

Language Teaching Through English Textbooks in Japan and Korea

Kouki Ookawa

Ehime Prefectural Misaki High School

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This study examined the perspectives of intercultural understanding found in 8 high-school English textbooks endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan and 8 high-school textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education in Korea. This was done through an analysis of the articles found in each lesson for content, the different nationalities described, and their educational purpose. The purpose of this research was to compare the treatment of these 3 factors in the textbooks from both countries. The results of the research revealed that the Japanese textbooks contained many local topics, but the Korean textbooks tended to focus on topics relating to other nations rather than local topics. Considerations for revisions to future textbooks are suggested in order to help editors and authors make textbooks that provide teachers with the materials they need to educate students for the global community.

異文化理解や英語によるコミュニケーション活動が学校での英語学習に重要であることは、一般的に認知されている。本論では、文部科学省により承認された日本の高校英語教科書8冊と韓国教育省が承認した韓国の高校英語教科書8冊を異文化理解の観点から分析する。本研究の目的は、本文の内容、本文が扱う国々、教育目的などの3つの要因を比較することである。研究の結果から、題材が両教科書とも英語が第一言語として扱われている国についての多くの題材を含んでいることがわかる。調査された日本の教科書および韓国の教科書ではいくつかの違いがある。例えば、日本の教科書は自国の文化に関する話題を多く含んでいる一方、韓国のものは自国の文化よりはほかの国に関する話題が多い。最後に、グローバルな世界に適応できる生徒を育てるための教科書の未来の方向性を示唆する。

In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology (MEXT) usually revises the educational guidelines about once every 10 years (Ookawa, 2017). The most recent revision of these guidelines was in 2013 (MEXT, 2013). These revised Courses of Study emphasize that the objective of English education in Japan is to develop communicative abilities in students. These communicative abilities include both linguistic objectives (being able to accurately understand and appropriately convey information or ideas) as well as nonlinguistic objectives (having a deeper understanding of language and culture while maintaining a positive attitude toward communication through the foreign language).

Similar to how MEXT publishes the standards and objectives that schools use to guide their English language instruction, the Korean Ministry of Education (KMOE) is responsible for setting the policies for language education in Korea (Yuasa, 2010). The documents and standards developed by the KMOE stress the importance of improving students' communicative English as a means of promoting national development. Although there are many similarities between the two countries, the language policies developed by the KMOE place more of an emphasis on improving students' English language communicative abilities (Takeda, Choi, Mochizuki, & Watanabe, 2006). In both countries, the textbooks written for use in high schools have to be designed to meet the respective guidelines.

One area where a comparative analysis of textbooks from Japan and Korea could prove especially beneficial for Japanese educators is in the field of communicative competence. Because the KMOE places a much higher focus on improving students' ability to communicate in English, Korean textbooks focus more on this area of language education (Takeda et al., 2006). As Japan begins to move towards a more communicative approach to teaching (MEXT, 2013), Japanese textbook makers could look to their Korean counterparts for guidance.

Literature Review

The Role of Teaching Culture in EFL Classroom Materials

In Japanese high schools, MEXT's guidelines state that another purpose of English education in Japan is to deepen intercultural understanding (Ookawa, 2017). Similarly, the KMOE also lists this as an important area of focus for English language education in Korea (Kawai, 2004). Given this is an explicitly stated educational goal for English language education in both countries, it is essential to understand the conditions necessary to meet this goal in the classroom.

Exposure to materials related to foreign and global culture is important because this can help students to gain a deeper understanding of both foreign cultures and the growing global or international culture, two goals that are clearly connected to the language classroom. The other, often overlooked, factor involved in improving students' cultural understanding is the importance of having students begin to examine their own cultural backgrounds. This can be done by introducing and discussing materials from the local culture.

One important factor to consider when teaching culture in the English language classroom is the place of English as a global language (Kachru, 1990). Because English is widely used in many different countries, it is important to examine how English is used by speakers from countries that may not necessarily be considered traditional English-speaking countries as well as by speakers from countries like England or the United States. Kachru discussed three different spheres of English usage that depend on the place that English has in a country. In his spheres, A is called the inner circle, B is called the outer circle, and C is called the expanding circle (see Table 1). Countries in the inner circle include Britain, Canada, Australia, the United States, and New Zealand—what are thought of as the traditional English-speaking countries where English is spoken as the native language by the majority of the people. The outer circle includes countries such as India and Singapore where English is used as one of many official languages. The expanding circle includes countries such as Japan or China where English is used as a language of international business and communication but is not an official language.

