Net-ism and the dominance of English coincides with the dominance of the United States in the world economy. Treanor says that the basic model of the Net-ism is taken from classic liberalism. The classic liberalism is characterized by free market under the “laissez-faire” competition policy. Likewise, an electronic laissez-faire free market appears to characterize the currently undergoing Internet. As the ideology of liberalism has promoted monopoly-controlled industries, which in turn contributed to the growth of the global economy currently dominated by the US. The Internet also, at the current stage at least, is a monopoly dominated by the US with a most advantageous use of English as the computer language and the main Net medium, as represented by Microsoft Empire. Under the monopolist economy there may be only one economy, and people are forced into an economic interaction that they do not necessarily choose of their own will. After the Cold War ended, we have found there are only one capitalistic economy, only one free market economy, and only one Internet, from which people find escape impossible. This is the point that the realists criticize most.
The Present Reality of the Internet

The reality of the Internet tells us that the Internet is not globally shared yet. The realists, like Treanor, claim that we have to be suspicious of whether the Internet will really create a global community or not. According to Treanor, the advocates of the "Net-ism" and their supporters tend to assume unrestricted access to the Net and emphasize that it is open to everyone, implying the Internet’s political neutrality and equality of participants. However, Treanor criticizes such an assumption is wrong. If we ask who the users of the Internet are, inequality of Internet access becomes obvious. The users of the Net are armed with sufficient "media literacy." They come from the best educated, the best-paid class. They occupy only a very small portion of the world’s population, who inhabit mainly in the northern hemisphere. In order to use the Internet fully you need money to buy a terminal machine, ability to operate the keyboard and, above all, you need ability to use English as the so-called "international language". Unless your machine is installed and armed with highly efficient automatic translation software, many of you are barred from global reach to a marketplace of useful ideas and information exchange. According to a SNNDP (Sustainable Development Network Program, initiated by the United Nations in 1992) report, the US has already a substantial lead in deploying and effectively using electronic commerce (e-commerce), for both business-to-business and business to consumer services. Europe is lagging behind 2 to 3 years and developing countries come in last with at least a 5-year lag.  

The inequality of access to the Internet, which often implies the inequality of distribution of valuable information, is observed not only between individuals in the same country but also between the countries. This may be said a newly created phase of the North-South problem. Recent statistics indicate that, contrary to many expectations, the information gap between industrialized countries and developing countries is expanding rather than contracting. Moreover, within many developing countries, the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is increasing. Recent estimates indicate that the global number of Internet users in the world is about 180 million, of which only 14% are in developing countries. In the African continent alone there are around 1.3 million users. Of these, almost a million are in South Africa alone. If we exclude South Africa, the average number of users is only 6,000 people per country in Africa. 

2. Globalization vs. Anti-Globalization

Globalization as Seen from the Cultural Perspective

The above-mentioned arguments with regard to the Internet reality are deeply related to the issues of "globalization" or "global community. Now, what is globalization? Many arguments have been made concerning what it means by globalization. Here I would like to refer to Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s theory

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on "global cultural flows". Appadurai claims that the complexity of current global economy and cultural interrelationships has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order. As an elementary framework for exploring such disjunctures between economy, culture and politics, he has suggested five dimensions of global cultural flow: (a) ethnoscapes, (b) mediascapes, (c) technoscapes, (d) finanscapes, and (e) ideoscapes. Increased transnational flow of people as both lowly and highly skilled labor is the "ethnoscape". The ethnoscape represents the shifting world by people crossing transnational border, i.e., tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons. Multinational enterprises represent the "technoscape", i.e., transnational transfer of technology, both high and low, and both mechanical and informational. The ICT helps accelerate flows of media, finance, and ideas and ideologies.

**Disjunctures in Globalization: Cultural Homogenization vs. Cultural Heterogenization**

Appadurai argues that the central problem of today's global interaction is the tension between cultural homogenization and heterogenization. Both homogenization and heterogenization may be seen as the two aspects of globalization and much empirical facts and data could be brought to bear on both sides of the arguments.

