

# Well-being like Winnie-the-Pooh? :

## About literary ability of child social workers

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### Abstract

Child social workers who work to realize well-being of the child need literary ability. There are two contexts. The first is the normative and ideal basis of social welfare in Japan. Quality of contents of social welfare is related to the value “good” as long as it is depended on real humans who have imagination to “well” or “the best”. The second is to respond to the critique against social workers who have used power of description and violence of description. As to power of description, we can paraphrase it as literary ability of description.

To show the above, the author used series of “Winnie the Pooh” as examples. Using Pooh is effective for two reasons. The first is that Pooh has been thought to be living in a kind of ideal world for children, though the evaluation to series of “Winnie the Pooh” has been controversial. The second is that Pooh has had roles of study-guide for many theme.

Depending on view point and way of description, Pooh can be written as if he were living in misery. We can have, however, imagination and question against it and rethink and react for the best interest of the Pooh. How to ask the questions to the children and parents, how to communicate with the children and parents, how to imagine the situation, what to write on the documents and how to narrate the case will affect the nature and consequences of the case itself. Such activity of child social worker is kind of linguistic one, which heavily depends on their literary ability.

**Key Words:** Winnie the Pooh, well-being, social work,  
child abuse

## 1. Introduction

### 1. 1. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to show that child social workers who realize “well-being of the child” from the view point of “the best interest of the child” need literary ability.

Most studies of child social work in Japan haven't focused enough on value of base of linguistic activity of social workers. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) says that advocating and upholding human rights and social justice is the motivation and justification for social work. That actual meaning in the daily works of child social workers in Japan, however, is related “good” or “well” rather than “right” or “justice”. On this view point, we can confirm that linguistic activity of child social workers must include literary one and child

social workers must have such ability.

### 1. 2. Procedure

The proposal of this study is that child social workers need a kind of literary ability which is like a kind of art sense.

To sure the above, the author confirmed two reasons of that(2.). That is, child social workers have to follow main concept of child social work in Japan and have to handle their power of description.

Next, the author used series of “Winnie the Pooh” as examples to show the above(3.). When it comes to child social work, we can learn by Pooh the gap between the facts explained and the facts seen, and importance of literary ability to rethink and react against the gap.

Finally, we confirmed that activities of social workers that rethink and react against such a gap and

reconstruct the nature and consequences of the case is kind of linguistic one, which is heavily depends on literary ability(4.).

## 2. Necessity of literary ability of child social workers

Child social workers need to have literary ability. Literary ability is ability of expression which enables them to handle their symbol flexibly and to represent not only their reason and analysis but also sensibility, imagination and emotion. It enables them to construct the appropriate narrative.

There are two reasons to suggest the necessity of literary ability.

### 2. 1. Main concept of child social work in Japan

The first is from main concept of child welfare.

Today, mainstreams of approach of child social work is evidence based, scientific, and legal approach, which are fashioning as rebound against so called postmodern thought. In this context, the ability of child social workers is supposed to be under control of reason which can recognize fact, objectivity, undeniable truth of the case.

Missions of child social workers are, however, related to pursue "well" and "the best". Therefore, the ability of child social workers should be actually under influence of their sensibility, imagination and emotion. We should not be satisfied with the modern thought that the best interest of the child will be realized if we collect and organize objective factors and apply them to the scientific law.

Contents of Social welfare are related of the value "justice" and our reason as long as it's depended on abstract value such as natural law, social justice and political correctness. Quality of contents of social welfare, however, related of the value "good" as long as it's depended on real humans who have imagination about "well" or "the best".

The normative and ideal basis of guarantee of social welfare in Japan is the sentence Article 25 of Constitution of Japan "All people have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living". Studies of social welfare have tried to understand the meaning of "social welfare" independently from, though not ignore, legal interpretation of jurist. Studies of social welfare have actively caught "wholesome and cultured living" rather than "minimum standards" and have interpreted "wholesome and cultured living" as well-

being. Living that should be called well-being changes in accordance with the general standard of living of the society and common sense about it of the society. Therefore, according to changes of times and societies, and in light of the idea of well-being, we regard social welfare such as institutions, policies, care services, support services, can be expanded. Based on such idea, social workers act flexibly at the street level.

In addition, field of studies of child welfare, we have ideal basis which is given by Child Welfare Act and the Convention on the Right of the Child. The fundamental idea of child welfare is, to guarantee "well-being of the child" from the view point of "the best interest of the child". Social workers in Japan shares those ideas.