Table 1. Kachru's Three Circles of English

A: Inner circle	B: Outer circle	C: Expanding circle
Countries in which English is used as a native language (e.g., the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia)	Countries in which English is used as an official language (e.g., Singapore, India, Bangladesh, Ghana)	Countries in which English is used as a foreign language (e.g., Japan, South Korea, China, Indonesia, France)

Traditional English classes have focused on how English is used in the inner circle countries, but there is a growing understanding of the importance of English usage in countries from the outer and expanding circles. Because of this, many textbooks are beginning to introduce lessons that focus on the use of English by speakers from countries in these two other circles. The idea is that this approach will better allow students to use English in a global world where it is increasingly used as a lingua franca for activities such as business and tourism (Yoon, 2007).

Previous Studies of English Textbooks

The importance of textbooks for language education has long been recognized by researchers and teachers (e.g., Hino, 1988; Schneer, 2007). Both inside and outside Japan, researchers have conducted numerous quantitative and qualitative analyses of English textbooks from a variety of different perspectives (e.g., Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Pecorari, Shaw, Malmström, & Irvine, 2011; Weninger & Kiss, 2013).

There have been a number of different approaches to analyzing textbooks. One important qualitative study is Weninger and Kiss (2013). In this study, the authors took issue with the quantitative approach commonly used to analyze culture in foreign language textbooks. They saw this type of approach as one that objectified culture. They concluded that an alternative qualitative framework was needed to appropriately analyze textbooks.

One result of the political influence on the development of the textbooks used in Japan is that many textbooks focus on language and themes taken from the inner circle English-speaking countries (Muroi, 1999, 2004; Yamanaka, 2004). For instance, Yamanaka (2004) examined nine junior high school English textbooks and 10 high school English textbooks to determine the subjects covered in these books. She reported that the articles in the book were much more likely to be about topics related to English-

speaking countries in the inner circle than about topics related to the other circles.

Other studies have compared the content of Japanese and Korean textbooks. Takeda et al. (2006) examined the English language textbooks used by 3rd-year junior high school and 1st-year high school students in both Japan and Korea. They found there were some differences in both the content and vocabulary of the textbooks used in the two countries as well as in the difficulty of the text. Ookawa (2017) analyzed the exercises found in five high school English textbooks used in Japan and five high school textbooks from Korea and found that the exercises in Korean textbooks included a more balanced approach to teaching the four skills. However, although the results from these studies give us valuable data about the similarities and differences between the textbooks used in Korea and Japan, the number of textbooks analyzed in these studies was small, and it is difficult to extrapolate any general tendencies from this limited analysis.

Purpose of the Current Study

This study was designed to build on these previous studies by comparing eight Japanese high school textbooks with eight textbooks used in Korea. The aim of the study was to perform a comparative analysis of the cultural themes and the pedagogical purpose of the main passages of the English language textbooks used in the course of English Communication I in Japan and English I in Korea. The main passage refers to the reading activity that serves to introduce the students to the main theme of the unit. These passages occur at the start of almost every unit and range from 50 to 1000 words. Three research questions were developed for this study:

- RQ1: What topics were covered by the main passage of each lesson?
- RQ2: Which of the three circles of English were introduced in the main passage of each lesson?
- RQ3: What type of intercultural understanding did the main passage of each lesson focus on?

Method and Procedure

Materials

The materials used in this study were selected from the English textbooks used for the English Communication I course in Japan and the English I course in Korea (see the Appendix for a complete list of textbooks). Both Communication English I and English I are widely taught at many high schools and are among the English language courses that

almost all 1st-year high school students in both countries have to enroll in. The Japanese English language textbooks chosen for this research were the top eight textbooks, in terms of sales, of the high school textbooks approved by MEXT for use in the course Communication English I. The Korean textbooks were eight randomly selected textbooks taken from the list of textbooks approved by the KMOE for use in the course English I. The Korean textbooks were randomly selected because there was no way to determine the eight most popular textbooks on the list as the sales numbers for these textbooks are not publicly available. In total 95 passages from the Japanese textbooks and 63 passages from the Korean textbooks were analyzed.