The cultural homogenization arguments are very often associated with the critical arguments about "Americanization" as a strong driving force for unification of diverse world's cultures, exercised through hegemonic power of "the American economic and cultural imperialism", as frequently and ironically represented by such words as McDonaldization, Coca-Colonization, Disneyland, etc. Homogenization of the world culture is also very well illustrated by the popularity of transnationally accepted credit cards as a symbol of the unification of the world economy. The American-invented credit card system works as a "global standard". The electronic mail system and the Internet are likewise an American origin that is now accepted as a global standard by all other countries, whether they would like it or not. However, as I mentioned earlier, the globalization in this sense has already created new types of inequality and discrimination between "the haves" and "the have-nots", not only in terms of the use of credit card but also the access to the Internet, and many other means to participate in information and economic exchange in the world market. The globalization has been made possible by the monopoly capitalism based on the goal of liberalism and the principles of free market competition. Because of this very basic nature of globalization, the global economy does not carry with it the ethics of equitable distribution of wealth and income. The lack of this ethics has been a serious problem, and the same problem lies in the Internet as well.

While the cultural homogenization arguments tend to put stress on the impacts of American cultural economy, the cultural heterogenization arguments attach importance to the counteractive movements from the local sides, paying much
attention to the facts that cultural forces from various metropolises of the world’s “center” or “core” societies brought into “peripheral” societies often become “indigenized” or “localized” in one way or another. Opposing to such external pressures of cultural homogenization through economic globalization, anti-globalization movements have grown, as illustrated by the protest rally of some NGOs against globalization at Johannesburg Summit.

From Disjuncture to Dialogue: Bridging Globalism and Localism

Anti-globalization movements are radically represented by some NGOs concerned about various issues on development and environment. Not only those organizations but also local governments and voluntary groups of citizens in the peripheral areas show their concern over those issues. Many of them worry about the negative force of globalization to wipe out their local economy and traditional culture. Reacting to the external pressure of globalization, the so-called nativism often gain power, which leads to revitalization movements of the local traditions and native languages as the basis of their cultural identity. Such movements often include strategic attempts to utilize the external stimuli (ideas and technologies) brought by economic globalization for the sake of revitalizing their own internal cultural traditions. Anthropologists are interested in this phenomenon as the “indigenization” or “localization” of globalism. As is well known, Sociologist Roland Robertson named this phenomenon glocalization. Interestingly, English language per se is not free from the glocalization mechanism. In the process of its diffusion, glocalization occurs in accordance with the local language. A Well-known example is the case of “Singlish” (Singapore English).

It should be noted here that the needs to achieve the revitalization of local/indigenous cultures might drive people to utilize innovative ICT including the access to the Internet. This is especially true of many NGO and NPO (Non-Profit Organization) activities in recent years. In such a context as mentioned above, a communication and dialogue between the “globals” and the “locals” may occur in a rather positive way. Here, we find how the global and the local can become reciprocal instruments in the deepening of democracy, to which discussion I will return in the later section (Section 5).

3. Development of Multicultural Communities

Global Ethnoscape and Multiculturalism

In searching for the philosophy of the Internet, which is the main theme of this paper, we have to take a look at the recent growth of multicultural communities under globalism and its implications for politics and education.

The worldwide flows of immigrants, transnational migrant workers, multinational joint venture business persons, etc. in recent years contribute to the
transfer of the existing monocultural communities into certain types of multicultural and transcultural communities, which assume interaction between/among different cultural groups in cooperative or collaborative manner. The social scientists have become fully aware of the multicultural character of the contemporary transitional societies. Therefore, they emphasize the importance of understanding the reality of multiculturalism and the rationality of redefining cultural identity. In the era of globalization, many of the local communities, both centers and peripherals, and both developed and developing societies, face the difficult problems of how to accommodate themselves to the new living environment that now include substantial numbers of newcomer residents from outside.

The process of "deterritorialization", a concept first used by Geographer David Harvey as one of the central forces of the modern world, brings laboring populations with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the lower class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies. Deterritorialization helps promote the diversification of local community in terms of race, language and culture, including religion. In such a multicultural community, various efforts of mutual understanding for equitable and cooperative co-existence through constant communication and information exchange become a must both for the local residents and the newcomers. These newcomers often construct their own communication and interaction networks with other fellow countrymen. Their diaspora network often develops across the world.

Emergence of the cultural mosaic by the flow of working population from developing countries into local cities and towns in the developed countries has become a worldwide phenomenon today. This is the phenomenon that Appadurai calls "ethnoscape". The increase of diaspora communities is observed in all over Japan as well. The recent trend concerning foreign population in Japan is characterized by the rapid growth of Brazilian population of Japanese extraction and there have emerged many problems with regard to education and identity of those newcomer children.

