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Tereza Nakaya is a teacher of Japanese at the Department of Asian Studies at the Palacký University in Olomouc (Czech Republic). In her research she focuses on cognitive semantics based on theoretical and methodological approaches of cultural linguistics and cognitively oriented (ethno)linguistics. She is a PhD candidate in General Linguistics at the Department of General Linguistics at the same university and works on her dissertation devoted to the reconstruction of the linguistic image of the Japanese concept KOKORO.

e-mail: tereza.nakaya@upol.cz

Tereza Nakaya

# The Japanese concept KOKORO and its axiological aspects in the discourse of moral education

## Introduction

The conference “The Soul in the Axiosphere – The Axiosphere of the Soul”, which was held in October 2017 in Warsaw, led me to reflections on what the “soul” amounts to in the Japanese environment. It first led me to rethink what *duše* means in Czech and *soul* in English, and what relationship these words have to other words in their semantic group (*heart, spirit, mind, etc.*); what expressions correspond to them in the Japanese context and, especially, what values they carry and are related to. It became apparent that in the Japanese environment the most suitable concept in the axiological context is KOKORO.<sup>1</sup>

The following text presents the results of an analysis of axiological aspects of the Japanese concept KOKORO in the discourse of modern moral education. This focus was motivated

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<sup>1</sup> The entire text uses the following graphic distinction: for the phenomenon denoted – the denotation, a non-highlighted font is used (“kokoro”). The concept related to the denotation is marked in capital letters (“KOKORO”), while the related lexeme – word is marked in italics (“*kokoro*”). The romanization of Japanese follows the English Hepburn romanization; Chinese is transcribed with pinyin romanization. The order of Japanese names is surname – name.

The study was conducted at the author's own expense.

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by the fact that it is an area of education which aims to form the personalities of students and instil moral values in them, as well as to transfer traditional socio-cultural patterns based on shared values. Since the late twentieth century, the lexeme *kokoro* has been particularly prevalent in the Japanese environment, including the area of moral education. Based on my previous research dealing with the reconstruction of the linguistic image of *kokoro* (e.g. Nakaya, 2017), incorporating also this particular study of axiological aspects of *kokoro*, I view *kokoro* as a Japanese cultural key word (as understood by Wierzbicka, 1997).

The analysis itself is based on theoretical and methodological approaches of cultural linguistics and cognitively oriented (ethno)linguistics (Jerzy Bartmiński, Anna Wierzbicka, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Farzad Sharifian, Irena Vaňková and others). The concept KOKORO and its axiological aspects were investigated on the basis of the occurrence of the word *kokoro* in the four-volume textbook for moral education *Kokoro no nōto* (2002, revised in 2009), intended for students of primary and lower secondary schools (MEXT, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d).

The initial part of this article introduces the semantic structure of the lexeme *kokoro*, followed by its comparison with relevant foreign-language expressions. The second part deals with axiological aspects of the concept KOKORO and its position within the discourse of moral education. In order to provide the appropriate framework, the socio-cultural context of modern moral education is also briefly mentioned, as it is apparent that the change in the social (political as well as economic) situation induces change in societal values and in the words in which they are expressed. The final part presents the results of the analysis itself.

## The semantic structure of the lexeme *kokoro*

The lexeme *kokoro* (心, こころ) is relatively frequent in present-day Japanese. It is an original Japanese word (*wago*),<sup>2</sup> and its occurrences can be found in the oldest literary works.<sup>3</sup> *Kokoro* is frequently used in both spoken and written Japanese, permeating across various contexts. Since it is strongly polysemous, it is subject to innovative usage. It is also an appealing word with a positive charge; owing to its prevalent positive connotations and positive tone it is

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<sup>2</sup> The Japanese lexicon is divided into three main origin-based layers: native words (original Japanese words), Sino-Japanese words and loan words.

<sup>3</sup> According to *The Great Japanese Etymological Dictionary (Nihon gogen daijiten, 2005, p. 491)*, the first occurrence of the word *kokoro* can be found as far back as the *Kojiki* chronicle (712).

often used (or even overused) in various slogans, clichés, proverbs, advertisements and song lyrics, as well as in given names. The Chinese character representing *kokoro* even ranks among the ten most frequently used characters in girls' names (Barešová, 2016, pp. 104, 119–120). *Kokoro* is also used in Japanese phraseology as a component of numerous phrasemes and proverbs; it is part of more than five hundred phraseological units (Sagara, 1995, p. 9).

From the point of view of semantics, *kokoro* covers the thinking, spiritual and emotional element of a (Japanese) person and is a key word when referring to his/her inner world. According to Czech Japanologist Zdeňka Švarcová (2011),<sup>4</sup> the content of the word *kokoro* may be understood as “a mental space in which cognitive processes of a Japanese person take place”. However, it does not necessarily have to refer to a person's mental space; in some cases it also refers to similar dispositions in animals or (abstract) objects, when a Japanese person metaphorically projects *kokoro* into a non-human world (cf. e.g. *uta no kokoro* ‘kokoro of a song/poem’). Its other uses reveal a close connection with the Japanese socio-cultural environment and references to traditional cultural values (cf. the expression *wa no kokoro* or *Nippon/Nihon no kokoro* ‘kokoro of Japan’; *nihongo no kokoro* ‘kokoro of Japanese’; *Nihonjin no kokoro* ‘kokoro of the Japanese’).

The first meaning of the lexeme *kokoro* listed in the Japanese explanatory dictionary *Kōjien* (*Kōjien*, 2011) is “the source of/prerequisite for a person's mental processes, or mental processes themselves”. The definition also provides additional meanings and it is apparent that the lexeme *kokoro* covers an entire variety of meanings in the semantic field of the human psyche, ranging from “the complex of knowledge, feeling and will” to desires, ideas, perception, thinking, etc.; these are further developed using metonymic and metaphorical extensions. Another Japanese explanatory dictionary, *Nihon kokugo daijiten* (*Nihon kokugo daijiten*, 2002, p. 657), defines *kokoro* as “the organ controlling rational (intellectual) and mental (emotional) processes in a human being, or these processes themselves”, and notes that *kokoro* “is used as a concept in opposition to body (*karada*) and thing (*mono*)” and “is further used metaphorically to describe things or phenomena corresponding to the person's soul/mind/heart (*ningen no kokoro*)”. The following words are listed in this dictionary as synonyms: *seishin* ‘soul/psyche’ and *tamashii* ‘soul’.