Procedure

To determine the type of content used in the main passage of the textbooks, the author collected all the main passages from the appropriate textbooks. These passages were then assigned to one of 11 categories based on the main content of the passage (see Table 2 for details). After the passages were assigned to a category, the content of the passage was then further classified based on the apparent purposes of that content.

Table 2. Cultural Categories and Content

Category	Content
Manners & customs	seasonal events / general customs the origins or meanings of events or behaviors viewpoints and thinking patterns of one culture
Daily life	food / clothes / family life items related to daily affairs
Geography & history	climate / sightseeing places / traffic / industry historical explanations past events / historical events of one country
Natural science	products / energy / scientific development information technology
Human rights	disabled people / racial discrimination equality

Category	Content
Stories	novels / old legends
Language & communication	languages / nonverbal communication / greetings facial expressions
School life	classes / subjects / school events conversation between students
Environment	protection of the earth / pollution clean energy
Youth culture	anime / comics
War	stories concerning war / past events in wars

In order to answer the second research question, the passages were classified according to which of Kachru's circles of English the passage dealt with. As many of the passages dealt with themes relevant to the home country of the students, a category representing the local region was also included. Passages in the Japanese textbooks that discussed Japan or passages in the Korean textbooks that discussed Korea were assigned to the local region category. It was also possible for passages to be about an unknown area. When the passage gave information pertaining to two or more regions, multiple regions were counted.

The third research question was about the purpose of the passage with regards to what type of intercultural understanding it was thought students were expected to gain from the passage. The following four purposes were used for the analysis: understanding other cultures, understanding self-culture, global understanding, and comparing cultures. As with the classification of the area covered, when one lesson seemed to have two purposes both were counted.

Results

Contents of the Materials With Respect to Topics Covered

An analysis of the topics covered in the Japanese textbooks (Figure 1) showed that human rights was the topic that was covered most in the textbooks: 14 % of the total number of passages in the text were about this topic. Manners and customs (13%), natural science (11%), and geography and history (11%) were also popular topics. The least frequently covered topics were youth culture (4%) and war (3%).

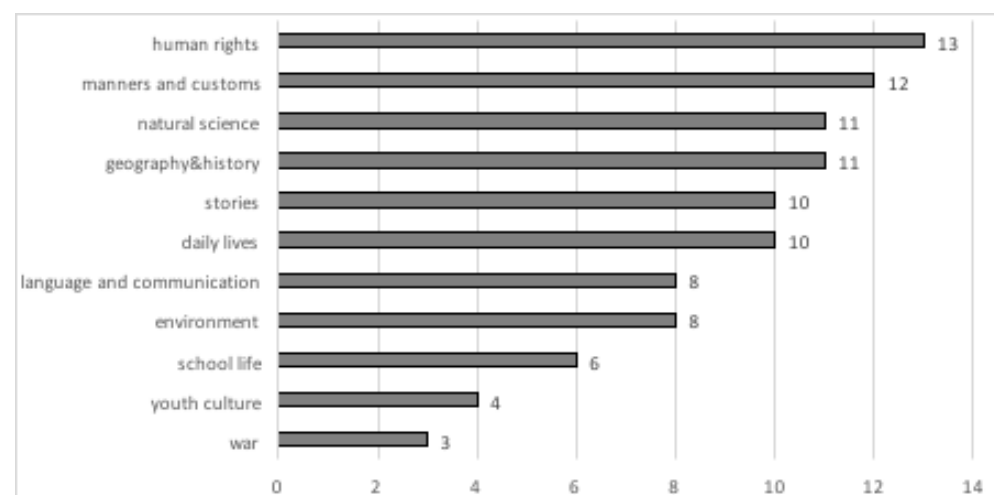


Figure 1. Categories of the cultural materials in the Japanese textbooks. The eight most widely sold 1st-year textbooks were examined, a total of 95 passages. A passage may be counted in more than one area.