Moving People in the Multicultural Contexts

Such change necessitates examination of various aspects of the specialized policies regarding intercultural communication and dialogue. Natives' or old comers' intolerance and even aggression toward newcomers as well as open or hidden conflicts between the two were witnessed everywhere in the world when the community has become multicultural by the increase of newcomer population with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A general attitude of denial and lack of respect for cultural diversity, cultural intolerance and indifference easily cause political inability and failure to manage cultural differences and to rationalize and organize transitional processes from monoculturalism to multiculturalism, and finally result in unstable, unreliable, and chaotic situations of the communities. The
economic, political and institutional problems of transitional changes have become evident in many places of the world at the turn of the century and in the context of globalization.

In such a transitional and multicultural setting of the communities as mentioned above, a challenging search for the philosophy and the policy of day-to-day communication and interaction among different cultural groups of people becomes inevitable. The Japanese word "tabunka kyosei" meaning “equitable and cooperative co-existence of different cultural groups” has become a keyword in this context (here, tabunka means “multicultural”). As you remember, the year 2000 was designated by the United Nations as “the International Year for the Culture of Peace”. The philosophy of the Culture of Peace gives us an image of the world community consisting of multilingual and multicultural human groups that interact in such a way as to realize “the equitable and cooperative co-existence”. The word kyosei was first adopted by Japanese biologists as a term to describe symbiotic phenomena observed among diverse bio-entities or biological beings, suggesting diverse types of ecological relationships among various bio-entities. In other words, kyosei in ecology or biology is being used as a value-free word to indicate the mere fact or natural phenomenon. In the social sciences, however, the same word is being used as a rather value-oriented word referring to the political and ethical implications of multiculturalism to connote the goal of attaining harmonious relationships among the different human groups or sectors of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The basic image of the changing Japanese community, often called “tabunka kyosei shakai” (shakai means “society”), connotes that development of multicultural society is a kind of transitional process characterized by the increase of linguistic and cultural barriers for communication and interaction among human groups of different backgrounds and this process requires residents, both natives and newcomers, to join the persistent challenge for removing such barriers.

**Transculturalism: Cultural Hybridity and Creation of New Identity**

There could be different interpretations of the term “multiculturalism” but the common understanding of it is something like a basic concept and policy developed in order to understand and manage cultural diversity. The constant cultural diversification implies the possibility of constant identity changes, the existence of multiple identities and all other processes linked to the individual or group identification. "Cultural diversity" is the starting point for the discussion of development and management of cultural relationships today. The cultural relationships in this sense have powerful influence on defining the social positions of groups and individuals. Therefore, “cultural rights” are regarded as important part of basic human rights in democratization process at national, regional and global levels.

“Multiculturalism” and “transculturalism” are the two key words to understand the on-going socio-cultural transformation and identity change in contemporary
society. Of the two terms, "transculturalism" is a newer term to describe social changes wrought by globalization, increased mobility, and ethnic and cultural intermingling. The term is increasingly being used not only in academia but also in literature and even in public-policy discussions regarding people's attempts to redefine themselves. Multiculturalism is a more popular term, generally implying the acceptance of and celebration of distinct cultural heritages, while it continues to reign as the dominant, "politically correct" framework through which ethnic identity is examined. However, some observers have begun to argue that multiculturalism must give way to new views of self and community, i.e., transculturalism.

Multiculturalism generally connotes that you must be aware of cultural differences, and respect and honor them and that you are in a situation in which those differences become insurmountable. Respect for cultural boundary and identity maintenance is regarded as a primordial feature of multiculturalism. Transculturalism, on the other hand, casts identity in a new light: as a melding, or fusion, of ethnic backgrounds and cultural experiences. In this sense, transculturalism appears to go the other direction from multiculturalism. What is different now, at the beginning of the 21st century, is a world that is becoming more mobile and more connected than at any time in history. Today, cultural change happens more rapidly, and on a different scale. Under such circumstances, people create "fused" identities and new cultures that mix and match cultural heritage beyond the existing boundaries. This is what is called transculturalism.\(^7\)

