Beyond the Dichotomy between Adults' Control and Children's Agency:

The Birth of the Pendulum in Prewar Japanese Writing Education

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1 Introduction: How Should We View Children's Writings?

When coming across documents written or illustrated by children, how should we analyze them? Are they representations of children's true feelings or opinions, or were children forced to write in certain ways by adults? We often attempt to confirm if children convey their true opinions or feelings through their writings or drawings; in other words, we desire to comprehend children's voices. However, trying to uncover "children's true feelings" or "children's free will" seems to be the very thing we must reconsider historically and theoretically.

Most documents, from ones using formats to ones written under the name of "free writing," are probably combinations of both factors. Even in adults' documents, we cannot dismiss the influence of others. Writers are always aware of other people's views. Available vocabulary is limited according to times and places. As Derrida (1967) expressed through the concept *ecriture* (writing), written documents are social, existing because of social powers. Since some point in modernity, *ecriture* has been a reflection of writers' views on society and their own thoughts. Using this concept, Derrida tried ambitiously to deconstruct modern dichotomies regarding

subjects and structure. Social scientists conceptualize and operationalize the combination of social aspects and subjective aspects of documents using concepts such as "narrative" and "discourse." How can children's writings not be seen through the same conceptions?

When it comes to children's documents, normal discussions regarding texts as well as subjectivity and agency are often forgotten because children are perceived as different from adults. Despite the academic struggle emerging since the new sociology of childhood to reflect on this presupposition (see Mayall 2013 and James & Prout eds. 2014), even researchers tend to start from that assumption. By presuming that children are thought to be subject to adults in modern society, researchers are often surprised to find, identify, or even advocate children's subjectivity, agency, voices, or cultures.

In my view, we should bear in mind that these "findings" and "advocates" have been repeated in many modern societies. Rousseau proposed a child-friendly environment in his book *Emile*. The child-centered education of Pestalozzi and Dewey flourished on both sides of the Atlantic. These philosophies were imported to the other side of the Pacific—Japan—as early as at the turn of the 20th century. Recently, more child-centered concepts, such as children's rights and participation, have been raised all over the world. In sum, we, who live in modern societies, have repeated discussions on "children as passive objects or children as active agents" and "controlling children or respecting children." Therefore, adults write about children and children write about themselves in this discursive pendulum.

The sociology of childhood is no exception. In a trend often called as the new sociology of childhood since the 1990s, researchers began to advocate

"children as agents" and "childhood as social structure." However, Alan Prout (2005, 2011), a former advocate of the trend, began to suggest that these slogans may essentialize some modern notions such as subject and structure that have been reconsidered in other fields. He and his followers, whom Ryan (2012) named a "new wave," are trying to look at the social and historical construction of the modern dualisms of children and childhood, such as being/becoming, nature/culture, and agent/structure. Among others, the modern bio-social dualism regarding children has often been scrutinized (Prout 2005, Lee & Motzkau 2011).

I would add to these the dichotomy of freedom/control, which could be a mere variation of those dichotomies but should be stressed when highlighting a generational relationship that is embedded in modern practices with children. This dichotomy also presupposes the distinction and hierarchy between adults and children. However, considering the social aspects of all writings, it is fruitless to define whether the documents in front of us truly reflect children's voices. Instead, we should look at how the discursive pendulum came into existence in many modern societies. In sum, the dichotomies of respecting children or controlling them, the child-centered approach or adult control, and freedom or guidance—in other words, claims to overcome the latter by the former—seem to be phenomena that we should historicize.

In this paper, I intend to show how this pendulum appeared in the context of Japanese writing education. In the next chapter, I will give a brief overview of a perspective that I think is useful for considering this dichotomy. Then, very basic knowledge on Japanese prewar writing education will be provided, followed by detailed analyses of the texts on

writing education. Finally, I will conclude with some suggestions for reading children's documents.