As shown in Figure 2, an analysis of the topics covered in the Korean textbooks showed that geography and history was the most popular topic: 22% of the total number of passages focused on this topic. There were also many passages about manners and customs (19%) and daily life (16%). Similar to the Japanese textbooks, the least frequently covered topics were language and culture (2%), youth culture (2%), and war (2%).

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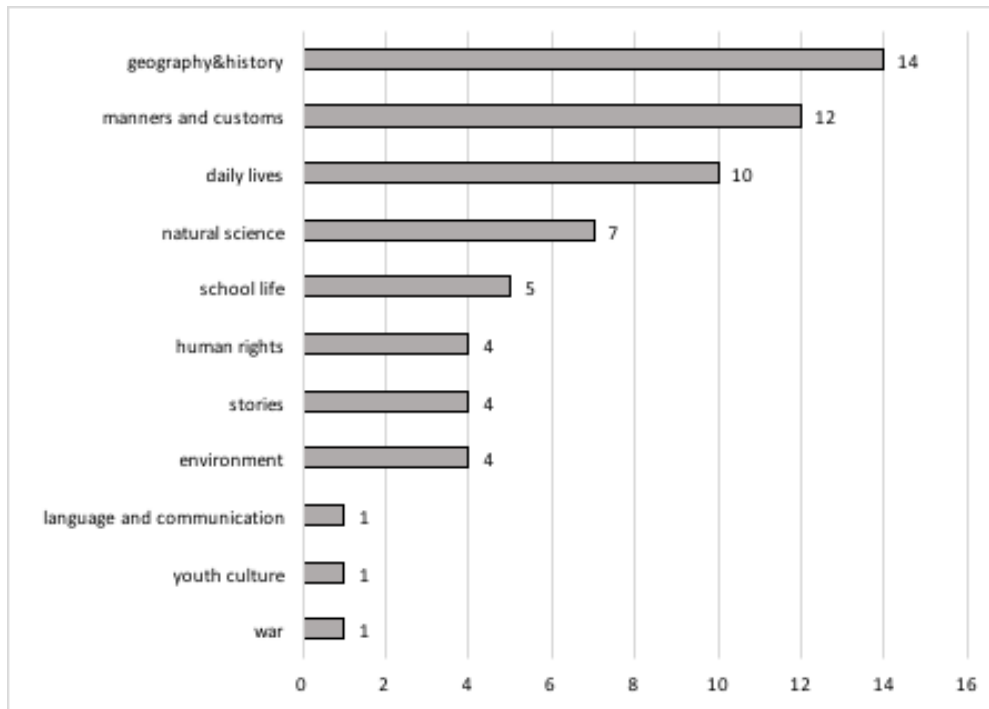


Figure 2. Categories of the cultural materials in the Korean textbooks. Eight randomly selected 1st-year textbooks were examined, a total of 63 passages. A passage may be counted in more than one area.

Regions and Nations Covered in the Materials

Figure 3 illustrates which of Kachru's three circles were topics in the passages in the Japanese textbooks. The most common area covered was the expanding circle, countries where English is used as a foreign language. More than 79% of the total passages were about countries in the expanding circle. Many of the lessons in the textbooks talked about the local area, Japan (62%). Countries where English is used as a native language made up 47% of the lessons, and the least frequently covered area was the outer circle, countries where English is used as an official language but is not the main language of the country (8%).