**Resistance to Blending**

While we are moving toward the era of cultural blending, we must admit that a strong resistance to ethnic and cultural blending still exists. This gives such an impression that transculturalism is not likely to be embraced on a widespread basis anytime soon. Ethnic wars, such as those in the former Yugoslavia, are all too vivid in our memory. For many people, culture is still a matter of ethnic purity, to be defended to the death under the tragic name of "ethnic cleansing." On a less tragic level, there are some countries like France that show a strong reluctance and/or resistance to imported foreign things, particularly those intrusions from the US, such as Hollywood films, Disneyland, MTV, McDonald, Coca-Cola, and so forth. Such anti-blending includes resistance against the domination of English as an international language. The resistance to blending is not a mere conservative or anachronistic response to the change of culture and society but it implies something more. Here, let me return to the argument concerning the international language issue in the section to follow.
4. Implications of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Globalization and the Language Issues

As I have mentioned earlier, we have to admit the reality that English is the most dominant language in the world today and is actually playing the role of international *lingua franca* for the time being. But on the other hand, we should not forget that there exists a serious problem concerning the present dominance of English in the globalizing world as well as in the Internet. I think that this issue is not merely a matter of language but it involves more fundamental problems pertaining to human survival. We must not take the present status of English for granted. According to Professor Yukio Tsuda, a Japanese linguist, one out of every four persons (25%) of the world population today are said to speak English as either native language or the second language. As a matter of fact, English is being used in many spheres of international activities: business, politics, diplomatic negotiation, conferences, science, media, art, etc. However, quite a few linguists and scholars warn that the domination of English as an international language has already caused and will cause many serious problems. It is serious, because it will lead to termination of diverse and rich resources of human beings. Tsuda points out six such problems caused by the domination of English: (1) inequality and discrimination in communication, (2) “linguicide” - destroying and “killing” minority languages, (3) unification of cultures, (4) unequal access to information, (5) colonization of mind, and (6) creation of class society based on English proficiency.

These six problems are closely related to each other. As Tsuda points out, English domination has produced a complex of inequality and discrimination between English speakers and non-English speakers. This complex includes not only language handicaps in public spheres but also educational burden, psychological complex and frustration, sociologically marginal position, disadvantage in world politics, etc. Because of the forced diffusion of English -- and some other European languages like French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, etc. -- under colonialism, thousands of native languages had already disappeared. Pessimists foresee 95 % of the languages in the world today will disappear by the end of the 21st century. Destruction of diversity of native languages implies not merely a unification of language but also a unification of culture. Dominance of English has brought about rapid penetration and diffusion of American cultures and life styles. Almost everywhere in the world today, we see American-born popular culture, particularly consumer culture, as represented by many kinds of soft drinks, fast foods, blue genes, T-shirts, etc. In the peripheral areas, these consumer goods and life styles are brought to people of wealthy class through a variety of electronic media, mainly TV commercial and the Internet advertisement.

Tsuda suggests the need of a new paradigm of “linguistic ecology” in place of the existing paradigm of English as an international language. The existing paradigm is
based on and also supports the ideology of unified language, cultural imperialism, and globalization. The new paradigm he suggests is intended to realize and promote multilingualism, multiculturalism, and foreign language education, being based on the ideology of equal values of different languages and communication styles. This ideology regards language and culture as human rights and advocates protection of minority languages. Why does he call this paradigm "linguistic ecology"? Because, he says, just as the nature exists by the ecological symbiosis of diverse biological beings, the human society can survive only when equitable co-existence of diverse languages and cultures are securely maintained.

**Implications of Biodiversity and Linguistic-Cultural Diversity**

To be sure, in the sphere of plants, especially of crops, hot discussions are going on with regard to the problem of how to stop declining biological diversity. The threat to biodiversity is one of the priority topics discussed at the UN World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, held in August-September this year (2002). The Summit launched the foundation of a Global Conservation Trust to help maintain the world's most critical plant collections.21

A recent newspaper reports, referring to the World Summit in Johannesburg, that "because of the emphasis on high-yielding modern crops aided by liberal chemical inputs, the world’s food supply is becoming increasingly homogenous. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that three-quarters of the original varieties of agricultural crops have been lost from farm fields since 1900. This loss of variety has speeded up over the past 20 years, and unfortunately, it is sometimes under the guise of development projects that vast areas of *monocropping* are being introduced."22

Monocropping means a decline of crop-diversity. It has been brought only for the business purpose as a matter of convenience. What is good for business, however, is not necessarily good for the future of world food supplies. Likewise, what is convenient and good for the English dominated Internet is not necessarily good for the future of world cultural enrichment. When we think useful we often think in economic terms. But development is not only about money. It is also about social and cultural values. We should know that by reducing varieties, both in biological and cultural terms, we are destroying the social tissue and are making societies more vulnerable.