2 Perspective: Niklas Luhmann's "Observation of Observation"

As is often stated, *Centuries of Childhood* by Phillipe Ariès (1960) highlights the complicated birth of the modern notion of childhood. In his book, the author reports on the rise of adults' mindsets toward children, such as coddling and exasperation, contrasting the sentiments of modern families with the moralists' sentiments in relation to the rise of the modern family and school education. If the analysis by Ariès is correct, the basis of the dichotomy I mentioned appeared with the rise of modern conceptions of childhood.

The German sociologist, Niklas Luhmann (2004: 155-156), reinterpreted these findings of social historians and described the modern educational system as "autopoietic" and consisting of a hierarchical relationship between children and adults. First, children are thought to be not only objects of education but also subjects for observing the world and themselves individually. Second, adults (socializing agents) should observe these observations of children and act on them (i.e., observation of observation, or second-order observation). In this observation of observation, adults see children from a higher level. Here, children's inner minds and free will are found and sometimes advocated. Adults are thought to grasp, care for, and work on them. Luhmann (1992) looked at this generational relationship as a key to the establishment of the modern educational system.

However, Luhmann did not analyze any historical documents personally.

Therefore, this paper will provide one example in the context of prewar Japan, showing how children's observations were discovered and how the importance of adults' observations of children's observations began to be articulated.

3   Resources: Texts of Japanese Writing Education

Japanese writing education (*tsuzuri-kata kyōiku*)[1] established in the prewar period has often been said to be unique. Around the 1930s, it took the form of *seikatsu tsuzuri-kata,* which can literally be translated as "life writing." The method of this practice continues more or less intact in present writing classes in Japan.

In this practice, teachers suggested that students write about what they see and think in daily settings "as they are, without embellishment (*arinomama*)." Children were encouraged to reflect on their lives and thoughts in their writings. It was believed that this process would produce better grown-ups and citizens. In other words, the scope of this practice was not limited only to language but also to the way children live or expectations of the kind of people they should be. To pursue this purpose, teachers were required to choose suitable topics by considering children's characteristics as different from adults and encourage them to write things "as they were."

Here, children were seen as subjects of observation and adults are expected to observe the observation. By looking at how this tradition came into being, I considered the appearance of the pendulum of freedom or guidance and organization of the generational relationship.

Regarding the history of writing education in Japan, Michio Namekawa's

Sakubun Tsuzuri-kata Kyōiku-shi (The History of Writing Education) (1977–1978), is often referenced. However, his book is problematic for the purpose of this paper because he was a leading actor in terms of child-centered life writing, showing a very linear history that started from a period of oppression and advanced to a child-centered period. Namekawa criticized writings of the first three decades in the Meiji period (1868–1912) as formalism and pragmatism.

It is true that writing education in the schools throughout this period consisted of memorization and imitation of formats such as definitions of things, sentences for daily use, and letters. This style was based on forms of education in the Edo period, such as memorization of Chinese classics by intellectuals and the repeated copying of texts (*ōraimono*) by commoners.

More recent works, however, indicate that the relationships between the world and writing, or episteme in the Foucauldian sense, were different in the pre-modern period.[2] Within the Chinese classic tradition, Japanese intellectuals in this period had to write not about what they saw but about the conceptual scenery with required combinations. Additionally, the written language was very different from the spoken language. In these points, children were no exceptions. For example, in the earliest children's writing magazine *Eisai Shinshi* (New Magazine for Gifted Education), which collected "good" writings of children and teenage contributors, we can find an example of Chinese classical style writings in which a 10-year-old wrote that he had brought Japanese sake to cherry blossom viewing just because this combination was required in the formats, regardless of what he had really done.