As it is apparent from Japanese definitions, *kokoro* is a word used in the context of inner states and processes connected to rationality – thinking and reasoning, as well as

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<sup>4</sup> From personal e-mail correspondence with the author.

emotionality – feeling, experiencing and perception. Kokoro thus often stands in opposition to body (*karada, mi*); such examples can be found in phraseology, as well as in poetry, etc. (see Nakaya, 2017). In addition, it stands in opposition to head (*atama*), although the semantic profiles of the lexeme *kokoro* include both the emotional and the rational profile. The emotional profile is, however, prevalent in various contexts of common usage of this word in present-day Japanese. Japanese linguist Ikegami Yoshihiko (Ikegami, 2008, p. 186) observes that, in modern Japanese, native speakers collocate the word *kokoro* with the verb *feel* (*kanjiru*), while the verb *think* (*kangaeru*) collocates with *head* (*atama*); that is, “the Japanese feel with kokoro and think with head” (*kokoro de kanjiru atama de kangaeru*). Likewise, Japanese researcher Nakano Shigeru (Nakano, 1997, p. 3) mentions that “kokoro leans more toward the emotional sense of heart rather than the ‘rational’ sense of mind”.

In the scholarly discourse the lexeme *kokoro* is used as a term in psychology and philosophy, where it functions as an equivalent for *mind* and is defined as “a complex of feeling, thinking, reasoning, remembering, will and interest” (Maeno, 2010, p. 9).

## What is in the soul: *kokoro* in an interlingual comparison

Considering the range of meanings of the lexeme *kokoro*, it is hardly surprising that it is not easy to translate. In addition, it belongs to the semantic field related to such abstract phenomena and processes as feeling, thinking, experiencing, reasoning, etc. When translated into foreign languages, the word *kokoro* is rendered by various expressions, but is frequently not translated at all, particularly in collocations and phrasemes.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Czech and English, its translation is based on the particular usage and the semantic profile foregrounded in the Japanese source text.

Considering translation into English, *The New Japanese-English Dictionary (Shinwaeid-aijiten, 2008)* provides the following equivalents for *kokoro* in various collocations: *heart, feeling, emotions, mentality, psyche, soul, mind, the way people feel, (real) spirit, psychology, way of thinking, sentiment(s), personality, thought, attention, will, mood*. The *Japonsko-český slovník* (Krouský & Šilar, 2005, p. 258) lists the following equivalents: *srdce, duch, duše* and *nálada*. It is therefore obvious that the translation equivalent is not unambiguously set, but depends on a particular usage of the word *kokoro* in the Japanese source text. There is no

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<sup>5</sup> *Kokoro* is also the title of a famous modern Japanese novel from 1914 by Natsume Sōseki. It is worth noting that the title *Kokoro* is preserved in its English translation by Edwin McClellan, as well as in translations into German and Spanish.

expression in either Czech or English that would incorporate all aspects of the meaning of the Japanese *kokoro* at the same time. The most typically used partial equivalents of *kokoro* in the two languages (if not omitted in translation) are presented below (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).



Fig. 1: KOKORO in English

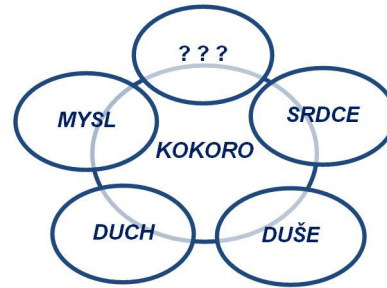


Fig. 2: KOKORO in Czech

If, at this point, we consider the semantic profiles of this lexeme only on the basis of the definitions of its meaning and exemplification of the word *kokoro* in Japanese explanatory dictionaries, it is possible to distinguish between its psychological profile (CZ: *duše*; EN: *soul*), pro-social profile (CZ: *duše, srdce*; EN: *soul, heart*), mental profile (CZ: *mysl*; EN: *mind*) and emotional profile (CZ: *srdce*; EN: *heart*). Bearing in mind that this seeming equivalence will not be fully functional in individual language realizations, it is possible to assign Czech and English equivalents of *kokoro* (provided in the brackets) within these profiles. This hypothesis has to be thoroughly verified, but only after the verification of the indicated profiles on the basis of systemic and textual data.

On the other hand, when considering the Japanese equivalent of the Czech word *duše*, one may choose in particular from the expressions *kokoro, seishin, tamashii* or *reikon*. It is, however, important to keep in mind that the Czech lexeme also has various semantic profiles. Czech linguist Irena Vaňková (Vaňková, 2016, p. 277) lists five of them: the physiological profile, the psychological profile, the socio-psychological profile, the ethical profile and the spiritual/transcendental profile. A translation equivalent is, then, selected based on the semantic profile within the semantic structure of *duše* which prevails in the particular context. If the prevalent profile is the psychological, the socio-psychological or the ethical one, *kokoro* is one of the possible translation equivalents, another being the Sino-Japanese expression *seishin* 'soul/psyche'. If, on the other hand, the usage of *duše* in a particular context is motivated by the spiritual profile, this lexeme will probably be translated into Japanese as *tamashii* or *reikon* (soul in the transcendental sense), which – unlike the expressions *kokoro* and *seishin* – refer to the “soul leaving the body”.