5. **Creation of Public Culture through the ICT and Internet**

**The Internet and Grass Roots Democracy: Human Rights Movement**

I am greatly concerned about that the ICT and the Internet involve politically and ethically risky problems, with which we need to take every caution. But, at the same time, I am appreciative of the high potentiality of these technologies,
particularly from the perspective of growth of grass roots democracy and alteration of global governance. If we can establish the ethics and politics of the ICT, the Internet will promote a process of "information democratization" by allowing citizens, organizations and institutions in most countries to publish and distribute their own information and knowledge. The postmodern global governance is very well characterized by the rapid growth of non-governmental organizations of all scales and varieties and the establishment of reciprocal relationships between the United Nations and NGOs in pursuing a variety of development projects. Those projects gain much productive outcomes when networking among various types of NGOs comes off by utilizing effectively the Internet and other innovative ICT devices. A new type of global governance under which the UN systems collaborate on a variety of development projects with NGOs at various levels becomes very powerful when it is armed with innovative global technologies like the Internet.

The explosive growth of non-government organizations of all scales and varieties since the latter half of the 20th century is no doubt a very strong driving force to alter the nature of global governance. It is obvious that the growth of NGOs is pushed forward very strongly by the linked development of the United Nations’ leadership, especially the global circulation and legitimization of the discourse and politics of "human rights." The global spread of the discourse of human rights is an important part of the global "ideoscapes" (Appadurai) that have undoubtedly helped local democracy take root in many countries. And here it is worth noting that this global spread of the idea of grass roots democracy has been made possible by the combination of the global non-governmental politics with the innovative development of the ICT in the past four decades. Appadurai suggests that such combination as this “has provided much energy to what has been called ‘cross-border activism’ through ‘transnational advocacy networks.’” According to him, these networks provide “new horizontal modes for articulating the deep democratic politics of the locality, creating hitherto unpredicted groupings. He suggested two types of such networks: ‘issue-based’ -- focused on the environment, child labor, or AIDS, and ‘identity-based’ -- feminist, indigenous, gay, diasporic.”

Collaboration of the UN and NGOs through the Internet

The following case is an example of how the collaborative system of the UN’s SDNP (Sustainable Development Network Program) operates through utilization of the ICT and the Internet. The SDNP was initiated by the United Nations in 1992 as part of the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) network and its focus is sustainable development issues. Every SDNP node is a country-owned, non-profit network that is open to all the stakeholders in sustainable development. The multi-national SDNP family has produced multi-lingual resources on sustainable development as well as on the technical aspects of networking. The following is a brief summary of the story of how UNDP/SDNP projects in rural Cameroon
developed and helped empowerment of women by providing useful information.

Fossi Yoni Mireille a young woman, 22 years of age, lives in Mbouda, Cameroon. She is a drop out of secondary school. Meanwhile, a non-governmental organization, named the Association for the Development of Women and Health (FESADE) based in the capital Yaounde was connected to the SDNP in Cameroon. Through this connection, FESADE became able to provide an Internet service and this young woman has benefited from this service and has acquired advanced techniques of livestock production. But, it was a long way for Cameroon to reach this stage, because it was not easy to introduce cutting-edge technology in a country with a mostly rural population and only five telephone lines for every 1,000 people. The main approach the SDNP had to take was to help people bridge the gaps in the local infrastructure through networking. The network consists of 300 members including scientists, NGOs, academics and government officials. These people worked with the SDNP to identify areas of information technology, which they could apply to their daily activities. To reach out to poor communities, the program’s ultimate target group, many members serve as intermediaries, working with the grassroots population. Among them are rural NGOs and women’s groups. SDNP took off initially with three computers in Yaounde and later created a web site, which was advertised by its links to other places. Reportedly, now in its fourth year, SDNP has more than 100 people with electronic mail boxes spread over five Cameroon’s 10 provinces. The program has seven mailing lists with 330 members sharing information on a variety of issues on sustainable development. It also serves more than 10,000 people through its Internet Help Desk.