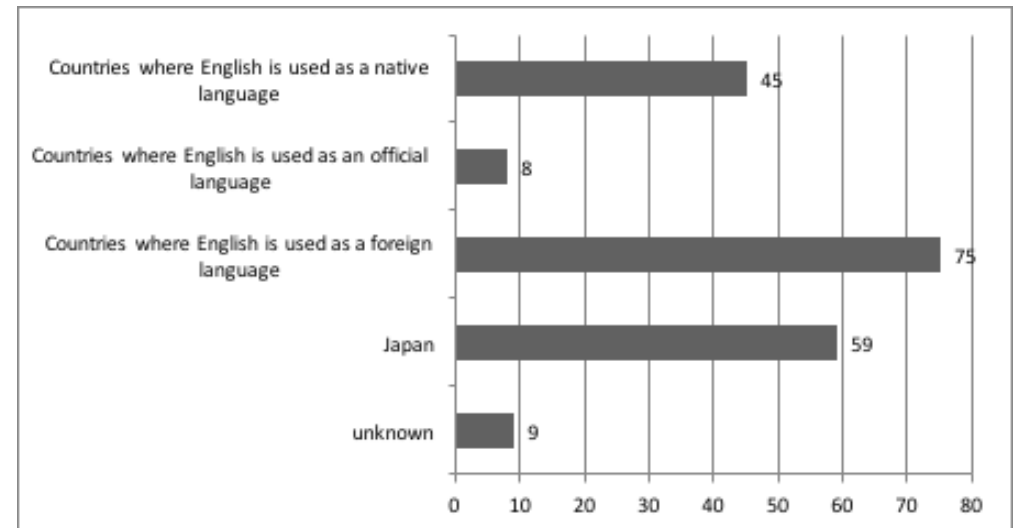


Figure 3. Areas treated in the cultural materials in the Japanese textbooks. The eight most widely sold 1st-year textbooks were examined, a total of 95 passages. A passage may be counted in more than one area.

An analysis of the topics covered in the Korean textbooks (Figure 4) showed that countries in the expanding circle were most frequently covered: 60% of the total number of passages. The second most popular topic was countries in the inner circle: 56% of the passages focused on this area, a higher percentage than was found in the Japanese textbooks. There were also fewer passages about the local area, Korea (27%), than there were in the Japanese textbooks. Finally, similar to the Japanese textbooks, the least frequently covered area was the outer circle (13%).

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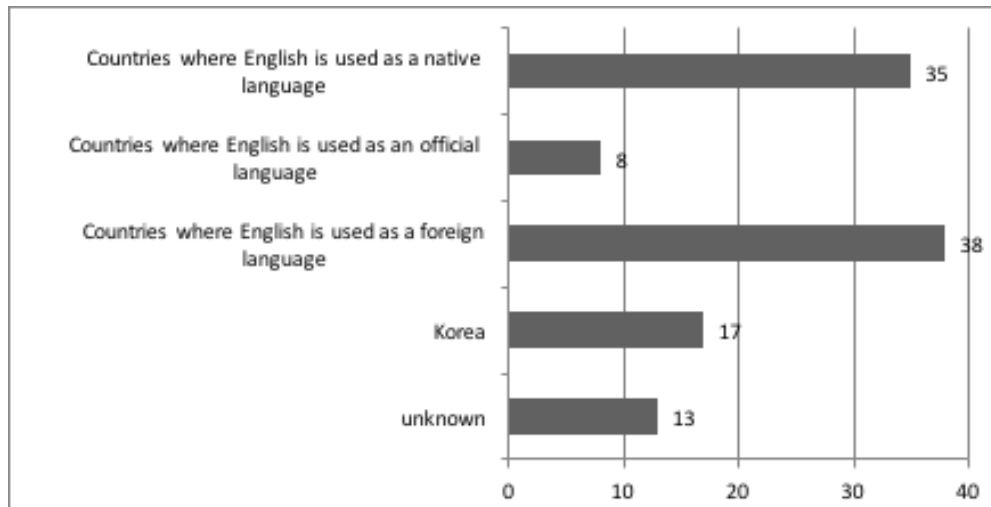


Figure 4. Areas treated in the cultural materials in the Korean textbooks. Eight randomly selected 1st-year textbooks were examined, a total of 63 passages. A passage may be counted in more than one area.

Content of the Materials With Respect to Intercultural Understanding

Figure 5 shows the number of passages that dealt with one of the four areas of cultural understanding. In the Japanese textbooks, the number of passages that focused on improving the students' global understanding was higher than those that had any other cultural purpose: 39% of the total number of main passages focused on this aspect of cultural understanding. The number of passages that focused on the understanding of other cultures (32%) and self-culture (24%) were the next most frequent. Passages that focused on a comparison between cultures were the least frequent (8%).