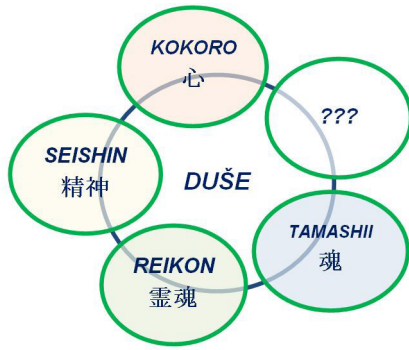


Fig. 3: The Czech word *duše* in translation into Japanese

The issue of partial, incomplete equivalence of the Japanese words *kokoro*, *seishin*, *tamashii*, etc. from the broad semantic field of the person's inner world, to the Czech words *srdce*, *duše*, *duch*, *mysl* or the English words *heart*, *mind*, *soul*, *spirit*, etc. is closely tied to cultural differences in the conceptualization of the inner state and inner life of a human being. In her study, cognitive linguist Anna Wierzbicka (Wierzbicka, 1992) deals in detail with the meaning of the Russian word *dusha* (as well as *dukh* and *serdce*) compared to the English *soul*, *mind* and *heart*, and the German *Seele*, and the difficulty when translating them. She also discusses the changes in the content of those concepts over time and offers their comparative analysis. She mentions, for instance, that the older English "*mind* had both a spiritual and a psychological dimension" and "was clearly linked with emotions" (Wierzbicka, 1992, pp. 44–45). As far as the Russian word *dusha* is concerned, Wierzbicka remarks that "the Russian *duša* [*dusha*] is used very widely and can refer to virtually all aspects of a person's personality: feelings, thoughts, will, knowledge, inner speech, ability to think" (Wierzbicka, 1992, p. 52). The wide conception of a person's inner world in the Russian DUSHA is similar to the richness of KOKORO – *kokoro* refers to emotions, feelings, experiencing, reasoning, will, etc. (see above) and incorporates (some) meanings of the English *mind* and *heart*.

The following is a short comparison of the Japanese *kokoro* with the Chinese word *xin*. The word *kokoro* is usually written in Japanese with the syllabic alphabet hiragana or with the Chinese character bearing the meaning 'heart', derived from a picture of the heart muscle (see Fig. 4). The Sino-Japanese reading of the character is *shin* (Chinese: *xin*).

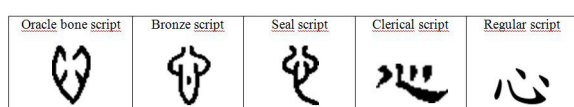


Fig. 4: Graphic development of the Chinese character 心 (simplified version based on online dictionaries Vividict.com and Jigen.net)



Chinese cognitive linguist Ning Yu (Yu, 2009, pp. 302–303) observes that “[t]he heart-mind dichotomy traditionally held by Western cultures, in which the heart is taken as the seat of emotion and feeling whereas the mind is the place for thought and reason, does not exist in traditional Chinese culture”. He continues to note that “[i]n traditional Chinese culture, the heart is the locus of both affective and cognitive activities. Therefore, it is roughly equivalent to ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ conceptualized in English”. This categorization, in the Chinese cultural context, corresponds to the concept of the Japanese KOKORO, which is not, however, fully equivalent to the Chinese XIN. The Japanese word *kokoro*, unlike the Chinese *xin*, does not include the meaning of the heart as an organ.<sup>6</sup> Further differences are apparent even at the level of abstract meaning (for a comparison of *kokoro* and *xin* cf. e.g. Morimoto, 1985, pp. 85–86). A comparison of the English *mind* and *heart* with *kokoro* has been conducted for instance by Nakano (Nakano, 1997) and Morimoto Tetsurō (Morimoto, 1985), who also compared it with other English lexemes: *heart*, *soul*, *mind*, *spirit*. Nakano observes that compared to the English MIND, KOKORO is a more “comprehensive and holistic concept, [as] it covers both mind and heart, i.e. the whole body of the inner-state or psyche” (Nakano, 1997, p. 3). Like Yu (Yu, 2009), Nakano also discusses the difference between English and Japanese concepts in relation to western-style thinking and different cultural environment.

It is apparent that the conceptualization of the inner state of a human being embodied by the Japanese concept KOKORO is based on the domestic or wider Asian cultural tradition, philosophy and the view of human beings and their inner world. This conceptualization is in many aspects shared by Chinese and Japanese cultures, although there are noticeable differences between their conceptions of the inner life/mental space of a human being. Both Eastern conceptions differ from the view of the inner state of a person in Western thinking. It is nevertheless possible to find certain similarities between the conceptualization of the person’s inner world in Russian or Old English and Japanese (and Chinese). The similarity between the Russian DUSHA and the Japanese KOKORO lies specifically in the fact that both languages, and respectively also both cultures, basically combine in one concept what the English environment divides into two concepts, MIND and HEART (and SOUL), and for which the Czech environment uses the concepts of MYSL and SRDCE (and DUŠE). When comparing DUŠE (SOUL) with KOKORO, it is important to realize that the spiritual/transcendental viewpoint is not applied here. A more detailed comparison shall be, also in this particular case, the subject of further research.

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<sup>6</sup> The heart as a bodily organ is represented in Japanese exclusively by the Sino-Japanese word *shinzō*. In contrast, the abstract meanings of the word *heart* are referred to by the Japanese word *kokoro*.

## **KOKORO in the axiosphere and the axiosphere of KOKORO: *kokoro* as a cultural key word**

KOKORO is connected with various values, most of which are related to human qualities, a person's inner state and interaction with other people. The following section deals with the axiological aspects of KOKORO: the first part provides a brief general overview and the next one is focused on the area of modern moral education, where *kokoro* is a key word.

### **KOKORO as a value: a general overview of axiological aspects**

According to folk conceptualizations, *kokoro* itself is an important value in the Japanese cultural environment. The expressions and collocations evidencing the position of *kokoro* as a value are for instance *kokoro ga aru* 'to have *kokoro*' and *kokoro ga nai* 'not to have *kokoro*'. In fact, the expression *kokoro ga aru* itself is an evaluation, a statement of the fact that something is valuable or that it has *some* value. Other examples are the collocations *Nippon/Nihon no kokoro, wa no koro, wagokoro* 'the Japanese *kokoro*' or *Nihonjin no kokoro* 'the *kokoro* of the Japanese'. In these expressions, *kokoro* actually represents and refers to traditional cultural values or concepts inherent to all Japanese and closely tied to the Japanese socio-cultural environment. These are concepts that are regarded as the essence of Japaneseness, for instance WA 'harmony', OMOIYARI 'empathy, thoughtfulness', OMOTENASHI 'hospitality', CHŪ(JITSU) 'loyalty', BI 'the sense of the beautiful and the aesthetic', or traditional Japanese cultural disciplines and related values (tea ceremony, martial arts, etc.).