Traditionally, the idea of "well-being" has been important. Social workers need ability to explain how they acknowledge whether someone's life as already well-being or not yet. They also have to flexibly and creatively understand the current situation, depicts future figure, communicate with various collaborators and stakeholders with using words and pursue the best situation. For that purpose, social workers use literary ability whenever they imagine the living of the child, see the child, read and write document about the child, and orally explain about the child.

### 2. 2. Handling power of description

The second is, related to the above, from the meaning of response to the critique against social workers. Social workers need be conscious of power of description and violence of description. Margolin (1997) pointed out that using power of description is inevitable for social workers, while violence of description must be removed as much as possible. The aim of Margolin was to show the way, which social workers using some power or violence under the cover of kindness and win trust that they are essentially and always "doing good". Social worker's power and violence are especially intensified in the case doubted child abuse. correctness

Though it is difficult to divide them clearly, using power is not always doing violence.

As to the violence of description, it is including problems of lack of rights of opinion-expression of the children or parents or forgery of documents by false description. Such problems should belong to legalism and rational governance system based on justice. The otherwise are, however, the problems of power of description.

As to the power of description, we can find a paraphrase which is more flexible, creative and open-ended. That is, we can recognize the power of description as a kind of literary ability of description.

In fact, studies of social work in Japan have tended to recognize handling power as problem of skills about art for well-being rather than problem of ethics about illegal oppression.

For example, the record is typical as power and art of social workers. Soeda (2006) referred to Margolin's discussion above and remarked that social workers should be in humble attitude when they make documents. Instead of refusing to abandon their power, they try to behave humbly. But how can we be humble against power? After all, it's just saying the same thing as before, "Social workers should make records for the best support". The record is supposed to be important for them to behave as a professional. The important point of description of a case of child social workers is different from that of police and jurists<sup>1</sup>. Child social workers tend to emphasize their conjecture of true intention of client, better figure of future and priority of correspondence as more important information rather than things related to absolute evidence. On the other hand, police and jurists tend to emphasize evidence of case, causality of facts and rights and obligations stipulated by law, rather than things related to well-being of the child. This difference is related to a kind of professionalism. The power that police and jurists must be the most careful is illegality, while that of social workers is failure of good support<sup>2</sup>.

After all, social workers can confront their own power of linguistic activities only in the dimension of literary ability.

### 3. Well-being like Winnie-the-Pooh?

Using series of Winnie-the-Pooh is effective from two contexts. The first is that Pooh has been thought for a long time that he is living in a kind of ideal world for children and they have been subject of discussions. The second is that Pooh has had role of study-guide for many theme for a long time.

#### 3. 1. Character and acceptance of Pooh

"*Winnie-the-Pooh*" written by A. A. Milne and illustrated by E. H. Shephard in 1926 and the sequel "*The House at Pooh Corner*" in 1928 are fantasy novels as child literature. These are made up of 20 short stories that

teddy bear Pooh plays and lives with the boy Christopher Robin and many friends in The Hundred Acres Wood. In 2009 D. Benedictus and M. Burgess made "*Return to The Hundred Acres Wood*" which is positioned as an official sequel to the Pooh series.

The setting of Pooh world is a little complicated. In the first episode "We are introduced to Winnie-the-Pooh and Some Bees, and the Story Begin" in "*Winnie-the-Pooh*", Milne who is both of the author and father told stories to his son C. Robin with teddy bear Pooh. The story is that teddy bear Pooh lives and plays with Robin and many friends in the Hundred Acres Wood. Pooh is one-year-younger than Robin and called "silly old bear" by Robin. Pooh world gives reader the image of ideal world of children, where they are relieved from poison of education at school, they can experience good adventure and can be pure and innocent. Especially, Pooh world is tolerant of mistakes in words. Mistakes in words frequently appear in stories, even Owl and Rabbit who are supposed to be well-known characters often mistakes words. What they want to represent is always given priority than what they spell. They live in such a generous childhood era, unlike adults who cleverly use words for some strategy. Pooh world is incompatible with the school education which need idea of literacy, rather the world of children is threaten by literacy (Matsuyama 2001).