According to Kōjin Karatani's famous *Origins of Modern Japanese*

Literature (1993), after the movement to invent a way to unify the spoken and written language (*genbun-icchi*), Japanese literature discovered motifs such as real landscapes (*fūkei*) and interiority (*naimen*) in the late 1880s. Karatani also showed the later literary discovery of the child (*jidō*), who was expected to use different motifs from those used by adults. It is logical to think that, parallel to this change in episteme, motifs and the style of children's writings also changed.

Taking these statements into consideration, this paper will address important books and articles regarding writing education since the turn of the 20th century to the 1930s that appeared in Namekawa's books; however, the interpretation will be different. First, how were children and their ideal writings characterized and how were they contrasted with adults and their writings—what and how should children observe? Second, how were adults (teachers) expected to care about or educate in terms of desired characteristics of children in writing education—how should adults observe children's observations? As a result of this exploratory analysis, this paper will show the change in logic in three stages in the next chapter and discuss when and how the relationship of observation and observation of observation appeared and the pendulum began to swing.

4   The Discovery of the Modern Concept of Children

1)   Children's Nature and World: Around 1900

Modern Japanese education started with the declaration of the founding of the school system (*gakusei*) in 1872. As mentioned above, initial lessons in writing education consisted of memorization and imitation of formats.

This approach changed from the late 1880s onward in parallel to the establishment of modern state systems and the rise of capitalism.

Stepping away from memorization, the unification of the spoken and written language was pursued by some writers, and Japanese literature discovered motifs, distinct from mere combinations of concepts. Similarly, writing education began to distinguish between the world of children and adults and statements that children's writing motifs should not be the same as those of adults began to emerge.

Article 1 of the 1890 Primary School Order (*Shōgakkō Rei*) begins with "Primary schools should bear in mind children's physical development." This sentence was the first official definition of children (*jidō*) in Japanese modern education, and it referred to the physical characteristics of children as different from those of adults. The 1891 Fundamental Principles of Primary School Rules (*Shōgakkō Kyōsoku Taikō*) set out conditions for writing education: "Children should be ordered to write what they have learned in reading education and other subjects, what they look at and listen to in their daily lives, and what is necessary for their lives [⋯]" (Article 3, Clause 5).

Kazutoshi Ueda, who was a key person in establishing national language (*kokugo*) as a school subject in 1900, mentioned children's "nature" (*seishitsu*) as distinct from that of adults, in such phrases as they "feel starved for knowing the facts" and "tend to be in the place of receiving something, not giving" (Ueda 1895: 18). His theory, as stated below, was evaluated as "causing a stir" in "the empty formalism in sentences of prim Chinese classic styles" in Namekawa (1977: 210):

In other words, the biggest aim of writing education in ordinary education

is teaching how to summarize one's thoughts in speaking and how to write these words down instantly. [Remembering difficult] Chinese characters is not at all important. […] Forcing children to write articles in Chinese classic style must be criticized as the work of those who do not know children's nature at all. (Ueda 1895: 17-18)

In the traditional learning methods of Chinese classics, learners first memorized as many formats as possible and later created their own sentences by modifying the formats. Here, Ueda criticized this approach as unsuitable for children. Instead, he emphasized that teachers should teach "techniques of transcribing their spoken language directly" (ibid. 19) and their motifs should be "things near at hand" (ibid. 76). Considering the children's nature, Ueda chose to abandon the traditional path, putting the method of transcription (*genbun-icchi*) first.

Kichisaburō Sasaki, in his book showing the detailed aims and timetables of national language education, insisted that certain topics unique to children existed and were appropriate for writing assignments. The title of a section in the book, for example, is "Not for Adults' Practical Use, but for Children's Practical Use." Sasaki positioned himself against "pragmatists" who insisted that children should practice what they would use as grown-ups in the future. He emphasized the existence of what children should write about in their childhood, as follows:

These people choose themes that are very much suitable for adults such as "Inquiry on Rice Prices," "A Letter Asking Someone to Look after the House during My Absence," "A Letter Accompanying Someone Sent to Borrow