### ***Kokoro* as a Japanese cultural key word: the socio-cultural context**

*Kokoro* may be regarded as a Japanese cultural key word, particularly since the late twentieth century, as it is very frequent in Japanese in various contexts and fulfils all attributes of cultural key words listed by Wierzbicka (Wierzbicka, 1997, p. 16).<sup>7</sup> At the turn of the 1980s Japanese society experienced a number of changes leading to moral problems at schools and among

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<sup>7</sup> It is a common word and is frequently used in one particular semantic field; it also functions as the core of phraseologisms and appears in various sayings, proverbs, song lyrics, book titles, etc. Finally, it has no single equivalent in foreign languages.



students. These were attributed among other things to the decreasing morality of students and insufficient moral education. There was an increasing number of cases where students stopped attending school, as well as increasing numbers of student suicides, cases of violence at schools among students and bullying. In this context, Japanese philosopher Takahashi Tetsuya (Takahashi, 2003, p. 28) uses the expression *kokoro no are* 'a storm in kokoro'.

The state administration began to advocate the introduction of strict moral education at schools as of the 1990s. In this regard, Professor of Sino-Japanese Relations at the University of Leeds Caroline Rose (Rose, 2006, p. 132) mentions not only "moral education", but also "patriotic education". She argues that the state's effort to introduce education focused on this area has to be viewed within the framework of the complete reformation of the Japanese education system taking place as a result of social, political and economic changes in Japan. Like Takahashi (Takahashi, 2003), Rose (Rose, 2006) also mentions the end of the Cold War and globalization as global factors. In relation to globalization, the aim of the new moral education was to raise students to be proud citizens of the Japanese state, loyal to their country and helping Japan succeed in the twenty-first century international competition of the globalized world (Rose, 2006; Takahashi, 2003). It should be added that the promotion of the new moral education and strengthening of patriotism amongst students were sought out at the turn of the twenty-first century especially by conservative right-wing political parties and their supporters or various conservative clubs and associations (e.g. Rose, 2006; Takahashi, 2003). This fact needs to be taken into account particularly in relation to the emphasis these circles place on Japanese traditional culture and values, and domestic tradition. The opponents of this approach and of related study materials note parallels with the pre-war moral education (the so-called *shūshin kyōiku*) – stressing patriotism and domestic tradition (e.g. Higashi, 2008; Takahashi, 2003) – and with obvious neo-nationalist tendencies.

In view of the social changes mentioned above, emphasis began to be placed on moral and domestic values not only in the area of education, but also in society in general. A number of organizations incorporated the word *kokoro* into their name. One of them is the association called the Revolution of Kokoro in Tokyo (*Kokoro no Tōkyō kakumei*), with the influential conservative right-wing politician Ishihara Shintarō as the driving force behind its establishment in 2000. This organization focuses on wholesome education for youth and implements various projects in collaboration with local administration and citizens. According to information provided on its website,<sup>8</sup> the association was established in response to

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.kokoro-tokyo.jp/> (accessed 10 August 2017).

the decline of social morality and disintegration of traditional values; its objective is to build a sense of morality in citizens and the future generation and to raise the young generation towards social responsibility by fostering a spirit of non-material (spiritual) values.

Another organization worth mentioning, whose establishment in 2015 is also connected with Ishihara Shintarō, is the conservative (ultra right-wing) political party called “The Party that Values Japan’s Kokoro” (*Nippon no kokoro o taisetsu ni suru tō*).<sup>9</sup> The first point of its political programme<sup>10</sup> declares that the party “shall strive for its own (Japanese) constitution which shall respect the individuality of the country with a rich culture and history, as well as the kokoro of its people; a constitution drafted by the Japanese”.<sup>11</sup>

As can be seen, then, since the turn of the millennium the lexeme *kokoro* has appeared as a term in various (educational) programmes, as well as in the names of – mostly conservative, right-wing – organizations, including a political party. Typical rhetorical contexts of this discourse concern a turn to real values (attitudes to a person and his/her needs), traditional Japanese values and domestic traditions.

## **KOKORO in the discourse of moral education (a key word)**

Moral education, whose strict re-introduction was promoted in Japan under the influence of social, political and economic changes in the late twentieth century (see above), is referred to in Japanese with the neutral term *dōtoku kyōiku* or with the euphemism *kokoro no kyōiku* (literally ‘education of kokoro/education of the mind’). Apart from this, within the discourse of the “new” moral education of the early twenty-first century, the lexeme *kokoro* is also found in the collocation *yutaka na kokoro* (literally ‘rich kokoro’), which is another key concept (discussed in more detail below). In addition, the twenty-first century is referred to in various contexts as *kokoro no jidai* (literally ‘a time of/for kokoro’), that is, a time when kokoro shall be emphasized and the values related to it shall play an important role.

In the discourse of moral education (*kokoro no kyōiku*), *kokoro* has been a key word since the turn of the millennium and as such has even been used in the titles of moral education study materials. These include a series of textbooks entitled *Kokoro no nōto* (known

<sup>9</sup> In 2017, the party shortened its name to “The Party for Japanese Kokoro” (*Nippon no kokoro*).

<sup>10</sup> <https://nippon-kokoro.jp/> (accessed 10 August 2017).

<sup>11</sup> The current (post-war) Japanese constitution was drafted by the American occupation administration and enacted in 1947.

in English as *Notebooks for Moral Education*, according to the translation by the Japanese Ministry of Education).