Pooh series are often featured in magazines or books about literature in Japan<sup>3</sup>. Some professional critics in Japan have pointed out problems of Pooh series. Some pointed out that females were marginalized or excluded in the Pooh world by the patriarchal author Milne (e.g. Kanai 2012). Some pointed out that since Milne took advantage of silence of C. Robin and Pooh, he expressed them overly pure and innocence (e.g. Adachi 2004). In fact, Milne's son had had various conflict and hardship since Pooh comes to be very popular (Thwaite 1990).

Such critique is typical in discussion of children's literature. From later 19th century to early 20th century of Britain is called golden era of children's literature, such as "*Alice in Wonderland*" or "*Peter Pan*". Image of children who has unique world and needs to be respected has recognized since 19th century. At that time writers overly pursued pureness and innocence of childhood. Though Pooh series have been regarded as relatively natural one because its motif was real human relationship between father and son (e.g. Saito 2010), also have been pointed out that Pooh world is boys (=males) world and ideal world that isn't based on real childhood.

Especially, the evaluation of Disney's Pooh is more controversial. Disney's Pooh became very popular all over the world<sup>4</sup>, and TV program, video, picture book and character goods were sold and loved. But Disney's Pooh brought controversy including issue about difference of style of Britain and USA, and made people who love the air of south Britain perplexed (Thwaite 1992). "Pooh" whom college students in Japan image is Disney's Pooh than original Pooh, and original Pooh is almost unknown by them (Hattori 2010). Disney's pooh has negative image among snobbish professional critics in Japan<sup>5</sup>. For such critics, Disney's Pooh and consumers of Disney's Pooh goods were target of contempt and hatred rather than critique. Critics have regarded "Disney" as very incarnation of global capitalism, Americanization or anti-intellectualism. Though Disney's Pooh has made children happy and created large amount of charity (Harrison 2011), his social contribution isn't referred very much by Japanese critics. Of course they critique not only Disney itself but also Disney's Pooh and Pooh World at the point of literary sense<sup>6</sup>.

These critiques will have meaning as long as they give us beneficial point to pursuit, imagine and describe well-being of children or better society. Both original Pooh and Disney's Pooh express desirable world and living of children even though way of expression is different. Living of Pooh has been understood that it expressed an important period for development of children, which is filled with freedom, innocence, and friendship and challenging. In that sense living of Pooh shows a certain idea of well-being which is in common with well-being of children. Pooh has given us the sense to understand, image and evaluate quality of living of children. In addition, Pooh has let us, through critics, be conscious and careful that adults often arbitrarily watch, image, construct and evaluate living of children.

### 3. 2. Role of study-guide of Pooh

Besides such conceited activities of critique, there are somewhat serious somewhat parody-like studies. Pooh is beneficial for use of study-guide.

It is popular to use Pooh series as good example for explanation of other subject. Hoff B. found that Pooh is great bear who is questing and demonstrating Taoism (Hoff 1982). Williams J. found that Pooh is great bear who is questing and demonstrating various philosophical, mysterious, magical and psychological and other knowledge (e.g. Williams 1995, 1997, 2002).

Melissa D F and Powers J found that Pooh is an instructor of etiquette, fitness and others (e.g. Melissa and Powers 1995, 1996). Allen R. E. & Allen S. D. also found Pooh is a consultant of management, problem solving and success (Allen 1994, Allen & Allen 1995, 1997). Crews F. asked Pooh to become the symbol of intelligent parody which pretend serious professional analysis, making a fool of snobbish critics and let them silent for many years (Crews 1979, 2006).

When it comes to child social work, we can learn by Pooh the gap between the facts explained and the facts seen, and importance of literary ability to rethink and react against the gap.

### 3. 3. Well-being or child abuse?

Let us consider about Pooh from the view point of child social workers of Child Guidance Center (CGC) who know doubt of child abuse to Pooh. Depending on view point and way of description, Pooh can be written as if he is living in misery.

Table 1, which is shown at the end of this study, is a case memo about the Pooh which was written by the CGC social worker while talking on the phone with the informant. The information based on episodes in "Winnie-the-Pooh", "The House At Pooh Corner", "Return to the Hundred Acre Wood", and Disney's short movie "Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree".