Trays and Bowls," and "A Letter Requesting Laborers," thinking that they will be of practical use in the future even if children do not understand the meanings at present. However, they are not at all appropriate topics. "A Letter Inviting a Friend to Play Catch" or "A Letter Accompanying Someone Sent to Borrow a Birdcage" must be necessary for children's actual lives, and they can imagine and have their views on the topic. [⋯] Look at children's real lives. They fly kites. They play Japanese cards. [⋯] What is practical use for them is not the same as that for adults. We never want to be mean teachers who make children suffer, who are living in a completely different society, by forcing on them those stark and insipid themes. (Sasaki 1902: 493-494)

Here, he emphasized the motifs suitable for children's "practical use" (*jitsuyō*). "Children's lives" (*seikatsu*) indicated that Sasaki believed children had their own living world apart from that of adults. The adult world consists of economic and social activities but the world of children features play.

In sum, the uniqueness of the nature of children and their world—different from that of adults—was recognized at the turn of the century. These conceptions strongly required a teaching strategy that was based on nature and the world in relation to the "developmental stages" of children, as was often stated. The way children write should be a transcription of their spoken language, and the motifs they write about should fit their daily lives and practical use. In this logic, the technique would remain relevant until children become grown-ups, with the expectation that they will write on adult topics in the future.

However, few of us think "A Letter Inviting a Friend to Play Catch" or "A Letter Accompanying Someone Sent to Borrow a Birdcage" is necessary for children; those letters probably adopt the style of "A Letter Accompanying Someone to Borrow Trays and Bowls." The style mentioned was still affected by the style of traditional Chinese classics. Ueda divided purposes of writing into "production" and "reproduction," insisting that only the latter is possible for children. According to his theory, children had to learn how to reproduce or imitate formats by using topics suitable for their nature and world for transcription. The internalized formats would help them write about whatever they want to in the future (i.e., "When the children grow up, they will establish their own style"; Ueda 1985: 21). "Childlike inner minds" that feel things differently from adults and "childlike styles" that express feelings in a way different from adults had not yet been discovered.

2) Childlike Inner Minds and Styles: The 1910s

From the late Meiji period to the Taishō period (1912–1926), new styles representing or confessing authors' interiority, such as I-novels (*shishōsetsu*), began to be pursued. In writing education, children were instructed to write down what they saw and felt as they were. This development is thought to be a turning point in the existing history of writing education.

Enosuke Ashida, who was later called "the pioneer of life writing" (Nakauchi 1977), criticized practical writings as unsuitable for children, saying, "Recent writing education consists of non-childlike motifs in order to respond to the so-called request from society" (Ashida 1913: 27-28). This "request" forced children to learn practical sentences for economic and social purposes. Here, similar to the previous period we have looked at, children's

writings were thought to be separated from adults' lives. However, for Ashida, it was not only "children's daily lives" that should be topics of their writings but also "something that feels real to them," especially "what they have come across in reality," such as memories of excursions and comments on experiments (Ashida 1973: 26).

The underlying presupposition was shared with adult literature— "writings should be works to represent one's psychological life in letters" (Ashida 1913: 20). New motifs such as "real feelings" (*jikkan*) and "psychological lives" (*seishin seikatsu*) appeared. Ashida placed "feelings" (*jō*) higher than "formats" (*kata*), as stated below:

> If we look at private writings, there are both practical ones and ones to express feelings. […] If you use formats, you never forget necessary business and you can save your energy as well. What I find worrying is, however, people might think everything can be written in formats, even though only some daily writings can be written with formats. (Ashida 1913: 27)

His concern was that the format might kill children's "feelings." He advocated writing education based on the nature of children as well as their innermost feelings.