In his observations concerning the *Kokoro no nōto* series, Takahashi (Takahashi, 2003, pp. 108–110) writes about “kind nationalism” (*yasashii nashonarizumu*) and uses the expression “kokorogy” (*kokoroji*) or “kokoroism” (*kokoroshugi*) for the state’s strategy aiming to implement the policy for enhancement of nationalism through pleasant and agreeable expressions, such as *kokoro*, present in these textbooks. Researcher at Miyazaki International College Debra Occhi (Occhi, 2008, p. 204), in turn, observes that the lexeme *kokoro* appears in Japanese songs and textbooks “as part of an implicit cognitive cultural model for ideal Japanese society” and, like Takahashi, notes that expressions containing *kokoro* are used in this discourse to promote cultural ideology (Occhi, 2008, p. 207).

## **The *Kokoro no nōto* study materials and the concept of the new moral education**

This study of the axiological aspects of KOKORO in the discourse of modern moral education analyses an updated version of the controversial textbook series *Kokoro no nōto*, published in 2009 and available on the website of the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d).<sup>12</sup>

The textbooks *Kokoro no nōto* were originally issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 2002. The Ministry ensured and supervised their nationwide distribution into all Japanese primary and lower secondary schools. Their updated version entitled *Watashitachi no dōtoku* (*Our morality*) was published in 2013.

The study material, *Kokoro no nōto*, was published in four volumes covering all grades of the nine-year compulsory education.<sup>13</sup> They have been officially approved as auxiliary study material for moral education to be widely used not only in moral education and other classes at schools, but also outside school, for instance in the home environment. As for the official aim of the new textbooks, the publisher states that they “were created with the aim of fulfilling the education of *kokoro*” (MEXT, 2009a, p. 105), that is, moral education.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/doutoku/index.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/doutoku/index.htm) (accessed 28 August 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Volume one is intended for students of the first and second grades of primary schools, volume two for the third and fourth grades of primary schools, volume three for the fifth and sixth grades of primary schools, and volume four for the pupils of lower secondary schools.

It is also the wish of the authors “that the children discover their own self and build a rich kokoro” (MEXT, 2009a, p. 105), and they invite the children’s carers (teachers, parents, etc.) “to cooperate and collaborate towards making *Kokoro no nōto* a unique world’s treasure” (MEXT, 2009a, p. 105). Developing a rich kokoro is the task of making students become proud Japanese of the twenty-first century, and the *Kokoro no nōto* textbooks shall raise such Japanese and form their kokoro (mind) (*Nihonjin no kokoro*) (Takahashi, 2003, p. 34). The expression *rich kokoro* (*yutaka na kokoro*) is a key term in modern Japanese moral education and appears in its methodology, which calls for developing a rich kokoro and structures it as follows (Oda, quoted in Takahashi, 2003, p. 33):

- (1) KOKORO of introspection (working on oneself),
- (2) KOKORO of being kind and thoughtful to others,
- (3) KOKORO of being genuinely touched by the beautiful and the noble,
- (4) open KOKORO of being altruistic to the world, others and the public.

The structure of *Kokoro no nōto* follows this methodology and the four volumes of the textbook are divided into four sections:

- (1) MYSELF (attitude to one’s self – raising self-awareness),
- (2) ME and OTHERS (attitude to others – living together),
- (3) LOVING LIFE (esteem and respect for life and nature),
- (4) KOKORO of loving one’s hometown and homeland.

The main topics of the textbooks are morality, decency, pro-social behaviour and enhancement of patriotism. All the volumes of the analysed series have the form of worksheets (notebooks) with blank spaces for notes, where students can record their impressions, feelings and observations. The textbooks are designed in pastel colours and contain a large number of pictures, slogans and poems aiming to influence the child’s kokoro (soul/mind) in the intended direction.

The textbook series has aroused criticism and is considered very controversial (e.g. Higashi, 2008; Occhi, 2008; Rose, 2006; Takahashi, 2003), particularly in the case of section four, concerning the theme of love for one’s hometown and homeland. The critics notice parallels with the pre-war Japanese moral education, *shūshin kyōiku*, and are concerned about covert promotion of neo-nationalist tendencies (Takahashi, 2003). One of the means of implementing this policy is the rhetoric of these textbooks, where the content is expressed in positive or neutral words and phrases with *kokoro* being the key one.

## Axiological aspects of KOKORO in moral education

It is evident that at the beginning of the twenty-first century *kokoro* is one of the key words of Japanese moral education (see the above-mentioned expressions *kokoro no kyōiku*, *yutaka na kokoro*, *Kokoro no nōto*). A passage from the introduction to the first volume of *Kokoro no nōto*, intended for students of the first and second grades of primary schools, reads: “Let us raise beautiful kokoro (for ourselves)” (*Utsukushii kokoro o sodateyō*) (MEXT, 2009a, pp. 4–5). The opening motto of volume two (for the third and fourth grades of primary schools) is “Let us cultivate (lit. polish) and raise big kokoro” (*kokoro o migaki ōkiku sodateyō*) (MEXT, 2009b, pp. 8–9). The third volume, in turn, for the students of the fifth and sixth grades of primary schools, states “Let us raise and brighten up our own kokoro” (*jibun rashiku kokoro o sodate kagayakaseyō*) (MEXT, 2009c, pp. 8–9). All these initial slogans are phrased as appeals: the authors encourage the students to develop their kokoro in a particular way as described above.

The linguistic and content analysis of the *Kokoro no nōto* textbooks conducted in this study investigates what meanings and collocations of the lexeme *kokoro* are used in the four volumes and what values the lexeme conveys, as well as what connotations it has and what conceptualizations or metaphors it is part of. I focus on the values which are instilled in the Japanese students of primary and lower secondary schools through the lexeme *kokoro* in the discourse of the moral education textbooks under consideration – that is, “what kind of kokoro the students shall have” and “what kind of kokoro they shall raise/develop”, and, consequently, “what kind of people they shall become”. The objective was to establish what exactly is conveyed by the expression *beautiful kokoro* (*utsukushii kokoro*) and others. The analysis follows the structure of the textbooks, which are divided into four sections according to the methodology of moral education (as explained above).