Description of Table 1 is written by the child social worker who has jurisdiction of the Hundred Acres Wood<sup>7</sup>. It is written mainly by facts. It is, however, written somewhat literature-like. For example the writer emphasize Pooh's living negatively, with frequently using "no" and pointing out weak points of child caring. When it is written on the format of acceptance paper of information of child abuse, the narrative is reconstructed. Table 2 shows that<sup>8</sup>. Before safety confirmation, there is a formal acceptance meeting or informal meeting to sure what to check about that case. Child social workers make the documents like table1 or Table2 before or after those meeting. At that point, child social workers need to decide the posture to face to the case.

When the CGC social workers visit Pooh's house, they will find the document like Table1 or Table2 correct as facts. They must admit it is correct, however, they will feel dilemma with arbitrariness of the interpretation and the writing style. There will be the gap between the facts explained and the facts seen, and the child social worker will find it important to have literary ability to rethink the

expression against the gap.

Even writing facts, its meaning is more or less depend on the writer, for example, which facts does the writer choice, what impression does the writer aim to give and which way does the writer think is the best way for the child. A narrative of a case is constructed from various factors such as factual recognition, political intention and personal impression and emotion, and vision of future. A child social worker cannot act automatically only using reason. A child social worker must use literary ability, imagine and construct a narrative of the case, make it into words and act for the sake of the best interest of Pooh.

In the first place, what do you think is the best interest of Pooh? Is it immediate protection, looking for some kind of support or intervention, or only watching over? Then, if we are child social workers and see the description like Table 1 and Table 2 written by peers or collaborators, and if the narrative is shared by all people networked, how can we argue the another aspect of living of Pooh?

#### 4. Discussion

When we see document such as Table1 or Table2, we can think Pooh needs intervention. We can also find it difficult to protest against the narrative that Pooh lives in misery since there are many facts showing necessity of intervention.

We can have, however, imagination and question. Those are, for example, "Are the problems of Pooh's ability really only Pooh's? Those may be common with all children." "Haven't his parents really come home? If so, why has Pooh's house cleaned up and has honey pot filled? They may have come home often and may have cleaned room up and put filled honey pot." "Is Pooh really unhealthy? There are large number of Children who hasn't medical checkup in this country, and social workers aren't doctors." "He may really have light or moderate delay in the development of intelligence. But so what? He may rather have very high communication ability enough to overcome that handicap since he has many friends." "Is Pooh really living in misery? Pooh may have been loved by many people enough and local society may have energy or potential to support Pooh." etc.

We can recognize these imagination and questions as kind of logical thinking. The purpose of the logical thinking is not to prove the truth, but to explore clues for the best interests of the child. In this context, the main value of our reason is depend on not reason itself, nor the truth, nor the justice, but on creativity for a kind of good. How to ask the questions to the children and parents, how to communicate with the children and parents, how to imagine the situation, what to write the documents and how to narrate the case will affect the nature and consequences of the case itself. Such activity of social worker is kind of linguistic one, which is heavily depends on their literary ability.

**Table 1: The memo based on the informant****Personal information**

- He is, male, probably 5-year-old.
- He has difficulty to do daily normal conversation. Conversation with him often doesn't mesh, He often cannot be listening to others enough and he often use unique or nonsense logic. He seems to have a light or moderate delay in the development of intelligence.
- He has few clothes. So he usually wears only a red T-shirt which is so small and doesn't fit, or doesn't wear anything. He usually doesn't wear even the shoes and pants. So he exposes lower body. In addition, His sexual idea is remarkably weak.
- Though no serious injury or malnutrition so far, he has little or no consideration for health and sanitation.
- He is preschool
- He hasn't undergone medical checkup yet.

**Living Conditions and habit**

- He usually lives alone at home all day except the case his friends stay.
- His parents don't return home either during day and night, and cannot be contacted. The location or information for contact his relatives is also unknown.
- In the house there is no evidence that parent has done housework such as cooking or laundry. There is not even cooking utensils such as kitchen knife or microwave. Nor laundry machine.
- In the house there isn't toy, educational material nor medicine box.
- He usually eats only something sweet and eats little meat, vegetable, cooked foods. When his friend told him to eat vegetable such as carrot or radish, he refused. So his eating habits is remarkably abnormal and unhealthy.

**Happened trouble and other noteworthy things**

- During heavy rain, he is isolated alone for four days at his house and foods ran out. He was found by his friends when he was walking alone.
- When he played with his friends, he dropped big stone into river from bridge though a friend Eeyore was under the bridge. Big accident didn't happen but so dangerous.
- He asked a friend to shot the balloon he has and the bullet hit him. Big accident didn't happen but so dangerous.
- He sometimes goes to his friends' house and received foods, and his friend Rabbit looks annoyed.