From a different background, Miekichi Suzuki, the editor-in-chief of the famous children's literature magazine *Akai Tori* (Red Birds) (1918–36),[3] suggested that a principle of good writing was whether writers wrote about "what they looked at and thought" without embellishment[4] : "The main aims [of writing education] are 1) to develop children's ability to express

inner and outer phenomena, and 2) to gain indirectly, a certain result of cultivation of emotion in this way" (Suzuki 1919:74). Here, interiority was found as something that should be transcribed.

During this period, children began to be seen as observing subjects of "real feelings," "psychological lives," and "inner minds" (*naimen*). The depth of their interiority as subjects had begun to be pursued as something a priori. Moreover, children's unique writing styles, which were not mentioned in the previous period, were also discovered. For example, Ashida compared two writings from different periods on "the mock battle" (*gisen*):

> A writing of 1898: On the 9th December in the 31st year of Meiji, we, fourth graders who had come to school, formed red and white troops and aligned altogether, getting out from the school gate at quarter past eight, crossing Kiji-bashi bridge orderly and majestically, entering Take-bashi bridge, passing through the bridge in front of the meteorological observatory [⋯]
> A writing of 1914: Having waited for long, the day of mock battle had come at last. I thought I would do well as a fourth grader and left school with enthusiasm. (both cited from Ashida 1973: 206-209)

Ashida wrote, "the former has no sense of childlike atmosphere, as if a child wearing adult clothes. On the contrary, the latter is filled with childishness. Nobody doubts the fact that it is a work of a child" (Ashida 1973: 210). Here, children's inner minds—different from adults—were thought to exist a priori, and it is confirmed that nobody would fail to judge that the latter writing was a good transcription of children's inner minds. However, why the type of style could be characterized as "childlike" was

never explained logically. Both Ashida and Suzuki thought that they, as well as trained instructors, could figure out "childlike styles" a priori and often correct children's writings to make them closer to such styles. In his "The Motto of *Akai Tori*," Suzuki wrote, "The 'Subscribed Writings' selected by Miekichi Suzuki in *Akai Tori* were an institution that teaches vivid examples of true writings to all children, all those who are in charge of children's education and all our citizens" (Suzuki 1918).

Criticizing these behaviors as an example of adult control or power, in which adults forced children to write in a certain way, is a mere hindsight.[5] In this period, it was believed that the childlike nature that should be transcribed existed a priori and would come out automatically if adults took children's feelings into consideration. Ashida insisted:

> Teaching is often thought to be instilling, but, when thinking about it carefully, it is that teachers equip children with methods and place them in appropriate circumstances, letting them develop by their natural desire for knowledge. (Ashida 1973: 7)

Teachers began to observe children's inner minds. However, the depth of children's interiority was perceived as static. All that was required of adults was to choose motifs that felt real to children so that their childlike inner minds would come out automatically without any specific intervention. It was believed that children would reveal their inner minds according to transcribing methodology. This approach would change in the next period.

3) Children Who Reflect on Their Lives: The 1920s

When encouraged to write what they feel and what they think "as they are," however, some children deviate from teachers' intentions. Many practical examples demonstrated that some children's writings were not childlike; rather, they spoke of delinquency and poverty. In the history of writing education, this deviance became an issue. Even *Akai Tori,* which was not an official textbook and was read predominantly by middle-class children, revealed an acceptance and sometimes praise for these motifs. The famous Masako Toyoda's *Tsuzuri-kata Kyōshitsu* (Writing Lesson) is a good example of the depiction of miserable lives that was praised by the public.[6]

In the 1920s, new practices called "vitalism" (*seimei-shugi*) and "education based on actual lives" (*seikatsu kyōiku*) appeared. These later evolved into the famous practice of life writing. In their writing exercises, children's motifs were "lives" (*seikatsu*), dynamic connotations of their daily lives and inner minds, as suggested by the following:

> I think children's pure desire is development of their lives. Education that becomes aware of children should be something dynamic developing with those developing children's lives. (Minechi 1922: 9)

Interestingly, children were made to reflect on their way of living and thinking in their writings, an activity that was believed to set them on the path toward a better life:

> The aim of writing education, targeting the children of today, is to cultivate

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the attitude and ability of reflecting, organizing and expressing their own lives that automatically evolve and advance, and then to reform and advance children's individuality more and more based on their own ideals. (Tanoue 1976: 94)

Toyotarō Tanaka, whom Namekawa (1978) evaluated as a good example of integrating the goal of improving lives into the education of expressions, wrote, "Every time children express themselves, their attitudes toward reflecting on themselves are trained" (Tanaka 1924: 35), and "When we try to express ourselves in better ways, in higher and deeper ways, we have to live in better, deeper and purer ways" (ibid. 37).

Writing about lives and improving them were mysteriously combined. Writing what one sees and what one feels as it is (*arinomama*) and subsequently reading one's own writing facilitates organization of one's inner mind and life. This reflexive function of writing is often indicated with the notion of *ecriture*. The same function has been used as a tool in children's writing education.

In terms of relationships between children and adults, this practice was based on a different relationship from previous ones. First, teachers had to have a correct notion of children and were required to understand children's lives and inner minds. More importantly, to do so, they not only needed to know a lot about psychology but also consider children's lives and inner minds expressed through their writings. Tanaka wrote:

We have to explore the motifs of writings in children's lives. Then, we come across the question of what worlds those children's lives are in. […] This

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book will try to discover worlds of children and their voices by reading children's works and confirm what is suitable for their writing motifs. (Tanaka 1924: 57-59)

Tanaka presented many examples of children's writings. In an earlier period, children's writings were often cited in relevant literature as good or bad examples. Here, however, Tanaka cited some writings as clues for adults in understanding children. He did not evaluate children's writings by comparing them with a priori standard of childlikeness as Ashida and Suzuki did. He felt that teachers did not know children's lives and inner minds a priori but could discover them by reading children's writings. Such knowledge could be applied to encourage children to write as reflecting on and reforming their lives as well as improve their writing abilities. What a tautology!

This mysterious method gained popularity. Teachers and adults perceive children as having individual lives and inner minds that cannot be determined a priori by adults and try to comprehend them. However, the lives and inner minds of children were not supposed to be truly mysterious. Most of Tanaka's examples were diaries and comments on school events. He never imagined that children would write beyond teachers' expectations or about truly asocial things such as a desire for murder. The possibility of their betraying adults' expectations, to some extent, was taken into consideration by their teachers.

Adding to that, children were thought to be approaching ideal lives and writings, sometimes through teachers' strong instructions and sometimes through co-criticisms of others. Goals were set by adults; sometimes

ethical ("Children's lives proceed to the goal: truth, goodness, beauty and sacredness"; Minechi 1922: 19) and sometimes nationalistic ("Children we are dealing with are future citizens who will be responsible for our culture"; ibid. 19).

In short, this practice of and through writing was as follows: 1) children's lives (= observation) were seen as black boxes that adults could not imagine a priori; 2) adults were supposed to try to grasp them (= observation of observation); and 3) through this pedagogical practice of encouraging reflection toward better lives and writings, children were expected to gradually approach the ideal status of "the child." "Reflection" (*naisei*) here is neither serious nor ceaseless. On the contrary, it should be conducted within a certain scope that adults can accept.

Children were discovered as reflexive subjects. Adults (socializing agents) were expected to understand and canalize them. In reality, children probably reflected on themselves considering adults' expectations. However, the ideal instruction here is an invisible one; adults guide children as if they have reached the ideal status by themselves.

5　The Birth of the Pendulum: Repeated Child-centered Statements

1)　The Birth of the Educational Relationship

Since the turn of the 20th century, children with a distinct nature, world, and inner minds have been discovered as observing subjects. First, the uniqueness of children was found in their nature and world. Then, the childlike aspects of their observations were realized. Their observations were initially thought to be written automatically when given suitable motifs for

children. However, later, diversities in the observations were discovered, and the necessity to grasp children's lives and inner minds expressed through their writing was advocated. Teachers were expected to observe children's observations and encourage them to reflect on their lives and themselves as if they had reached a certain status by themselves.