### MYSELF (attitude to one’s self – raising self-awareness)

The first section of the analysed textbooks is devoted to the development of an individual and emphasizes the values related to the individual’s personality and inner state: *responsibility*, *(daily) order and routine*, *consistency* and *purposefulness*. Children should *dream*, *be curious and perceptive*, *positive and in a good mood*, *smile*, *have friends* and *be kind to everyone*. These values and desirable qualities are expressed through the lexeme *kokoro* in the following, mainly adjectival and verbal, collocations:

- **bright (= positive/cheerful) kokoro** (*akarui kokoro*)
- **beautiful kokoro** (*utsukushii kokoro*)
- **big kokoro** (*ōkii kokoro*)
- **unbreakable kokoro**, directed towards achieving a goal (*mokuhyō ni mukau kujikenai kokoro*)
- to **raise** (one's) **kokoro** (*kokoro o hagukumu, kokoro o sodateru*)
- to **polish (= cultivate) kokoro** (*kokoro o migaku*)
- to **brighten up** (one's) **kokoro** (*kokoro o kagayakaseru*)
- **let us polish (= cultivate) kokoro** and **raise** (our) **big kokoro** (*kokoro o migaki ōkiku sodateyō*)
- to **raise** and **brighten up** one's own **kokoro** (*jibun rashiku kokoro o sodate kagayakaseru*)
- if you are sincere to yourself, your **kokoro will be** much **lighter** (*jibun ni shōjiki ni nareba, kokoro wa totemo karuku naru*)
- to **observe** and discover (one's) **kokoro** (*jibun no kokoro o mitsumeru*)

In the volume intended for students of the fifth and sixth grades of primary schools (MEXT, 2009c, pp. 36–37), the first section contains the metaphor KOKORO = BICYCLE, accompanied by a picture of a boy and a girl riding a bicycle down the road. Featuring a number of questions, the page encourages children not to be spoiled, to act responsibly and for themselves, and not to rely on help from or rescue by others: *Can you control the handlebars of kokoro, the pedals of kokoro and the brakes of kokoro properly?* (*Kokoro no handoru, kokoro no pedaru, kokoro no burēki, shikkari to kontorōru dekite imasu ka?*) According to this metaphor, kokoro is a machine or mechanism that may be controlled and one needs to learn how to control it.

## ME and OTHERS (attitude to others – living together)

The second section, which deals with the relationship between the individual and others, emphasizes values reflecting traditional concepts of Japanese society; that is, the individual's attitude to other members of society, whether they are one's own family members, friends, neighbours, seniors, disabled people, etc. The values emphasized are: *respect, gratitude, kindness, affability, modesty, thoughtfulness, helpfulness, altruism, decency, politeness, etiquette* and *tolerance*. These values are expressed through the lexeme *kokoro* in the following collocations:

- **warm kokoro = affable, hearty, kind** (*atatakai kokoro*)
- **modest, humble kokoro** (*kenkyo na kokoro*)
- **wide kokoro = generous, good-hearted, open** (*hiroi kokoro*)
- **tolerant, generous kokoro** (*kan'yō na kokoro*)
- **thoughtful, empathetic kokoro** (*omoiyari no kokoro, omoi yaru kokoro*)



- **loyal and positive** kokoro (*seijitsu de akarui kokoro*)
- **kind** kokoro (*yasashii kokoro*)
- **grateful** kokoro (*kansha no kokoro, arigatai kokoro*)
- kokoro **respectful and grateful** to one's counterpart (*aite o sonkei shi kansha suru kokoro*)
- **let us connect** kokoro with kokoro (*kokoro to kokoro o musubō*)
- to **connect** kokoro and kokoro (*kokoro to kokoro o tsunagu*)
- **let us deliver** affable kokoro – **let us become the deliverer** of kokoro (*atatakai kokoro o todokeyō – kokoro no haitatsuyasan ni natte*)
- **let us feel/perceive** the counterpart's kokoro (*aite no kokoro o kanjiyō*)
- to **convey/communicate** kokoro (*kokoro o tsutaeru*)
- kokoro **willing to help** (*tasuketai to omou kokoro*)

In each volume of the analysed series, section two specifically emphasizes the values of thoughtful/empathetic kokoro (*omoiyari no kokoro*), warm/affable kokoro (*atatakai kokoro*) and wide/open/generous kokoro (*hiroii kokoro*). In the volume for students of the third and fourth grades of primary schools (MEXT, 2009b, pp. 40–41), the first one, thoughtful kokoro (*omoiyari no kokoro*), is described in greater detail as a combination of the following three parts, or three kokoro:

- kokoro **willing to help** (*tasuketai to omou kokoro*)
- kokoro **willing to rejoice together** (*issho ni yorokobitaku naru kokoro*)
- **attentive** kokoro = not indifferent towards others (*kizukaō to suru kokoro*)

The second section also includes several metaphors, for instance GREETING (*aisatsu*) = A NICE RIBBON WHICH WILL TIE YOUR KOKORO WITH THE KOKORO OF PEOPLE AROUND YOU (*anata to mawari no hito no kokoro o musunde kureru suteki na ribbon*) (MEXT, 2009a, pp. 36–37), or COMMUNICATION = PLAYING CATCH WITH KOKORO (MEXT, 2009d, pp. 68–69). Employing this metaphor, the authors of the textbook attempt to tell the students that communication is not only about using words, and that when communicating one needs to think about one's partner, select words appropriately and convey and receive information with discretion.