The women’s center provided information and training with over women in health and nutrition, dressmaking, farming and livestock breeding. Seventy percent of the project partners and beneficiaries in Cameroon are woman whose practical needs in livestock production are addressed by a NGO named HPI with help from the networking program. Many of those women are illiterate. But the illiteracy does not matter, because the Internet can provide those women with useful information regarding how to raise and breed their livestock by effective use of animated pictures and explanatory patterns. Although excited at having access to the Internet and e-mail, the people faced problems in connecting the Internet safely due to the poor quality of local telephone lines. This was a constraint to Internet expansion in Cameroon. In order to improve the conditions, SDNP has helped by providing cheap e-mail access by installing servers in each province, where there are NGOs or small and medium enterprises that can host them. The ICT and the Internet are now regarded as the key tools for reducing poverty.

As mentioned above, UNDP is the UN’s global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. As of 2001, one hundred and sixty six (166) countries are working with UNDP/SDNP on their own solutions to global and national development
challenges of democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and
recovery, energy and environment, the ICT, and HIV/AIDS. UNDP activities seem to
encourage in particular the protection of human rights and the empowerment of
women.

Conclusion: Some Suggestions for the Future

Let me conclude my presentation by making a suggestion for the improvement of
the present reality concerning the utilization of the ICT and the Internet in the
multilingual/multicultural context, particularly from the point of view emphasizing
the urgent need of establishment of the “Philosophy of the Internet” and its
education. To be more specific, my suggestion is summarized in five points as it
follows.

1. “Philosophy of the Internet” and the “Public Culture”: Educational
programs dealing with political and ethical problems of the
Internet

If we are successful in establishing an internationally accredited educational
programs of the “Philosophy of the Internet” to deal with political and ethical
problems of the Internet and the ICT, and to encourage students to make effective
and responsible use of the Internet for the purpose of sharing valuable knowledge and
skills among the conscientious users so as to achieve equitable and cooperative co-
existence of human groups of different cultural backgrounds, the ICT and the
Internet can contribute to the creation and development of the “public culture”. As
long as the Internet is used only for the monopoly of information by a handful
numbers of elite and the so-called “NET mania”, it may not be called the public
culture yet. By the “public culture” we mean the culture consisted of knowledge and
information worth sharing publicly for the purpose of maintaining human dignity in
terms of freedom and equality, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, origin, status,
and other ascribed attributes. In other words, the public culture includes ideologies
and institutions of human rights, culture of peace, and multiculturalism for equitable
and cooperative co-existence of different people. Various kinds of case reports taken
from the UNDP projects and NGO activities will be excellent learning materials for
the educational programs to deal with political and ethical problems of the Internet.
We need to encourage the establishment of “Philosophy of the Internet”.

2. Educational programs of “media literacy ”

We all live in two worlds: the real world and the media world. We are constantly
crossing the border between the two worlds. To survive actively in these two worlds,
we need sufficient media literacy. I am using the term (phrase) “media literacy” in a very broad sense. James Potter suggests that there are at least three kinds of literacy: reading literacy (print media), visual literacy (film and television), and computer literacy. Media literacy includes all these specialized abilities but is more than those. Potter states, “media literacy is a perspective that we actively use when exposing ourselves to the media in order to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. We build our perspective from knowledge structures. To build our knowledge structures, we need tools and raw material. The tools are our skills. The raw material is information from the media and from the real world. Active use means that we are aware of the messages and are consciously interacting with them”.

Thus, media literacy is a set of abilities to develop multiple perspectives in order to interpret the meaning of the messages precisely and most appropriately by using available information obtained through different kinds of media.

To be a powerful Net-user, you need to acquire the comprehensive media literacy, not just computer literacy. But I assume that not all the people could be powerful Net users with sufficient media literacy. Then, the role of the powerful Net users is to help or collaborate with those people who happen to be illiterate in some kinds of media for some reasons. We can find an excellent example of this kind of collaboration in the SDNP project for empowerment of women in Cameroon, as I have referred to in the preceding section.

3. Encouragement of Japanese language education for both Japanese and foreigners

It is needless to say that Japanese language education is an essential condition for Japanese to know the Japanese culture, for Japanese language education includes not only Japanese language skills but also the Japanese way of thinking and cultural knowledge. Sufficient Japanese language ability is a prerequisite for obtaining sufficient media literacy. As I have introduced previously, Professor Tsuda suggested the need of a new paradigm of what he calls “linguistic ecology,” in place of the existing paradigm of English as an international language. The new paradigm is based on the ideology of equal values of different languages and communication styles and intends to support multilingualism, multiculturalism, and foreign language education. This ideology regards language and culture as human rights and advocates protection of minority languages.