**For Safety or well-being**

He should be under temporary custody, get some exam and diagnosis and be under social worker's support, as soon as possible.





## Notes

- 1 About the difference between the two, the author referred to Takahashi, Saimura and Shoji et al. (2009).
- 2 For example, the textbook *Social Work Underlying Value and Ethics* (Kawamura T, 2002, Chuohoki Publishing Co., Ltd.) lectures how to write the record, such as being careful of difference between medical model and well-being model, but seems to recognize value and ethics of record as problems of skill mostly.
- 3 For example, “*Onigashima-Press*” vol. 37, spring, 2001, “*Moe*” vol. 24, 9 issue, 2002, “*The Flying Classroom*” vol.6, summer, 2006, “*Moe*”, vol33, 10 issue, 2011.
- 4 In 1966, 40 years after “*Winnie-the-Pooh*”, Walt Disney Productions made short animation “*Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*”. This Setting and story line is respecting the original nevertheless the style is Disney original. After, Disney has produced many works of original stories.
- 5 “*Eureca*” (pronounced *Yuriika*) which is famous literary critique magazine featured Pooh in January 2004 issue, where many critics attacked Disney’s Pooh and his fans.
- 6 *Ibid.* For example, original Pooh’s mouth isn’t drawn clearly. So he gives readers chance, power and pleasure of imagination. But Disney’s Pooh moves his large mouth and plays more dynamically. Original Pooh often makes unique and almost nonsense logical thinking and sings a unique poem. But Disney’s Pooh is drawn emphasized greedy and simple personality. In addition, while original The Hundred Acres Wood has poetic nature scene and modest mild air, Disney’s one doesn’t have it.
- 7 At the lecture of “Contents of Social Care” at Nara University of Education, the author showed Table 1 to students without explaining it was the case of Pooh. Of course students imagined a boy in a lonely and crisis situation. After that the author showed Disney’s movie “*Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*” (in DVD “*Winnie the Pooh: fully preserved version*”). The students understood that it was the case of Pooh. Students believe that living of Pooh never seems to be in misery nevertheless the document doesn’t say a lie. This practice using Pooh is not just to enjoy the image gap. The experience of this gap let them notice literary power of describing a case based on facts and analysis from facts, and need for literary power to doubt and protest someone’s literature.
- 8 The author made up Table 2 based on the style of Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare “Manual for Child Abuse” (2013 version).

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## 【日本語要旨】

## くまのプーさんのような良い暮らし？ — 児童ソーシャルワーカーの文学的能力について —

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「児童の最善の利益」〔the best interest of the child〕の観点から「児童の福祉」〔well-being of the child〕の実現を使命とする児童ソーシャルワーカーには文学的能力が求められる。これには二つの文脈がある。一つは、日本の社会福祉の規範的かつ理念的な基盤である。社会福祉の質は、「善さ」という価値に関係しており、その限りでそれは "well" や "the best" に関する想像力を持つ人間に依存している。もう一つは、ソーシャルワーカーの発揮する「記述の暴力」と「記述の権力」に対する批判への応答である。このうち「記述の権力」については、それを文学的能力の一種として換言できる。

上記を例示するために、作者は児童文学作品「くまのプーさん」シリーズを例として使用した。「くまのプーさん」の使用は二つの理由から効果的である。一つ目は、プーさんは子どもにとって一つの理想的な世界に住んでいると考えられていることであり、その解釈や評価には議論がある。二つ目は、プーさんがこれまでさまざまなテーマについての学習をガイドする役割を果たしてきたことである。

児童ソーシャルワーカーの視点や説明の仕方によっては、事実とエビデンスに基づきながら、プーさんがあたかも惨めに暮らしているかのように表現することができる。しかし児童ソーシャルワーカーは想像力と疑問を抱くことができ、「プーさんの最善の利益」のために行動することができる。児童ソーシャルワーカーがどのように子どもや両親に質問するか、どのように子どもや両親とコミュニケーションをとるか、どのように状況を想像するか、どのように書類を書くか、どのようにケースを語るかは、ケースそのものの性質と結果に影響する。そのような児童ソーシャルワーカーたちの活動は、彼らの文学的能力に大きく依存する言語的な活動である。