## LOVING LIFE (esteem and respect for life and nature)

In the third section, students are supposed to learn to respect nature and hold life in high esteem. The values emphasised here are: *respect for life, esteem for nature, (the ability of) being touched, love for nature and the ability to praise nature*. Esteem and love for nature are deeply rooted in Japanese culture and are instilled in the students. At the same time, students are encouraged to be considerate about the environment in which they are

growing up and show respect for nature and all living things. These values are expressed through the lexeme *kokoro* particularly in the following collocations:

- kokoro **considerate towards nature** (*shizen o omoiyaru kokoro*)
- **beautiful** kokoro **providing people with deep emotion** (*hito ni kandō o ataeru utsukushii kokoro*)
- kokoro which gets **deeply moved by the Mother Nature** (*daishizen ni kandō suru kokoro*)
- kokoro **respectful of life** (*seimei o taisetsu ni suru kokoro*)
- kokoro **kind to animals and plants** (*dōshokubutsu ni yasashii kokoro*)
- kokoro **touched by beautiful things** (*utsukushii mono ni kandō suru kokoro*)
- the homeland **raising our** kokoro (*watashitachi no kokoro o sodatete kureru furusato*)
- **let us feel** with the entire kokoro (*kokoro ippai ni kanjiyō*)
- **let us appreciate** kokoro which **is able to experience beauty** (*utsukushii to kanjirareru kokoro o taisetsu ni shimashō*)

In the third volume of *Kokoro no nōto*, this section emphasises the relationship between beautiful nature and beautiful (human) kokoro. In particular, it claims that “beautiful nature will make your kokoro beautiful” (*utsukushii shizen wa, anata no kokoro o utsukushiku shimasu*) (MEXT, 2009b, p. 65). Once achieved, (one’s own) beautiful kokoro further influences others, who can thus also become people with beautiful kokoro: “if we encounter beautiful kokoro, our kokoro becomes even more beautiful” (*utsukushii kokoro ni deau to, watashitachi no kokoro wa sara ni utsukushiku narimasu*) (MEXT, 2009b, p. 67).

A particularly complex expression is “kokoro in kokoro”, which stresses the importance of beautiful kokoro and means that the human ability to feel and perceive someone’s warm-heartedness and the ability to become touched by something depend on whether we ourselves have a beautiful kokoro, or, more precisely, whether we have a good heart (=good kokoro) in our heart (=our kokoro): “when encountering someone’s beautiful kokoro, (our) kokoro is moved (= touched), because there is beautiful kokoro in our kokoro” (*hito no utsukushii kokoro ni furete kokoro ga ugoku no wa, watashitachi no kokoro no naka ni utsukushii kokoro ga aru kara desu*) (MEXT, 2009b, p. 66).

## KOKORO of loving one’s hometown and homeland

The last and the most controversial section of the analysed textbooks, which is the most criticised part of the series (see e.g. Takahashi, 2003), is devoted to the individual’s relationship to the wider community, such as their (home)town, the region, the country/homeland. With regard to this section, critics have pointed out the excessive encouragement of patri-

otism and the tendency to develop love for the homeland among children, that is, kokoro loving one's homeland (meaning both the region and the country) (*aikokushin*),<sup>14</sup> as well as links to pre-war moral education *shūshin* (*kyōiku*) based on the fact that the state strives to control the children's minds (*kokoro*) and subtly direct their reasoning in a set direction (Takahashi, 2003, pp. 34–35). In the view of the critics, the covert objective of the textbooks is to impose a unified collective mind. This section emphasises *love for one's homeland and domestic tradition, respect and tolerance, compliance with rules and keeping promises, (social) responsibility and morality*. These values and their observance create a state of harmony (WA) in society, which is one of the Japanese key social concepts. According to the critics, the intention of the authors (the Ministry) is to use them as a means to mould an ideal, conscientious and loyal (obedient) citizen of twenty-first century Japanese society, who will be fully aware of his/her role in society (e.g. Takahashi, 2003). In the text of the last section, *kokoro* appears in the following collocations:

- kokoro for public morality = the sense of public morality (*kōtokushin*)
- kokoro striving to be helpful in society (*shakai no yaku ni tatō to suru kokoro*)
- orally conveyed **Japanese** kokoro (*kataritsugare uketsugarete kita Nihon/Nippon no kokoro*)
- kokoro connects the world (*kokoro wa sekai o musubu*)
- **let us open** kokoro to society (*shakai ni kokoro o hiraite miyō*)
- to immerse oneself completely in the traditions and culture of our homeland and **raise (one's) rich individual** kokoro (*waga kuni no dentō ya bunka ni doppuri hitarinagara, mirai ni mukete watashi rashii yutaka na kokoro o hagukunde iku*)
- **let us polish** (= cultivate) kokoro which **has a feeling for the year's seasons** (*kisetsu o kanjiru kokoro o migakō*)
- **let us preserve** our homeland in our kokoro (*watashitachi no furusato o kokoro ni nokosō*)
- **the homeland** that **raises** our kokoro (*watashitachi no kokoro o sodatete kureru furusato*)
- **sceneries resonating** in kokoro (*watashitachi no kokoro ni hibiku keshiki*)

One of the values stressed in this section in all the volumes is respect for domestic tradition and traditional Japanese culture. In the second volume (MEXT, 2009b, p. 94), students are encouraged to preserve the “*kokoro* that was and still is the essence of domestic culture” (*waga kuni no bunka o sasaete kita kokoro*), described as a combination of four elements:

- kokoro seeking to live in harmony with nature (*shizen to tomo ni ikiyō to suru kokoro*)
- kokoro seeking to cooperate with others (*hoka no hito to chikara o awaseyō to suru kokoro*)
- kokoro demanding/calling for beauty (*utsukushisa o motomeyō to suru kokoro*)
- kokoro trying to act in a proper way (*reigi tadashiku shiyō to suru kokoro*)

<sup>14</sup> *Shin* is the Sino-Japanese reading of the Chinese character used to render the word *kokoro* in script.

Although leading students to realize the values of their homeland and to respect its traditional culture might not be wrong as such, the way this is done in the analysed textbooks is too direct and one-sided: they only present selected positive (and stereotypical) aspects and do not mention any potentially negative considerations, or include any call for deeper reflection or discussion.