I totally agree with Tsuda to emphasize the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity, because the language is not only an instrument for communication and thinking but also an important resource, in which the essence of culture is kept, as well as a tool to operate and transmit the cultural heritages. We must make every effort in enlightening people as to the importance of language diversity for all humankind. In this context, it may be worth noting here that an innovative
development activity to maintain the language diversity has been attempted by a Japan’s NPO/NGO named The Japan Forum.\textsuperscript{26}

4. Encouragement of foreign language education for Japanese

Emphasis on Japanese language education should not be confused with contempt of foreign language education. Although the domination of English as the only world language seems to be inappropriate, we cannot help admitting the present reality of global use of English in many different spheres of social and cultural interaction. In order for us to survive in the era of the ICT and the Internet dominated by the US power structure of world economy and politics, we have no choice to make in learning English language, to our regret. However, in light of the importance of diversity of language from the cultural perspective, we need to offer as many foreign language programs as possible and to educate young people towards bilingual/bicultural persons for the future. Especially, languages in the neighboring countries should be given special consideration in foreign language education.\textsuperscript{27}

5. Development of automatic translation software easy to handle

However, I do think that not all Japanese have to master English and/or other foreign languages. Promotion of the national projects developing excellent simultaneous translation software in major foreign languages for Internet users is urgently needed. This project should go hand in hand with various projects to promote foreign language education.

Note

2. Website: Sustainable Development Networking Programme (http://www.sdnp.undp.org/home/).
3. Ibid.
4. Appadurai, A., 1990, “Disjunctures and Difference in the Global Economy”, in Featherstone, Kike (ed.), Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity, London: SAGE, pp. 295-310. He uses the terms with the common suffix “-scape” to indicate that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs.
5. Appadurai, op. cit.
6. It is ironical that the recent Enron scandal has discredited the American economy as the “global standard” hopelessly with the public. This incident has
proved that the American economy is lacking a sense of morality.

7. Treenor argues that there is an inseparable relationship between the global homogenization and the monopoly capitalism. He says, “When the advocates and their supporters talk about Net-ism, the word is always used in the singular. According to them, the Internet intends to attain a global community by uniting all communication networks in the world. If the Net-ism intends to attain a single language, English, a single communication network, the Internet, a single culture, the Global culture, and a single community, the Global Community, it is an ideological monopoly by definition. Monopoly implies ‘unity’, implies expansion to the limit. Global economy is not a global economy, if there are two of it. Being global means being one unit, and being unchallenged” (Treenor, op. cit.)


10. Honna, Nobuyuki, 2001-2004, Ajia no Eigo (English in Asia), Special Lecture, the University of the Air (currently on air), Channel 205, SKY PerfectTV!


13. The declaration defines the “Culture of Peace” as it follows: “[A] set of values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behavior and ways of life based on respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and co-operation; full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts; respect for and promotion of the right to development; respect for and promotion of equal rights of and opportunities for women and men; respect for and promotion of the rights of everyone to freedom of expression, opinion and information; and,
adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, co-operation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations.” (UN, The Culture of Peace)


15. As an example of conceptual examination of multiculturalism is found in Culturelink, the network of Networks for Research and Co-operation in Cultural Development, which was initiated by UNESCO in 1989 and the Croatian Institute for International Relations in Zagreb has been the Network's focal point, published a dossier dealing with the issue on redefinition of cultural identity in the November 1999 issue of the Culturelink review. The Culturelink Network Report emphasizes the need of academic devotion to examining the conceptual and policy issues of multiculturalism and suggests an interesting discussion regarding the distinctions of several related notions such as multiculturalism, interculturalism, transculturalism, and pluriculturalism. According to the Report, while multiculturalism is generally understood as a conceptual and policy response to cultural diversity in a region or state (in the case of European Union), interculturalism stresses communication and general interaction among cultures, as well as all types of exchanges that may take place among them. Transculturalism covers the establishment of common identities that may transcend particular national or ethnic identities. Finally, pluriculturalism, which is apparently a new word introduced very recently, is a word to “stress cultural plurality and participation and is therefore particularity linked to the processes of cultural and overall social democratization that indicate also the economic and social plurality (Culturelink Network Project, “Redefining Cultural Identities: The Multicultural Contexts of the Central European and Mediterranean Regions,” International Course Report, 2002.)