Importantly, the presupposition that children's observations have aspects that are mysterious to adults makes educational relationships stable. Even if, in reality, a child is different from "the ideal child" to adults, that does not automatically mean the failure of education. Instead, the distance from the ideal can been seen as something that stirs educational motivation. Teachers can simply try to encourage the child to reflect on himself/herself.

In Luhmann's (1991) words from his earlier work, the child can be seen as a "communication medium" of the educational system. A child is not a "trivial machine" but an "autopoietic machine." In other words, children are not mere objects; instead, they have agency. However, children are not the same as adults, yet these autopoietic machines have become targets of adults' observations. Adults discuss what children's observations are like and how adults should intervene and incarnate their observations. This educational communication makes the educational system autopoietic.

In practice, the educational system has not had to cope with very deviant cases. In the modern "tutelary complex" (Donzelot 1977), delinquents can be sent to other systems, such as juvenile justice, social welfare, and families. Moreover, even if a child does not reach the ideal status specified by the educational system, as often happens, the teacher typically does not have to be responsible for the child for long. Eventually, such children will leave school in a few years.[7]

2) The Swing of the Pendulum

In parallel to the establishment of the educational relationship, discussions on freedom or guidance and respecting children or controlling them began to take place.

The practices of Enosuke Ashida evolved into "free theme writing" (*zuii sendai*); accordingly, children could choose their topics. Tomojirō Tomonō (1918) criticized this development by proposing "systematic teaching" (*keitō shugi*) and questioning if Ashida's method of letting children write what they wanted to write was the best way. Chiyozō Shiratori (1921) summarized the debate by stating that these practices were not truly contradictory. Both scholars respected children's freedom and individuality; the only difference was how much intervention they thought was needed to realize the teaching goal.

However, complete freedom would not be accepted. In the long run, children needed to be molded into a certain scope. The method of life writing is, perhaps, one solution, as teachers can lead children to better situations, even though they make it seem as if they have reached them independently—not by writing what they wanted to write or being taught only systematically, but by being instructed to reflect on their lives.

This generational relationship can be analyzed as both child-centered and hyper oppressive.[8] Eventually, even life writing was later criticized as an imposition of teachers' ideals. Those who criticized it insisted on replacing it with practices that "truly" respected children's freedom, as described below:

One potent reason for the fact that writings at school are not at all true free

productions [of children] and always are something like models with little vitality is the misplaced kindness of children's life guidance (*seikatsu zendō*), which goes hand-in-hand with the guidance of thoughts and the mobilization of indoctrination by past governments. (Ueda 1929: 41)

Luhmann (1992) indicated that endless discussions on how to observe children's observations and how to act on them would constitute educational communication (i.e., the educational system). Logically, when the relationship between children and adults is perceived as observation and observation of observation, a hierarchical relationship, it is inevitable to find some arbitrariness on the part of adults' observations. There is always room for going against observation on the children's side. Therefore, the proposal to give "true" freedom to children and discussions about respecting children or controlling them, using free or systematic approaches, and practicing child-centered or adult-centered methods have been repeated mutually and complementarily. The dichotomies regarding child-centeredness are signs of the episteme of the modern educational system.

6   Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, some childhood sociologists are attempting to overcome the modernist dichotomies surrounding childhood studies such as "being/becoming," "nature/culture," and "structure/agent" because these dichotomies tend to hide combinations or mixtures of the two extremes ("excluding the middle"), thus making it difficult for researchers to analyze the complex nature of contemporary childhood(s) (Prout 2005,

2011). Some sociologists try to analyze contemporary childhood(s), while others study history to show how these dichotomies appeared, sometimes counterfactually. The analysis described in this paper can be placed along the latter line.