## Conclusion

This paper has dealt with the axiological aspects of the Japanese concept KOKORO, which may be viewed as a key cultural concept. The issue in focus here has been the position of this concept in the discourse of the Japanese moral education introduced at the turn of the millennium. For the purpose of this study, I performed a content analysis of the series of moral education study materials *Kokoro no nōto* (2002, revised in 2009), intended for Japanese students during their nine-year compulsory education. Using the methodological tools of cultural and cognitive ethnolinguistics – especially observation of collocations and connotations of particular expressions and their metaphorical and metonymic extensions – I conducted a semantic analysis of the lexeme *kokoro* present in the above-mentioned study texts.

The lexeme *kokoro* appears extremely frequently in the analysed study material, both in fixed phrasemes or collocations and in a number of instances of its innovative usage. The prevalent forms are adjectival and verbal collocations; the most frequent adjectival collocations include *yutaka na kokoro* 'rich kokoro', *hiroii kokoro* 'wide kokoro', *omoiyari no kokoro* 'empathetic kokoro', *utsukushii kokoro* 'beautiful kokoro', *akarui kokoro* 'bright/positive kokoro', *seijitsu na kokoro* 'honest and sincere kokoro' and *omotenashi no kokoro* 'hospitable kokoro', while the most frequent verbal collocations include *kokoro o hiraku* 'to open kokoro', *kokoro o sodateru* 'to raise/develop kokoro', *kokoro o hagukumu* 'to raise kokoro', *Adj. + kokoro o motsu* 'to have Adj. + kokoro', *kokoro o tsunagu* 'to connect kokoro', *kokoro o musubu* 'to connect kokoro', *kokoro o kagayakaseru* 'to brighten up kokoro', *kokoro o migaku* lit. 'to polish kokoro', i.e. 'to cultivate kokoro', *kokoro o tsutaeru* 'to convey kokoro'. All the verbs and adjectives collocating with the lexeme *kokoro* carry positive meanings. *Kokoro* itself is considered a positive value and the textbooks present the students with the kind of *kokoro* they should have. In contrast, they rarely mention what *kokoro* they should not have – what *kokoro* is undesirable for them. The analysed texts are formulated

in a positive way and present KOKORO as a concept connected exclusively to positive values which are expressed using positively charged phrases.

The analysis has demonstrated that in the discourse of moral education kokoro refers in particular to: (1) the individual's inner state (what he/she is/should be like = what kokoro he/she should have); (2) the individual's (inner) attitude or approach to (a) his/her self and his/her life, (b) others, (c) nature and life, (d) the community – hometown, homeland (Japan); (3) character, personality, our essence, character traits.

Out of the proposed semantic profiles of *kokoro* (see above), it is mainly the psychological, pro-social and emotional profiles that appear in the discourse of moral education. In the analysed material, the concept KOKORO is unambiguously connected to positive values and occurs exclusively in positive domains. These are the personal level and the related qualities of *modesty, purposefulness, (social) responsibility, positive approach, friendliness, kindness and obedience*, as well as the pro-social level and the related positive qualities, such as *thoughtfulness, helpfulness, gratitude, generosity, altruism, decency and politeness*, and the pro-cultural/pro-national, patriotic level, involving values such as *loyalty, respect, devotion, responsibility and morality*. All these values are expressed through the lexeme *kokoro*. According to the methodology of the Japanese Ministry of Education, a person possessing all the qualities mentioned is “a person with rich kokoro”.

Depending on the context, the Czech equivalents of the lexeme *kokoro* in particular cases of its usage in the analysed texts would include: *postoj, přístup, duch, povaha, srdce* and *duše*. However, some of them would seem unnatural or even forced in translation. The analysis has presented the polysemy of *kokoro* and demonstrated that in the discourse of modern Japanese moral education KOKORO can be classified as a key concept.

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## The Japanese concept KOKORO and its axiological aspects in the discourse of moral education

This article on the axiological aspects of the 'Japanese mind/heart/soul' focuses on the native Japanese word *kokoro*, which is extremely polysemous, frequently appears in various contexts and can be considered one of the Japanese cultural concepts or key words. The primary concern here is the axiological aspects of KOKORO in the discourse of contemporary moral education. The first part presents the basic semantic structure of the word *kokoro* and its comparison with similar words in other languages. The next section summarizes the social changes leading to the emergence of *kokoro* as a key word, and its way to the discourse of moral education. It also examines what cultural and moral values of Japanese society can be revealed through the study of the cultural key word *kokoro*. The final part presents the results of a content and semantic analysis of a four-volume edition of study material for moral education classes *Kokoro no nōto* (2002, revised in 2009).

### Keywords:

ethics; Japan; Japanese; *kokoro*; *kokoro no kyōiku*; *Kokoro no nōto*; moral education; moral values

## Japońskie pojęcie KOKORO i jego aspekty aksjologiczne w dyskursie wychowania moralnego

Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony aspektom aksjologicznym 'japońskiego umysłu/serca/duszy' koncentruje się na rodzimym japońskim leksemie *kokoro*, który charakteryzuje się dużą polisemicznością i często pojawia się w różnych kontekstach, i który można uznać za jedno z japońskich pojęć kulturowych czy słów-kluczy. Artykuł omawia aspekty aksjologiczne KOKORO przede wszystkim w dyskursie współczesnego wychowania moralnego. Pierwsza część przedstawia podstawową strukturę semantyczną słowa *kokoro* w porównaniu z podobnymi słowami w innych językach. Kolejna – omawia zmiany społeczne, w wyniku których *kokoro* stało się słowem-kluczem i weszło do dyskursu edukacji moralnej, oraz przedstawia wartości kulturowe i moralne społeczeństwa japońskiego, jakie można

dostrzec dzięki jego analizie. Końcowa część przedstawia wyniki analizy treści i semantyki czterotomowych materiałów do nauki wychowania moralnego zatytułowanych *Kokoro no nōto* (2002/2009).

**Słowa kluczowe:**

etyka; Japonia; japoński; *kokoro*; *kokoro no kyōiku*; *Kokoro no nōto*; wychowanie moralne; wartości moralne

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