17. There is a growing scholarly concern about a discourse on transnationalism, transculturalism, and globalization, throughout the humanities and social sciences in recent years. Research has turned to focus on how globalization and transnationalism are altering existing concepts of culture and community in the eras of modernity and postmodernity. In these studies, “transculturalism” is becoming a key concept. For example, the Center for 21st Century Studies at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee has started its new project entitled “Transculturalism and the Ends of Community” as 2001-2002 Center Theme.
Daniel J. Sherman, Director, writes: "We are living through a break with the era of separable societies and nation-states. No longer can the world be thought of in terms of autonomous cultures, languages, and expressive traditions. The idea of "transculturalism" points toward the new arrangements of people, identities, and social practices that are currently emerging, and it belongs to a longer history that needs reinterpretation. How do the terms "culture" and "community" function relative to one another in various disciplines, including anthropology, art history, literary theory, political economy, philosophy, cultural studies, architecture, and the health sciences as well as in "minority" discourses on race, gender, and sexuality studies?" As transnational developments of our economic and cultural systems are breaking down the existing boundaries, people turn to experience both a sense of liberation and anxiety. Related to this sense of anxiety, the most serious problem seems to be that inequalities between the haves and the have-nots in terms of power and access to distinct resources in shaping the transnational and transcultural future are becoming obvious and expanding at every level, among people, communities, regions, and nations, as I have already pointed out earlier.


20. Ibid.

21. The threat to biodiversity is very well illustrated by banana, which is the world’s most widely traded fruit. Largely for commercial reasons, virtually every banana sold in industrialized countries comes from a single variety, known as Cavendish. The multinational fruit companies that dominate the banana trade, because they are easier to commercialize, prefer uniform bananas. The commercialized bananas ripen simultaneously, making them easier to harvest and ship. However, the commercial homogenization means that the entire world’s supply is vulnerable to pest, plague or natural disaster that could quickly wipe out the market and with it the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of families that grow the crop on behalf of the corporations, which themselves bear little of the risk. It was reported that, as a matter of fact, we already experienced a disastrous Panama Disease fifty years ago, which wiped out the then popular banana called Gros Michel. It was fortunate that powerful genes of substitute bananas had still existed then and were available to make a quick replacement. This illustrates why it is so vital to conserve the world’s more than 1,400 crop gene banks, which contain about 5.4 million plant and seed samples, including the legacy of 10,000 years of planting, plowing and breeding of crops for human use. They also contain many wild species for which there may be no commercial use today, but which
could contain genetic material that can resist diseases or climate changes in the future (For the banana story, see James, Barry, “Crop Varieties Threatened by Pressure on Seed Banks”, International Herald Tribune, Monday, August 26, 2002).

22. As for the monocropping, it is said that more than 80 percent of the cropland in American states like Iowa, Illinois and Indiana is planted in just two species: corn or soybeans. This necessitates heavy pesticide and fertilizer use, since monocultures are apt to invite pests and draw a lot of nutrients out of the soil. This trend toward “genetically uniform fields supported by chemical cocktails” is spreading around the world with the risk of supplanting varieties considered unsuitable for modern food production. This is in large part due to the growing concentration of agribusiness. “Five companies control 65 percent of the global pesticide market... Five grain-trading corporations control more than 75 percent of the world market for cereals. A handful of multinational corporations control most of the global trade in coffee, cocoa, pineapples, tea and sugar” (Barry, op. cit.).


26. Since its foundation in 1987, The Japan Forum (TJF) has been conducting continuously and extensively international projects to support Japanese language teachers in the Asian-Pacific area. TJF projects include technical assistance to developing teaching materials and textbooks in accordance with the language and culture of the targeted country. TJF utilizes the Internet very well (http://www.tjf.or.jp/). A quarterly English newsletter, The Japan Forum Newsletter (Quarterly) is available.

27. In addition to the international assistance projects mentioned in the preceding footnote, TJF has been engaged in domestic support projects for education programs of Chinese and Korean languages, targeted at Japanese high school students, since 1994 and 1996 respectively. For further information, see the following English publications: (1) The Japan Forum Report / Language and Culture Series 3, “Re-examining Today’s High School Chinese Language Education: Issues and Ideas Confronting Foreign Language Education”, 1996; (2) "Chinese-language Education at Japanese High Schools”, 1999; and (3) "Korean-language Education at Japanese High Schools", 1999.