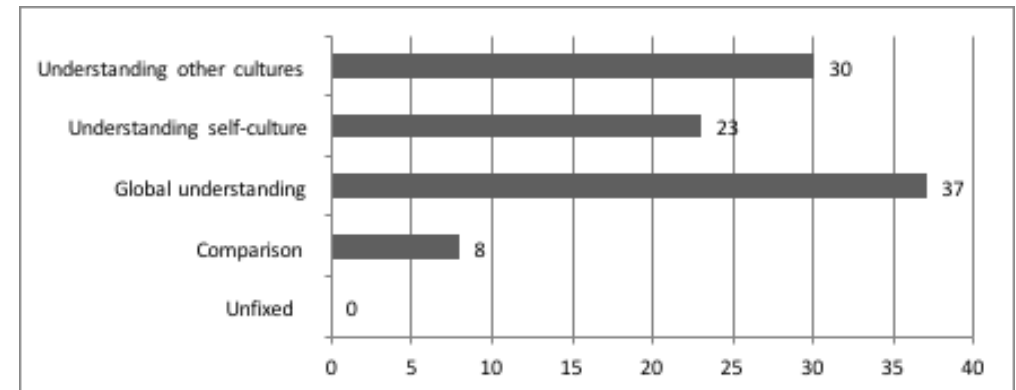


Figure 5. Purpose of the cultural materials in the Japanese textbooks. The eight most widely sold 1st-year textbooks were examined, a total of 95 passages. A passage may be counted in more than one area.

In the Korean textbooks, the number of passages dealing with global understanding was also the highest (see Figure 6): 46% of the total number of passages dealt with global understanding. The next most frequent purpose was understanding other cultures (33%), which was also similar to what was seen in the Japanese textbooks. However, the number of passages that focused on understanding self-culture was smaller than what was found in the Japanese textbooks (17%). Similar to the Japanese textbooks, the number of passages that focused on cultural comparisons was very small (3%).

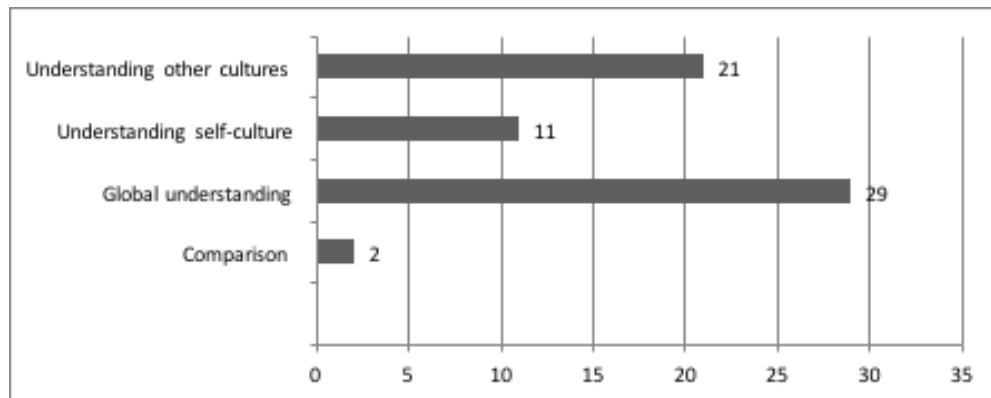


Figure 6. Purpose of the cultural materials in the Korean textbooks. Eight randomly selected 1st-year textbooks were examined, a total of 63 passages. A passage may be counted in more than one area.

Discussion

There are a number of interesting patterns that can be seen from this analysis. First, the main passages cover a wide variety of topics from daily life to customs and manners, history and geography, environment, and war in both the Japanese and Korean textbooks. From a pedagogical perspective, this is good because it gives the teachers a lot of possible cultural issues that they can focus on in the classroom. However, teachers need to be aware that students may have difficulty understanding some of these topics. Therefore, they need to make sure that they properly scaffold the topics in the classroom. This will help students to understand and appreciate the cultural implications of the topics being taught. Overall, having this number of topics is good because it will help to increase students' knowledge of cultural issues and increase their understanding of the world, which is an important part of improving their global understanding.