This paper has presented the birth of dichotomy or the pendulum of freedom or guidance. In other words, it reveals the institutionalized fiction of a hierarchical relationship between children and adults in the context of Japanese writing education. This pendulum is based on the findings of children as both observing subjects and observed objects, a fact that promotes stability of the educational system. In this system, "more child-centered methods than before" have been required repeatedly. Many discussions on children's voices and rights have been piled onto this fictional relationship.

As Luhmann indicated, this picture is generally universal among modern educational systems and not specific to prewar Japanese writing education. However, the complex mixture regarding guidance of and respect for children might be specific to Japanese education. As a matter of path dependency, we should look in detail at how the pendulum has swung and how it has come into being in each historical context. In sum, we should bear in mind both the universal aspects and the specific aspects when examining children's documents.

Whatever the case, we should go beyond the dichotomy of adults' control and children's agency. If we do not take the child-adult dichotomy for granted, we see that children observe adults' observations of themselves, different from the presupposition of observation and observation of observation. Therefore, judging whether documents one collects represent

children's "true" observations and criticizing a practice or a study as less child-centered, placing one's own as "truly" child-centered, are not fruitful activities. Instead, we should place the documents—how children look at their worlds and inner minds (observation)—on relational contexts, including how adults look at children's worlds, inner minds, lives, freedom, agency, and so on (observation of observation), and then describe how the generational relationships were constituted; in other words, how the intertwining of children's observation of adults' observation and adults' observation of children's observation in specific social settings creates a certain adult-child relationship, such as a fictional hierarchical relationship of observation and observation of observation in the modern educational system shown in this paper. Historicizing and drawing pictures of intertwining relationships will be beneficial for future research and practices related to childhood studies.

Endnotes

（1） Regarding terminology, I use "writing education," not "composition," in this paper. The Japanese government used the term *sakubun*, which literally means "composing sentences" for the name given to writing education until the establishment of the subject *kokugo* ("national language") in 1900. However, the term was later changed to *tsuzuri-kata*, which means "the way of writing." It is a subcategory of *kokugo*, along with *yomi-kata* ("the way of reading"), *hanashi-kata* ("the way of speaking") and *kiki-kata* ("the way of listening"). Thus, to convey the broader connotation of this word in parallel to the other three categories, writing (education) is preferable to composition as a translation of *tsuzuri-kata*, though the term was changed back to *sakubun* in postwar educational reform.

（2） On ruling class education (*hankō*), see Saitō (2005) and Unoda (1998); on commoners' education (*terakoya*), see Tsujimoto (1999).

（3） *Akai Tori* was not necessarily for school education but collections of children's literature for middle-class families. Most magazine entries consisted of novels and poems written by adult authors, but a readers' corner included children's writings.

（4） According to Namekawa, who analyzed the pattern of adjectives in Suzuki's comments on children's writings posted to *Akai Tori*, "writing impressively what they feel with detailed descriptions as if one can see the real movements (behaviors and emotions) was required" (Namekawa 1978: 348).

（5） The concept of *dōshin* ("childlike mind") that symbolized *Akai Tori* began to be criticized as just a reflection of adults' ideals, not the true feelings of children. This criticism had been repeated since the late 1930s. The most famous critic was Tadao Satō (1959), who insisted that real boys preferred heroism in *Shōnen Kurabu* (Boys' Club).

（6） Toyoda, from a poor family of a factory worker, wrote the "real" lives of downtown Tokyo and her feelings "as they were." Her teacher, who respected Suzuki, published her writings as *Tsuzuri-kata Kyōshitsu*. The fame led her to become an essayist later.

（7） The compulsory school age in this period was from six to 12 years of age.

（8） Foucault's (1975) concept of "disciplinary power" depicted these two aspects. However, in the field of education, the negative side has been predominantly stressed to criticize the oppressive side of modern school education.

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