The second interesting trend found in the data is that the textbooks had a very global approach. When using English to teach intercultural understanding, many researchers and teachers are worried that the materials will focus too much on the inner circle where English is the native language. However, this was not the case with these textbooks: The most common area covered in the passages was countries in Kachru's expanding circle where English is used as a foreign language. This was true in both the Japanese and Korean textbooks. However, the number of such passages in the Japanese textbooks was significantly higher than the number in the Korean textbooks, about 79% compared

to 60%. Also, there was a much greater focus on the local region (Japan) in the Japanese textbooks than on the local region (Korea) in the Korean textbooks. However, in both Japan and Korea the culture of other countries in the outer circle were underrepresented. In both sets of textbooks, there were not many lessons about countries where English is used as an official language.

Third, the data show that in both the Japanese and Korean textbooks the cultural focus of many of the passages was increasing students' global understanding and their understanding of other cultures. This is important because the guidelines of both MEXT and the KMOE stress the importance of having students develop a more global view of the world. Additionally, there was also a strong focus on helping students to understand their own culture in both the Japanese and Korean textbooks, though there was a greater focus on this area in the Japanese textbooks than in the Korean textbooks.

Conclusion

It is clear from the results that the textbooks used in Japanese and Korean high schools are becoming more multicultural in nature. In Yamanaka's 2006 study of textbooks used in Japan she found that the majority of the topics in the textbooks were about the inner circle countries. The current study shows that the textbooks used today place a much greater emphasis on both local culture and English as it is used in countries from the outer circle. However, there is still a lack of focus on Asian nations in these textbooks. As foreign travelers visiting Japan are predominantly from Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, it would be beneficial for Japanese students to learn more about these cultures. It is hoped that this is something that will be reflected in future editions of these textbooks.

Although the passages in the textbooks were found to focus more on the global use of English, it is not enough to confine this international perspective to the reading activities. For students to learn about other cultures and for them to become global citizens, teachers also need to include activities in the classroom designed to help students to better understand local, foreign, and international cultures. Because of this, it would be helpful if textbooks included more clear and specific instructions on how to teach cultural understanding along with communicative exercises that allow students to discuss both their own and other cultures.

Although the results of the study are promising, there are a number of limitations with this study. First, the coding of the passages was done by a single researcher. Although great care was taken to choose the appropriate category for each of the passages, it is possible that others may disagree with the coding. Second, the study was focused on only

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the main passages of the textbooks. Although there was a significant correlation between the topics covered in the main passage and the rest of the unit, it is possible that some units may have covered topics that were not included in the reading. Because of this, it would be beneficial if future studies were to look at more than just the main passages of the textbooks. Finally, although this study provides us with a clearer picture of how textbooks introduce students to culture and intercultural understanding, it is important to remember that English textbooks are not the only way that students learn about other cultures in the classroom. Teachers may provide supplementary materials or cover topics related to culture in classroom discussions. Therefore, further research that examines what teachers are actually teaching in their classrooms with regards to this topic would help to provide a clearer picture of the types of culture students are being exposed to in language classrooms in both Japan and Korea.

The research has shown that there are both similarities and differences between language textbooks in Korea and Japan. The textbooks of both countries have their own strengths and weaknesses. There are things that Japanese textbook makers can learn from Korean textbooks, and likewise Korean textbook makers can learn from Japanese textbooks. It is hoped that this research will allow Japanese and Korean teachers to better understand the treatment of culture in the textbooks used in their countries and that this will enable them to develop English classes to help their students become international citizens.

Bio Data

Kouki Ookawa is an English teacher at Ehime Prefectural Misaki High School.
<kookawa321@yahoo.co.jp>

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Appendix

Textbooks Used for This Study

Japanese Textbooks

- *All Aboard! Communication English I* (Tokyo Shoseki)
- *Vista English Communication I* (Sanseido)
- *Crown English Communication I* (Sanseido)
- *My Way Communication I* (Sanseido)
- *Comet English Communication I* (Suken shuppan)
- *Vivid English Communication I* (Daiichi gakushusha)
- *Element Communication English I* (Keirinkan)
- *Landmark English Communication I* (Keirinkan)

Korean Textbooks

- *High School English* (YBN)
- *High School English* (Mirae)
- *High School English* (Doosan Dong-A)
- *High School English* (Kumsung Publishing)
- *High School English* (Visang Education)
- *High School English* (Ne Neungyule)
- *High School English* (Chunjae Education)
- *High School English* (Cheonjaegyogwaseo)